



FACT SHEET

USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-396A

396TH AIRCREW TRAINING SQUADRON

The 396th Aircrew Training Squadron (396th ATRS) was activated on 1 May 1999 at Sky Harbor International Airport, Phoenix, Arizona. The squadron 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 396th Aircrew Training Squadron is train, develop, and inspire tomorrow's Air Warrior's 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 unit is organized using an USAF tactical flying squadron as a model with emphasis on military training and leadership development. Cadets fulfill staff billets as well as other squadron duties to accomplish mission objectives. Staff officers and NCO's assist them from both the military and civilian ranks. Even though the squadron is classified as a training unit, the 396th also maintains a readiness mobility mission as well to assist civilian authorities in time of natural disaster or national crisis.

Military Education and Training

Since the primary mission of the unit 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 with officer training development.

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.

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 USAFX Briefing Program to further their officer development along the same guidelines as their professional counterparts. This program is maintained through annual briefings each officer must complete to progress in the unit.

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. In addition to the survival training, personnel also receive instruction in weapons by personnel in Combat Arms. Exercises are held to allow the students to practice their skills in a simulated combat environment.

Air Intelligence training teaches various threats encountered worldwide by U.S. forces. Course of instruction include Air Defense Weapons, Aerospace Forces, Maritime Forces, Ground Forces and Weapons of Mass Destruction. 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 in that war. Areas of study include WW I & II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War I & II, Iran-Iraq War, Falklands War, Arab-Israeli Wars, Indo-Pakistani Wars, Cold War and various NATO Operations.

Flying Training

Upon completion of Officer Candidate School officer may choose the Pilot Training Track (PTT) or the Navigator Training Track (NTT). Both tracks offer the same basic courses with slight deviations for the Pilot Track. One primary difference is the FAA age requirement of 16 years of age to Solo in the PTT. All personnel undertake the same course of instruction with 70 hours of academic hours in Pre-Flight Indoctrination. Some of the subjects covered include principles of aerodynamics, flight safety, aviation physiology, weather for aircrews, federal aviation regulations and navigation to name a few. As the student aviator progresses, they enter the Primary Phase of training, which concludes with the FAA Written Examination for Private Pilot. Advanced courses of instruction are also available.

Aviators are also taught the USAF methodology of combat flying in various forms under differing stress conditions. The reasoning behind this approach is to expose the students early on to recognize and handle these stressors, which occur during actual military flight training. Early pattern development in this methodology helps the aviator understand their chosen profession. Missions are flown under demanding USAF guidelines.

Actual pilot flying training is performed at an Airfield designated by the unit, at the discretion of the officer and instructor. This part of the training is set up with special rates from a local flight school. The student pilot and the instructor will layout a specific course of flying training for the student. The Operations Section must approve officers before they can begin this phase of training. Navigators remain with the unit for instruction their entire time while in training.

Special Tactics

This course of instruction allows the officer to gain insight into the USAF Pararescue and Combat Controller career fields. As a Pararescue officer, you will be taught about the role, use and employment of these individuals on Combat Search & Rescue missions. The Combat Controller is used to secure airfields, landing zones, and drop zones for use by friendly forces. These two areas are combined in our course of instruction for use as a Cadet Combat Rescue Officer (CCRO). This demanding area exposes the officer into various subjects such as Combat Medic I, II, & III; Scuba I & II; Weapons employment with emphasis on proper handling and use; Night Tactics, Land Navigation I & II; Small Team Tactics; Radio Communications and advanced physical fitness training. This field of instruction is a very demanding pipeline.

During field exercises the CCRO will use their skills in a variety of ways. Whether to secure an enemy airfield behind the lines; rescue a downed aviator from a POW Camp; execute a long range patrol behind the lines to gather intelligence without being compromised or engage enemy forces with minimum numbers in an effort to execute mission parameters. The CCRO must maintain all regular duties in the unit and continue to work through the normal USAFX curriculum for promotion. Whatever the mission, the STO must achieve outstanding accomplishments in the face of overwhelming odds.

History

History of the USAF Explorers and the 396th Aircrew Training Squadron see USAF Explorer Fact Sheet 35-396B.

Qualification for Admission

Interested in becoming a member of the finest USAF youth training program in the Explorer Division? 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 or Civilian Aviation, Special Tactics, Desire to enter one of the Military Service Academies or a College ROTC Program, or a goal of attaining a Private Pilot's License. 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 the unit. You may have some valuable skills to assist in our mission as well.

Nomination

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 the USAF INDOC Lackland AFB, TX. 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. Physical fitness requirements depend on which pipeline a recruit is interested in joining. For the Flying Pipeline, the recruit must pass the Fighter Aircrew Conditioning Test (FACT) while the Special Tactics recruit must pass the Physical Abilities and Stamina Test (PAST). 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 20-30 candidates. Each class varies also with different demographics from throughout the Valley (see USAF Explorer Fact Sheet 35-396D).

Point of Contact

396th Aircrew Training Squadron, Attn: Recruiting Officer, 3200 East Old Tower Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85034; 480.970.8485. Email the Recruiting Officer at info@usafexplorers.org or visit our Web Site @ www.usafexplorers.org.

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