

ployed in a tropical or disease-ridden area. The low medical evacuation rate, and the willingness of the women to remain for indefinite periods, both indicated that they were adaptable to such employment. However, all WAC advisers noted, in conclusion, that such success was likely to occur only in headquarters that made careful advance preparation and maintained a constant friendly alertness to detect developing problems.

The Middle East Theater

An example of the use of Wacs in an inactive theater was furnished, on a small scale, in the Middle East theater.⁴⁷ Here were assigned two WAC companies, totaling slightly less than three hundred members—one located in the city of Cairo, the other several miles outside it at Camp Russell B. Huckstep.

The first request for Wacs in Cairo was received in the fall of 1943 from Maj. Gen. Ralph Royce. General Royce at this time asked only for twelve WAC secretaries "to prevent the constant and sometimes serious leaks in information."⁴⁸

The request was approved, and in December of 1943 ten enlisted women and two WAC officers were flown to the area. Capt. Josephine Dyer headed the group and later served as staff director. Other requests followed: one for 240 women for theater headquarters, which was approved; one for 600 women for Tehran, which was disapproved on the grounds of nonavailability of WAC personnel; and two others, of 150 more Wacs for theater headquarters and 104 for the 19th Weather Squadron, which were disapproved by Operations Division of the War Department on the grounds that no military vacancies existed in the command. Before making these requisitions, the thea-

ter had entertained some hopes of on-the-spot enlistment of American women living in Cairo, but it was found that 49 out of 50 eligible civilian women refused to enlist, and the idea of local recruiting was abandoned as it had been in Europe.⁴⁹

The shipment of 240 women for the Cairo area was accordingly organized in the United States in February of 1944. It reached the theater only after an exhausting four-month struggle to get shipping space, during which the unit spent a month at Fort Oglethorpe, a month in one area at Camp Shanks, three weeks in another area, a week at Camp Patrick Henry, three weeks on shipboard, and ten days in Naples. The delay proved trying for the women, who were so eager to get overseas that 118 of them, 13 in the first three grades, voluntarily relinquished their ratings in order to comply with the theater's requisition for unrated personnel. The women were described as "dejected and disillusioned" during the months of waiting, but their morale rose rapidly as soon as they were in transit.⁵⁰

Arriving in Cairo on 16 June 1944, the women were sent to Camp Huckstep,

⁴⁷ (1) Historical Data, WAC Det, Middle East SvC, Camp Huckstep, 11 Sep 44, by Lt. Jane A. Riebesell, WAC Hist Off, with appendixes for Jul, Aug, Sep, and Oct 44. Hereafter cited as Unit Hist Camp Huckstep, by month. (2) Hist Review, WAC Det Cairo Mil Dist, 28 Aug 45; last 13 pages pertain to Huckstep unit, Sep 44-Apr 45. Hereafter cited as Unit Hist Cairo Det. (3) Summary: WAC-AMET, prepared by Sgt Birdie Weisbrod, Jun 45, based on file of G-2 Hist Sec AMET. Hereafter cited as WAC AMET Summary.

⁴⁸ Memo, MPD ASF for TAG, 10 Nov 45, sub: WAC Pers for Gen Royce per Msg JM 1814, 27 Oct (CM-IN 16628). SPGAR 220.3 WAC, Dir Pers ASF, DRB AGO.

⁴⁹ (1) Cbl CM-IN 3072, 4 Feb 44; Cbl 2442, 9 Feb 44. (2) Memo, Stf for Dir WAC, 31 Jan 44. WDGAP 320.2 sec 8a. (3) WAC AMET Summary.

⁵⁰ Unit Hist Cairo Det; WAC AMET Summary; and esp Unit Hist Camp Huckstep, p. 4.