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## 'New era' begins at Mojave as Calspan F-16s land

### Bicycle Works expands

**BY BILL DEAVER**

MOJAVE — "A new era begins at Mojave Airport/Spaceport," East Kern Airport District General Manager Stuart Witt said last Thursday as the first of three Air Force F-16 fighters taxied to a stop in front of the Calspan Bicycle Works on the airport's flightline.

The aircraft, flown to Mojave from Luke Air Force Base, will be used to support research and development operations at Edwards Air Force Base and the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Center, said Paul Nafziger, who heads the Bicycle Works.

"We're also going to support the Navy on qualifying new warships by firing target missiles that simulate ballistic missiles,"

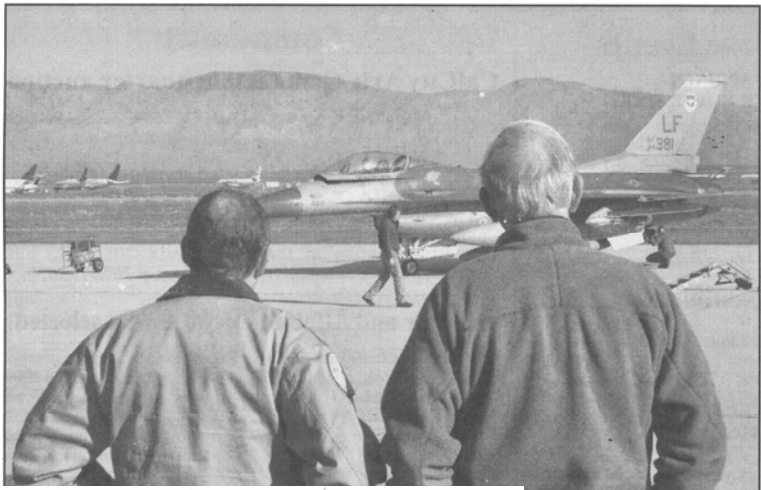
Nafziger said. The ships must detect and interdict the approaching targets, Nafziger explained.

Nafziger said the Bicycle Works will initially hire three additional mechanics and an administrative support person for the project.

"Within a year I plan to have about 20 people," he said. "We're getting an awful lot of interest from customers as people find out about the program."

Bicycle Works Test Pilot Terry Tomeny said the company "hand-picked" personnel to fly and maintain the airplanes. "I told Danny Gast, who heads our maintenance operations, to 'pick the right people,' which he did."

Tomeny said the Air Force is (See CALSPAN on Page A-7)



**A NEW ERA BEGINS** — Terry Tomeny, left, and Paul Nafziger of the Calspan Bicycle Works at Mojave Airport/Spaceport watch as one of three Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons arrives at the airport last Thursday to begin work with the Bicycle Works. The airplanes will be used for flight test projects. **BILL DEAVER/Desert News**

# CALSPAN

(Continued From Front Page)

“excessing” F-16s and sending them to “boneyards” like Luke. Nafziger and Tomeny have been working for several months to obtain the airplanes, an effort that culminated in landing of the three airplanes last week.

He said Bicycle Works personnel went to Luke AFB, where the planes were based, and were allowed to select the airplanes they wanted. “They helped us pick five of the best and we kept three. — they were very helpful,” Tomeny said.

Nafziger said Tomeny “is our prime guy” to fly the airplanes, and that two other Calspan pilots who work at the Air Force Test Pilots School at nearby Edwards Air Force Base as instructors will also fly the airplanes. Other full- or part-time pilots may also be used.

The first F-16 to land was flown by Air Force Lt. Col. Tom Pollio of Litchfield Park, Arizona, and the second by Captain Travis Ruhl. The third

airplane landed around noon to the delight of customers in the Voyager Restaurant.

## F-16 ‘Fighting Falcon’

According to the Air Force, the F-16 Fighting Falcon is a compact, multi-role fighter aircraft. It is highly maneuverable and has proven itself in air-to-air combat and air-to-surface attack. It provides a relatively low-cost, high-performance weapon system for the United States and allied nations.

The F-16A, a single-seat model, first flew in December 1976. The first operational F-16A was delivered in January 1979 to the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. The airplane was designed by General Dynamics, which sold its aircraft manufacturing business to the Lockheed Corporation, which in turn became part of Lockheed Martin after a 1995 merger with Martin Marietta.

Known by its pilots as the “Viper,” the F-16 is the aircraft flown by the Thunderbirds,

the Air Force’s famed demonstration team. More than 4,400 of the airplanes have been built, and it serves in the air forces of 25 nations.

And now three of the versatile birds have been added to the flight test stable at the world’s first commercial civilian flight test center and commercial spaceport.

Calspan was founded in 1940 as part of the research laboratory of the Curtis-Wright Airplane Division in Buffalo, N.Y. It operated as the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory from 1946 until 1972 when Cornell University sold public stock in the lab and set it up as the Calspan Corporation. Based in Cheektowaga, N.Y., Calspan is internationally recognized for proven excellence in technology and science, and has built its reputation on a rich heritage of innovation. Calspan’s corporate structure includes four operating units: flight research, transonic wind tunnel, transportation research, and systems integration and design.



**WELCOME** — Air Force Lt. Col. Tom Pollio, center, is welcomed to Mojave Airport/Spaceport last Thursday by Terry Tomeny, at left, and Paul Nafziger of the Calspan Bicycle Works.