

Fresno's Air Guard will fly in Germany

By **CHARLES MCCARTHY**
Bee staff writer

Fresno-based Air National Guard crews will join personnel from seven other Air Guard units to stand in during 1986 at Ramstein Air Base, West Germany, while an F-4 fighter-interceptor unit there switches to new aircraft.

It will be the first time a National Guard or reserve unit has substituted for an on-line, overseas Air Force combat unit. The "opposition" in Soviet-built MiGs will be only seven minutes' flying time away.

"The tip of the spear," is how Lt. Col. Dave Cobb of Fresno described the unit Friday. Cobb will command

the unit, which will be known as Detachment 11.

A former chief pilot for short-lived, Fresno-based Far West Airlines, Cobb will be on full-time active duty for 18 months. He plans to run the detachment from the cockpit of a Phantom, as well as from behind a desk.

Cobb said he will draw his personnel and planes from Fresno and from seven other National Guard F-4D units in the continental United States and Hawaii. Part-time Guard members and full-time employees will rotate from their home bases to Germany for 60-day and 90-day tours of duty.

While in Germany, all will be

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considered full-time Air Force personnel.

Eight key Air Guard officers and enlisted people will remain with Cobb on full-time active duty for 18 months.

The Air Guard's overseas tour of duty is part of the government's "Total Force" concept, designed to provide maximum defense for the lowest possible cost, Cobb explained. In Germany, training missions will be flown daily, as will fully armed five-minute-to-takeoff ramp alerts.

"Under Total Force, there's no

difference between the Guard and active Air Force in terms of combat readiness," Fresno Guard spokesman Lt. Col. James A. Arthur emphasized.

Cobb explained the Air Guard 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing will remain committed to air defense of the western United States, and its headquarters will still be at Fresno Air Terminal. One detachment of Fresno-based planes and crews will remain active at George Air Force Base near Victorville.

At Fresno and Victorville, at least two fully armed Phantoms are on round-the-clock alert. Their air crews remain nearby, ready to fly on five minutes' warning.