

94 FTS Overview of Operations

The 94 FTS conducts over 15,000 training and competition glider sorties annually, focused on developing the officership, leadership and character of over 4,000 United States Air Force Academy and ROTC cadets. It operates airmanship training at USAF's busiest day, VFR-only airfield to provide the maximum opportunity for cadet participation in a USAF operational environment, motivating them toward careers as Air Force officers. Currently 500 cadets per year take a basic solo course in sailplanes (AM-251). The cadet instructor force consists of 106 sailplane instructor pilots. There are 26 active duty officers, 13 reserve officers, and 2 enlisted troops assigned to the 94th Flying Training Squadron. The soaring resources currently include 21 sailplanes and 5 tow aircraft.

94 FTS Programs – Airmanship 251 - Basic Soaring



The **Basic Soaring** program (Airmanship 251) provides a motivational experience for all third class (sophomore) cadets. The cadets first experience soaring in the TG-10B (L-23 Super Blanik) which familiarizes them with aircraft controls, the ever-present checklist, pattern work, and the perspective to earth. Over 7,000 sorties are flown in this beginning program annually. Nearly 300 solos are achieved each year. It usually takes the average student 12 sorties to solo. Sorties are flown all summer and also during the academic year.

94 FTS Programs – Airmanship 461 – Cadet Instructor Pilot Upgrade

Essential to the **Basic Soaring** program is the Cadet Instructor Pilot Upgrade course (Airmanship 461). This course is a semester long program in which 40 third classmen are selected from almost 400 applications and learn to become soaring instructor pilots. The 40 sophomores are selected based upon their flying ability and other factors which include academic and military performance. After an average of 80 training flights and many hours of strenuous ground school, the upgraders are ready to wear the instructor pilots wings and teach his/her first student. Cadet instructors are enrolled in one of two airmanship courses. One teaches the 500 **Basic Soaring** students each year (Airmanship 472), and the other is charged with turning out 40 new instructors annually (Airmanship 473). These upgrade instructors must accumulate at least 100 instructional sorties before they qualify to teach all phases of upgrade training. **Basic Soaring** instructors teach during the academic day and during the summer. Upgrade instructors volunteer their time after school and on weekends. This type of sacrifices demand a lot of time and dedication from the cadet instructors, since most of them are taking over 23 credit hours of academics.



In December 1998, the 94 FTS obtained permission to award the WWII style US Army Air Corps Glider Pilot Wings to cadet instructor pilots. Approval was granted by the National WWII Glider Pilots Association, Inc. and by the Superintendent of USAFA. Mr. Werner Birkelbach, a WWII glider pilot, presented the first round of "G" wings to the Fall Semester AM-461 graduates during a ceremony in early December.

94 FTS Advanced Programs

How do we keep these cadet instructors motivated and proficient? Advanced programs such as aerobatics, spin training, cross-country, wave flying and other special qualifications are granted to those cadet instructors that are motivated enough to give soaring more time than is required.

All of these programs add up to one of the busiest VFR airfields in the world with over 200,000 aircraft movements a year and 15,000 soaring sorties flown annually.

The USAF Academy has two advanced sailplane teams. Each team is composed of around ten cadet instructor pilots and several officers.

The objectives of the Advanced Programs teams are:

- To support Air Force Academy recruiting
- To enhance instructor competence, confidence, and proficiency
- To demonstrate to the public the professional competence of Air Force Academy cadets
- To support Air Force Academy community relations
- To strengthen morale and esprit de corps among the Air Force Academy cadets

The teams send representatives to various air shows across the country. Every Spring Break, the Aerobatic Team loads the sailplanes onto trailers and deploys to Arizona for concentrated training perfecting their aerobatic maneuvers which include: Chandelle, Lazy Eight, Loop, Cloverleaf, Immelmann, Split S, Barrel Roll, Cuban Eight, Reverse Cuban Eight, Inverted Flight, and Slow Roll. The Cross-Country Team deploys to Texas a week before USAFA Graduation Week to hone their cross-country gliding skills flying sorties as long as six hours and as many as 200 miles from the home airport.

Aerobatics Team



The first advanced program is the **Aerobatics Team**, flying the TG-10C. The team performs precision aerial maneuvers, exhibiting throughout the United States the flying capabilities of Air Force Academy cadets and their sailplanes. The team currently competes at four regional International Aerobatic Club (IAC) sponsored competitions throughout the year.

Cross-Country Soaring Team



The other team is the **Cross-Country Soaring Team**, flying the TG-15A, TG-15B, and TG-10B. The team competes in Soaring Society of America (SSA) regional and national competitions. They strive for state and national records, and SSA Soaring badges for individual achievement.

