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Hughes Aircraft was encountering problems with dive-bombing pigeons at its plant in El Segundo, so the company developed an exotic defense system:

A series of fake owls stationed on ledges.

But the bogus predators were only marginally effective.

"We took a couple of the owls down because they [the pigeons] actually started roosting on them," said Timothy Cozine, a Hughes facilities maintenance engineer, who coordinated the offensive.

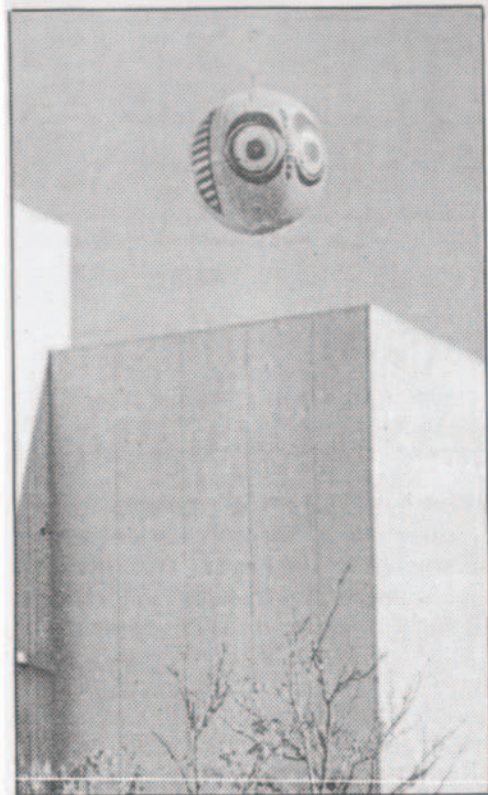
Next, Hughes set out spikes (which "give them a feeling of sitting on a cactus," Cozine said) as well as sticky repellent on the ledges and roofs.

Still some enemy bombings continued. Pigeons, he pointed out, are like humans—"they adjust."

So, the company resorted to the ultimate weapon: A 2-foot balloon with two sets of eyes that appear to move. Made by a Chicago company, it's called Terror Eyes.

Cozine says that since Terror Eyes was hung over the plant's quad, the pigeons have stayed away.

By STEVE HARVEY
 From staff and wire reports



ROBERT GABRIEL / Los Angeles Times

Hughes' ultimate weapon: Terror Eyes.