In this new course, lieutenants take a deeper look at the meaning of their service.

To Be an Airman

By Bruce D. Callander
NEWLY commissioned Air Force officers, despite having just completed years of academic and military training, are being sent back to school. This time, their objective is to learn what it means to be “an airman.”

During 1999, more than 1,000 second lieutenants will attend the four-week Aerospace Basic Course under Air University at Maxwell AFB, Ala. The Air Force hopes that, by the Year 2002, it will be able to send all new officers to the school, along with selected civilian employees.

The course, unique in AU’s catalog, is designed to teach the students where they fit into the Air Force and where that service fits in among the nation’s other armed forces. The curriculum is weighted heavily toward USAF’s Core Values and Core Competencies and reinforced with problem-solving exercises, war games, computer simulations, and simulated joint operations.

An obvious question is why new officers, including those coming directly from the Air Force Academy, should need yet another course in being officers.

The answer, said Lt. Col. Douglas R. Lengenfelder, ABC commandant, is that the course is intended as a leveling process to focus officers from various commissioning sources on a common goal. “Even though an individual may get a fair amount of this information in the academy and other officer training courses,” he said, “those teach at the knowledge level. We teach at the comprehension and application levels. So, even if they may have heard the terms, how they are expected to use the information has changed considerably.”

Roots of the Project
The idea of a basic training course for officers had its roots in a series of reports on the state of the force. In 1989, an internal USAF study, titled “A View of the Air Force Today,” found a growing concern and frustration among service members. In 1994, Carl H. Builder, a researcher at RAND, issued another report, titled the Icarus Syndrome, that drew on the earlier study and pinpointed specific causes for the problem.

Builder said that the contributing factors included the air arm’s long infatuation with technology, narrow “occupationalism” of members, and the lack of an overarching service vision.

USAF leaders took both reports seriously, but, at the time, they had even more fundamental problems with which to deal. Gen. Merrill A. McPeak became Chief of Staff in October 1990 and presided over a major restructuring and consolidation of the force. During his tenure, the service began implementing a new philosophy known as “Global Reach, Global Power,” but the main emphasis was on managing the post–Cold War drawdown and preserving the effectiveness of the surviving force.

In October 1994, when Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman became Chief, he shifted the focus to some of the internal problems that had begun to appear. During his tenure, the Air Force emphasized personal accountability for members’ actions, laid down a list of Core Values, and defined Core Competencies (things the Air Force does—or is expected to do—best). Fogleman emphasized a “back to basics” approach.

The 1996 Corona Conference of senior USAF leaders also took a critical look at the force and found a number of shortcomings. One was that young officers lacked an understanding of core values, core competencies, and the importance of teamwork. They were too preoccupied with their own careers, the leaders concluded, and had little appreciation for the role of aerospace power in joint operations.

Needed, the conference agreed, was a training program, similar to the Marine Corps Basic Course, to indoctrinate new officers with the culture of the Air Force.

The following year, Fogleman ordered Air University to set up a single test course to explore the possibilities. Called the Air and Space Basic Course, it ran seven weeks and trained 312 new officers representing all commissioning sources and a variety of Air Force specialty codes.

The results were encouraging, and the Corona Conference of 1998 approved the training as part of the Professional Military Education package for officers.

Its length and name now shortened, the four-week Aerospace Basic Course is scheduled to run two classes this year and train 1,014 students. AU plans to bring in seven classes in 2000, nine in 2001, and enough in 2002 for all newly commissioned officers. Lengenfelder said he expects the current faculty of 24 to roughly double over the same period.

Not unexpectedly, the ABC curriculum is built around the now-familiar core statements. The Core Values—“integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do”—are the subject of a “Little Blue Book,” which the Air Force supplies to members. The Core Competencies—“air and space superiority, global attack, rapid global mobility, precision engagement, information superiority, and agile combat support”—speak more to the attributes the service itself is trying to attain or maintain.

Translating such concepts into academic subject matter is not easy,
Lengenfelder observed. “There is a difference between living Core Values and just reading them,” he said.

**Working Through Scenarios**

To make the point, the course uses a variety of tools, from simulation to role-playing. One example the colonel likes to cite is a digital video disk titled “What Now, Lieutenant?” It presents a number of hypothetical problems and requires the student to work through scenarios to a solution.

Lengenfelder explained, “Let’s assume you pull up a scenario in which a young lieutenant says, ‘I think it’s wrong that my wing commander won’t let me hang glide. It’s my time and my body and I do it on the weekends. This isn’t fair.’

“Then he starts going through a decision matrix where he’s gathering information. He can click on his peers, his boss, his wing commander, and the [judge advocate general]. He keeps learning more information. If he gets to the end of the scenario and doesn’t like the answer, he can back himself out of the decision tree and go down another branch, re-explore, discuss, and work through it again.

“There are no right or wrong answers, but we want them thinking about these questions. In this scenario, the officer finally clicks on the wing commander, who says, ‘We’ve lost three people already to hang gliding. We deploy in another month and I can’t afford to lose another person and I’m ordering my troops not to hang glide.’ So now the lieutenant starts thinking not just how this affects him or her but how it affects the team and the Air Force. We push team really hard in how it affects the team and the Air Force. We push team really hard in this last list includes Builder’s icarus Syndrome and three works by his -

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Lengenfelder went on, “Our final wargame is called Blue Thunder. What they do there is a full joint aerospace operations plan. They have to work through all the phases of planning an actual war, including analysis, picking targets, and making sure that national security strategy is met. And, having planned it, they war-fight their plan in the field.”

**Eye Exercises**

“This is a visual generation,” Lengenfelder said. “If there is a movie out there that has a demonstration of Core Values or Core Competencies, we recommend they watch it. Even though it may not come out and say, ‘This is about integrity first’ or ‘You are going to learn about service before self,’ they’re still learning and dealing with these issues as they watch these movies. We’re trying to get them to think about these tough issues before they, as officers and senior civilians, have to deal with them.”

A third list includes computer wargames normally sold for entertainment. “If there is a commercial off-the-shelf wargame that teaches Core Competencies,” said Lengenfelder, “we recommend they play it. In fact, we use some commercial off-the-shelf software in class to teach several of the Core Competencies.”

Course officials insist they provide a good workout for the students’ minds and allow them to make their early mistakes without paying the penalties of erring in actual combat. Like the movies, the wargames cover both history (“Red Baron 2” and “A Bridge Too Far”) and contemporary combat (“Total Air War” and “M1 Tank Platoon 2”). The student can experience Pickett’s ill-fated charge at Gettysburg, command an armored unit in Desert Storm, or traverse centuries of geopolitical history, from 3000 B.C. to the future launch of colonists to a distant galaxy (“Civili- zation II”).

ABC is more than videos and computer games, however. A substantial part of the curriculum involves developing mock war plans and then applying them in simulated combat. The idea here is to help young officers understand their roles in the Air Force and USAF’s responsibilities in joint-service and international operations.

As Lengenfelder said, “Our course uses the building-block approach. We start out with foundations, where we give them a little theory, doctrine, and strategy, but the real concentration is on what it means to be an airman. We also talk about what the Air Force brings to the joint warfighting table.

“Then, we move to forces, functions, and Core Competencies. Here, we bring in the Navy, the Army, and the Marines, and we let the students know the strengths and weaknesses of each of the services and what each brings to that joint warfighting partnership. We talk about the importance of having different forces, but, again, what we really stress is, know your business and what it means to be an airman. And, when they think they understand each of the Core Competencies, we make them war game them. We use simulations extensively in our program so that they understand how to use those attributes.”

Like any college-level course, ABC encourages students to study related materials. It draws on reading lists approved by the Chief of Staff and has worked up another specifically for newly commissioned officers. This last list includes Builder’s icarus Syndrome and three works by historian John Keegan which examine historic battles and commanders. Other books cover subjects as wide-ranging as the evolution of warfare and the Linebacker II offensive of the Vietnam War.

Students also receive lists of recom-pended movies including everything from contemporary films (“Top Gun” and “The Right Stuff”) to World War II films (“The Battle of Britain,” “Tora, Tora, Tora,” and “Patton”) to history epics (“Gettysburg,” “Glory,” and “Braveheart”).
have an understanding of the big picture. What does it take to get our mission done? Who really makes this happen? They learn the significance of civil engineering, the security forces, the hospital, and how all of these different organizations interact to make our mission work. It isn’t just airplanes and pilots.”

The rest of the warfighting is largely done by simulation. In the process, AU hopes, the students will develop a greater appreciation for where aerospace power fits into the community of forces and where they, individually, fit into the overall picture.

The course puts heavy emphasis on the “airman” as the basic element of the force. That term has been used narrowly in the past, officials admit, usually to mean any enlisted member but sometimes to identify one in a specific enlisted rank. Only rarely has it been applied to officers, too. The Air Force would like to use it as the generic term for all USAF members, including members of the Guard and Reserve, and, in the broad sense, civilian employees.

In effect, this would make it the USAF equivalent of the Army’s soldier, the Navy’s sailor, and the Marine Corps’ Marine.

Some years ago, the Air Force began speaking of its members as “warriors” and trying to develop the concept that not just aircrews, but all of them, are fighters. To underscore the point, units had members wear battle dress uniforms to work and operate under simulated field conditions. Again, the results were spotty, but the term “warrior” now appears at a number of points in the ABC course material.

Producing warriors may be a tall order for a course dealing with everybody from future fighter pilots to civil engineers and administrative officers, but ABC has one important thing going for it: Most students are just beginning their careers. Those marked for rated specialties, for example, will attend ABC before going to flight training. Others may already be selected for various support jobs.

The rest of the force may be much older than the students. The teaching positions call for captains, but because of USAF-wide shortages in that grade, the school has substituted lieutenants in many of them. The teachers attend a four-month training program that stresses how younger people learn today. Students and teachers alike are comfortable with using videos and interactive wargaming, the colonel said.

What the course does not cover, said the commandant, is politics. “We don’t discuss whether we can use weapons in space or things like that,” he said. “What we do is say, ‘Here are the current laws and here are some future things that you’ll probably see.’ Congress already has authorized the military to look into developing weapons in space. And, so, we’re having them think about it but we don’t get into the morals issue with space.

“Along those same lines, not only do we teach a futures block in our course but we give them future weapons systems to wargame with. Within Blue Thunder, they actually get to ‘use’ an airborne laser and other advanced weapons. Some still are being developed but, eventually, they are going to come online. If that’s 10 years from now, that’s not when we want these folks to start thinking about them. We want them thinking about them today so that they’re ready for tomorrow’s Air Force.”

How well the training works may not be immediately evident, said Lengenfelder. “The value of our course probably won’t even be seen until maybe 15 years down the road,” he said. “It could start around the 10-year point, when they start having to deal with joint issues and being able to deal with what the Air Force does in terms of the joint area and our national security.

“I would hope that it would help them do their jobs better now because they have that big picture,” said Lengenfelder. “I would hope that they are more effective officers. But the real value comes when, let’s say 10 years from now, they’re planners at a joint table and have got all the different colors around the table. Somebody has to sit there and explain why we do the things we do. I would hope that, by then, these officers would have been thinking about that for most of their careers.”

Big Picture First

“We give them the big picture first,” said Lengenfelder. “Then, when they go off and learn their specialties, they understand the significance of what they do and how that fits into the Air Force mission.”

The aim is to get the young officers to think of their service as something more than an occupation. “We emphasize that rather than looking at it just as a job,” the colonel said, “they should think of it as a profession or even in the concept of a calling.”

Because the new officers come from different commissioning sources—Air Force Academy, Officer Training School, and Reserve Officer Training Corps—some presumably might be more receptive to this idea than others. In fact, studies of the first test class to take the course confirmed that there were some differences as the officers began their training. Interestingly, however, tests among the same officers as they finished the course showed that their attitudes had become more similar.

The study also asked graduates for their reactions. Most were positive. As one officer put it, “The greatest strength was getting to meet people from different commissioning sources. Also, all the things I ‘blew off’ in ROTC, I actually learned here and I think I’ll even retain most of it.”

Another said, “As a support officer, I now feel much more qualified to articulate the objectives and capabilities of my service.”

A third said, “There was no Distinguished Graduate program. This was good because the environment inspired teamwork and unity instead of just competition.”

The graduates also were asked to cite course weaknesses, and most focused on the lectures as being too long and repetitious. By contrast, a number praised the less traditional tools, particularly the interactive CD-ROM, and the Blue Thunder exercise.

Youth in the Saddle

One strength of the course may be that many of the instructors are not much older than the students. The teaching positions call for captains, but because of USAF-wide shortages in that grade, the school has substituted lieutenants in many of them. The teachers attend a four-month training program that stresses how younger people learn today. Students and teachers alike are comfortable with using videos and interactive wargaming, the colonel said.

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An airman is a member of an air force or air arm of a nation's armed forces. In certain air forces, it can also refer to a specific enlisted rank. He can also be referred as soldier in other definition. In civilian aviation usage, the term airman is analogous to the term sailor in nautical usage. In the American Federal Aviation Administration usage, an airman is any holder of an airman's certificate, male or female. This certificate is issued to those who qualify for it by the Federal Aviation Administration.

An Airman is a person of integrity, courage and conviction. They must be willing to control their impulses and exercise courage, honesty and accountability in order to do what is right even when no one is looking. Service before self An Airman's professional duties take precedence over personal desires. Every Airman is expected to have the discipline to follow rules, exhibit self-control and possess respect for the beliefs, authority and worth of others. Excellence in all we do An Airman strives for continual improvement in self and service in order to propel the Air Force前进.

APPLICATION FOR AIRMEN, AIRWOMEN RECRUITMENT EXERCISE (BMTC 2021) GUIDELINES

February, 2021. Interested and qualified applicants are to apply FREE OF CHARGE online at www.airforce.mil.ng. Applicants are to apply once.

I love being an Airforce & be a pilot. But have tried it since 2005 i did not succeed. Then i gave up on it. An airman first class is typically promoted to senior airmen after 36 months in the Air Force and 20 months in grade. Very skilled airmen may be promoted quicker as well. However, only 15% of all airman first class may be promoted this quickly. Some factors that are looked at when deciding if an airman first class should be promoted quicker include: leadership potential, physical training scores, recommendations, and education progress.

What is the proper way to address a Senior Airman? Warning: A non-numeric value encountered in /home/militaryranks/public_html/includes/dbconnect.php on line 2 If you have already graduated, I feel you would not be eligible to become an airman because you would be older than the limiting age specified. However, I am assuming that you joined as an airman after graduation. While there are opportunities for the serving airmen to become officers, due to the pressures of your existing job, you would find it difficult to attempt AFCAT or CDS in the initial one or two years. By then, you would have become too old to write these examinations. Therefore, you could get an opportunity to go through departmental selections only. Therefore my advice is that if yo