



**The Chief of Staff wants to fix the way USAF uses its pilots, starting with those flying the F-22.**

# EVERY PILOT IN HIS PLACE

By Adam J. Hebert, Executive Editor



USAF photo by TSgt. Ben Bibler

**T**he Air Force is making major changes to the way it trains and distributes many of its combat pilots, and the F-22 Raptor is the centerpiece of the overhaul.

Though the Raptor is in steady production, this new aircraft will be built in numbers far too small for it to replace the F-15C fleet entirely. Moreover, it will be widely dispersed in small numbers around the world. Its combat time, therefore, will be precious, and so it should be expended only on the highest-priority tasks.

That, say top Air Force officials, means it is time for F-22 pilots to narrow their focus, drastically.

The Raptors and their pilots will be optimized for two principal missions—air superiority and the destruction of enemy air defenses, also known as DEAD. They are high-risk, high-intensity, high-payoff missions, especially against anti-access threats such as advanced surface-to-air missiles and fourth generation fighters.

The Raptor is expected to excel in such environments. And because it is,

training F-22 pilots for any mission other than these is “wrong,” declared Gen. T. Michael Moseley, USAF’s Chief of Staff. He added, “I want it fixed.”

If the Air Force today is “spending precious Raptor modernization dollars or training sorties on the core missions of our other aircraft,” Moseley declared in a recent memo, “that is also wrong, and I want it stopped.”

The air dominance theme goes further. The Chief has directed that new F-22 pilots are to come from ranks of the F-15C community. Raptor pilots currently include officers drawn from F-15E, F-16, and F-117 cockpits, but these pipelines will come to an end. None of those fighters are pure air superiority machines.

A “priority needs to be set,” said Col. Patrick Marshall, commander of the 1st Operations Group at Langley AFB, Va. Moseley said that with a variety of backgrounds already represented in the F-22 force, the final ratios “should provide the right squadron mix” of expertise as the Air Force brings the F-22 to the 3rd Wing at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

The directive allows Langley’s fighter wing to prioritize its training and resources as it works to bring the 94th Fighter Squadron to full operational capability next year. The 94th is the second of the two F-22 squadrons at Langley.

The number of USAF air-to-air assets will decline as F-15s are retired, noted Lt. Col. Dirk Smith, deputy ops group commander. The Air Force needs to “keep that edge,” he said, and cannot afford to water down F-22 training with missions that other aircraft can perform.

Smith noted that the Air Force already has “a bunch of bomb droppers,” and, longer term, the service hopes to buy nearly 10 F-35 strike fighters for every F-22 it receives.

Regarding the F-35 squadrons, the service will follow a similar approach in staffing. Moseley’s memo noted that USAF will “draw upon the experience of our A-10, F-16, and F-15E pilots” to ensure the service retains its close air support, suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD), and interdiction capabilities.

At about the same time, Moseley announced a change to the way the Air Force assigns its pilots and other rated officers. Long-standing policies that led to too many pilots in operational units—and too few in other positions that require rated expertise—are coming to an end.

Said the Chief of Staff, “I am particularly concerned about overmanning in fighter [and] bomber units.”

This is preventing some younger aircrew members from getting the flying hours they need to become “experienced,” which is defined as 500 flying hours in a fighter or 1,000 hours in many other aircraft.

The goal will be to prevent overstaffing in these operational units. To that end, the Air Force wants to keep these units staffed at a rate of 100 percent to 105 percent, said Lt. Col. Frank Van Horn, aircrew management expert on the Air Staff. That is less than is usually the case today.

US Air Forces in Europe has this problem in many of its fighter units. Gen. William T. Hobbins, USAFE commander, said A-10 flying unit staffing will be reduced from 120 percent to just over 100 percent.

USAFE’s F-15C and F-16 units were even more out of whack, but the situation is already improving, Hob-

said, there have been isolated cases of younger pilots finishing an initial tour with less than the 500 flying hours they need for more advanced follow-on assignments.

### Now, TAMI-21

Through a program called Transformational Aircrew Management Initiatives for the 21st Century, or TAMI-21, sorties for inexperienced airmen will increase, with the goal of ensuring that training requirements continue to meet the needs of the combatant commanders.

Going down to 100 percent manning will probably give young pilots two additional sorties per month.

With the overmanning of flying units ending, about 180 pilots will be reassigned to currently short-staffed areas. This includes unmanned aerial vehicle units, Air Force Special Operations Command units, command and control units, and assorted staff assignments that require rated expertise. TAMI-21 will move 80 inexperienced fighter pilots, 40 inexperienced bomber pilots, and 60 experienced fighter pilots out of standard operational units. This may take up to three years.

The younger officers will move into new special operations forces aircraft such as the CV-22, as well as Predator

ment system is expected to keep staffing levels in balance.

“We’re still living with the impact” of the drastic cuts in rated officer production in the 1990s, Van Horn added, and the Air Force needs to avoid those sorts of long-term imbalances in the future.

Some career enlisted personnel will be used to fill nonflying positions that are currently reserved for rated officers. The Air Force’s major commands have been asked to identify some 400 positions, in places such as the air operations centers, that could be switched over, said Van Horn.

The service wants this to be a Total Force effort, and is looking “for a mutually beneficial relationship,” Hornitschek said. Reserve component units may be able to help the Air Force absorb new pilots by ensuring they receive adequate flying hours in Guard and Reserve units.

Simultaneously, there should be new opportunities for Guard and Reserve airmen to move into currently undermanned headquarters and AOC positions.

Plans also call for opening up jobs on airframes previously kept off-limits to undergraduate pilot training graduates. Effective immediately, said an Air Force news release, “all manned platforms will be programmed to ac-



USAF photo by SSgt. Samuel Rogers

*Opposite (l-r): Col. Thomas Tinsley, Lt. Col. James Hecker, Lt. Col. Stuart Nichols, and 1st Lt. Michael Hiatt step to their F-15s at Langley. Left: At Nellis AFB, Nev., Capt. Merrick Baroni (l) and Lt. Col. Dirk Smith prepare for a Red Flag mission in their F-22s.*

bins said. Weapons systems officers, navigators, and air battle managers have been filling in many of the gaps left by the overpopulation in the flying units, and these career fields can also look forward to more equitable distribution in the future.

With staffing levels as high as 120 percent “and climbing,” Van Horn

and Reaper units. Older airmen will take on instructor, air operations center, and staff positions that are presently undermanned.

The various movements represent “a one-time fix,” said Lt. Col. Michael Hornitschek, chief of the Air Staff’s Rated Force Policy Branch. Once the imbalances are corrected, the assign-

cept” new pilots by the time they first become operational. This will include the F-35, next generation search and rescue helicopters, the KC-X tanker, and “all future systems.”

Next year, for the first time, UPT grads will be assigned directly to the F-22, ending the F-15C’s temporary monopoly on Raptor pilot positions. ■