

Air University invests in technology to mitigate airborne pathogens at OTS

By Phil Berube, Air University Public Affairs / Published May 11, 2020

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Air University has added to its investment of a multilayered preventative health strategy at Officer Training School to allow it to safely continue its mission of producing Air Force officers while in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The strategy for the current class included prescreening the 305 officer trainees before and after they arrived for class at the end of March, strict adherence to physical distancing, frequent sanitizing of contact surfaces, coordinated student movement and implementation of other DOD and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention public health measures to mitigate transmission of the disease.

AU is taking the initiative to address safety concerns regarding possible transmission of COVID-19, or of any other pathogen, which is why Officer Training School is in the process of installing air-handling technologies that, along with the current use of HEPA filters, show promise in decreasing airborne spread of viral and bacterial infectious diseases.

“Adding this technology greatly enhances the precautions we have in place at OTS to limit the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to our students from the base and off-base communities,” said Col. Jayson Allen, OTS commandant. “This technology will not only help during the current pandemic, but it will also help mitigate the spread of seasonal illnesses, such as influenza or common colds, across our OTS campus now and in the future.”

The new air-handling technology is being affixed to the existing HVAC systems at the campus’s eight buildings: a dining facility, two academic buildings, a fitness center and four dormitories, which house about 3,700 officer trainees per year. The entire project should be complete by the end of June.

“This investment is about more than just improving the air quality at Officer Training School; it’s about investing in our people,” said Allen. “We’re committed to providing the safest and healthiest work environment as possible for our Airmen, and this investment is evidence of that commitment.”





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Master Sgt. Keith Armour, Officer Training School 24th Training Squadron Military Training Instructor, evaluates officer trainees as they perform open ranks, April 21, 2020, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Officer Training School has been deemed an essential mission during the COVID-19 pandemic and is taking preventative measures, such as screening trainees upon arrival and wearing face coverings, to mitigate exposure. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Alexa Culbert)



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An officer trainee walks by a temporarily installed portable air-handling unit in a hallway at Officer Training School, May 7, 2020, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Permanent units are being affixed to the HVAC systems in the school's eight buildings. The air-handling technology, along with the current use of HEPA filters, show promise in decreasing airborne spread of bacterial and viral infectious diseases, such as the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. (Courtesy photo)