

pany, two headquarters companies, a replacement depot detachment, and a small Signal group on detached service, first in Constantine and then in Rome. Eventual enlisted strength totaled approximately 900, about half of theater WAC strength, plus 52 WAC officers, and some 400 British ATS attached to the battalion and housed with it. With such a large concentration of female personnel under WAC command, matters of supply, administration, and discipline were considerably simplified.²⁷

In all units—Air, Ground, or Service Forces—the most striking difference from employment in the zone of the interior was the higher degree of skill and ability involved. All but a negligible number of enlisted women were qualified for skilled jobs; there were only two WAC “laborers” in the theater—one basic, one repairman. The statistically average Wac in this theater was a trim, healthy young woman, unmarried, older than the average soldier, with better education than the zone of the interior Wac.²⁸ Thus, the theater never experienced the problems of the zone of the interior in assigning personnel of low aptitude or little training. The higher average ability was reflected in the final tally of WAC assignments in the various headquarters.²⁹

Type of Duty	Percent
Total	100.0
Clerical	31.9
Communications	29.2
Stenographic	16.3
Miscellaneous	12.7
Headquarters Cadre	9.9

Such high percentages of skilled personnel not only made assignment easier, but minimized problems of maladjustment, mental health, discipline, and improper or too-heavy work. In most units women did not even have to perform

kitchen police and fatigue duties, since local labor was available and it was considered uneconomical to waste a skilled Wac's time in such heavy tasks. The large WAC battalion alone eventually had about 250 civilian servants.

The advantages that the theater enjoyed in such high-type personnel were made clear by its reaction when, in later shipments from the United States, the quality declined somewhat, especially for officers, concerning whom an observer protested, “If we cannot give them officers who are outstanding leaders, we should at least give them officers who are ladies and whose conduct is such that the enlisted women can respect them.”³⁰ A corresponding decline in the care of selection of enlisted women more than doubled the number who promptly had to be returned to the United States because of physical breakdowns.

The only major problem in WAC employment encountered by the theater was that of the Signal Corps Wacs.³¹ By midsummer of 1944, women in this work began to suffer from fatigue and depression; their sick rate was twice as high as other Wacs', and morale was low. The theater chief signal officer diagnosed the fatigue as “resulting from working long hours over a period of several months

²⁷ Interv with Maj Boutell, 8 Mar 50; interv and written statement, 6 Mar 51.

²⁸ Redeployment Summary.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Statistics in Coleman file are even higher for the period Jun 43–Jun 45.

³⁰ (1) Memo, Col Boyce for Dir WAC, 28 Oct 44. WDWAC 320.2. (2) Cbl W1960, 5 Feb 44. SPWA 320.2 sec 9.

³¹ Discussion from: (1) Memo, WAC CO 6715th WAC Com Co, APO 512, for CO 2629th WAC Bn Hq 29 May 45. Coleman file. (2) Rpt, Bn CO 2629th WAC Bn to Dep CSigO NATOUSA, 11 Sep 44. Coleman file. (3) Memo cited n. 10, Tab A, 2 Sep 44. (4) Memo, Traf Off 3141st Sig Serv Gp for CO 2629th WAC Bn, 22 Sep 44; Tab B is D/F, Theater WAC Stf Dir, 10 Sep 44; Tab C is Rpt of Surv Com, 11 Sep 44.