

A Proposed Experimental Plan
for Integration

On 2 December 1948 the Secretary of the Department of the Army set forth in a memorandum a suggested plan for a VOLUNTARY unit operating on a NON-SEGREGATED basis. It provided for about 5000 officers and enlisted men with Negro participation at 10% of the enlisted strength, 5% non-commissioned officers and 3% of the officers. (At the time of this proposal Negro officers were 1.44% of the total officer strength.)

There were to be combat and service units and every activity was to be conducted on a non-segregated basis. Enlisted men assigned to this unit could obtain a cancellation of orders, but with officers there was no such choice. The proposal was made contingent upon the adoption by the Navy and Air Force of the same or closely comparable plans.

Objective: To study the following factors:

1. Willingness of white and Negro troops to serve in non-segregated units.
2. Efficiency and probable combat value of non-segregated units.
3. Exercise of command by Negro officers and Negro non-coms over white troops and mixed groups.
4. Social problems involved.
5. Morale, discipline and esprit de corps of the units.
6. Opportunity afforded Negroes for advancement (and the degree to which Negroes proved competitively qualified and took advantage of such opportunity) as compared with similar opportunity in segregated units.
7. The degree to which the experience gained from the experiment can be regarded as typical of the Armed Services as a whole.

Weaknesses of the Experiment:

1. Right of cancellation of orders may tend to confine the experiment to white and Negro troops who wish it to succeed.
2. If the experiment should succeed it ought to be followed by one which eliminates the voluntary aspects for the enlisted men.
3. Pressures from outside groups may tend to make the experiment non-typical.
4. Fairness and openness in operation and sound public relations needed to avoid accusation that the operation has been sabotaged.



Alternatives to the Experiment:

1. Gradual reduction of size of units which are segregated (now being pursued).
2. Expansion of the principle of non-segregation in schools, hospitals, special types of units (now being pursued).

(General Staff of the Army thinks the above is the best approach).

Recommendation: That the National Military Establishment as a whole go forward with this project and that it be effected as soon as possible, preferably early in 1949.

