

Aviator

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at \$15,000 per year; five-year or long-term at \$25,000 per year,

- Continues upfront payments for first-time eligibles,

- Allows those under an existing ACP agreement to convert to the new program's five-year or long-term agreements on their fiscal 2000 anniversary date and,

- Expands the program to colonels with less than 24 years of aviation service.

Peterson stressed, "A robust ACP is an integral part of the Air Force's multifaceted retention game plan that responds to our changing environment. While not the primary reason for separating, exit surveys identified aviator compensation as a significant factor in a pilot's decision to separate."

He added senior leadership is not singling out pilots.

"We're concerned about retaining all members, officers and enlisted," he said.

"Many career fields have unique retention factors. In addition to the basic pay increase of 4.8 percent in January 2000 and pay table reform in July 2000, we are addressing several retention concerns with some form of additional compensation," Peterson added. "For example, special duty assignment pay, hazardous duty incentive pay, selective re-enlistment bonuses, career enlisted flight incentive pay, and foreign language proficiency pay, to

name a few."

For pilots, the nation's strong, growing economy is accompanied by the highest sustained levels of airline hiring in history. These opportunities in civilian aviation are a major factor in many pilots' decisions to separate or retire from the Air Force.

ACP is a step in the right direction in retaining pilots, according to Maj. Terry Hunter, deputy commander of the 437th Current Operations Flight.

"Most pilots have made up their minds about their career paths," he said. "For those who chose to make the Air Force a career, ACP is a positive because, with our ops tempo, it ensures members will be able to provide a decent lifestyle for their families. It ensures they will be comfortable."

Restructured ACP does not attempt to compete with commercial aviation compensation, according to Peterson. Rather, he said, it is designed to provide incentives to pilots to remain on active duty, exchanging ACP compensation for additional active-duty service commitments.

Peterson emphasized restructured ACP should not be viewed as an entitlement.

"This year's rates of compensation encourage long-term commitment. Pilots should view restructured ACP the same way the enlisted force views a selective re-enlistment bonus."

He added that depending on the success of the fiscal 2000 program, the Air Force might not have to offer similar rates or agreement lengths in the future.



In training

Staff. Sgt. William Pace, a loadmaster assigned to the 14th Airlift Squadron, attaches cyalume lightsticks to a pallet in preparation for a nighttime airdrop from a C-17A Globemaster during a local training mission at Charleston AFB.

Tech. Sgt. Cary Humphries, 1 CTCS

Clinton

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The President also made state visits to Greece Saturday and to Bulgaria Monday.

He traveled to Italy to attend a conference hosted by Prime Minister D'Alema on "Progressive Governance for the 21st Century" Saturday and Sunday, and concluded his trip with a visit to Kosovo on Tuesday.

Following events at the U.S. Sector and Camp Bondsteel, the President will depart for Aviano Air Force Base, and then on to

Washington, D.C.

He will arrive in Washington early today.

"This weekend we will launch two aircraft and two crews who will form the nucleus of the direct presidential support missions. We are still in the planning stages today to guarantee timely, safe airlift of the presidential party to select destinations in the region," Richardson said in an interview last week.

The White House was still undecided on the final locations of the president at the time of the interview.

"The aircraft have performed in a fantastic manner. We've been at about 100 percent on departure reliability with the exception of some delays for diplomatic clearances," said Master Sgt. Steven Falls, production superintendent, deployed to Incirlik, along with 19 maintainers and two supply specialists.

"We've been working 12-hour days, seven days a week to launch and recover about 5-6 jets a day," he added.

Despite the challenging working conditions, Falls said about half the maintainers volunteered to go to Turkey over the holidays.

The maintainers deployed November 2 and hope to begin leaving just before the Thanksgiving holidays.

"Folks will start coming back around November 21 with the last bunch to leave on Thanksgiving Day," Falls said.

In addition to the long work hours, maintainers are staying in a tent city set up as part of Operation Northern Watch and have integrated with the 628th Air Mobility Support Squadron.

"They've been fantastic and have helped us out as much as they can and we've helped them when we're not busy."

"We've done all the detailed planning in conjunction with the

Presidential Pilots Office and Air Mobility Command to ensure we had all the data, flight clearances, equipment and support necessary at a number of probable destinations," Richardson said.

"We're very confident that we'll repeat the success which we enjoyed last spring when we flew the president in the same area," he added.

The PPO office is based at the 89th Airlift Wing, Andrews AFB, Md., but directly serves the Office of the President.

Richardson said the base enjoys a solid working relationship with the PPO and White House Planning Staff.

The base last flew the president from Ljubjana, Slovenia to Skopje, Macedonia and then into Aviano AB, Italy.

Success for these missions is defined not only by the president's arrival at his destination on time, but in a larger Team Charleston perspective.

"We measure success by how effectively the team worked together to guarantee that the president would arrive at his destination in time," said Richardson. "When Team Charleston's work ethic promotes such a level of cooperation and productivity, then we look at that as being just as successful as the president getting off the jet where and

when he intended to."

"The president doesn't see all that teamwork behind the scenes. We do what the White House expects us to do. You can just imagine all the planning, coordination and action behind the scenes that is invisible to others that has to happen right the first time."

"We anticipate flying the president on a C-17 just prior to Thanksgiving. Immediately after Thanksgiving, we should begin bringing all the personnel and equipment back to Andrews and then back to Charleston. We should be completely out of the theater by the end of the month."

Shouldering the responsibility for providing safe, reliable C-17 strategic airlift capability can sometimes be a curse and a blessing at the same time.

"The aircraft has such a fantastic record of performance that everybody who is aware of that record, wants to use it and yet there are so few tails available that the command has to be very judicious about allocating C-17 tails against all the users that want the airplane...not everybody is going to get what they want."

But he added that missions to support the president are considered Air Mobility Command's highest priority.



courtesy photo

President Bill Clinton meets and greets US Soldiers after landing at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, during his recent trip to the Mediterranean Region. Eighty Charleston troops helped support the president during the trip.