

# Future Air Force 2023 Conference

## Pilot Training: Challenges and Solutions

It is not only the Air Force that is addressing equipment renewal and capability development. Therefore, there is a lively discussion on what solutions should be chosen in the face of growing needs and demands considering the activities of Russia, China, and others. Somewhat on the sidelines is the issue of training of aviation personnel, especially pilots. A quality pilot is essential. The organizers of the Future Air Force 2023 Conference have therefore decided to focus on pilot training. Its quality will fundamentally affect the Air Force's operational readiness for future challenges and conflicts.



Future Air Force 2023 Conference is a joint project of three entities experienced in organizing similar events - FUTURE FORCES FORUM, DEFCON and DALI Consulting. Of course, the conference could not have been prepared without the expert guarantee and support of the Commander of the Air Force, Brigadier General Petr Čepelka, who assumed personal patronage of the event.

The Programme Committee, headed by former Commander of the Czech Air Force Brigadier General Libor Štefánik, prepared a two-day programme. In three blocks, it will focus on areas that will affect the effectiveness of aviation training. The first block is devoted to flight training itself, starting with the selection of pilots, through the basic and advanced training stages. The second block focuses on the recruitment of new pilots and the third on the involvement of the private sector in the training of military pilots.

**1. Training process:** already in 2014, at the 21st EURAC Air Force Commanders' Conference, it was stated that the training of future pilots is too long, costly and does not

match the current requirements, threats and capabilities of modern technology. The first part of the conference will therefore focus on the overall training time and requirements for effective training, which will require the purchase of new equipment. Today in the Czech Republic, a pilot reaches 1<sup>st</sup> class at around 30 years of age, i.e. the total training time for pilots is almost ten years. A second, equally important factor is the requirements arising from the introduction of the fifth-generation aircraft, which can no longer be seen as a stand-alone platform but as part of a system of which it is a key component. It is more than obvious that the Air Force Commanders' statement from 2014 has lost none of its relevance today. And this is true even for the air forces of countries that do not have the highest ambitions like most of the alliance countries.

**2. Recruiting new pilots:** the acquisition of new air equipment is not only a challenge for the Air Force Command in terms of the combat capabilities of the new equipment, but also in terms of the expected number of equipment to be acquired. For the supersonic aircraft, 24 aircraft are expected to

be purchased, which is almost one times the current number of 14 JAS-39 Gripen aircraft. It is no secret that a career as a pilot is no longer as attractive for today's young generation as it was for older generations. The pilot shortage factor is not only a problem of the Air Force. Virtually all air forces, including the most advanced ones, are facing pilot shortages.

**Leveraging the capabilities of the private sector in training military pilots:** the development and acquisition of new multi-role aircraft is a very costly process. At the same time, low defence budgets have led to a reduction in training capacity. At the same time, training on new aircraft is also more expensive - more than five times more expensive than on 4<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft. Therefore, it is logical that national air forces are looking for solutions to make air training fast, cheaper and maintain the necessary quality. One way to make flight training more efficient (maintaining quality at lower cost) is to involve the private sector. Examples from Canada, the UK and the Czech Republic make this clear.

More than 60 representatives of Air Forces from all over the world were invited by the Commander of the Czech Air Force. The anticipated high participation from users, suppliers of aviation equipment and service providers will certainly contribute to a rich exchange of views, contacts and to more effective cooperation between actors involved in aviation training.



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