

# Patriots take to the skies



## ABOUT THE PATRIOTS

The Patriots Jet Team is made up of former members of the Blue Angels and the Thunderbirds precision flying units. The team flies identical Boeing/Aero-Vodochody L-39C jet planes.

### DIMENSIONS

- Span: 31 feet
- Length: 41 feet
- Height: 16 feet
- Wings' area: 202 feet

### WEIGHTS

- Basic empty weight: 7,200 pounds
- Clean A/C takeoff weight: 10,075 pounds

### PERFORMANCE

- Maximum speed: 560 mph



PROVIDED PHOTO

The Patriots will perform Saturday and Sunday at the California International Airshow Salinas at the Salinas Municipal Airport in Salinas.

*Former Blue Angels and Thunderbirds pilot the team*

By VICTOR CALDERON  
The Salinas Californian

For the first time in 10 years, the California International Airshow will not feature an active military team such as the Blue Angels.

"Because of timing, it just was-

**'The Patriots (Jet Team) are awesome. The public will be impressed.'**

— Harry Wardwell, executive director, California International Airshow Salinas

n't possible," said Harry Wardwell, executive director of the Airshow. "Military teams are under a lot of pressure to fly a lot of shows."

Instead, this year's event will feature the Patriots Jet Team, a

group of former Blue Angels and former Thunderbirds, in place of a military team.

The Patriots L-39 jets have been modified for use on the air show circuit. They have upgraded avionics systems for naviga-

tion and communications, less excess weight for better show performance, a 25-gallon smoke oil system, and a non-original paint scheme.

The Patriots have added a fourth jet for the 2006 season, after debuting in 2003 as a two-plane team.

The team's routine includes diamond formation loops and rolls followed by maneuvers including "Opposing Loops," the "Cuban Eight" and vertical rolls. The team is known for their signature "Tail Slide"

maneuver, in which the aircraft actually slides backwards toward the ground.

Lead Pilot Dean "Wilber" Wright is a U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel who flies the F-117 Stealth fighter pilot out of Holloman AFB, N.M. and former lead solo pilot for the USAF Thunderbirds, for which he flew the F-16.

Left Wingman John "Boards" Posson is an airline captain who competed in aerobatics for the past 12 years.

Right Wingman Vlady "Mig"

Chetverous has a military fighter background and was the right wingman for the nine-ship Soviet Union Jet Demonstration Team.

Slot Pilot Paul "Sticky" Strickland is a USAF colonel and former slot pilot for the USAF Thunderbirds, for which he flew the F-16.

"The Patriots are awesome," Wardwell said. "The public will be impressed."

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PROVIDED PHOTO

The Patriots began as a two-jet team in 2003. For 2006, the team added a fourth jet.

## MEET THE PILOTS



Dean 'Wilber' Wright



John 'Boards' Posson



Vlady 'Mig' Chetverous



Paul 'Sticky' Strickland