



“YOUR WINGS ARE WAITING”
United States Air Force Reserve
by Lieutenant Colonel Warren F. Neary, 2017

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Training military aviators to fly, fight, and win has been a foundational skill since the birth of the Air Force on 1 August 1907 as the fledgling Aeronautical Division of the Army. Throughout the following century, pilot training has remained a complex process melding a person and machine into an effective weapon for national defense. Pilots must be responsible, highly motivated and skilled because combat aviation places unique demands on the human body and mind. Prospective pilots undergo mental and physical challenges to ensure only the most qualified graduate to fly some of the most advanced aircraft in the world.

Initially military pilots learned under the instruction of the Wright brothers. During the First World War, the United States established five flying schools growing from just 65 pilots to 1,674 by 11 November 1918. The Air Corps years between 1923 and 1939, saw the intellectual development of Airpower strategy, but pilot training remained remarkably consistent. When World War II broke out in Europe, it was clear that the country needed vastly more combat pilots and opened new flying schools across the country. The numbers grew quickly from 3,393 pilots who earned their wings in 1941 to 86,578 in 1944. Airpower leaders developed a new, scientific assessment program that tried to identify those students best suited for fighter aircraft and those for bomber aircraft so they could begin specialized training in either single-engine or multi-engine aircraft earlier in pilot training. That specialized approach continued until after the Korean War, when it changed to a generalized Undergraduate Pilot Training approach where each student progressed from basic flight in a Cessna T-41 “Mescalero” to advanced training in a jet engine T-37 “Tweet” and the T-38 “Talon” before winning their wings and going on to specialized training in their assigned aircraft. In the mid-1990s, the Air Force went back to a specialized approach graduating about 1,300 new pilots each year. Students began in the T-37 aircraft and were then assigned to either the fighter/bomber track and flew the T-38 aircraft or the tanker/airlift track and flew the T-1, a modified Beech 400 business jet.

With a shortage of active duty pilots, the Air Force Reserve proved again that it was an essential element of the Total Force with many of the experienced pilots who were leaving active duty eagerly signing up to continue serving in the Reserve. After a successful test run at Columbus and Vance Air Force Bases, the Air Force created the Associate Instructor Pilot Program in 1997 under the 340th Flying Training Group at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. The group provides Reserve Instructor Pilots to augment the cadre of active duty instructors. The Reserve instructors bring a wealth of experience as combat pilots. More than 80-percent were active duty pilot instructors who now work in a part-time role while keeping current as full-time civilian airline pilots.

For more than 20 years, Reserve Citizen Airmen, like these from the 5th Flying Training Squadron “Spittin Kittens” at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, have been an essential part of the active duty-reserve training partnership training new pilots and helping them win their wings.

Your future is in the sky and your wings are waiting.

AIR FORCE RESERVE

The Air Force Reserve is a combat-ready force, composed of more than 70,000 Reserve Citizen Airmen, stationed locally at over 60 locations throughout the United States and serving globally for every Combatant Command in air, space and cyberspace.

We are a cost efficient and mission-effective force, providing the nation with operational capability, strategic depth and surge capacity, both overseas and here at home. The Air Force Reserve’s wide-ranging operational capability serves the diverse needs of every Combatant Commander, whose requirements are as varied as the geographic and functional areas they support.

Air Force Reserve Command directly supports the homeland with capabilities, including aerial fire fighting, aerial spray, and weather reconnaissance, better known as the “Hurricane Hunters.” Our relationship with other federal agencies, including the National Weather Service and US Forest Service, demonstrates how federal, military and civilian organizations can work together to support the entire nation.

The majority of our Reservists serve alongside our active duty counterparts in association constructs. Approximately two-thirds of the Air Force’s associations are with the Air Force Reserve. Integrating through associations delivers significant taxpayer value, both in cost savings and improved mission effectiveness, by sharing aircraft, equipment and facilities with the active duty.

Value is also gained from “Airmen for Life” as the Air Force Reserve retains the experience and training cost of a member’s active duty service. As over 75 percent of our Reserve Citizen Airmen serve part-time, this combat-tested experience stays in a highly cost-efficient force, available whenever the nation calls. Further, the nation benefits from the intrinsic value gained by a member’s civilian experience in a variety of career fields, from pilots and nurses to space and cyberspace professionals.

AIR FORCE RESERVE MISSION

Provide Combat-Ready Forces to Fly, Fight and Win.

MISSION SETS

The Air Force Reserve currently performs about 20 percent of the work of the Air Force, including traditional flying missions and other more specialized missions, such as Weather Reconnaissance, Aerial Fire Fighting, Aerial Spray and Personnel Recovery.

WHERE AIR FORCE RESERVISTS ARE CURRENTLY SERVING OR DEPLOYED

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti (Horn of Africa), El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, Guam, Guantanamo Bay, Honduras, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda.



**AIR FORCE
RESERVE**

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