

144th FIW selected to provide defense

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Fresno's 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing is one of eight Air National Guard units selected to provide air defense alert for the 86th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ramstein Air Base, West Germany.

The 86th is scheduled to convert to F-16s on April 1 and will be unable to maintain its two-aircraft alert commitment during the conversion period, so Air National Guard F-4 units are to deploy F-4Ds to Ramstein about March 1 for an alert of one year — or possibly longer.

Each of the units involved will supply one formed aircrew — pilot

and weapons systems officer — for the duration of the alert. With the exception of the first and last involved, crews will serve 90-day tours, with three-week overlaps so those involved can complete theater indoctrination — ground school and six training sorties — before their predecessor group returns home.

In addition to the 144th, Air Guard units will be assigned from Hawaii, Portland, Ore., Fargo, N.D., Duluth, Minn., Mount Clemens, Mich., Ellington, Tex., and Niagara, N.Y., with the Californians at Ramstein from December through March of next year.

Lt. Col. Lawrence "Dave" Cobb, the 194th Fighter Interceptor Squadron's A Flight commander, will hold that slot in Germany, with Maj. William Hall as project coordinator, MSgt. Lloyd Horn as first shirt, and MSgt. Danny Lopez as airfield management technician in the eight-man detachment.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for our Fresno unit as well as for the Air National Guard," 144th commander Col. William Neville stated. "This alert commitment will solidify the Air Guard's position as a meaningful contributor to our armed forces' 'total force' policy."