

Force quality begins with Air Training Command.

The Foundation

BY LT. GEN. ROBERT C. OAKS

THE Air Force has taken enormous strides during the past decade, and Air Training Command has been in the forefront—enhancing readiness through top-quality, highly trained people. As the Air Force moves toward the new challenges of the twenty-first century, Air Training Command continues to provide the foundation for its success.

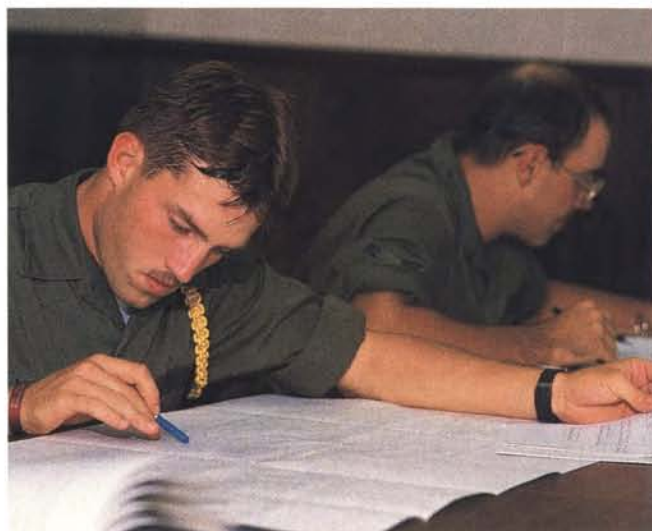
A decade ago, all indicators pointed toward a less capable Air Force—declining defense budgets, aging weapon systems, and dwindling numbers of young people to man the force. All services missed their recruiting goals in 1979, and pilot retention was alarmingly low. New problems were constantly arising to challenge the quality and capability of America's armed forces.

Now, just ten years later, our Air Force is better prepared than ever to carry out its vital mission.

The turnaround occurred because of a renewed commitment by the American people to a strong defense and the hard work and innovation of blue-suiters from the flight lines to the Pentagon. The cornerstone of this recovery is also the cornerstone of today's Air Force readiness: high-quality people.

ATC is proud of its contributions to the Air Force's success, but it is not resting on its laurels. By continuing a tradition of superb recruiting, ATC continues to attract the nation's best young people. By constantly refining its training techniques, ATC continues to provide the world's best aerospace training. On this solid foundation will be built the Air Force of our future.

ATC today is a command of change and challenge. From its basic structure to its teaching methods, the entire command is permeated by change.



At Sheppard AFB, Tex., enlisted men study for an ATC course. Sheppard Technical Training Center conducts courses in specialties from aircraft maintenance to biomedical sciences.

— Photo by Paul Kennedy



—USAF photo by CMSgt. Don Sutherland

One of the most noticeable changes is the plan to close two of ATC's thirteen installations. The President's Commission on Base Realignments and Closures marked Chanute AFB, Ill., and Mather AFB, Calif., for closure, with their missions to be relocated. Planning is under way to relocate Chanute's technical training, one sixth of the total Air Force load, to ATC's other technical training centers and to relocate Mather's navigator-training mission to Beale AFB, Calif. By early 1990, the Command will begin the systematic transfer of training courses, which will ensure that the last graduates at Chanute and Mather receive the same high-quality training provided to their predecessors.

Another change is the diminished number of airmen carrying out maintenance on ATC flight lines. Over the past year, aircraft maintenance activities at Reese AFB, Tex., Laughlin AFB, Tex., and Williams AFB, Ariz., have begun conversion to either contract or in-house civilian maintenance, joining the previously contracted flight lines of Sheppard AFB, Tex., Vance AFB, Okla., and Columbus AFB, Miss. Only one more command base remains to be converted—Mather. That conversion should begin in early 1990.

Change in the Air

The heart of ATC's modernization was the USAF Trainer Master Plan, released in April 1988. In February 1989, the plan was updated with the Department of Defense's 1989 Aircraft Trainer Master Plan. This plan included a report on progress by the Air Force and Navy toward a joint-service acquisition schedule for trainer aircraft and related systems. The core of joint acquisi-

ATC's SLEP and Pacer Classic programs extend the life of its T-37 and T-38s, respectively. Above, T-37 navigator training at Mather AFB, Calif., soon to be relocated to Beale AFB, Calif.; below, a T-38 used for high-performance pilot training.



—USAF photo by SMSgt. Buster Keillum

tion is the joint specification of requirements. Air Force and Navy experts are currently developing documentation for the Primary Aircraft Training System. The goal is to meet both services' near- and long-term needs with maximum opportunities for joint procurement of training systems.

Delivery of the DoD master plan to Congress represented a renewed commitment to Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (SUPT) and to modernization of the trainer aircraft fleet. A major step in converting the plan from paper to hardware occurred in August, when Air Force Systems Command requested proposals from aerospace industries for the Tanker/Transport Training System (TTTS). Source selection is ongoing and is scheduled to be completed in March 1990. Current plans call for the purchase of 211 off-the-shelf business aircraft (modified for Air Force needs), up to fourteen simulators, courseware, and other related training devices. Students are scheduled to begin SUPT in late 1992 at Reese AFB, Tex.

Delivery of the TTTS is critical for two reasons. We need the aircraft in order to begin dual-track SUPT. Equally important, the TTTS will relieve pressure on the aging T-38 fleet by reducing the number of sorties that the 1950s-vintage aircraft must fly. That relief is vital if the T-38s are to continue to serve as an advanced trainer into the twenty-first century.

Even that won't be enough to keep the current trainer fleet flying as long as needed. The T-37 Tweet and the T-38 Talon are undergoing modifications to extend their

lives. This year, Air Force Logistics Command awarded a contract to provide kits for the T-37 Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). The program will replace two fatigue-critical components of the Tweets: the forward wing spar lower cap and the "302" fittings, where the wing attaches to the fuselage. The horizontal stabilizer, the wing center carry-through structure, and the banjo fittings in the tail will be inspected and, if necessary, replaced. With these modifications, along with changes to our inspection program, the T-37's life can be safely extended. SLEP combines with the ongoing Pacer Classic program for the Talon.



ATC recruits the nation's brightest young people and gives them the world's best aerospace training. Above, a recruit takes an electronics laboratory course; left, recruits receive instruction from civilian aerospace experts.

Along with equipment changes, ATC has taken a hard look at how it trains. During 1989, the Command conducted Broad Area Reviews on both flying training and technical training. Experts throughout the Air Force looked at everything from training philosophy to facilities and developed more than 100 initiatives to improve training.

The Diminishing Pool

One of the greatest challenges facing ATC is to recruit top-quality young people, and this challenge grows more demanding each year. Last year, the Air Force delivered 43,000 high-quality enlistees to achieve its recruiting goals. But there is reason for concern. America's labor pool is shrinking, and the competition from schools and industry for America's best and brightest is intense. Increased recruiting goals in 1990 bring a magnified challenge, but it is one that ATC's recruiters—2,555 volunteers—will tackle and, with the support of America's people, achieve.

As the 1990s loom, the nation and the Air Force face a world changing faster than at any time since the end of World War II. ATC, in its current climate of change, is out in front as it restructures to meet the needs—many of which have yet to be determined—of tomorrow's Air Force. ■

Lt. Gen. Robert C. Oaks, USAF, is Commander of Air Training Command.

—Photos by Paul Kennedy

