VIRTUAL SECOND DECISION

INSIDER TIPS TO KNOW

Heavy Pilot

Maj. Russell John '09

11M/T-6A Instructor Pilot | JBSA Randolph/559 Flight Training Squadron

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- What is travel like? This varies a lot by location and mission set. Straight heavy pilots (C and KC aircraft), are gone quite a bit (appx 200 days a year) and deploy for no more than 4 months at a time. C-130s, my aircraft, are typically only gone when they deploy, otherwise spend a significant amount of time training at home station. For those C-130's stationed overseas, you will also spend a significant amount of time traveling and I traveled all over Europe and Africa from Germany. There's tons of opportunities to train with our foreign partners and interact with the local economy. In short, heavy pilots will travel quite a bit no matter which direction you go, but stateside C-130's are gone a bit less.

- What types of missions do you do? C-130's do a little bit of everything, from tactical low levels and airdrop of troops and equipment, to straight transportation of good an material. We also will sit alert to provide support for contingencies and medical and casualty evacuations. C-130's can basically land everywhere and in any weather conditions. The C-130J model is not refuellable, but all of the "special" versions (HC-130, MC-130, EC-130, etc) are typically refuellable and also have lots of varied missions. Your bigger aircraft are more conventional, mostly cargo haulers, but C-17's do have some units that are low level and airdrop qualified.

- What types of deployments do you do? C-130s will typically deploy to the Middle East and are generally deployed in country due to the more limited range. We can also be deployed in contingency operations that are off the beaten path, Djibouti and Ramstein being the primary examples.

- What is the training and commitment like to be a pilot? Training is definitely a challenge but a very rewarding challenge. You will start out in a small single engine airplane in Pueblo for Initial Flight Training and get about 20 hours and your first solo. Then, you will come back to your pilot training base for T-6's, doing loops and flying in formation, which will last about 6 months. You will then transition to a

bigger airplane, either the T-1 or the T-38, for Phase 3. After phase 3, you will head off to your formal training unit for the airplane you will fly and that can take anywhere from a couple of months to 6 months or more. Your instructors are truly interested in making you a better pilot, professional, and officer. It will be challenging at times and you might not always understand why we approach training in a specific way, but our instructors have significant experience across a wide range of missions and you'll get a chance to ask lots of questions of those different career paths. You will have a 10 year commitment from the day you get your wings, but there's often chances to either change airplanes, come back to pilot training as an instructor, or get into to special programs.

- How should I pick my bases/airplanes? I would ask your instructors a whole lot of questions about the specific mission sets and lifestyle more than I would about bases. You will find that very few AF pilots truly hated their assignment anywhere because you're around awesome people that are highly motivated to get the job done. If you want to travel a lot and not deploy a whole lot or only deploy to nice places, then the C-17 or C-5, and the KC-10, 135, 46 are for you. If you like doing a whole bunch of different missions and got to tons of different places, the C-130s would be good for you. The more special aircraft spent a lot more time training and their deployment tempo is a bit higher, but their missions sets are incredibly rewarding.