



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS

10 June 2025
PSDM 25-71

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL FSSs, J1s, A1s & USSF/S1s

FROM: HQ AFPC/DPM
550 C Street West
JBSA-Randolph TX 78150

SUBJECT: 2026 USAF Test Pilot School Enlisted Test Course Selection Board Announcement

APPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION SUSPENSE: 1 AUGUST 2025

1. **PURPOSE:** The annual USAF Test Pilot School (TPS) Enlisted Test Course (ETC) Selection Board selects dedicated enlisted personnel to follow in the footsteps of test pioneers like MSgt/Col Ulysses "Sam" Nero, shaping the future of Department of Defense warfighting capabilities. The TPS ETC is a demanding 6-week course designed to develop enlisted members into highly adaptive critical-thinking test leaders, thinkers, and innovators. Graduates will be equipped to plan, execute, analyze, and report on tests, methodically exploring the unknown with discipline to accelerate capability development within their units and career fields. The course curriculum is built upon four pillars exemplified by test legends such as MSgt Nero, Gen Jimmy Doolittle, and Gen Bernard Schriever:

- a. Tester: Developing the mindset for disciplined, risk-aware exploration of the unknown.
- b. Test Leader: Building and directing integrated test teams and fostering a professional test culture.
- c. Critical Thinker: Adapting test strategies to dynamic strategic, warfighting, and technological contexts.
- d. Test Innovator: Researching and enabling new ideas, methods, and technologies, including applying data science principles to accelerate capabilities.

2. **ENLISTED TEST COURSE EXEMPLAR, MSGT/COL ULYSSES NERO:** The Enlisted Test Course honors MSgt/Col Ulysses Nero as its exemplar. An enlisted pioneer from the early days of airpower, Nero applied his expertise in communications, armament, and ballistics to significantly advance bombing accuracy. He developed the innovative "Nero Sight" and demonstrated its effectiveness when others could not, proving the superiority of airplane bombing platforms. His defining moment came during the 1923 Mitchell Trials, where his single, perfectly aimed bomb sank the battleship USS New Jersey, decisively proving airpower's strategic importance. Nero embodied the TPS pillars through his meticulous testing, leadership in high-stakes trials, critical thinking in solving bombing challenges, and innovation in developing

crucial bombsight and communication technologies. ETC students are challenged to emulate Nero's technical mastery, leadership acumen, and innovative spirit.

3. **CY2026 SELECTION BOARD:** The CY2026 TPS Selection Board will convene to select candidates for the following USAF TPS ETC classes:

- a. 26A: Class starts February 2026
- b. 26B: Class starts August 2026

4. **GENERAL INFORMATION:** The instructions in this PSDM supersede all other application instructions for the TPS ETC. Please read carefully. Information regarding the CY2026 TPS ETC Selection Board process will also be available on Education and Training Course Announcements (ETCA), accessed via the USAF Portal. Direct questions to USAF TPS Staff via the contact information at the end of this PSDM.


5. **COURSE CONTENT OVERVIEW:** The 6-week ETC curriculum provides a foundation in test principles and practices, covering areas such as:

- a. Test Foundations: Intro to Developmental & Operational Test, Test Planning & Writing, Design of Experiments, Systems Engineering, Data Analysis & Reporting, Safety, Modeling & Simulation.
- b. Test Leadership: Negotiations & Persuasion, Crew Resource Management, Test Conduct & Communications, Acquisition Fundamentals.
- c. Domain Knowledge: Intro to Aerodynamics, Flying/Handling Qualities, Intro to Astrodynamics, Mission Systems (EO/IR), sUAS/RPA.
- d. Emerging Technology: Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML).
- e. Hands-on Application: Simulators (F-35 Mission Systems), Lab work (Human System Interface), Test Leadership Case Studies, Tours (Flight Test Museum, AFRL, etc.).

6. **ELIGIBILITY:** Open to any USAF AFSC and USSF SFSC, subject to:

- a. Rank: E-4 to E-7
- b. Time in Service: 4 to 16 years
- c. Security Clearance: Secret or higher
- d. Performance: No referral EPB/EPR in the last 3 years
- e. Fitness: Current passing physical fitness test or equivalent

7. APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

- a. Submit applications via email to: USAFTPS.DFAE.ETC@us.af.mil, with email subject line: "**Application: CY2026 TPS ETC Selection Board**".
- b. Application Documents: Submit one consolidated, scrollable PDF file (not a portfolio).
File Naming Convention: "LastName_FirstName_TPS_ETC_CY26.pdf".
- c. Required Documents:
 - (1) CY26 USAF TPS Enlisted Test Course Application. A template can be accessed by clicking on the paperclip icon () in the left toolbar if viewing the PSDM using Adobe Acrobat
 - (2) Career Data Brief (CDB)
 - (3) myFitness Physical Fitness Assessment History (or equivalent)
 - (4) Last 2 EPBs/EPRs (finalized copies only)
 - (5) One, single-page Letter of Recommendation signed by both the Unit Commander and Unit Senior Enlisted Leader

8. SELECTION TIMELINE:

- a. 1 Aug 2025: Application Deadline
- b. Sep 2025: Application Review Board
- c. Oct 2025: Selections completed and published via PSDM

9. **POINTS OF CONTACT:** Direct questions regarding applications or waivers to USAF TPS Enlisted Test Course at USAFTPS.DFAE.ETC@us.af.mil or Comm (661) 277-2358 / DSN 527-2358.

//SIGNED//

Director, Military Personnel Operations

Attachments:

1. Public Announcement
2. CY26 USAF TPS Enlisted Test Course Application

Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this memorandum adhere to Air Force Instruction 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and are disposed of IAW Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located in the Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS).

ATTACHMENT 1: PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

For FSS/FSP: You are authorized to publish the following article immediately upon receipt through 1 August 2025:

"The annual United States Air Force Test Pilot School (TPS) Enlisted Test Course (ETC) Selection Board call for applications is in progress. Applications are due on 1 August 2025. The USAF TPS is the world's preeminent flight and space test pilot school and trains enlisted test leaders to plan, execute, analyze, and report tests to methodically explore the unknown with discipline. TPS ETC graduates develop into testers, leaders, thinkers, and innovators, following in the tradition of pioneers like MSgt/Col Ulysses Nero. They are awarded the 9IT special experience identifier. Applicants from all backgrounds must possess strong leadership drive, a propensity for critical thinking, technical aptitude, and a deep desire to help develop the next generation of Air Force & Space Force weapon systems. For more information visit the ETC course details found under the Education and Training Course Announcements (ETCA)."