

Memo re: Implementation of Air Force Policy Concerning Negro Personnel, January 31, 1950. Air Force, Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services.

AF HQ-44  
3 Dec 1947

O/R - AFPDP  
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MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT: Report on Implementation of Air Force Policy Concerning Negro Personnel

1. Prior to World War II there were no Negroes in the Air Force. By V-J Day, there were approximately 140,000 Negroes serving with the (then) Army Air Forces. Negro organizations included a fighter group which had completed eighteen months of service in the Mediterranean Theater, a Negro bombardment group which had been fully manned and equipped and was in the last stages of unit training, and a host of non-flying units in the ZI and overseas. The non-flying units included Air Cargo Resupply Squadrons, MP Companies (Aviation), Ordnance Ammunition Companies, Aviation Engineer Battalions, Signal Construction Battalions, Quartermaster Truck Companies (Aviation), Airdrome Defense Battalions, Air Base Security Battalions, and Medical Detachments. At that time approximately eight per cent of the Air Force were Negro. Negro strength had previously reached a peak of twelve per cent in 1946 and a low of approximately six per cent in 1949. The decrease in Negro strength may be attributed to increased standards for enlistment and re-enlistment which apply to Negro and white alike.

2. The Air Force has long recognized that the traditional utilization of Negro manpower primarily in Negro units has contained certain elements of waste and inefficiency. When the Air Force was designated one of the Departments of the National Military Establishment, studies were initiated for the purpose of correcting this and other deficiencies. The current Air Force policy on Negro personnel, which was approved by the Secretary of Defense on 11 May 1949, is one of integration. Under this policy, personnel are assigned and utilized on the basis of the qualifications of the individual and the needs of the Service, rather than on the basis of racial origin.

3. We believe that this policy provides the equality of treatment and opportunity desired by the President, and furthermore, that it will alleviate many of the problems of procurement, training and assignment which have previously been encountered in connection with the productive utilization of Negro personnel.

4. One of the initial actions to implement our policy was the inactivation of the only all-Negro Air Force combat wing, the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Columbus, Ohio. With the adoption of the integration policy, the members of the 332nd Fighter Wing

[Subsequently?]

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examined by a group of classification specialists and were reassigned as rapidly as circumstances would permit. Due to budgetary uncertainties, it could not be determined immediately whether Lockbourne Air Force Base would remain active or would be placed on an inactive status. Although this retarded the redistribution of Lockbourne personnel somewhat, the Base has now been placed on an inactive status and, except for the small caretaking detachment, the personnel have been reassigned throughout the Air Force world-wide.

5. For the present, a certain number of Negro service units will probably continue to exist, since they are efficiently performing a necessary Air Force function. Individuals in those units, however, may attend technical or other service schools which will enhance their qualifications without regard to the previous limitations imposed by Negro quotas and Negro vacancies. Since qualified Negro personnel are now assigned to fill any position vacancy in any Air Force organization, and since all individuals are accorded equal opportunity and treatment, the principle of Negro quotas to maintain Negro units has, of necessity, been discarded. Racial quotas are not consistent with free competition on the basis of merit and ability.

6. How our current policies will affect the proportionate white and Negro strength of the Air Force we do not know, nor are we particularly concerned as long as there are no social or morale problems or problems of individual qualifications which adversely affect the efficiency of the Air Force.

7. The Air Force does not specifically designate certain units as Negro units. In the following statistics, units whose strength is over fifty per cent Negro are termed "Negro units." Assuming that the December 1948 statistics are representative of the pre-integration situation, the distribution of Negro personnel by unit at that time was as follows:

Number of Negro units	118
Number of white units containing Negroes	<u>50</u>
Total number of units containing Negroes	168

8. Upon implementation of the integration policy and redistribution of Negro personnel, the total number of units containing Negroes increased as follows:

30 June	273
31 July	439
31 August	797
30 September	954
31 October	1,119
30 November	1,233
31 December (estimate)	<del>1,309</del> 1,320

9. During the same time the number of Negro units decreased.

~~Part of the decrease was due to the inactivation of the various units~~

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comprising the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne. The decreasing number of Negro units was as follows:

30 June	106
31 July	89
31 August	86
30 September	91
31 October	88
30 November	75
31 December (estimate)	7067

10. All of the foregoing refers to numbers of units only. The ~~estimated~~ ~~estimated~~ numbers of individuals assigned to the various units, as of 31 December 1949 are as follows:

a. Negroes assigned to Negro units	<del>7,901</del> 7,402
b. Negroes assigned to white units	<del>10,361</del> 11,456
c. Pipeline (includes students)	<del>7,245</del> 7,033
Total assigned command strength, Negroes	<del>25,507</del> 25,891

In the white units referred to above, there were an estimated ~~206,997~~ 219,157 other-than-Negro personnel assigned.

11. The percentage of Negro enlisted strength has been running as follows:

31 December 1948 (pre-integration)	6.5%
30 June 1949	6.0%
31 July 1949	6.0%
31 August 1949	6.5%
30 September 1949	6.5%
31 October 1949	6.9%
30 November 1949	7.0%
31 December 1949	<del>7.1%</del> 7.2%

12. One matter which is affecting the implementation of the integration policy is with regard to the overseas areas to which Negro personnel are not being assigned. Through communications between the Department of State and the Department of Defense this situation is gradually being clarified. The most recent communication from the State Department did not specifically forbid the assignment of Negro personnel to any overseas areas, but stated that the governments concerned should first be queried before assigning Negroes to certain areas. The areas in question are as follows:

Iceland	Newfoundland
Greenland	Bermuda
Canada	British possessions in the Caribbean area

We plan to comply exactly with the State Department's instructions. When

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Negro personnel, through normal assignment procedures, come up for assignment to one of these areas, we will hold the assignment in abeyance and through the Secretary of Defense and the State Department, query the government concerned.

13. Although the implementation of our current policies dates only from May of 1949, Negro personnel have been reassigned to over a thousand previously white units. We have requested our major commanders to give the implementation of this policy close personal attention and to report to this Headquarters any incidents or disturbances which may be considered as racial in nature.

14. To date there have been only a very small number of incidents reported, and these have been inconsequential. Our commanders, without exception, are supporting and implementing the integration policy. We do not look upon this matter from a sociological standpoint. We adopted the integration policy as a solution, within the Air Force, of certain problems which may be peculiar to the Air Force. We feel that the effectiveness of the Air Force is our primary concern, and that our current policy should be regarded as an effort to achieve more efficient personnel management and utilization, rather than being a matter of social implications.

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