

the detachment were promoted by their male commanders, one only a few days after conviction by court-martial, General Baird informed General Stivers:

It has come to our attention that there have been a number of instances where enlisted women have taken up matters concerning WAC detachment internal administration with section chiefs. In several cases, staff officers have suggested that enlisted women follow a course of action directly in opposition to the orders of their company commander. It is obvious that a complete breakdown of internal company command will result if the above situation is allowed to continue within this headquarters.¹⁶⁹

USAFFE headquarters therefore published a memorandum, for its own detachment only, stating:

Enlisted women seeking advice or decision as to internal detachment administration will be referred to the Commanding Officer, WAC Detachment, by the section chiefs concerned.¹⁷⁰

This directive, published without co-ordination with the staff director, still was not effective, and squabbles ensued, such as one in which the USAFFE board informed a WAC commander:

You, as commander of the detachment serving this, as well as other units, in an administrative capacity, have no discretion in the matter [of WAC discipline in an off-duty offense.]¹⁷¹

In any case, the ruling was applicable to the USAFFE unit only, and did not solve the problem elsewhere. WAC company commanders, asked to comment on the causes of delinquency, noted, "Most of our troubles arose from a divided command which created and fostered a disregard for authority," and "Many Army Section Chiefs tend to encourage infraction of rules and try to protect the enlisted women working for them."¹⁷²

Major Kersey, the FEAF staff director, noted later:

The Air Force WAC Detachments, FEAF, and FEASC, had all personnel assigned to the WAC Squadrons, and consequently the WAC commanders did not encounter the same problem of disciplinary control.¹⁷³

Some WAC commanders of proven ability eventually asked to be removed from company work because of their ambiguous status. One capable officer quit after eight months because, "I could not do anything about the things that were being done and I could not stay there and see what was happening to [the women]." Another WAC commander developed a mental condition that required a disability discharge. Still another, of previously irreproachable character, had to be relieved of command after she formed the habit of drinking too much and spending the evenings on the beaches in a state of blissful unconsciousness.¹⁷⁴

It eventually came to be Colonel Brown's opinion that no mere publication concerning disciplinary authority would correct the situation, and that the enlisted women should be formally assigned to WAC units, the device adopted in the Mediterranean theater and in the Army Ground Forces. In spite of the cumbersome bookkeeping involved, such a command system was considered more nearly foolproof.

¹⁶⁹ D/F, G-1 USAFFE to DCofS, 26 Mar 45, atchd to WAC Draft AFPAC Reply.

¹⁷⁰ Stf Memo 31, Hq USAFFE, sec III. Atchd to WAC Draft AFPAC Reply.

¹⁷¹ Memo, Det Comdr, USAFFE Bd, to CO 5200th WAC Det, 1 May 45, sub: Restriction of WAC Pers, with 4 inds. Atchd to WAC Draft AFPAC Reply.

¹⁷² Folders, 5200th WAC Det, Drawer X-29443, and 5205th WAC Det, Drawer X-29853.

¹⁷³ Statement on draft of chapter, incl to Ltr, Col Kersey, WAF Stf Dir, Hq Strat Air Comd, to Chief, Mil Hist, 21 Apr 51. OCMH.

¹⁷⁴ Interviews listed in Bibliographical Note.