

sixty members arrived in Casablanca and proceeded to Mostaganem for service with the Fifth Army. In September the 60th WAC Headquarters Company arrived to augment the 149th, and the 61st for SOS headquarters at Oran.²¹

The need to release more men to staff Signal Corps installations in Italy brought about the activation of a complete WAC Signal company, which arrived in Algiers in November. The women were welcomed by the Deputy Chief Signal Officer, Allied Forces Headquarters, who promised them long hours of work under "far from ideal conditions."²² Members were assigned as route clerks, high speed radio operators, teletypists, cryptographic code clerks, and to cutting tape in radio rooms. On the same ship with the Signal company was the first WAC contingent for duty with the Air Forces in the theater, the Twelfth Air Force Service Command at Algiers. This unit was picked up at the port of debarkation by transport planes and flown direct to its parent organization. According to its chief of staff, "We have a lot of work for them to do right now; we can't afford to have them sitting around a port for several days."²³ Enlisted members, like those in preceding shipments, were again highly qualified, ranging from a former dean of women to a translator of African dialects. Most were assigned as telephone operators, file clerks, typists and stenographers, and to aid in the air service command's work of forwarding ammunition, engines, and other supplies to the front.

In January of 1944, the theater announced the arrival of another contingent for service with the Air Forces—some 372 enlisted women and eight officers, bringing the theater total to over 1,500. These were divided into four units for assignment to four different stations in North Africa.

Other shipments continued during 1944, eventually bringing the theater total to approximately 2,000. The theater thus assumed third place in the number of Wacs employed overseas, being eventually surpassed only by the European and Pacific theaters.²⁴

These Wacs were processed in and out of the theater by a WAC replacement depot, operated in conjunction with the men's depot, but with its own experts in WAC clothing, equipment, records, and other processing. Here new arrivals were given orientation talks by the WAC staff director, with hints as to how best to profit from the past experiences of Wacs in the theater. New arrivals were interviewed and assigned by a WAC specialist in G-1 Division, who was aware of the probable training, capacities, and limitations of WAC personnel.²⁵

Even before the full 2,000 had arrived, Wacs had begun to move out into Italy, beginning with the Fifth Army platoon in November of 1943. At the height of the Italian campaign there were fourteen WAC units with the various commands in Italy, including the Fifth Army, the Peninsular Base Section, and the Air Forces. By the end of the Italian campaign all of the theater's Wacs were in Italy.

²¹ (1) ETO WAC Hist, p. 7. (2) Cbl W3105, 20 Jun 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 5. (3) Press Release cited n. 12. (4) Hist, 6669th WAC Hq Plat (Overhead), APO 464, Fifth Army. In possession of Lt Col Cora M. Foster. (5) Intervs cited n. 1(3).

²² Press Release, 11 Nov 43, sub: WAC Sig Co Arrives; and Press Release 125237 AFHQ. WDBPR Env, Africa—SigC Co.

²³ Two Press Releases, subs: WAC, and WAC Air Corps Co Arrives. WDBPR Env, Africa—AAF Wacs.

²⁴ (1) *Stars and Stripes*, Algiers, January 20, 1944. (2) Peak strength: 1929, Jun 45 (96 offs, 1833 EW). Lowest: 206, Jan 43. Coleman file.

²⁵ Intervs with Col Coleman cited n. 1(3). (2) Ltr, Hq MTO to CO Hq Comd AF (Overhead), 2 Apr 45. AG 2220.3 298-P.