

ADF Pilot School

Last issue we spoke about the general requirements to get a place on an ADF pilot course, talking about issues such as age, school subjects, ADFA and the selection and testing process.



If you missed the previous article, you can find it on the CONTACT magazine website – follow the links to back issue #23 and scroll down and click on the Jobs Market article. You can also find it on the PATS web site www.pilotaptitude.com.au

In this issue, however, we are going to talk about how to make yourself more competitive, service commitments and then, what you really want to hear about – Pilot School.

I want this and I want it bad!

We know that – but it isn't us you have to convince – it is ADF Pilot Selection at Tamworth who make the final call. Think about it this way, you are playing a game of persuasion and, basically, what you are trying to do is convince the Federal Government to invest a couple of million dollars in you. See it from their point of view – why should they drop the money on YOU?

You have the education, have passed testing and are fit. But how do you persuade the Officer Selection Board to recommend you?

Clearly, natural flying ability will be assessed during Flight Screening at Tamworth – the trainee pilot will be put through a rigorous program with a failure rate of between 30 to 40 per cent. Pilot training in the ADF is demanding, so other key criteria are motivation and tenacity. The ADF is looking for people who stick at it when it gets hard.

The ADF know that many people, especially students, can't fund flying lessons, so they don't expect you to have flying experience in advance – in fact, they prefer people with no previous experience, so they can teach you to fly their way from the start.

Other ways of demonstrating your motivation are to gain good knowledge of the ADF and through other activities you may have undertaken. The following things will help:

- » join the ADF cadets if you are still at school
- » attend ADFA or other ADF open days
- » arrange a visit to a flying base or unit before you attend flight screening
- » attend airshows and talk to ADF pilots there

- » participate in team sports at school and keep it going when you finish school

You need to demonstrate a high level of knowledge about all three services of the ADF – their structure, leadership, current deployments, equipment purchases and the broader geopolitical considerations facing Australia. Some ideas for research include:

- » Army, Navy, RAAF websites – also, Wikipedia is quite good
- » subscribe to the official fortnightly ARMY, Navy and Air Force newspapers
- » gain technical knowledge of aircraft – *Jane's* reference books are quite good
- » Read *The Australian* and other newspapers to keep abreast of Federal political issues regarding foreign affairs

It is also appropriate that we mention this magazine – it is a quality publication that will broaden your knowledge in many important areas. ADFA, Duntroon and many other Defence libraries hold copies of it, and many ADF members, including senior officers subscribe. Buy the latest copy when it comes out, or you can still order back issues on the net – a small investment to make for what could be a very big win.

How long do they 'own me' for?

We want to briefly discuss this topic as it varies between the services and can be confusing. There have also been some recent changes.

The ADF uses the term initial minimum period of service (IMPS), which is pretty much exactly what it says.

In short, IMPS for a pilot who joins the RAAF via ADFA is 14.5 years or, as a direct entry (DE) pilot, is 11.5 years.

For the RAN, IMPS for a pilot who joins via ADFA is 13 years while a DE pilot attracts an IMPS of 10 years. It is important to note that the Navy plans to recruit only two or three DE pilots over the next couple of years – so, for the moment, this is a tough nut to crack.

The Army is different again as there are three entry options – ADFA, general service officer (GSO) and special service officer (SSO). The ADFA option attracts IMPS of 14 years (keep in mind that once you finish your degree at ADFA you attend the Royal Military College Duntroon (RMC) for another year

before pilot school). GSO pilot applicants do the full 18-month course at RMC (no ADFA) before attending Pilot School with an IMPS of 11 years, while SSO pilots only do a six-week course at RMC before Pilot School with an IMPS of 10 years.

The ADFA commitment may sound daunting but one way of looking at it is that, effectively, you have to serve no longer than a DE pilot on the same pilot course (because your time at ADFA is included in the total) – with the added bonus that you have done a three-year degree at ADFA before commencing pilot school. We discussed some of the benefits of ADFA in the last issue.

Basic Flight Training School – BFTS

Well congratulations, you have made it and have commenced your Basic Pilot Course (BPC) at Tamworth – you feel comfortable as you know the place and have memories of your successful Flight Screening that you completed here.

But in many ways you haven't really left flight screening behind, as BPC can be thought of as a 25-week flight-screening program. If a student has to be chopped from the course, the ADF will try to identify that here, before the more advanced and expensive training commences.

So what is BPC and how does it work? There are eight BPCs each year with up to 20 students on each course for a total of up to 150 students each year, divided roughly 50% RAAF, 40% Army and 10% Navy.

The first five weeks of BPC are full-time ground school before you commence training on the CT-4B of which there are 22 at Tamworth. Also BFTS is owned and operated by BAE Systems, a civilian contractor, so you will be trained by both ADF and civilian flying instructors.

The BPC syllabus is for 63.8 hours of flight time with the first 26 sorties covering basic general flying (GF) such as straight and level, turning, descending, steep turns, unusual attitudes, aerobatics and so on. Once the flying training commences, you will typically do ground school in the morning and fly in the afternoon or vice versa. To avoid airspace congestion, the program plans to fly about four or five waves of aircraft per day with about 10 or 12 aircraft in each wave.

Each morning begins with a whole-of-school briefing that covers such issues as weather, air-traffic control, taskings and other matters – similar to an operational squadron. For each of the initial 26 lessons, there are group briefings, tutorials and a debrief after the flight. Flight number 27 is a test flight that students must pass to progress to the next stage, which is instrument flying (IF).

The IF phase of training consists of another 11 training flights followed by another test. After this there are four navigation flights and then six advanced general flying (AGF) flights. AGF comprises more advanced aerobatics, emergencies and quality circuit work.

At the completion of this training, students have to sit the general flying test. If they pass, RAAF and RAN pilots go to RAAF Base Pearce to fly the PC-9 on the advanced pilot course while Army pilots complete the Intermediate Pilot Course (IPC) at Tamworth.

Next time, we'll look at the Advanced Pilot Course and Initial Helicopter Training.

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