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Media Roundtable

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Lt. Gen. Roberson: It's important for us to be able to share what's going on, and appreciate your involvement, engagement, being able to tell the story and talk about issues that are important.

AETC has a critical piece. We recruit, we train, and we educate Airmen to deliver air power for America. It's a big deal. Sixty-thousand plus Airmen that are part of AETC, and we train almost [300,000] every year in some form or another as a part of AETC. And what I truly believe is of course that training is foundational, but air power starts when they teach them. It starts with every Airman that walks into either our basic military training or comes from ROTC or our officer commissioning sources. So it's awesome.

I've been on the job now almost eight months, so compared to last time I've got a much better feel for what's going on and how things are being done. And it's exciting.

T-X is obviously a big part of AETC. It's an important part of our future. The T-38 has been with us for 50 years already and the T-X, I expect, will be the next trainer for the next 50 years probably. So it's a critically important decision and we're getting really excited about it.

The issue for us is IOC is 2024, so it's still, you know, eight years down the road before we'll start to see Initial Operational Capability. But we're doing a lot already to start working with the T-X.

The F-35 remains a critical part of our training program. That is going well in AETC. We've got international students now that are part of the Luke training program. Since the last time we talked the Australians, the Norwegians, and the Italians have pilots at Luke going through F-35 training with us. So that international, that integration, no-kidding working together for the F-35 is really starting to take shape. We're working hard to remain focused on IOC for the F-35 this year as well. That's more the ACC part, that's the operational side, but obviously our training is contributing to the ability to stand up the first operational squadron later this year.

RPAs remain a huge part of our effort as well. If you remember, we basically were told to double our RPA pilot production from last year to this year. We're on track. A lot of effort to make

that happen, so we're excited about going from you know, 192 to 384 RPA pilots which is our current goal right now.

Since the last time we met we released the AETC Strategic Plan. It's a two-years cycle strategic plan, and in that we just talk about what's most important or critical for AETC from an organizational perspective, but also adding a little bit of my own personal emphasis in areas.

There's four kind of primary focus areas that I concentrate on and I really talk about with everybody that I get to speak to in AETC when I go travel around the bases. I talk about these four. They're **motivational mission accomplishment, compassionate care of our Airmen and families, innovation, and leadership**. So what you'll see in the Strategic Plan is really kind of focusing on those areas and explaining to the command how important they are, why they're important and what the objectives, you know, what we're trying to achieve out of those. So from my perspective for a two year plan it's a good update to what we put out.

Airman's Week. Again, an important change and program that was added recently. A year now. We're at the one-year point for this Airman's Week. The feedback we're getting is actually quite good, very very good from the Airmen that are going through it. So these are our youngest 17 year olds coming into BMT, Basic Military Training. They finish their Basic Military Training. We send them to this Airman's Week, one-week course. It's really about instilling core values -- integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. Standard Air Force stuff. But talking about it and working with them in a way that is so focused and different from the way we've ever done it before. It really tries to get to the **affectual impacts** so that our Airmen are making professional, you know, good decisions, good choices on their own because they want to be a part of this and buy into it personally as opposed to us telling them, you know, you need to have integrity kind of thing. And we're really seeing some good results out of that, so we're excited.

The Air University side of the house, **continuum of education** continues to be worked. Lots of transformations going on on our education side of the house too.

So AETC is alive, well, exciting, and with lots of energy. There's a lot of great things that are going on.

I think I'll just leave it there and turn it over for questions. We can dive into anything else that you'd like to talk about.

Media: On T-X, first of all, can you talk about what has changed in this budget profile? It seems like the R&D funding stream is very much the same, very much holding steady, but IOC has slipped and I think that there has been some change in the [EMD] aircraft that the companies are able to build. So can you first just touch on any changes? Then I have a follow-up.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Details of the changes I personally don't have in front of me and I don't keep them up here. What I can say is there's been on change in the requirements for the T-X.

So one of the things that we're trying to do with the T-X program, this is one of the prototype efforts we have of **bending the cost curve**. You've heard the Secretary of the Air Force talk about this. T-X is one of the primary programs where we're using these new techniques to try and bend the cost curve, to get it lower than traditionally.

One of the aspects of that is **transparency**. We've already released those requirements that we know are going to be critical and important for us, and by doing that we've been able to dialogue back and forth with any company, anybody who's interested in the program. So they can, and we've gotten almost 300 inquiries or questions back from the release of those requirements from industry saying he, I'm not sure I really understand this aspect of what you're talking about here.

So we've been able to answer those and we haven't even released the Request for Proposal. It's not even out on the street. We'll put that out on the street this year.

But the bottom line is, we are now working with industry in a transparent way that we are very hopeful is going to allow us to do things and bring costs down and get the product that everyone wants to build or receive in a way that we've never done before.

As far as changes go, there's real stability in the T-X program. One of the requirements have changed. The biggest difference is this interaction that we're having between industry and us.

And the way that we're approaching that is, when we get a question in we answer it, but we provide that answer back to everybody. So it's not just to the company that asked that one question. All questions and all answers are open for everyone to see. And we've been able to answer some questions in a way that's going to make a big difference when we really see RFP. So

we'll see what that translates to after RFP release and how that's going to change a normal procurement process.

Media: So you don't see the requirements changing anymore.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: No. That's one of the premises of how we're approaching this program as well.

We have the ability, because the T-X is inside the Air Force and we're not sharing it with the Navy, or we're not sharing it with any other partners. This is an in-house Air Force requirement. So we have the ability to control those requirements much more than you would otherwise. So we are trying as hard as we can to stick to requirements and not changing them, because as soon as you do, now the costs go up.

Media: And what about affordability then? I've heard from the companies that the requirements are very stringent, the 15G requirement and all that kind of thing.

Do you think it's going to be very expensive for industry to build? Do you have concerns about affordability?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: I don't at all. In fact **affordability** is obviously one of the keys that we're going to be looking for.

There are prototypes basically already built. I mean some of the companies are already flying what they're going to propose. I mean they'll modify them somewhat but they've been public about what they're going to use.

So to meet the requirements is not going to be a problem. And those requirements have been very well vetted. We thought about those requirements for a long time and made sure that we made them as precise as we could, knowing what we needed to product pilots. And again, I've been in the Air Force now for **32 years**. My whole background is from fighters, flying fighters. We're not asking for anything that we don't need. It's not above any requirements. And the way it's lined up, as you know as well, there's an objective threshold, I mean there's a threshold that has to be met and then there's a goal that's higher than that. So they can just meet the threshold objective or they can really go up to you know, a stretch objective if they want to. But each company will be able to choose as they see fit.

So from our perspective, we're pretty confident in what we need. The requirements have been very well vetted and laid out

transparently. So I think the companies are going to be able to meet it pretty easily. If they can't, they won't submit a proposal.

Media: So you've got two clean sheet proposals, and then you've got two modifications of existing aircraft that we know about at the moment. How confident are you that you're going to be able to give equal weight to both sides?

And also, knowing that this is going to be an aircraft for the next 50 years, would you prefer a clean sheet design?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: This is the exciting part about this. We're not saying you have to have an off-the-shelf and we're not saying you have to have a clean sheet. We're letting each company decide how they want to go about this on their own, and the fact that we're going to have some companies that come with a prototype, a product that's already kind of built and some that are coming with clean sheet, I am very grateful for because it's going to add to the competition. Open, transparent competition by all companies based on what they think is best to meet the requirements for the United States Air Force. So I'm actually very glad that we're seeing all types.

In fact any company that wants to make a proposal, they can choose how they want to do it. The requirements are the requirements and we'll evaluate it when we get to that point.

Media: On that also, I understand that you had people out to fly the T-100 to make sure that it met all the sustained G requirements and everything like that. Do you expect to have your pilots flying the different proposals including the prototypes?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: That would be my preference, certainly. If they have aircraft that are flyable, you know, we would like to go see them.

Media: [Inaudible], Defense Daily.

Is there any attractiveness or less attractiveness to a prime that has maybe five or six subcontractors on its offer as opposed to a company that maybe has one or two? Or does it not matter? Is there any --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: It's up to the prime to decide how they want to meet the requirements. If they choose multiple, that will be

part of the proposal, so we'll see that. But there's no preference one way or the other.

Media: Frank Kendall the other day said that one of the new acquisition initiatives is where he wants the operators to tell industry what specifically, how much more they're willing to pay for increased capabilities. I'm wondering if you're going to implement that in your T-X RFP. Are you doing that?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: We're already pretty far down track on the T-X. So all the requirements have been specifically listed and we've had dialogue with industry on this already. So kind of what he's talking about I don't think applies as much to the TX because of where we're at.

Media: Okay.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: But again, the RFP hasn't even been released. So I think there's room, if we can make it more affordable, more capable, you know, then we're interested in how to do that.

Media: Okay. Thank you.

Media: [Inaudible], Inside the Air Force.

[Inaudible] about the T-1. I know there's some new discussion about the [inaudible], an upcoming decision about what that looks like down the road. Does that impact T-X at all? And when do you expect to kind of make a decision on --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: So T-1 is doing a great job and that's not going to change for any time soon. That T-1 is designed, once we get everyone through the T-6 which is the basic pilot training aircraft, then we vector them either to a T-38 to go fly a fighter or a bomber, or we send them to the T-1 if they're going to fly everything else, basically. Heavy C-130s, C-17s.

So the T-1 is in place doing a functional job that is critical and is not going to change any time soon.

What I can tell you is because of the technology and what we're trying to do with the T-X, that we will ultimately reevaluate Undergraduate Pilot Training as a whole based on that new capability.

So we're not anywhere near a decision. The T-1 is a critical asset and that's not going to change. But as we field the T-X

we're going to be looking at how that might impact Undergraduate Pilot Training for everybody.

Media: Down the road could the T-1 [impact UPT] depending on what route you decide to do?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Sure. In other words, is UPT still going to be a full year long or can we make it shorter -- which I'm hopeful of -- with the technology that's going to come from the T-X?

With that T-X, are we going to be able to train all pilots to a higher standard so that when they graduate from pilot training we can send them wherever we want them to go and they're going to be able to succeed? We need to find that out. So that's all part of the discussion and will make a difference on what we do with UPT.

Media: What's the time frame for that?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: IOC for the T-X is not until 2024. So we're years away.

Media: So after IOC or --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: No, I think as we get closer, the RFP is released, we do a contract award. I think once we get to contract award then it will be time to really get serious about how this is going to impact Undergraduate Pilot Training.

Media: Just to clarify, it's possible the T-X could replace the T-1 as well? That's not possible?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: No. Right now we're looking at 350, again, here's the requirements. We're looking at 350 aircraft to replace our existing T-38 fleet. That's what we're working.

Media: But could T-X or maybe a version of T-X replace the T-1 as well?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: The T-1 is very, are you familiar with the T-1? A much bigger airplane. Crew concept. It does different things than the T-X.

Media: So the T-X is going to only be --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: We're buying 350 aircraft to replace the T-38 with the T-X.

Media: Okay. But like you were saying, it could, what the experience you have with T-X [inaudible]. Whatever [inaudible].

Lt. Gen. Roberson: If pilot training changes. Right now we have what's called Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training which is what I just described to you. The other concept is Generalized Pilot Training. So this is kind of back to the future. This is the way we used to do it. So in that concept we would fly the T-6 and then the T-X, whatever that is. So whoever goes through, regardless, those are the two planes. It's like what we used to do with the T-37 and the T-38.

When I went through pilot training we all flew the T-37, we all flew the T-38. So if we go to a different concept for pilot training, then we would have to talk about how we would best make that happen.

So all of the aircraft would be potentially affected by a change in pilot training concept.

Media: I was going to change subjects.

You mentioned the RPA in the beginning and on the plus-up to 384. Where does that stand now and what's the time line on that?

Also one thing I haven't heard much talked about is now that enlisted Airmen will be able to fly the Global Hawk, what is, have you thought about the training process for that? How will that work?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Let me address both of those.

We are on track to meet our requirement for 384 RPA pilots. We just increased, we doubled our RPA training class from 12 to 24 per class. It just happened. The very first class of that just started, so we will be able to now keep that sustained increase of RPA pilots from now on. That's how we're, we're literally doubling the number that we have in each class.

We are on track, we're executing as we speak, and we fully expect to meet the requirement of 384 by the end of FY16 so that all of FY17 produces 384, which is what we were asked to do.

Voice: What we're tagged right now to accomplish is 290 graduates this year, but we'll build up to, what the General was saying, is to produce 384 in FY17. So the system is in place. But because we got a late start on doubling the classes, well, not a late start. But because this is in place now.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: This is the plan. This was planned for FY16, for us to meet the 384 by the start of FY17. October 1st.

Media: And on the Global Hawk training, how are you building that?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: On that piece right now we've got lots of folks that are looking at this and preparing and planning. But right now we don't plan on changing our training program. So we're going to send them through the same training program from AETC's perspective that we send all of our RPA pilots. So there will be no difference between the training that they get and the training that we're giving to everybody else right now.

Media: So instead of coming from OCS or coming straight out of the Academy, they're going to be coming straight from BMT and into Global Hawk pilot training?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: No. Initially we'll probably go with more senior enlisted members. So these will probably be sergeants who have been exposed and are a little more mature for the first class. But eventually they'll fit into the pipeline just like everybody else.

Media: Are you looking at certain specialty codes? Or just looking across the service?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Across right now. Obviously there are enlisted folks who have been exposed to the RPA world and understand kind of what's going on and how we do things, so they would have a little bit of an advantage over somebody who's coming in completely cold to the community.

Media: Like maybe sensor operators --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Well, sensor operators are already trained and they're doing that mission. So this would be to train new folks to become Global Hawk RPA pilots.

Media: -- that would be like one pipeline you'd really look at because they've been in that world before. I mean I know operating Global Hawk is totally different than sitting in the --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: It is, but we've already spent the money to train them, if you will, so we're looking at bringing in other folks right now. Eventually, you know, some of these sensor operators may be volunteering to go become a Global Hawk pilot, in which case their application would go in just like everybody else's that's going to be reviewed for this.

Media: Okay.

Are there any other critical skills that you're really looking at that are getting, the Air Force is saying we want to plus up training for these areas?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Generically or are you still talking RPAs

Media: Generically.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Okay, yes. Maintainers.

So one of the efforts that AETC has taken on in a big way is we are ramping up, just bringing in more people into the Air Force this year than last year, and that ramp-up in people is mostly targeting maintainers, security forces, those areas where we are short and we need more maintainers.

I'll use what's happened because of the A-10. We planned on divesting the A-10. We've been told you're not going to be able to. So those maintainers that were going to move from A-10 maintenance over to F-35 maintenance, we are not able to do that. So now we have to plus up you know, make up the difference. Because we're still flying the A-10 and yet we're still fielding the F-35. So we have to ramp up our numbers and we have to train the right people to fill the gaps in those areas.

Media: In terms of, there's not very much of a concern for reaching IOC for the F-35, but FOC is a big concern of having enough people. Is there a number, how many maintainers and pilots really need to be trained to reach that--?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: I'm sure there is. That's ACC, that's Air Combat Command. That's the operational side.

Media: Are they giving any input of how many they'd like to see come through training for that?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: We have our training [prog'd] from now through FOC. We know what those numbers are going to be and we're going to be able to meet that, no problem.

Media: Is there a need on the officer side of any other pilot, you talked about security forces and maintainers from the enlisted side. Is there anything from the officer side looking for more RPA pilots? And any other --

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Yes.

Media: Is Mobility looking for more? Is ACC looking for more bombers, more fighter pilots? Is there a need there?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Those are all programmed. The doubling of the RPA pilots forced us to bring in more OTS officer and ROTC officers and Academy graduates, and even graduates from pilot training. We took 80 pilot training graduates and sent them straight from pilot training to RPAs. So we had to look across the whole enterprise to be able to double the number of RPA pilots we're producing over the next year.

So yes, there have been some identified. RPAs is probably the biggest on the officer side increase. But we still need officer maintainers. We still need officer security force folks. So as we increase the numbers of maintainers we also need more officers to go with them.

Media: When you look at people who are coming out of OTS and ROTC, is there a lot of interest in RPAs? Are people coming in saying that's their first choice?

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Absolutely. Yes. We're starting to see more and more of that too.

Here's an interesting fact. Today there are more RPA pilot positions in our Air Force than any other type of pilot position. So more RPA positions than F-16 pilots, than C-17 pilots.

Now as the F-35 continues to go out and if we get the full build of F-35s for the Air Force, there will be more F-35 pilots. But that tells you where we're going with the RPA community and the importance and significance of it.

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Media: Thanks so much. I really appreciate it.

Lt. Gen. Roberson: Thanks for helping to tell our story.

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