

Frequently Asked Questions:

Prior-service/Retrainees:

Q: I have time left on my contract with another service and I was wondering how it would work if I wanted to cross-train into CCT now.

A: We have 3 prior service slots for Combat Control annually allocated every fiscal year. You will need to separate from your service first and have a good re-entry code for enlistment (RE-1). As long as you don't have any other enlistment concerns such as financial problems, single parent or other dependency issues, or category 1 or 2 law violations, you should be able to get a slot to start training within 3 months. Slots are first-come, first-serve and if none are available you'd have to wait until the next fiscal year slots are released. There is no interservice transfer options for enlisted so you cannot go directly into another service prior to your enlistment obligation is met. You can get more information on Physical Ability Stamina Test (PAST) standards and medical requirements on our website at www.afsoc.af.mil/specialtactics.

Q: I am interested in transferring from the National Guard to the Air Force to become a CCT. I was wondering if this is possible? Also, how would I go about doing so?

A: We have 3 prior service slots annually for Combat Control allocated every fiscal year. These slots are first come first serve and highly competitive. You will need to have a conditional release from your unit (DD-368) and is one of the forms required by a local Air Force recruiter to start your enlistment process. As long as you meet the requirements to enlist in the Air Force and require no waivers for entry (financial, dependency, law violations, etc.) you will be scheduled to take your physical at the MEPS and take the PAST. In order to compete for a slot, you'll need to score very well on the CCT PAST and be mentally/physically ready for the training process. As a prior service applicant, if you quit or fail out of the CCT program, you will be discharged from the Air Force.

Q: I am very interested in cross-training into becoming a combat controller. I have been in the Air Force for one year, but enlisted for six. I took the PAST and just barely failed. Who can I talk to about getting a waiver since I can't submit an application to cross-train into special ops for another 2 years.

A: The times/repetitions indicated on the PAST are minimum requirements. Use the two years training to exceed those minimum standards then focus on increasing your run and swim distances. Recommend you work up to a 3 mile run in 21 minutes or less and a 1,500 meter swim in 34 minutes or less. As a 6-year enlistee, the waiverable timeframe to retrain is 36 months – Air Force norm is 59 months. A 4-year enlistee can retrain into CCT/PJ at 24 months TIS – Air Force norm is 35 months. No earlier, no exceptions -- keep training.

Non-prior service recruits

Q: If I join an Air Force ROTC unit at any college would I still be able to qualify for Special Tactics? By attending the United States Air Force Academy would my eligibility for special tactics be helped or hindered?

A: ROTC and USAFA cadets are our primary source for officer positions in Special Tactics (Combat Rescue Officer or Special Tactics Officer). During your junior year, you can submit your phase I applications for either career field two times per year. If selected, you will be invited to attend our phase II selection at either Spokane, Washington for CRO or Fort Walton Beach, Florida for STO. Phase II selection is a one-week course designed to measure your ability to lead men while faced with various stressors such as water confidence drills, ruck marches, advanced calisthenics, and lots of running and other physical training during long training days.

Q: If I elect to directly enlist into the Air Force how would I become part of the Special Tactics program?

A: When you sign up with a local Air Force recruiter you will go to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) to take your physical and swear into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). Once in the DEP, you will take the PAST with a recruiting flight chief. Once you pass the PAST, you will be booked a guaranteed enlistment contract into Pararescue. Your basic training date will be lined up with your class start date for Pararescue. While in the DEP as a PJ recruit, we have PJ/CCT liaisons that will work with you to prepare you mentally and physically for the program.

Q: For right now as I consider my options what activities could I be doing to get a feel for the kind of work that special tactics includes?

A: Recommend you focus your workouts around the PAST standards - running, swimming, and calisthenics. I typically request applicants to take the PAST "unofficially" on themselves as part of your regular workouts adhering to the rest periods/timelines. If you provide your results to me or one of our liaisons, we can better assist you in your training once we have a baseline to work from.

Q: What type of career can I expect to make after my active-duty commitment?

A: There are lots of opportunities when you complete the service to your country. Combat Controllers are FAA rated Air Traffic Controllers and Pararescuemen are Nationally Registered EMT-Paramedics. You can pursue career paths in these areas or other fields of law enforcement, medicine, or governmental contract work.

Q: What would the path be for someone to become an officer and a PJ?

A: If you are not in an ROTC program, your process to apply for Combat Rescue Officer (CRO) will require a dual approach. First you'll need to submit your phase I application for CRO to HQ Air Combat Command, Major Glen Frazier. (You can find the full application process on our Web site at www.afsoc.af.mil/specialtactics). If you are a competitive candidate, you'll be notified of your selection to attend phase II. If this happens, your second step is to contact an officer recruiter and apply for Officer Training School (OTS). With your preselection from your phase I application, we can forward a request to Air Force Recruiting Service that we'd like to get you a slot. You must still be a competitive officer candidate. If you are, you will get an OTS

slot and get a commission in the Air Force. Once you are a commissioned officer, you will attend phase II selection for CRO (either in September/October or March/April). If you are selected during phase II, you will be assigned to start CRO training.

An alternate route that several non ROTC college grads take is going the enlisted route into the Pararescue program. Once you make it through the training, you can apply for OTS and CRO anytime prior to your 35th birthday. Many guys in your situation choose this route so they can get team time as an enlisted PJ prior to commissioning and becoming a CRO.

You can download our CRO phase I application or get the enlisted PJ PAST standards from our website www.afsoc.af.mil/specialtactics.

Q: How likely is it that if I go and train to be a Pararescueman that I will pass and actually become one?

A: The Pararescue program has an attrition rate of 70-85%. This number factors in applicants that were given the PAST in the recruiting process and passed, but failed the PAST when administered at the Indoctrination course. If you only account for the students that passed the PAST at INDOC and started the course, our attrition rate is closer to 70%. Most of the attrition is due to students self eliminating the program. Being in good physical shape is a great starting point, but you need to factor in your ability to handle stressors applied during selection and your ability to overcome and excel.

Bottom line is if you really want to do this job and have the physical baseline (PAST), you can make it through the selection course. Less than 10% are eliminated from the pipeline after graduating the PJ INDOC course.

Q: Does the G.I bill apply to Pararescuemen?

A: Yes, anyone that joins the Air Force and contributes \$100/month for 12 months receives the GI Bill.

Q: How long is the typical, total length of service for a pararescueman?

A: You can enlist for pararescue for 4 years or 6 years. Once you complete training you'll receive an enlistment bonus of \$3,000 for a 4 year enlistment or \$17,000 for a 6 year enlistment. More than 50% of our guys stay beyond the first enlistment.

Q: Would I have to go to basic training for the Air Force before the indoctrination course?

A: As long as you are booked a PJ slot, upon graduation of Air Force Basic Training, you will start PJ selection.

Q: How does the selection process of potential pararescuemen trainees work? Does one only have to apply?

A: When you sign up with a local Air Force recruiter you will go to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) to take your physical and swear into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). Once in the DEP, you will take the PAST with a recruiting flight chief. Once you pass the PAST, you will be booked a guaranteed enlistment contract into Pararescue. Your basic training date will be lined up with your class start date for Pararescue. While in the DEP as a PJ recruit, we have PJ/CCT liaisons that will work with you to prepare you mentally and physically for the program. You can get our current PAST requirements from our website at

www.afsoc.af.mil/specialtactics.

Q: What if I fail the PAST while in the Delayed Entry Program?

A: You can take it again in 30 days. Once you pass the PAST, we can book you into a Combat Control slot. If you fail the test anytime after that, you'll lose your slot.

Q: What is a typical "day at the office" for a combat controller?

A: When we are not deployed, we're training. Our training is broad and covers SCUBA diving, High Altitude Low Observation (HALO) and Static line jumps, All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and motorcycle riding, weapons, working Air Traffic Control in a simulator, going to various ranges to conduct close air support, etc. This is not the typical job that requires office time, but there are days where you are in the team room with your teammates conducting classes or catching up on the minimal admin stuff that needs to be taken care of. Check out our Website at www.afsoc.af.mil/specialtactics to make sure you meet the medical requirements and can pass the CCT PAST standards. The Combat Control selection course and pipeline requires a strong physical baseline (exceeding the PAST standard) and high motivation/mental fortitude.

Q: I've always been interested in becoming a Pararescueman to help people and I'm a pretty good swimmer. Can you tell me more about this career path?

A: The pararescue selection course is a very demanding course both physically and mentally. A good way to look at this course is 20% physical and 80% mental. Yes, water confidence is a major focus in this selection course which requires candidates to be strong mentally to overcome those stressors we place on them and their ability to overcome/achieve the task. I require applicants to take the PAST unofficially as a workout first and provide me those numbers. Once I have a baseline on you, I can better assist you in preparing for the selection course. I'm limited in what I can do until you are in the Delayed Entry Program for the Air Force. Once you sign up with a recruiter, I can put you in contact with one of my liaisons so he can work with you more hands on. We have training sessions for PJ/CCT delayed entry personnel and our goal is to prepare you mentally and physically for these two career fields.

Q: My acuity is really bad; it's actually 20/400 (both eyes) but I see perfectly (20/20) with contacts/glasses. Even though I see perfect with contacts, will I still be disqualified because my vision is worse than the maximum allowed of 20/200?

A: Yes, your eyesight is disqualifying as both eyes are worse than 20/100.

Q: If I have eye surgery like PRK, what are the pre and post conditions that must be met? If I have the surgery, will I be eligible to apply then?

A: The approved corrective eye surgeries are PRK, LASEK and LASIK. You must accomplish the pre-op appointment to ensure you are eligible for the procedure. Once you have corrective surgery, you must accomplish the 1-, 3- and 6-month follow ups to be considered for a waiver. There is a 12-month waiting period after corrective eye surgery in order to request a waiver through the Surgeon General's office.

Q: Do you suggest having surgery before or after enlistment?

A: If you want to come into the Air Force with a guaranteed job for Pararescue or Combat Control, you will need to get the surgery first.

Q: I have a question about cross-training into the Pararescue program. Because I am not a citizen (I am a permanent resident) I won't be able to get a security clearance until after I become a citizen. Once I become a citizen, will I be able to cross-train immediately or will I have to wait until I'm at the 35-36 month mark of my enlistment contract?

A: You must be a U.S. citizen in order to apply for Pararescue or Combat Control. If you elect to enter the Air Force with an INS card, you must obtain a US citizenship before you'd be eligible for retraining into PJ/CCT.

Q: I've read that because I would be cross training into special operations, that I don't have to wait that long and can apply immediately. But my recruiter is telling me that I would have to wait 3 years.

A: You can apply for retraining into PJ/CCT once you complete half of your initial enlistment - 24 months for a 4-year enlistee and 36 months for a 6-year enlistee.

Q: How hard is it to be accepted into special tactics?

A: You need to contact a local Air Force recruiter so they can complete the initial screening and ensure you are eligible for the Air Force. If you are qualified, the recruiter will schedule you to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and Military Entrance Processing Center (MEPS) physical. If you pass these requirements, you will list five jobs you'd like to do and swear into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). Once in the Delayed Entry Program, you will be administered the PJ/CCT Physical Ability and Stamina Test (PAST) and upon successful completion of the PAST, you will be reserved a job in your choice of PJ or CCT.

Q: Is the commitment time the same or longer?

A: Enlistment periods are either 4 or 6-year contracts. PJ and CCT offer a \$3,000 bonus for 4-year enlistees or \$17,000 bonus for 6-year enlistees upon successful completion of the PJ/CCT training pipelines.

Q: Can you take your Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and physical test and see if you would be considered before you join?

A: Recruiters typically do not like it when applicants ask this question as they want you to commit to their service (Air Force, Army, Navy, etc.) as opposed to the job. However, as you follow the steps involved in the enlistment process, swearing into the Delayed Entry Program is the last step -- so you always have the option to not sign up. I recommend you make the commitment to serve before making your commitment to do PJ or CCT.

Q: Besides Rank is there any difference between Combat Control and Special Tactics Officer?

A: For Captain and below, there is no difference between the mission a Combat Controller does and a Special Tactics Officer aside from rank and pay.

Q: Once in the USAF, how would I apply for these jobs?

A: You can apply for Combat Control upon graduating high school through a local AF recruiter. Once you take your physical at the MEPS, the recruiting flight chief or AFSOC advisor will administer you the CCT PAST. If you pass the PAST, you will be reserved a slot to attend the Combat Control Selection course. If you decide to attend college first, recommend you enroll in

an AF ROTC program so you will be eligible to apply for STO. As an ROTC cadet, you can apply for STO during your junior year of college.

Q: What is a typical day on the job when not on a mission?

A: When you are not TDY or deployed, you are conducting local training mostly. On days you are not training, you'll have time to catch up on administrative or other team taskings that come up.

Q: I heard that a special ops is never home.

A: Our guys are TDY and deployed an average of 6 months annually. Typical deployments are 120 day rotations.

Q: What is the minimum number of years a special ops has to serve?

A: Minimum enlistment is 4 years and offers a \$3,000 signing bonus upon completion of the 3 level course. We also offer a 6 year enlistment with a \$17,000 signing bonus upon completion of the 3 level course.