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EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OF REPLACEMENT COMBAT CREWS

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Headquarters, 3d Bombardment Division
APO 559
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SUBJECT: The employment and training of replacement combat crews in a strategic air force in a theater of operations.

TO: The Class Director.

Inclosures:

- Appendix A - General
- Appendix B - Combat Crew, Replacement Command, Eighth Air Force
- Appendix C - The Third Bombardment Division Plan

Submitted by:

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26 JUL 1946

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PROBLEM

1. Problem.

To study the method of employment and training of replacement combat crews in a strategic air force in a theater of operation.

2. Discussion.

a. Theater Commanders learned early in World War II that regardless of the amount of training a replacement crew accomplished in the United States, the theater had to further that training before a crew was ready for combat.

b. To train the maximum number of crews and to assist the theater in training of crews, Army Air Forces decided that an effective replacement system required the operational training of combat crews to a rigidly uniform standard for theater consumption.

c. To ensure that any system of training in the theater was efficient, Army Air Forces decided also that the flow of heavy bombardment replacement crews should be as nearly constant as possible.

d. Each theater air force inaugurated a replacement combat crew program to receive, to train and to make operational all new crews arriving in that theater.

e. Because of the exigency of war, many different replacement crew training systems were established in various theaters of operation. Between theaters, it was difficult to establish any standardization. (APPENDIX A)

f. Where a strategic air force is semi-permanently established, it is strongly felt that a standard system is feasible, and that system is the unit training of replacement combat crews. (Appendix C)

g. The Eighth Air Force established the combat crew replacement command which trained and indoctrinated all crews before they were assigned to combat units. This system had many disadvantages. (Appendix B)

h. In opposition to the Eighth Air Force training system, the 3d Bombardment Division unit training program ^{proposed to} received new replacement crews direct from aerial ports of embarkation and quartered them comfortably until needed by the combat units. Once a crew has been assigned to a unit they ~~found~~ ^{made} themselves part of an organization which they undoubtedly ~~had~~ ^{have} not enjoyed while in the Army Air Forces. They ~~were~~ ^{are} assigned their own aircraft, they ~~could~~ ^{can} "hangar fly" with the combat veterans, and they ~~went~~ ^{go} to school in the atmosphere of bombs and bullets that stimulates ~~their~~ ^{the} senses to attain perfection.

i. The most serious disadvantage to the unit training of replacement crews is the lack of training facilities. On the other hand, on a semi-permanent field, there is enough room for classrooms and ample salvageable equipment for "mock ups". Even if there is no equipment, as a last resort the operational aircraft not on a mission can be used for instructional purposes.

3. Action Recommended.

a. That in peacetime bombardment groups be required to train crews.

b. That Army Air Force regulations discourage consolidated training programs in the theater of operations.

c. That logistical planning for war include additional equipment for unit training program.

Appendix A

During the early phases of World War II, there were as many different systems for training replacement bombardment combat crews in the Army Air Forces as there were theaters being furnished crews. No central clearing and directing station received, analyzed, and formulated the final training requirements to be passed to the training air forces in the United States. Consequently, the training problems of the theater varied in the ratio to the type of training received by the crews.

to ARMY AIR FORCES

The Theater Commander soon recommended that all crews in heavy bombardment be trained the same and that the theater, having a craftsman's mold, could carve from it the product desired.

Appendix B

Combat Crew Replacement Command



DISCUSSION.

1. The Eighth Air Force decided early in the war that a great deal of theater training was necessary to ensure the safety of the individual crews. For example, to mention only a few subjects on which the new crews must be oriented, there were the navigational aids, Gee, MF/DF, HF/DF, occults, pundits, darky and searchlight aid, ~~were~~ all British, ^{that} and had to be taught to the American crewmen if they expected to locate the island fortress on return missions.

2. Not feeling that the individual units had the experience or the time to train replacement crews, Eighth Air Force established the Combat Crew Replacement Command to receive, to indoctrinate and to train replacement crews. Two large stations or air bases were assigned the command, and there, were assembled the best instructors from the Eighth Air Force and Royal Air Force and the available training equipment. Since all aircraft went to the combat units, the Command never was assigned sufficient aircraft for unit training and was only able to conduct individual orientation flights.

3. Combat crews were assigned to the command for approximately ten days. During that period, they attended lectures and concluded with proficiency tests, the results of which were mailed to the units to which the crews were assigned. The gunners were sent to a gunnery school for three days where ground to ground range firing was conducted.

ADVANTAGES.

4. Training equipment for classrooms was more abundant.
5. Standardization of instruction was more easily obtained.
6. The school had only one assignment, that was, training replacement crews and was not distracted by operational requirements.

DISADVANTAGES.

7. Combat lessons had to travel a long operational channel, group to wing, to division, to air force, to the command, and be evaluated before a change in curriculum could be made.
8. Instructors were too removed from combat and lost interest in their work.
9. No aircraft is available for unit training.
10. The replacement crews still had not found their combat unit and hence morale still low.

Appendix C

The 3d Bombardment Division Plan

DISCUSSION.

1. In the United States, all aviation personnel during World War II completed their technical training and were shipped immediately to a unit or a combat crew training school to be welded into a crew and fighting team. During 1942, 1943 and most of 1944, the training cycle consisted of three months training, a month at each of three different stations. The crews were assigned to provisional groups with one officer to look out for the welfare of the crews, and to ensure that they received the training as ordered by higher headquarters. The crews had no attachment to the unit to which assigned. The gypsy life only made the crews more discouraged and more anxious of what their future would be. When the group completed training, instead of being sent overseas as a group, they were divided according to the requisitions from the theaters and sent to the aerial port of embarkation in increments.

2. Thus, in the training of a replacement crew, the training in most cases was adequate, but the mental attitude, the desire to fight, the esprit de corps was completely missing, and in many ways destroyed the fighting ability of these crews or retarded it until an injection of esprit awakened them.

3. My biggest argument for replacement training at the unit is to attain this morale factor of providing a home for new crews as soon as possible. In Appendix B you can understand that the combat crew replacement command did not provide a solution.

4. The theater headquarters should retain control over the crews just as short a time as possible, but during that time to provide as attractive accommodations as are available. The cardinal rule to follow is to eliminate as much confusion from the crew as possible, and keep the moves for that crew to a minimum.

5. Once assigned to a combat unit, the crew member begins to know, after five months training, what it feels like to be a member of a unit, to know that he is a part of the machine to bomb the enemy. He has a corner to locate his personal effects, he can listen to the veterans "hangar fly", he can wander down to the line, and look at the aircraft that actually had a wing all shot up and was able to fly home, and he can watch the crippled aircraft staggering back to land at home.

6. There are always combat graduates that can be retained to be instructors. Their experiences and knowledge of the "know how" are fresh in their minds. The daily lessons that would take weeks to get to the Combat Crew Replacement Command can be injected into a training program in a few days. As instructors become complacent and separated from the training picture, new instructors are available from graduated crews. Another advantage to the unit training program easily realized is the number of personnel from which to select instructors. Each combat group has seventy-five to ninety crews assigned. Not every crew member is an instructor, but he is certainly a potential. Those with inherent instruction ability are easily discernable because the entire group staff is watchful of promising instructors.

7. In England where I received my experience, the weather materially influenced the air training. On days when operation missions were possible, unbelievably, training missions were not. Consequently, a group had to take advantage of every minute of flyable weather for individual and unit training missions. By the units conducting replacement crew training, ground school programs could be adjusted to take advantage of the weather. Every effort was made to have each new crew fly several individual orientation missions, one low altitude formation mission and two high altitude, above 18,000 feet, formation missions before going operational.

8. The importance of theater training can not be too highly emphasized. It is a must, and the unit is the only one able to conduct the aerial training as the combat crew replacement command does not have the aircraft. It may be said that the crews received the aerial training in formation in the States. The only unit capable of flying a thirty-six ship formation without jeopardizing other training is a combat unit. Even the more experienced crews need constant formation flying training, and in the accomplishment of that training, new crews can observe the combat formation under the guidance of the more experienced.

9. The only training facility that can not be duplicated on the station is firing ranges. The practicability of simulating combat firing by use of air to ground, and ground to ground firing has not proved satisfactory in the theaters. The gunners can not be released from operations long enough to profit by the training, and synthetic training devices have been developed that are good substitutes for actual firing and tracking.

ADVANTAGES

10. A home is given to the replacement crews.
11. Competent instructors are available.
12. Replacement crews are close to combat which awakens them to their short comings and emphasizes the importance of learning the "know how".
13. Commanders prefer to train their own crews.

DISADVANTAGES

15. Training equipment is difficult to obtain.
16. During days of good weather, aircraft is utilized to the maximum for operational missions and few are available for aerial training.
17. Air to ground, ground to air, and ground to ground firing ^{are} ~~is~~ not available.
18. Standardization of instruction among units is more difficult to obtain.

