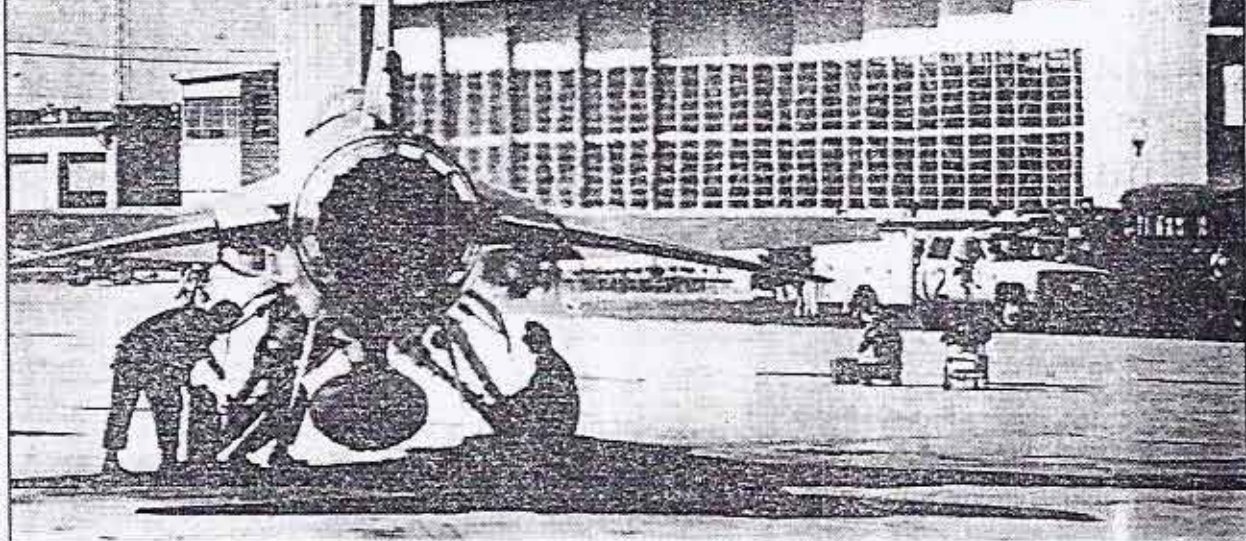


CALIFORNIA AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Fresno Bee/Carl Crawford

Ground crew personnel attend to the first F-16 to be permanently based with the Air National Guard at Fresno.

F-16 whispers into Fresno

Air Guard's first Falcon welcomed

By CHARLES McCARTHY
Bee staff writer

The first F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned permanently to Fresno slipped in almost unnoticed Monday morning amid the background noise of the louder F-4D Phantom jet engines at the Air National Guard base.

"They are quieter," said Mayor-elect Karen Humphrey as the F-16 touched down during a special welcome for the aircraft.

Without the F-16s, the city's plan to control noise around the Fresno Air Terminal might have fizzled in the screech and roar of F-4D Phantoms, she said. Now, she expects "a controllable noise level."

Humphrey and fellow City Council members two years ago lobbied the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., to waste no time replacing Fresno's aging and belching Air Guard Phantoms.

"We really put a team effort together to get these [F-16] aircraft brought to Fresno, probably sooner than we'd been able to expect."

F-16 US Air Force fighter

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Type: Air-combat fighter
 Armament: One 20mm cannon, up to 6 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, or 11,000 lb. weapon load.
 Speed: Twice the speed of sound.
 Range: 2,000 miles.
 Ceiling: Above 10 miles, straight up.
 Crew: One pilot.



The F-16 pioneered "fly-by-wire" technology, where a computer monitors the pilot's movements and translates these into instructions which control the plane. Some 20 F-16s are expected to fly about 285 sorties a month from the Fresno Air Terminal.

Source: Modern Combat Aircraft, InfoGraphics

Fresno Bee

signed to Fresno arrived later than expected Monday. Preparing for takeoff from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., pilot Lt. Col. Skip Osterman noticed the plane's liquid oxygen suddenly was a bit low.

still had to fly the Falcon slowly — not over 8 miles a minute — across the Sierra to Fresno. Air Guard officials frown on sonic booms over the continental United States.

and Army Guard colonels stood in the warm Fresno sunshine Monday morning, awaiting Osterman's arrival.

"He's 50 miles out," a colonel said as the plane approached.

Just then, two of the F-4Ds which have been triggering noise complaints since their arrival in Fresno back in 1983 howled in from their morning practice intercept mission.

Their exhaust smoke had barely cleared from the runway when Osterman landed Fresno's first F-16.

Osterman is operations officer for the Air Force's 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron at Nellis. His squadron tests the "used" F-16s, which have been handed down to the Air Guard after refitting as fighter-interceptors at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah.

By July, all the 1965- and 1966-vintage Phantoms will have disappeared from the Fresno ramps. A few will be sent to other units still using F-4Ds. Many will go to Florida where they'll be turned into pilotless radio-controlled drones to be chased down and blasted from the skies by U.S. and Canadian fliers in F-15s, F-16s and F/A-18s.

The Air Force has earmarked 270 hand-me-down F-16s for refitting with the latest electronic intercept equipment. By the 1990s, F-16s will make up over half the Air Guard's fighter force. In turn, the Air Guard will share its civilian part-time and full-time state technician pilots, will