



DEFENCE · MAP #29

AFCAT — the most wanted seat in the Air Force is the one with no pension



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Clear the AFCAT and you can be flying for the Indian Air Force in your early twenties, on pay that beats every other officer entry because of a ₹ 25,000 flying allowance. Then read the commission: through this exam the Flying Branch is fourteen years, no extension, no pension. The Ground Duty branches are where the pensionable career sits.

Last reviewed 13 August 2026

THE 30-YEAR JOURNEY

The Air Force runs this exam itself rather than through the UPSC, twice a year. You choose your branch when you apply, and that choice does more than decide what you do every day. Through AFCAT the Flying Branch is a short service commission of fourteen years with no extension and no pension. Ground Duty, technical or not, can be permanent. So the officer who never leaves the ground can have the career the pilot cannot, and the same cockpit is a permanent commission if you reached it through NDA or CDS instead.

SALARY PROJECTION

If you joined today

Figures as of August 2026

7th CPC defence pay matrix, Military Service Pay ₹15,500, flying allowance ₹25,000 for the Flying Branch, DA @ 60% on basic and MSP, X-city HRA, after NPS and AGIF deductions.. The Flying Branch column is higher at every step and stops at fourteen years. The Ground Duty column is lower and keeps going, and at twenty years of qualifying service it reaches a pension the other column never does. This is the clearest money-versus-time trade on the site, and the table only shows you half of it, because a pension does not appear as monthly pay. Rank-to-pay-level mapping on the Ground Duty path follows the Army equivalents rather than a verified Air Force table. We update this every year.

YEAR	MILESTONE	GROUND DUTY Permanent commission available, pension at 20 years	FLYING BRANCH 35 of 379 seats. Fourteen years, then out
0	Commissioned (Flying Officer)	L10 · ₹1.06L Flying Officer, Ground Duty No flying allowance. The same basic and MSP as the Flying Branch, about ₹25,000 a month less in hand.	L10 · ₹1.3L Flying Officer, Flying Branch Basic ₹56,100 plus MSP ₹15,500 with DA on both, plus ₹25,000 flying allowance. Confirm whether the allowance starts on commissioning or when wings are awarded.

YEAR	MILESTONE	GROUND DUTY Permanent commission available, pension at 20 years	FLYING BRANCH 35 of 379 seats. Fourteen years, then out
6	Squadron Leader, on time scale	L11 · ₹1.26L Squadron Leader, Ground Duty	L11 · ₹1.51L Squadron Leader, Flying Branch
14	Fourteen years in	L12A · ₹2L Wing Commander, Ground Duty On a permanent commission the career continues, with the selection board and the rest of the ladder ahead. See the NDA map for how that fork runs.	Out · ₹0k Released, terminal benefits The Flying Branch ceiling through AFCAT. Fourteen years, no extension, no pension, released at about 38. This row is zero because the commission has ended, not because the pay was.
20	Twenty years in	L13 · ₹2.15L Group Captain, Ground Duty Twenty years of qualifying service is where a pension vests. By selection above Wing Commander, on the same pattern as the Army ladder.	Out · ₹0k Civilian, six years on Not projectable, and this map will not invent an airline salary. What is documented is that the licence pathway exists, not what any individual earns on it.

In-hand figures are derived from basic, MSP, DA @ 60% and the flying allowance, not quoted from a pay order. The Flying column stops because the commission does. Snapshot dated August 2026.

Sarkari Job Guide does not claim this salary structure. The figures come from the verified sources listed on the career page.

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Agniveer (Indian Army)

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Visual career maps for government jobs in India. Each map shows the full 30-year path: pay at every stage, promotion timelines, and the costs nobody mentions.

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