

2015 Air and Space Conference**Media Roundtable with Lt. General Darryl Roberson
Air Education and Training Command****September 15, 2015**

COLONEL MCKENNA: We are going to go ahead and get started because we only have 30 minutes and I want to make sure the General gets as much time as possible with all of you. It's great to see you all again. I'm Sean McKenna, Public Affairs Director at AETC, and what a delight it is to interact with all of you in person as opposed to over the phone. My offshoot Jose Davis, who a lot of you have talked to, this is your first chance to meet him, and he is going to be taking any follow up questions, fielding any we are not able to answer and get you answers back here as soon as we can. But without further ado I wanted to introduce our new commander, Lieutenant General Darryl Roberson, who's been in place now for two months and he'll open with some comments and then we will use the rest of the time for question and answer. If you would, please introduce yourself and ask the question -- one follow-up and then we'll go around the room and get in as many as we can in the 30 minutes we're allotted. Okay? So with that, General Roberson.

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GENERAL ROBERSON: Yeah, good morning. Thanks for your time. I appreciate obviously the opportunity to be able to talk to you about the great things happening in AETC, recruiting, training and educating that we do on a daily basis to deliver America's airmen and the airpower that goes with it. As you all know, the theme at this year's AFA Conference is Reinventing the Aerospace Nation. This couldn't be more pertinent to us in Air Education and Training Command because the way that I look at it -- airpower starts here in AETC. This is the First Command and so it all begins right here. So when we talk about reinventing anything with regard to America's Air Force, that conversation will include what AETC is doing to product the very best airmen capable of delivering what's expected -- unparalleled air power at a moment's notice. Innovative airmen power the Air Force and their development starts the day they enter the service. In AETC we develop leadership in officers, enlisted and civilian airmen. It's the key to the success of the Air Force in the future just as it has been in the past. The continuum of learning must continue throughout an airmen's entire career, so that's something we're working diligently on. And rest assured that AETC will continue

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

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to invest in developing leaders for America's Air Force. Professionalism is at the heart of what we do as an Air Force. The profession of arms is different from other areas. It requires a level of commitment and professionalism that exceeds those expectations in some other areas. The Profession of Arms Center of Excellence -- what we call PACE -- stood up in March of this year and is supported directly by AETC at Joint Base San Antonio and it's essential to helping supervisors and commanders ignite in every airman the fire to excel in a lifetime of service. Moreover we are working hard to develop the technology and force required to successfully fly, flight and win well into the 21st century. The capabilities advantage that the U.S. Air Force has enjoyed over the potential adversaries is closing quickly. Modernization is vital to our Air Force maintaining an advantage and failure is not an option as you all know since it's our duty to protect our country. Several of the Air Forces key modernization priorities making the headlines today -- RPAs, F-35, T-X -- have a foundation in AETC. We are fully committed to providing the robust training required to keep the Air Force out front. By 2016 we plan to have doubled the number of undergraduate RPA training pilots more than ever before and

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we're building to a max capacity which will be sustainable by 2017. We generate superb operators and RPAs to fill the requirements that combatant commanders continue to request. With the F-35, AETC is rigorously retaining maintainers, pilots, but also we're beginning to train our international partners. We have an Aussie that's there now. We are already working on training maintainers from many countries at both Luke and Eglin Air Force Bases. The Air Force remains squarely focused on the F-35 achieving IOC at Hill Air Force Base in the fall of 2016. And arguably AETC's most pressing project -- the T-X trainer -- the Advanced Pilot Training program will eventually replace the venerable but aging T-38. The T-X or the advanced pilot training program will help us close those vital training gaps that we're seeing between fourth generation and fifth generation kind of capabilities. American airmen make us proud each and every day, they are the difference makers. And all they ask is that we provide them the education, training and equipment they need to be the best in the world. We owe that to them and their families. To maintain superior agility in the future, the education and training of airmen must be relevant and responsive. Whether in the air, space or cyberspace reinventing

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the aerospace nation begins in our Air Education and Training Command. Air power starts here. With that I'd like to open it up for your questions.

QUESTIONER: There's been a lot of talk of -- General Gorenc actually started off with us early yesterday morning talking about how Russia has made significant impetus to fight Georgia and is closing or has closed the gap to some of the asymmetric advantages that we enjoy. There needs to be a focus on [inaudible] by getting into that ATA environment and operating there, what is your command doing to support training for the high-end fight, given that the focus along not abandoning [inaudible] but has been on, you know, a permissive air space environment.

GENERAL ROBERSON: So it's a critical issue for the Air Force as a whole. AETC focuses on the initial training. So we're not the ones developing the high-end training requirements for the operational air crew; however, given that it's clear and we're working on this, that virtual constructive and live training is more important now than it ever has been and given the constraints and resources both in money and numbers of aircraft available, the scenarios that we have to train to, we

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in Air Education and Training Command are focused on getting the state of the art capability in virtual and constructive environments so we can, from the beginning, train to a level that's going to allow us to fight in that environment.

QUESTIONER: So folks talked a lot about T-X is a lead in to the virtual environment. Can you lay out the path forward to achieve that because there are so many different definitions of virtual constructive and what is needed. It seems like the Air Force has one voice on this or maybe I was mistaken.

GENERAL ROBERSON: I can only speak to AETC on this. The T-X -- the advanced pilot training program -- one of the three key parameters that we're looking for is the fidelity of our simulation and our ground-based training. And the reason is because of what you just talked about. We're going to emphasize this and we're going to integrate it into a training process that we have never done before. This is part of what we're getting at with the T-X and it's in place to address the issues that General Gorenc is facing and the other Commanders are facing operationally. So what we're going to do is, from the beginning, we've been very open and transparent on this T-X program with industry. To let them know why we need this new

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generation trainer, what those requirements are and to talk to them specifically about what we're trying to achieve. And this open dialogue with industry on this program is different than it has been in the past. What that's hopefully going to allow us to do is to more clearly define the requirements for what we really need because the industry partners are trying to meet our requirements. The more they understand what we are really trying to get at the better they are going to be able to fulfill it. I have to tell you, I'm an old guy, been around for a long time. Thirty two years I've been in this Air Force and the first airplane fighter that I flew was the F-4. One radar sensor on it. That's all it had. It was a stick and throttle kind of airplane. You had to fly that airplane and I've been fortunate to fly the F-15, the F-16 and the F-22. Haven't flown the F-35 yet, but the difference between the F-4 and what you have to be able to do with the F-35 are so different that we have to have this new generation trainer to get at those aspects that we can't get to with the T-38 and the current training program.

QUESTIONER: [Inaudible] with the Defense Daily. I have a general question. I'm wondering what does the Air Force

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706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

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want out of the next generation of simulators, I guess from a generic perspective? With all the technology, evolution and stuff like that what do you guys want?

GENERAL ROBERSON: So big picture wise, generically, what we need from simulation is the ability to replicate in a high enough fidelity that when a pilot is in that environment and he's flying that simulator, he gets so into the mission that he can't really tell that he's not out there flying in the airplane for real. So you are able to replicate visually sensor wise and the dynamics of the environment in a way that replicates real life. And it's hard to do. It really is. But technology and industry today has made such advances that we are able to do things with simulators that we were not able to do in previous times. You know, most simulators before were for practicing emergencies and they were of huge value for that. Today, because of the limited resources, each of our assets is multi-million dollars and we don't have a lot of them, so we can't put up huge packages to try to train to scenarios that we see developing in parts of the world. So we have to be able to replicate that in a simulator and make it real enough that the pilot gets valuable training. And it's not just the pilots.

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It's the maintainers, ground crew. It's everybody. The fidelity of the simulators needs to be able to replicate the environment that our airmen are going to see and that they can train to.

QUESTIONER: Can I ask you to explain what you mean by fidelity? I hear that a lot.

GENERAL ROBERSON: Yeah, so fidelity is one of those words that obviously could mean a lot of different things. But to me fidelity means, when I'm in that simulator, the visual acuity, the presentation, the representation of other aircraft, of the environment. We can simulate weather, we can simulate the runways. We can simulate an environment that we may fly for real. We have to be able to recreate that environment to a level that it's not like a joystick game of the old days that all of us are familiar with. That doesn't get you to the level of training that we have to have. And I tell you, just today and yesterday walking around to visit some of the industry partners that we have working right here on the floor, the level of advancement in this fidelity of the simulators is truly astonishing. It's commercial technology advances that we're trying to adapt to the military.

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QUESTIONER: Okay, thank you.

GENERAL ROBERSON: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Tell me about some of the scenarios that you want to train to that you can actually do better in the simulators than you can actually do in the actual aircraft?

GENERAL ROBERSON: So to be a little bit more specific -- the high end game. So what does this mean? This means that I can take off with my wingman and I can go simulate an environment, wherever it is in the world, and I can replicate the threats that are out there, SA-2s, SA-3s, 8s, 21. Whatever kind of threat you want to replicate from a surface to air missile that could come after to try to kill us or from an air to air perspective. So all of the different airplanes the different countries are flying, I can replicate going against another two ship. So it's two ship versus two ship. Or high end, we are going to replicate lots of surface-to-air missiles and we are going to replicate lots of enemy airplanes and. How does a two ship or a four ship or whatever size package we think we are going to present, how does that engage and fight and win against the scenario that we think we might have to face? And so in practicing by taking off here in a local area, it's

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incredibly hard to replicate that, but through virtual constructive simulation and integration with the live we are able to make it seem like you are in that environment for real.

QUESTIONER: And so for that the simulators are down at Hill Air Force Base with the F-35.

GENERAL ROBERSON: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Have you been down to see those? Have you talked with them about how that's going?

GENERAL ROBERSON: I have not. Hill Air Force Base is out first operational base. IOC for the F-35 is still planned for fall of next year and Hill is going to be the first base and they just got their first two airplanes I think just recently. And so the build-up for operational capability with the F-35 for the Air Force is well under way, but that will happen next year. For AETC, we have Eglin and Luke and we've been using simulators and simulation based training for years already on the F-35. And it's state of the art. I mean, it's really good.

QUESTIONER: Related to setting up Hill, General [inaudible] said a couple weeks ago that he's pretty confident there are not enough maintainers at that base to stand up a [inaudible] squadron, but I've seen the struggle that they

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cobbled together from setting down an F-16 squadron in place of contract help to reach [inaudible]. With the main focus in the IOC is there a similar struggle going on ahead to get enough people standing up for being able to train enough maintainers without [inaudible] by being able to retire the A-10. What's your road map, if they've not trained enough people to stand up for full operational capability.

GENERAL ROBERSON: The full operational capability and even IOC is the operator's side of the house. So General Carlisle, who is going to be following me here with the media, is the ACC Commander and has the operational piece of this. We have in AETC the training piece -- the build-up of this. As you know, maintenance and maintainers and the ability to field the F-35 has been an issue for us for years now and it's part of the reason why we were anticipating retiring the A-10 -- to take those maintainers over to the F-35. So things change. Congress said, "No, you are not going to do that" so we've got to readjust. We're good at that. We're flexible. We plan all the time. We try to anticipate all these things as best we can. We will be able to field the maintainers to be able to continue training in the AETC and to get to IOC by fall of next year.

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QUESTIONER: Are there any changes or anything without impending relief from Congress to retire this. [For people to be able to train that stand alone].

GENERAL ROBERSON: No. We'll be able to do it.

QUESTIONER: Is there a number of how many they need you to train for this?

GENERAL ROBERSON: Yeah, I mean obviously we know we have a certain number that we require to be able to operate the aircraft both in the training environment for AETC as well as IOC at Hill. Right now we are going to be able to meet that requirement.

COLONEL MCKENNA: There are already over 700 maintainers trained in the F-35. So we've been training this requirement for several years. We're on schedule.

GENERAL ROBERSON: Sir.

QUESTIONER: Bill Kerry [inaudible] International News. Sir, you mentioned that, by next year, you plan to double the number of candidates to a level that will be sustainable by 2017. Can you give us some numbers on that?

GENERAL ROBERSON: Right now we're training the 192 per year and we plan on doubling that, so we're going to go to

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384 by next year. And then we plan on being able to sustain the requirements for RPA pilots and crew. It's not just pilots, but it's the sensor operators as well for the foreseeable future. This is a big deal. I know you know this, but for the Secretary of Defense to allow the Air Force to drop down from 65 caps, down to 60 caps, so that we could populate our RPA Training Squadron -- because what we did when we reduced from 65 to 60, we were able to free up some of those crews who'd been doing this and we were able to move them from the operational world to AETC to become the instructors now to be able to provide this jump in RPA production. None of the combatant commanders of course wanted to go from 65 down to 60 caps. And that's why I say this was a big deal. This was a strategic-level decision by the Secretary of Defense, understanding the long term importance of RPAs and RPA production. So they allowed the Air Force to drop back a little bit, populate our training environment so that we could get to a point where we can sustain it for the future. And that's what we're going to do.

QUESTIONER: Several months ago Secretary James and General Welsh announced a package of incentives that were designed to retain RPA pilots. Has that kicked in and is that

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helping?

GENERAL ROBERSON: You know, again, that's operational guys focus, so it's really not my lane as AETC Commander. We stay focused on training the best RPA crews that we can and we work hard to try to retain them as well.

QUESTIONER: Just one last question. Yesterday during the RPA panel there was mention of PTSD being experienced by MQ-9 pilots. How big is that from your perspective and is there anything that you can work into training on the front end to prepare a pilot for that possibility?

GENERAL ROBERSON: That same scenario applies to any of our operational crews going into combat. So whether it's a B-1 or a fighter or anything, for the Air Force we train to be ready to defend our country. We train to produce professional airmen and we continue to work on that regardless of the platform that you're flying. So yes, there are issues with RPA pilots just like there are issues with other pilots on this. We work hard to make sure that we incorporate the ethics that are involved in all of this, the profession of arms as a whole, this is where PACE [Professional of Arms Center of Excellence] piece comes into play as well, but it's incorporated into all of our

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training programs. It's not specifically unique for the RPA guys.

QUESTIONER: [Inaudible] Recently there was a clarification of the Sustained-G requirement for the T-X. It puts at least one of the company's close to the limits of being competitive. Is this the Air Force's way of culling the field?

GENERAL ROBERSON: No. I can tell you that right off the bat. That's certainly not the case. I've been operational for the last few years, so I haven't been involved in the TX program until now. But this idea of being more inclusive and open with the industry is paying big dividends and I think it's very important for us to be able to get to where we need to be regarding the next generation trainer. I say that because what you see here is an early release of the requirements by 10 months. Compared to normal kinds of programs, you see a dialogue that is constant, ongoing, current and responsive to both industry and to us regarding the T-X program. I was fortunate enough just a week and a half ago to have what we call Industry Immersion Day at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio where all of the potential vendors thinking about this program were able to come in and brief their concept of what they are trying

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to do and we were able to talk about some of these things. Sustained-G is one of the three most important key performance parameters that we have listed. So that tells you that it's not a culling of the field. This is not something we're trying to do uniquely. This demonstrates the importance of that kind of capability to fifth generation training. And so the fact that we just recently released answers to a few more questions and it clarified from our perspective what we are looking for to industry, I'm hoping makes it easier for all of the companies to understand what we are trying to do. Then when it comes time to be able to compete to make sure all of those requirements are met.

QUESTIONER: Can I just follow up with allowing the enlisted folks to fly the RPAs and Predators -- also there is going to be what's called government owned contractor operated CAPs that are being stood up, so you've got to have contractors like operational missions that means that they broadcast your good stewardship out at AETC to get behind the controls at least -- I know [inaudible] but what are your thoughts on those two things?

GENERAL ROBERSON: Well, again both of those are

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operationally focused, that's not my job right now. From the training perspective, we are going to meet the requirements to make sure we have qualified RPA pilots for our nation and for our combatant commanders. And so the training requirement that goes into that, we review routinely. In AETC, we will be the keepers of training RPA pilots.

MR. LOSEY: Steve Losey with the Air Force Times. One thing with the Recruiting Service response sent to us last week, in it you mentioned the scout development model that is trying to improve recruitment of special operations and combat support areas. Which you said you're hoping to help them help with the attrition rates. Can you give us a few more details on how this program might work? How it might improve recruitment and attrition?

GENERAL ROBERSON: So obviously the premise and the reason we're focusing on this is because we continue to see high washout rates of folks that go into our program and don't make it through. We are attempting to address in all parts of this equation to get these special operations guys out into the field to be able to do the mission -- how we can improve on that. Obviously, a key part of that is from the very beginning. Who

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are we recruiting to potentially go into those kind of jobs? So what we are doing is we are focusing on that, so we can target as best we can those folks who have the highest potential for success. So how are we going to do that? I'll tell you right off the bat, we are going to the Navy to look at how they recruit SEALs. We are going to the Army to look at how they recruit their special-forces guys. What do they do? So that we know and can understand how they are going about that. Now, that puts us into a little bit of a problem because we are all going to be competing for the same folks and we only have so many to work with, but that's a starting point for us and what we're trying to do is use metrics and analysis and information to figure out how to recruit, in a very focused way, those people who are going to show the highest potential for success in those areas. There's lots to follow, but that's the intent of what we're trying to get at.

QUESTIONER: Do you know when we might see this?

GENERAL ROBERSON: We're already working on it.

MS. GRIECO: Leigh Grieco, Inside the Air Force. I wanted to ask, do you expect the Air Force will rely more on civilian and not on the officer RPA pilots in the future?

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GENERAL ROBERSON: We are training right now the requirements that are levied on us and they are all officers for the pilot positions and there's been no indication of that changing for AETC. So we are not preparing or changing or adapting our pilot instruction in AETC for any other option.

MS. GRIECO: Are there any -- what are the barriers to that? Why is there hesitation from the Air Force?

GENERAL ROBERSON: I wouldn't call it hesitation. I would just say that pilots in the Air Force are officers and, until that policy gets changed, we in AETC will continue to plan on training those officers.

MS. GRIECO: And I wanted to ask quickly about additional support for the aggressor training. Is the service going to continue to increase its contractor support?

GENERAL ROBERSON: Aggressor training is not part of my portfolio in the AETC. General Carlisle is coming next and he's ACC Commander and that's part of what he is trying to get at for training the operational crews.

COLONEL MCKENNA: Ladies and gentlemen, that's all the time we have. Please get with me for any additional questions you might have. General Roberson, final comments?

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GENERAL ROBERSON: Look everybody, I appreciate being able to spend a little bit of time with you. There are so many things going on in AETC. We are working so hard to take America's best off the street and turn them into airmen who are going to protect our country for the future. It's such a tremendous responsibility to do that -- taking America's treasure and forging them into airmen who are going to carry that air power for our country. I take that as a huge responsibility. AETC is a phenomenal command. Air power starts in AETC and we are going to continue to work hard every day to make sure that we do it the best that we can. So, thank you all.

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190