



# Arizona ANG trains Pakistani F-16 pilots



F-16

## 162nd Fighter Wing teaches wing commanders how to fly C and D model fighter jets.

By Air Force Maj. Gabe Johnson  
Arizona National Guard

**T**HE Arizona Air National Guard hosted training of Pakistan's air force while the Middle East country upgrades its fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons.

Eight Pakistani air force pilots experienced in the F-16's A and B models recently learned to fly the newer C- and D-model aircraft at the 162nd Fighter Wing, the international F-16 training unit at Tucson International Airport. They were honored at a graduation ceremony here yesterday.

The pilots are the first from their country to train in the United States since 1983, when the last class of Pakistani pilots trained at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.

"For Pakistan, our air force is gaining capabilities that it has needed for the last decade — capabilities that are critical to ongoing operations in Pakistan's war on terror," said Wing Commander Ghazanfar Latif, a 12-year F-16A pilot with the Pakistani air force.

The new planes purchased by the Pakistani government, Block 52 versions of the multirole fighter will allow pilots to conduct operations at night and greatly enhance their use of precision munitions.

The first four of the 18 planes purchased are scheduled for delivery June 26 to Shahbaz air base in south-central Pakistan. The rest will be delivered on a staggered schedule throughout this year. In addition, Pakistan's existing F-16 fleet will un-

Air Force Lt. Col. Alex Wilson, right, and Squadron Leader Shirjil Kahn of the Pakistani air force prepare for an F-16D training flight at Tucson International Airport in Arizona. | Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Dave Neve

dergo a mid-life update in 2011 designed to upgrade cockpits and avionics to match the F-16C/D.

The eight pilots and their families will have spent 10 months in the United States navigating the upgrade-training pipeline. They spent two and half months reviewing military aviation terminology at the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and seven months in flight training at Tucson International Airport.

The bulk of the flight training in Tucson included a transition course from the F-16A/B to the F-16C/D, flight lead upgrade training and instructor pilot certification.

"We're training these eight pilots so they can return home and be instructors themselves and teach others to fly the new F-16s," said Parkinson, a 22-year fighter pilot.

With so much to learn, the students flew a rigorous schedule of five flights per week.

"The radar, data link and other avionics help create the big picture of what is going on around you. There's lots of information to process in the C model, so you have to prioritize all of the input you are getting," said Squadron Leader Yasir Malik.

Air Force Maj. Windy Hendrick, a flight commander and 13-year F-16 pilot, has instructed students from all over the world. She said she and her fellow instructors learned a great deal about their Pakistani counterparts.

"They are all experienced pilots with 500 to 1,800 fighter hours in the F-16, and the majority of that time is combat hours in the fight against extremists," she said. "They are very humble and don't talk about their experience, but the more we learn about them and all they've done, it makes us proud to be their instructors."

