



FACT SHEET

USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-01A

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE EXPLORERS

The United States Air Force Explorers (USAFX) was activated on 1 May 1999 at Sky Harbor International Airport, Phoenix, Arizona. The command is located with the 161st Air Refueling Wing of the United States Air Force Arizona Air National Guard. The unit is the first in CONUS to provide military aircrew training for young men and women ages 14-21.

Mission

The mission of the USAFX is train, develop, and inspire tomorrow's Air Warriors for our Nation's Armed Forces.

Values

The unit strives to maintain: Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do.

Organization

The command is organized using an USAF command level structure as a model with emphasis on military training and leadership development. Cadets fulfill staff billets as well as other unit duties to accomplish mission objectives. Staff officers and NCO's assist them from both the military and civilian ranks. Even though the USAFX is classified as a training unit, the unit also maintains a readiness mobility mission as well to assist civilian authorities in time of natural disaster or national crisis.

Military Education & Core Curriculum

Since the primary mission of the command is military education, emphasis is centered on the concept of providing men and women the environment in which to learn about military careers. All personnel wear USAF style uniforms, with distinctive Explorer insignia to distinguish themselves from AF personnel and instructors. It is an aerospace-oriented military education for officer training development.

USAFX standards for training are established at United States Service Academy levels for discipline, education, leadership and training. Since other youth programs offer different styles of training (AFJROTC, Civil Air Patrol, Sea Cadets and Young Marines), the USAFX model uses the total immersion system that puts the cadet at Induction Day and moves forward toward commissioning and beyond.

The basic core curriculum is at the heart of training. Each unit must train in Professional Military Education (PME) as followed by USAF education. Life Support handles the Air Intelligence and support of the Combat Training operations and exercises. Air Warfare looks at the history and use of airpower through different wars and conflicts. The USAFX Briefing Program trains these young officers in the art of public speaking with annual briefings and training programs. Then a cadet begins Specialty Training where a unit specializes in a military career field such as Airmanship, Combat Rescue or Intelligence.

Admission

Each and every cadet desiring to join the USAFX program must complete the same tasks as if joining the military. Each individual desiring to join the unit as a cadet officer must pass a rigorous screening process very similar to the process used by the American Military Service Academies and USAF ROTC program. Individuals must visit the unit and talk with the Recruiting Officer. A prospective recruit candidate must fill out the appropriate paperwork followed by at least two interviews by officers of the unit. This is normally done at Cadet Candidate Interview Boards.

A Background Check is processed along with the Cadet Recruit References. The Board also conducts scholastic academics review. At this point, the recruit candidate will be reviewed for final selection. If chosen, then the new Officer Candidate will report for duty at the next class processing date for Induction Day for Officer Candidate School. If not selected, then the individual may request a formal review, and try again for the next training period. Each Officer Training Flight class size is around 15-20 candidates.

Officer Candidate School

The program begins with Officer Candidate School for approximately fifteen weeks of training. Teaching fundamental concepts of military organization--drill, ethics, honor, Air Force heritage, physical training, proper uniform wear,--are emphasized during this time period. At the end of the fifteen weeks the candidate is promoted to Cadet Second Lieutenant. This takes place with a Commissioning Ceremony. A few days later, the newly commissioned Lieutenants attend a Graduation Dining-In.

Commissioning and Officer Training

The training continues with officer development, communication skills, organization and mission of the Air Force, military thought, unit level drill and ceremonies. These training areas are developed as the cadet progresses through the program. The training follows the same officer progression as an active duty Air Force officer. Specialized weekend training allows cadets the opportunity to attend leadership development at selected military installations. Officers are also immersed in the Air Force Chief of Staff (CSAF) Reading Program to further their officer development along the same guidelines as their professional counterparts. They also brief through the AFX Briefing Program that is maintained through annual briefings each officer must complete to progress and promote within the unit. PME is considered the cornerstone of continued officer training from Cadet 2LT thru Cadet BG.

Air Intelligence training teaches various threats encountered worldwide by U.S. combat forces. Course of instruction include Threat Air Defense Weapons such as Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAM's), AAA, Self-Propelled Antiaircraft Artillery and more. Threat Aerospace Forces introduces the officer to Friend of Foe exercises, Fighters, Bombers, Helicopters, Special Mission aircraft and Air-to-Air missiles (AAM) for example. Threat Naval Forces shows the use of Aircraft Carriers, Submarines, Cruisers, Frigates and more surface threats. Threat Land Forces focuses on the Tanks, APC's, Anti-Tank weapons, Artillery, MLRS and other threats encountered on the ground. Weapons of Mass Destruction takes an officer into the world of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in use today by enemies of the United States. Students are required to recognize, identify and classify threats of various uses by foreign governments.

Air Warfare allows students to become familiar with the history of various conflicts and how Air Power was a major influence. Areas of study include WW I & II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Iran-Iraq War, Falklands War, Arab-Israeli Wars, Indo-Pakistani Wars, Desert Storm, Cold War and various NATO Operations. Ongoing current operations are also covered with Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF).

Combat Training

Combat survival training is required of all personnel. Individuals learn about survival in different environments such as water, desert, tropical, and arctic climates. Knowledge and understanding of POW incidents in different conflicts allow students to appreciate the military Code of Conduct training. Some of the skills taught during this phase of training include land navigation, Escape and Evasion procedures, combat search and rescue operations, poisonous animal recognition and signaling. Team training concept is taught to show individuals the importance of cooperation and survival behind enemy lines. Exercises are held to allow the students to practice their skills in a simulated combat environment. Water survival training is also practiced as many military aircrews must deploy overseas for deployment.

Combat arms training following the USAF & USA model is mandatory for all officers in the USAFX program. Basic qualification in the Beretta M9 allows personnel to become familiar with military firearms. All officers maintain proficiency with annual recertification to military standards. When available, training and use of the M4 Rifle allows cadets hands on training. Hand to hand combat is also practiced to allow cadets the use of unarmed combat which could be a real threat to them in the future.

Specialty Training

Each specific USAFX Squadron determines the branch of training they will specialize in order to give the most realistic training possible. One unit may have only general military skills, while another unit may train in Aircrew or flying training for example. The unit must decide to train in at least one specialty, but they may also combine or have multiple specialties if they so desire. Under this concept, it allows the unit to become specialized and more professional as the years go on. The core curriculum is taught by most units, it is just the specialty training which sets them apart.

Currently, only 4 specialty areas are offered in the program at two units:

396th Aircrew Training Squadron of the 161ARW, Phoenix AZ (Aircrew, Combat Rescue Officer & Intelligence)

Explorer Crew 156 of the 156AW, San Juan PR (General Military Skills)

Qualification for Admission

Interested in becoming a member of the finest USAF youth training program? The program is open to 14-21 year old young men and women. You must possess good grades and be of good moral character. Prospective Candidates should have a strong interest in: Military Career, Military Aviation, Special Tactics, and desire to enter one of the Military Service Academies or a College ROTC Program. Adults 21 and older may contact us about joining the staff as an instructor, serving on our Parents Committee or in another support capacity within a unit. You may have some valuable skills to assist in our mission as well.

Additional Information

See also USAFX Fact Sheets 35-03A Military Education & Training, 35-10A Airmanship, 35-11A Special Tactics and 35-12A Intelligence Officer. For Unit specific information see Fact Sheets 35-396A 396ATRS, 35-396J 396ATRS Snapshot; and USAFX Web Site @ www.usafexplorers.org.

Point of Contact

United States Air Force Explorers Attn: Executive Officer, 3200 East Old Tower Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85034; (480) 970-8485 - Recruiting Officer info@usafexplorers.org

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