Passenger enplanements from Lafayette Regional Airport have averaged 114,615 annually for the period 1980-1986 dropping to a low of 102,895 in 1983 and reaching a peak of 172,973 in 1985.

Robert E. Mouton, director of international operations at the airport, reports that 63,543 passengers enplaned at Lafayette from January through July 1987 and predicted that this year's volume will exceed 112,000.

But while the passenger business increased during the period, the oil crunch has taken its toll on both the total based aircraft and total take off and landing operations.

During 1981 there were 200 aircraft based at Lafayette, but by 1986 that number had dropped to 127.

Total operations by air carriers, air taxi, general aviation/civil and military aircraft peaked at 223,454 in 1982 but dropped to 109,374 in the last calendar year. The annual average for the period 1980-86 amounted to 172,973.

Mouton said there were factors other than the economic downturn contributing to some of the problems experienced at the airport. One was the deregulation of the aviation industry that took a period of time to reach Lafayette. Another problem was the loss of Hammond Air Service which meant no service to Hobby Airport in downtown Houston and no alternate to New Orleans. Another factor was the air controllers strike.

"All of these things impacted the airport," Mouton said. "The result was fewer people wanted to get on a plane."

Despite these developments, the director says "We are lucky to maintain what we have."

Airlines serving Lafayette provide a daily schedule of 18 departures and 16 arrivals daily.

The service includes Continental Air Line operating DC 9s with capacity of 83 and 108 passengers, as well as 727s capable of accommodating 119 and 151 passengers.

American Eagle Convair 580s have a capacity of 90 passengers, the Royal Bandeirante (a Brazilian manufactured aircraft) can accommodate 16 and the newly inaugurated Continental Express/Brit has a capacity of 18.

Brit is a subsidiary of Texas Air parent company of Continental. Mouton said "Informed sources advise that Continental has no intention of leaving Lafayette."

Confidential operates an air freight service known as Cargo Development Group (CDG) and also handles freight for Royale and Brit. Figures compiled by the airport authority show that during the period 1980-86 enplaned cargo amounted to 4,231,291 pounds, or an average of 604,470 pounds annually. While cargo shipments reached a plateau of 666,004 in the boom times of the early 1980s and then dropped, the figures reveal that cargo traffic is on the upswing reaching 446,708 pounds in 1986 compared with 399,816 pounds the previous year.

Lafayette Regional has acted as a catalyst for commerce in another way. There are 37 tenants at the facility employing about 800 people.

Despite these developments, the airport and aircraft

These photographs depict activity at the Lafayette Regional Airport terminal and on the runway. The plane is a Flying Tiger Line Boeing 747 chartered to lift military personnel from Lafayette.