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**Interview with Media**

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**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Welcome everybody. Thank you for your time, obviously. It gives us an opportunity to share the incredible things that are going on in AETC.

I'm going to read some prepared remarks. Maybe some of the data will help you and then we'll open it up for questions following that, but it's our pleasure to be here. A sidekick, you're going to get a much better answer, I promise, with both of us being here to do this session today.

AETC, Air Education and Training Command. We do all the training, the recruiting and the education for the United States Air Force. Kind of a big deal. And air power really does start with AETC. So all of that air power that you see out there, we're the ones who train all of the specialties to make all of that happen.

There's lots of things to cover today. We'll be glad to take your questions. I want to cover a few of them in particular that probably have the highest interest for us at the moment.

We continue a lot of advances in AETC, from recruiting more airmen to expand our Air Force. Big deal. The burgeoning TX advanced pilot training program. The expanded RPA program. And obviously, our undergraduate pilot training that is so important to us as we're continuing to lose more pilots from our Air Force.

So these are busy times, they're exciting times, important times in all of the AETC pieces.

On the TX. The program moves forward. It's getting more and more exciting. The announcements are coming out more routinely. And so I think you're seeing a lot of enthusiasm towards the TX.

What I will tell you is we're open for anybody and everybody. We're looking at every potential option that's out there that can provide and meet the criteria for what we need in our advanced pilot training program.

We're in a good position. We really are. Because there are great teams that are going to be competing for this contract, and

no matter who wins, from our perspective, it's sorely needed for our Air Force and for our pilot training, and I know we're going to get a great product when it's all done.

The Advanced Pilot Training program is focused specifically and only on replacing our T-38s for pilot training and our introduction to fighter fundamentals. So we're talking about replacing 431 T-38s with 350 of our TX aircraft.

It's independent of separate efforts that may be out there, and right now we're on a funding track that has about 628 million over the next five years already programmed into the system.

Our Air Force is committed Initial Operational Capability right now in 2024. So that's pretty far off, as you can see. But it's an important program that we're already going forward on. And Full Operational Capability for this TX is not expected until 2034 right now. So a multi-year program. Very important to us.

Pilot training gaps widen and continue to get greater every single year because we're bringing on more and more fifth generation aircraft with the F-35 coming to us more and more. So T-38, once again, it's just continuing to give us wider gaps on the training that we need to prepare our pilots to fly those fifth generation airplanes. This is really important.

On the RPA side of the house, huge effort over the last year to double the production of our remotely piloted aircraft pilots. And I am very happy to say that we have achieved that. We were tasked that through a tremendous effort from the Secretary of Defense on down to make this happen for our RPA community. So we are now producing 24 RPA pilots with every class that we graduate. That is double what we were doing not long ago.

We have produced over 700 RPA pilots to date, and obviously those RPA pilots are going to be meeting combatant commander requirements worldwide.

All FY16, which we're about to end, and all FY17 quotas are currently filled for our remotely piloted aircraft production.

We have URT graduates that are waiting NQ19 FTU training that will keep our FTU capacity at full speed as well.

RPA training, just so you know, takes about six to seven months and it's done right at Joint Base San Antonio Randolph, and then

it's follows by four to five months where they go to their formal training unit to get ready for combat operations.

The HAF has recently, as you know, the Headquarters Air Force has recently directed an Enlisted Pilot Program, and we are going to do that with the RQ4, Global Hawk, and AETC will provide undergraduate RPA training for the individuals that are chosen for the program. Our first Enlisted RPA Student will be beginning the program next month. So it's here.

The plan right now as we have it is approved for three Enlisted Pilot Initial Classes, what we're calling EPIC, E-P-I-C, four students each. And as mentioned, we're going to start here October, and then we're going to flow the next two sets of classes for 12 students over the months to follow.

Following that beta test, this training class, this initial class, then we'll make any adjustments that we see are necessary before we start the real full-up RPA program for our enlisted force. So that's moving forward as expected.

On the F-35 side of the house, we continue to lead the way, obviously in AETC with training F-35 pilots, and things are going extremely well. We now have partner nation instructors that are with us at Luke Air Force Base in particular, from the Australians and from Italy and we're going to be bringing on instructors from the rest of our seven main partners. So the Netherlands, Norway, Australia, civilians, and the rest of the program is lining up beautifully. We're actually starting to develop our first FMS cases, Foreign Military Sale case training as well.

We've now in the F-35 registered more than 30,000 fleet hours across all variants. A huge milestone. Obviously there are some issues with some of our installations that are currently in the news, and we can talk about that in the question and answer if you would like.

But for AETC there are four aircraft specifically that are affected by that and it's not going to be an impact to our pilot production capability at this point.

The first F-35 is probably the biggest news, the first F-35, what we call our Basic Course students, so these are the folks that come straight out of pilot training, they don't have any prior fighter experience, they're going to begin here on December 6<sup>th</sup>

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of this year where we bring the first B Course into the F-35 program. Big milestone as well.

On the Battlefield Airmen training side of the house we stood up our Battlefield Airmen Training Group, very specifically a separate group to focus more precisely on our Battlefield Airmen training. We stood that group up a couple of months ago. Obviously this is a very important piece of our warfighting capability as well. Modernization and recapitalization for our Battlefield Airmen is occurring across five strategic pillars -- infrastructure, curriculum, leadership and advocacy, manpower, and marketing and recruiting. Those are proceeding forward.

We currently have eight training locations that are kind of disbursed all over the U.S.. We're going for a process right now of consolidating those eight training spaces into something less. We don't know exactly how many that's going to be, but the Chief and Secretary have authorized us to go out and look at bases so we can bring all of that training down to a little more precision as part of this Battlefield Airmen Training Group.

Then finally, the last thing that I'd like to just cover is recruiting.

Probably the biggest effort that has happened in AETC over my tenure of the last 14 months is the fact that we were challenged by Congress, by our Defense Department and our Air Force leaders to increase the numbers of airmen, active duty airmen that we have in our Air Force from approximately 310,000 airmen to 317,000 airmen in one year. Now that means we've got to not only replace all the normal attrition that we have and bring in all the people that we have to replace them, but we have to add 7,000 additional recruits into our Air Force. And in today's environment, challenges with recruiting, that's a big deal. But I am very happy to say that by the end of September, i.e. a couple of weeks here, we, the United States Air Force are going to have 317,000 active duty airmen in our Air Force.

So with that, I'll open it up for questions that you may have.

**Media:** General, Phil [inaudible] with the Air Force Times.

With the enlisted pilot training for the Global Hawk does that education look any different than what officers might receive? Are there any considerations you need to make?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Great question.

Right now the going-in plan is that the training we give to the enlisted pilots is going to be exactly the same as what we're giving our officer pilots. So right now there is no difference, and we did that very deliberately. That's part of why we had this EPIC process that we're going through, to send folks in.

So the way that we looked at it is four brand new enlisted enrollees for our RPA training course to fly the Global Hawk. All four of the very first class that begins next month are very experience and even familiar with RPA operations. So these are going to be tech sergeants, master sergeants, who are either already sensor operators for other RPAs or are in some way very familiar with the operations that occur.

By the time we get to the 12<sup>th</sup> EPIC member, we are bringing in somebody who is not familiar, never been exposed to it and comes from a different training area, so that we get the full gamut of somebody who really knows you know, what's going on, all the way to somebody who's never been exposed to it in these EPIC courses. Then we'll take a look at the results using what we already know works, and then we'll decide if we need to make any adjustments.

**Media:** Does this affect recruitment at all? Because on one hand, you have new opportunities opening up for enlisted airmen; on the other hand, some people say they don't want to spend all day in front of a bank of computers.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Does it affect recruiting. Right now, it does not affect recruiting. The reason that it doesn't is because the way that we're approaching this is each enlisted pilot that comes in is going to replace what would have been an officer. So it's not additive, it's replacement for.

So I think in many ways recruitment may go up because enlisted members are going to have an opportunity that they haven't had for a long time. And I think, I'm very confident in our enlisted force that they're going to be able to get through this and become RPA pilots in our Air Force.

So I think the word's going to spread among the enlisted force. I think it's going to be very positive. And I think it's actually going to help with recruitment.

**Media:** John Tirpak, Air Force Magazine.

What is your plan for replacing the T-1 or extending the service life? And do those plans affect TX at all?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** So right now we have a plan that's laid out through not only one FYDP but through the next 20-30 years. We've looked at what the requirements would be to replace the T-1.

As you know, we have our initial pilot training that occurs; then we send folks to undergraduate pilot training where they start in the T-6. And after the T-6, then they divest to either the T-38 or in this case the T-1.

Right now the TX is designed solely to replace the T-38, so the T-1 is going to continue to be a part of our pilot training program.

**Media:** There's no need to SLEP them or buy new airplanes? What's the plan?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** The plan takes that into account, like we do with everything else. So the T-38s continue their SLEP as well. We're replacing wings on those airplanes because, like I said, FOC on this isn't until 2034. So we're going to be flying T-38s for a long time as well.

But the T-1, the management, the program, the plan, the funding, the maintenance, the depot requirements, all of that are laid into our planning as factors for our budget every year.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** And we're doing a T-1 AMP right now, an Avionics Modernization program where we'll take the T-1 avionics into the 2030's. So we have the ability to fly that airplane all the way through our final buy of the TX for the T-38 which will occur in 2034. We'll have an option all the way through the 2030's, and if we opt to replace the T-1 with just a generalized UPT, we can do it at that point which marries up at the end of the production line with the TX for the T-38 replacement. Right now there's an AMP program going on for the T-1.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** And I will tell you, the T-1 will probably be with us even after that because we use the T-1 very specifically and uniquely for our Combat Systems Operator training, our CSO training for the [NAS] that we're doing.

**Media:** General, Steve Losey, Air Force Times.

I have a question about the tragic shooting at the 37<sup>th</sup> that occurred earlier this year.

What's the status of the investigation into that? And there were some questions that were raised about the alleged gunman and how he may or may not have been treated prior to that. Are there any changes that AETC is considering as a result of the shooting and the investigation?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Obviously a tragic incident any time we have one of our airmen, especially a squadron commander, that ends up getting killed as a part of his duty, that's important to us.

We have been engaged since the moment and even before that happened, with issues that relate to Battlefield Airmen. The training is very tough. It's very demanding. There's no doubt about it.

So we immediately did a quick, you know, hey, what do we think happened here and what can we do to try to make sure this doesn't happen again?

So we put into place some measures very quickly. And those, the review of all that is going on with that, continues even today. So this is not a dead issue. This is an issue that we are continuing to look into. I'm still gathering information on exactly how and why. There are some processes that probably could have helped that we are looking at changing to make sure that we can make it easier to get things accomplished next time around for a situation that might be similar.

But I promise you, the due diligence has been and is currently ongoing and it's not finished, and that some changes have been made regarding what happened there.

**Media:** Can you give us an example of what kind of changes have already been made?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Sure. When a member of the Battlefield Airman Training System declares that they want to quit or stop their Battlefield Airman training, there was in place by law a process that everyone had to go through. That process we think could be done a little bit quicker and a little bit more smoothly, so we have put in place some changes to the policies to allow us to get to the issues of taking care of those airmen a little faster than what was in place before.

The other thing too is, we've looked at some of our policies, again, that are in law that we're going to propose changes to that address what happens to an airman in this particular case who was a previous military member and has rights and authorities that go with that and how it influences their process for changing their training programs.

**Media:** When you say there are things that, you know, you wanted to do quicker. Is that removing someone from the base environment?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** That's one piece of it. Or helping them get to another training area. Or accommodating them in some other way. In other words, you know, we have a process, we have a system. It's law based. There's legal pieces to it. And it just takes time.

So what we're trying to do is expedite, help that, make that smoother, a lot faster. Have commander input more directly on what we do with airmen when these kinds of things happen.

**Media:** Thank you, General.

I wanted to talk a little bit about readiness, if I can.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Yes.

**Media:** I understand that AFRL last year they were working on more enhanced LVC and I know that you need more [better] fighters right now. So at what point is the Air Force going to make enhanced LVC a requirement when you're looking for Red Air, and I guess how much longer do you need those physical guys in the cockpit Red Air, like iron in the sky before you can just shift more of it towards computer?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** It's a great question. Most of your question is outside of my lane as the Commander for Training. But what I can tell you is that in Air Education and Training Command, you know, Red Air training is important at our FTUs for our F-35s, for our F-15s, et cetera. So the ability to use live virtual constructive training methods are something we are very interested in and is one of our primary emphasis areas, as you can tell, with the TX as it's coming along. That's going to help us get to a new level of training that we haven't been able to get to before, and we're going to continue to incorporate live virtual constructive into our programs.



**Brig. Gen. Croft:** I'll just add a few things.

So live you understand. Constructive is just simulator. Virtual is a human being flying a simulator. There is a certain need for that. It's very hard to simulate the actual human being and that's why that's very valuable for us.

The TX with our connectivity between the aircraft and the simulator, will allow us to do things like a virtual wingman where there's actually somebody in the simulator flying wingman to a real airplane. It also allows us to do things where we have another adversary in a simulator, but it's a human being flying the simulator against the TX.

Those things can also be done in the future for the F-35 or F-22, and that allows us to increase the complexity of a lot of our scenarios which can't be repeated sometimes with the limitations of our range airspace throughout the U.S.. Some of the airspace required to fly those fifth generation airplanes just physically exceeds what we have in our range airspace right now. It's never getting any bigger. They generally stay the same or get smaller.

So it increases our capabilities to train at the high end; it increases our ability to save money so we don't have to fly all of our aircraft all of the time. There's a good mix there that requires us to have connectivity, overcome some security concerns obviously, and the ability to put some things that are done live into the simulator environment. We're --

**Media:** How --

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** -- the TX in particular for AETC.

**Media:** How big of a concern is that as far as like hacking into the system?

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** So all of our systems have to be net-ready, which actually prevents us from being hacked. It also allows us to defend whatever network it is that we're using for that simulator system. So that's part of a key requirement when you do have a networked system, that we meet those specific requirements to prevent hacking into a system.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** It's part of the military specifications.

**Media:** [Inaudible], with Inside the Air Force.

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I caught a little bit of discussion about where there's an ongoing [inaudible]. I'm not real familiar with it and I wondered if you could speak to kind of what the focus is of that, and then maybe the time line for completing that. And then also the lessons learned.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** I hate to lead with this comment again, but most of that's outside of Air Education and Training, outside of my portfolio.

But our training and range space is critically important in AETC specifically. So enterprise wise we are doing a study to make sure that we've got the training space to practice, and in particular AETC needs to make sure we've got what we need to.

We are always concerned about, you know, what we're calling air encroachment, that our training spaces remain viable for us for pilot training, for also advanced training in FTUs.

So we are constantly working with local communities and preserving what we have. We have some tremendous training air space. I'll use Luke Air Force Base out in Arizona as one example. We've got to preserve that training space given what we're trying to do with the F-35s, one example of where this is critically important to us.

So we're part of that. AETC is a subset of the total enterprise. And I don't have a time frame of when that's supposed to be done.

**Media:** One quick question.

On the --

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Somebody new that hasn't had a chance before we come back? Anybody else?

**Media:** Back on the enlisted RPA program. I wonder since you opened up that program to all AFSCs, are you starting to see certain communities contribute more interest than others? I know it's early days still.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Yeah.

**Media:** And then secondarily, as part of your effort within this initial tranche of airmen, is one of the things that you're going to look at you know, which communities seem to do better versus others?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** To answer your first question, no. We haven't seen a trend or anything like that yet. It's still so early that we really have no feel for that.

I know there is generic excitement across the Air Force from the enlisted force about the opportunity this presents, so they're following it very closely and we're going to eventually get to where this will be open to anybody, as you mentioned.

The second part of your question, to be honest, there is nothing that we have seen to date that's going to limit one AFSC out of this process. But that's part of the reason we're doing these EPIC classes, is to make sure we understand if there are some constraints or issues that we're able to overcome them or we start looking at how we would make sure we've got the right person for the job.

**Media:** And then can I just clarify your comment on growing the Air Force. That 7,000, were those all net accessions? Or was some of that reenlistments?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** It's a combination of reenlistments to keep our Air Force where they're at, but it's also a big part of new accessions. So as any airman retires or separates from the Air Force, basically we have to replace that airman. So not only did we have to replace all the airmen that were leaving, but we had to add additionally to what was 310,000 another huge amount to get us up to 317,000.

So that takes all of this into account. This is retirement. We have models that predict reenlistment. We have models that predict separations and retirements. And we use those models to predict how many we're going to need as we go through the year.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** If I could specifically just add, our accessions, active duty accessions went from last year 24,000 and change to 31,200. So that's 7,000 increase for active duty, brand new accessions. You're going to see that number --

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** We had to bring in more than 31,000 new airmen into our Air Force this last year. And you guys know this, but literally, only 25 percent of the American youth population even qualifies to go into the military. Only 25 percent. So we're starting at 25 percent of the population and everybody, a lot of people are looking for those same 25 percent. So it's very competitive. It's a tremendous effort that our

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recruiters and our basic military training and our technical training folks were able to accomplish to bring in that extra 7,000 this year.

**Media:** [Inaudible], Inside the Air Force.

Going back to the Global Hawk again. Are there any pieces of Global Hawk training that you're going to be watching in particular to see if they're working? You said you're going to keep what's already going.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Yes.

**Media:** Is there any particular time line for [redoing] that training?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** We're going to be looking literally at all of it. So it's the exact same program that's already in place. We're not changing that variable at all. And then we're going to bring in folks who are highly kind of propensed to RPAs because they're already part of the community or they know it very well, all the way to somebody who has no clue about the RPA community, to see how each of them do.

Then we have three classes of those, four airmen at a class. The first class starts next month. And at the end of those three classes, what we call EPIC classes, then we'll do an assessment of what we saw and whether changes need to be made.

**Media:** I wanted to ask [inaudible]. As [inaudible], can you talk about tanker training and some of the changes that are [inaudible]?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** KC-46 obviously a huge program for the United States Air Force, and we're going really happy to get going on this. As you know, we just got permission to buy the first couple of lots of airplanes and we have finished, as of August, just a few, you know, a little while ago, five full-up facility construction projects that had to be in place for us to get the training going. And so we are in the process now of finishing the facilities. We're working on our instructor cadre. And we're working on the instruction program itself. So developing what's going to be happening.

And we have a little bit of time because the first airplane's not going to get here until about August of next year. But based on what we're expecting, we think it's going to start flowing fast.

So once the first one gets here, we're going to see a lot of planes coming off the line. So we're using this very valuable time to make sure we're ready, growing and postured to be able to train to the KC-46.

There are some differences and we're already postured to be able to address those differences. I would say that the forecast for our ability to very accurately train to what is needed is great. There's no question we're going to be able to bring the new instructors on and start the initial training when the KC-46's start arriving at Altus.

**Media:** [Inaudible]?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** It's a different cockpit. It's a much more modern cockpit. And it is a different way of refueling.

So what this airplane brings that's so awesome is a couple of things. It brings dual capability for refueling. So a boom like we're traditionally used to with F-16s or F-15s. But it also has drogue capability.

So we're going to be able to refuel our Navy partners in the F-18. We're going to be able to refuel our coalition partners that are flying other types of airplanes that use a drogue as well, with one airplane.

If you're familiar with how we do air refueling now, in the KC-135 and the KC-10, the boom operator literally lays down in the back of the airplane and has a view of what's going on. He kind of flies the boom into the awaiting airplane.

The boom operator in the KC-46 is going to be sitting up front in the cockpit area with the pilot and copilot. So he's going to be operating this boom or drogue system from a set of instrumentation that's sitting in front of him in the cockpit area. He won't even see the airplane.

But because of the cameras and systems and sensors and all that kind of stuff, we're actually going to be able to refuel even more accurately than we did before.

The other thing that the airplane brings is additional capability with cargo lift, and with integrating into our command and control structure in a way that the KC-135 was not able to do.

So more modern avionics, more modern way of integrating with other systems that are out there, and having it be a part of our sensor system that exists out in the battlespace. It's significantly different.

**Media:** Can I follow up on that same topic?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Okay

**Media:** How did the delay in delivery of the first aircraft impact your training plan? I imagine that would maybe give you a little bit more time, but were there also any negative impacts to that?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** I would say, you know, I'd rather have this problem than the other problem, which we were a little bit concerned about. But this has given us some extra time to really put in place and make sure we're spot on and ready to go. So we're going to be ready to go when that first airplane --

We're already training. We're working with Boeing who's the contractor providing the airplane. We're doing the upgrades for our instructors right now in all of those positions. And we're going to start, you know, putting in place the syllabus, all the things that would have had to have been done. We just have a little bit more time to do it. So it's really, if you're going to have a problem like this, that's the easier one to overcome.

**Media:** Is there like a negative [inaudible] to this?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Obviously we want to field the KC-46 as soon as we could. So the negative is, in terms of training really, no.

**Media:** Can I just follow up quickly on, you mentioned briefly the T-38 re-winging. And I was wondering, is that something, I know there's a [source] of thought noted to that recently. Is that something that's happening as a result of the trainer moving back a little bit? And could you give us like a little bit of information about maybe how much that contract could be [inaudible], and if that maybe gives the Air Force more wiggle room in terms of if it needs to push back TX more because of budget reasons?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** A couple of things, then I'll let General Croft add in here as well.

The plan for the TX has been in the works for a long time. I mean this is not a new thing. And we're not going IOC until 2024.

So because of that, we've already had to plan and program and budget the viability of the T-38, and we are doing that. So we're continuing to SLEP the T-38 and we're continuing to update the avionics in the T-38. And we will have to use that airplane literally until the 2030's, until all of them are replaced by the TX.

So we have to maintain the viability of it. I don't have the actual dollar amount of what is in the budget for a T-38 SLEP, but we can get that to you. Because it's already kind of programmed and set.

Now I probably can't tell you what it's going to be until 2034, but I can tell you what we have planned in our budget right now for sure.

And then the bottom line is, the TX is on the schedule that it is on for multiple reasons. But we have to fit all of these programs into our limited budget in the United States Air Force.

So we continue to field F-35s. We're working on the KC-46. We're working on the B-21 now. We're recapitalizing JSTARS. I mean you could just go down the list of all the things that we've got to continue to provide that are vitally important to air power for our country. And you can see why we've had to fit in the TX the way that we have through the budget program.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** The T-38 re-winging is a part of the normal maintenance of the aircraft and the service life extension that we just did.

As the TX, the Final Operational Capability got slipped from 2032 to 2034, that happened due to budgetary reasons, we will have to do what's called a Pacer Classic 3. It's a third SLEP program for the T-38 that's ongoing right now. We will have to do that for an additional number of aircraft. I don't have the exact number, but it's around 24 airplanes. That requires us to SLEP the airplane for two more additional years.

The other one is that the FOC for the TX scheduled for 2034 is based on the expected cost. We don't have the final cost of the program yet because we haven't bought the airplane. Once we buy the airplane, if we can buy inside the budget we have right now

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more aircraft more quickly, then we won't have to SLEP the T-38 any farther.

Again, that's an unknown. But right now based on our estimates we're going to 2034 which requires a little bit more Pacer Classic 3 for the T-38 fleet to get to that age.

**Media:** So this re-winging that was put out recently, that's just part of the SLEP that you guys had planned?

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** Right. So the program office and the SPO up at Wright-Patterson does a continuous analysis of the fatigue on the T-38. And as things start to wear out more quickly or faster than we thought, or just as the aircraft ages, there are certain parts you just have to replace them. Wings is one of those.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** And the Pacer Classic is our attempt with the T-38 specifically, and it's called Pacer Classic 3 now because we're on the third iteration of re-winging those T-38s that have been specified.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** So this is the third SLEP of an aircraft that we never expected to SLEP.

**Media:** Can I ask, again on TX.

I know that the Air Force has an incentive to have refueling capability, but you personally, how much do you put an emphasis on refueling for the TX?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Sure. So the TX, one of the basic requirements for it is that we have air refueling training capability in the simulator for sure. And then above threshold as an objective level, we've said hey, if you can do it not only in the simulator but you can do it in the airplane, then we'll take into account that capability.

So it's important to expose our student pilots to the experience of pilot training. Right now all of that training has to be done in an F-16, in an F-15, in an F-35 which, as you know, cost per flying hour wise is a much more expensive way to do it than to do it in an airplane that's much cheaper.

So the intent is hey, we value and we need to be able to train to a basic level of air-to-air refueling. We're willing to do it in the simulator if the fidelity is good enough. But if you can put



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it on the airplane, we will give you credit, if you will, for having that on the airplane as well.

**Media:** Do you give more credit if it's already on the airplane than you do if it's a modular system that fits on the airplane later?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** No. It's the same.

**Media:** And real quick, separately.

The F-35, there was a [flashing] problem with the tubes. I think a few of those were grounded at Luke --

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Right.

**Media:** -- which were training. How has that impacted --

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** We had four aircraft that were affected by this, and the team, the Air Force, is working through exactly how we're going to get through this. In fact they're working as we speak to figure out how we're going to go forward.

Those four aircraft are not going to be an impact to our training based on where we're at right now in the training program. And as long as we can get those repaired, you know, within a reasonable amount of time, they shouldn't impact our training.

**Media:** What's the time line?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** We're hoping that by the end of the year we'll have something that's in place for these four airplanes.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** Can I just add one thing on the TX?

The air refueling capability threshold level is in the simulator and also the aircraft's plumbing has to be in place so that the aircraft can be modified easily in the future. That's the threshold level.

The objective level is you can actually do it in the airplane.

**Media:** [Inaudible] [Military.com] really quick.

You had mentioned that it's actually quite expensive to get airmen in the cockpit for F-15s and F-16s and the TX is a ways away. And the fighter pilot shortage is ongoing right now.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Yes.

**Media:** So what is the process for AETC to streamline airmen to get more airmen into the cockpit and flying them [now]?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** So we're hoping long range, we think the TX is going to bring capabilities that will allow us to probably shorten undergraduate pilot training. So a shorter pilot training program means we're going to be able to get pilots to the field a little bit quicker.

That remains, you know, the details exactly of how much shorter, that's going to be decided once we go on contract and we know exactly what we're going to get.

In the meantime, in the short order, the two squadrons of F-16s that we're transitioning at Hill to the F-35, those F-16s were going to be farmed out to the total force. So some to the Reserves, some to the Guard, and then out to the field. Those two F-16 squadrons have now been designated to come to AETC. So we're going to plus-up the number of fighter pilots that we can produce using those F-16s as soon as we can get them on line.

**Media:** The consolidation of training bases you talked about before. Can you give us some idea of the time line? And are they talking about tech schools or pilot training bases? Or what?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** This is specifically for Battlefield Airmen training. It's part of the Battlefield Airmen Group.

Right now there are eight locations that we do training for this. We do parachute jump training with the Army. We do water training with the Navy. We do you know, a bunch of different varieties of our training in different locations.

What we're trying to do is consolidate all of those different training places into something that's more reasonable like three, maybe four locations is what we're hoping for.

That will allow us to get the synergies of that training together more, and reduce some of our overhead, infrastructure, et cetera, that we have in place now. But that's specifically just for the Battlefield Airmen.

**Media:** And by when?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** So we are hoping to, the analysis is already out. The Secretary and the Chief have already agreed to the criteria for these bases to be looked at. And some of that includes environmental analysis and if you're familiar with it, you never know for sure how long that environmental analysis is going to take or go.

So I can't give you an exact date of when this is all going to be done, but it is ongoing and it's important for us to get done.

**Media:** Can I follow up on the Battlefield Airmen thing?

Can you tell us in a little bit more detail, I know that this was done to streamline, to increase the efficiencies, to make all this happen?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** Yes.

**Media:** Aside from you know, the fewer locations, can you give us any more details on how this new training group is going to streamline how these airmen are trained?

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** What we're trying to do is consolidate to about three or four places. With that is going to come probably some infrastructure requirements.

Right now we do not have an adequate pool, aquatic facility, to train, for instance, our para-rescuemen. We're doing it because we're borrowing and we're using existing systems. But when we consolidate to the three or four, we're going to be able to hopefully build a new aquatic system that's part of those three or four base and allow us to do the training in a way that prevents breaks in training.

Every time we have to send the Battlefield Airmen to a different location, that's a week we lose, or a few days that we lose in training. And not only that, we're paying them TDY to do that travel.

So it's less expensive, it's going to take less time. It's more effective and efficient, and we're confident that it's going to improve the quality overall of the training that we're able to do.

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** I have one point on a question earlier.

It's a multi-tiered effort. So in the beginning we're increasing pilot training production to 1375 pilots a year. We're on that ramp right now. That's about a 15 to 20 percent increase.

We're also increasing the number of pilots we put to the T-38 track which allows us to make them fighter pilots, or in the future, pull them back into the fighter.

And the other one is, at fighter formal training units, we're going to increase the percentage of fighter pilot production right away 10 to 20 percent, depending on what those units are able to do and start producing more fighter pilots across the board. Then you're going to absorb more into the fighter pilot pipeline.

So in addition to the F-15s that we just mentioned, that's the other ongoing efforts, and that's an effort to try and ramp up that production to address all those issues.

**Media:** And the time line for that?

**Brig. Gen. Croft:** It's happening. So the 10 to 20 percent's happening right now. The UPT ramp up is happening right now. The T-38 transition is happening right now. It's just going to scale up over time.

**Lt. Gen. Roberson:** And you know training. A pipeline like that, I mean we could start today and literally it takes two years until we've got a product that's out there doing the mission. So these are all efforts to maximize the production with existing resources and capabilities with the long term look being how do we bring in more additional resources to plus all this up and make it bigger. We just need to increase the pipes that we have out there.

I appreciate your time. There is so much going on in AETC it's unbelievable. We are just honored to be there, obviously.

The requirement for air power continues to be a basic requirement for how our country fights. And air power starts in AETC and it's focused on our people.

All these equipment and pieces, that's all great, but we've got to continue to really focus on our people as we're doing all of this, and we stay focused on them.

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So thanks for telling our story. There's a lot going on out there. And you'll be able to see more through the rest of this AFA Convention for sure. Appreciate all your time.

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