

## Air defense exercise will bring fighter planes to North Coast skies

By [BOB NORBERG](#)

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West Coast air defenses will be tested today in an exercise dubbed Felix Hawk, which will send military aircraft flying low over the North Coast between Cloverdale and Garberville.

"Folks might see a couple of F-16 airplanes flying as slow as they can to intercept a Cessna flying slow," said Lt. Col. Brett Bosselmann of the Washington Air National Guard.

"It might be a little bit alarming; it might be a little loud, too," he said.

The exercise is overseen by the Western Air Defense Sector at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Tacoma, Wash., which is the air defense center for the United States west of the Mississippi River, Bosselmann said.

"Our job is to detect, detour and defend," Bosselmann said. "In partnership with the FAA, we are constantly surveying the skies over the U.S. When we identify there is problem with an airplane out there, we look to see what we can do as a military to detour and defend."

The exercise, which will take place about 10 a.m., will involve a Cessna 182 flown by the California Civil Air Patrol from the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport on a route from Cloverdale to Garberville.

The Cessna, which cruises at about 130 mph, will be intercepted by two Air National Guard F-16 Fighting Falcons, stationed at the Fresno International Airport.

The fighter aircraft will be flying at 6,000 to 7,000 feet at speeds between 350 to 575 mph, so they will be seen from and heard on the ground, Bosselmann said.

In a second part of the exercise, the F-16s will intercept a much faster C-21A, a military version of a Learjet business jet, at a high altitude over the Pacific Ocean west of Eureka. That part of the exercise will probably not be seen from the ground, Bosselmann said.

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