

jections. Also, later employment was handicapped by language difficulties.⁶⁵

Independent Commands Overseas

In addition to overseas personnel under the command of the various theaters, there were several thousand overseas Wacs who were not assigned to any theater but to the numerous independent commands authorized to send part of their personnel overseas. Neither the allotment nor the command of such personnel was a prerogative of the theater, but remained with the parent organization. Such commands included various War Department boards and groups, the Office of Strategic Services, the AAF Weather Wing and Army Airways Communications System, and especially the Air Transport Command. Most such commands seldom employed more than five to ten women at any one station, and ordinarily attached them to the nearest WAC unit for housing.

Just as in the United States, unit problems and schisms frequently resulted from the presence of these privileged outsiders with different schedules, rules, ratings, and status in general. No particular solution was reported by the theaters, other than to suggest that full disciplinary control was essential to the unit commander. As a result, theaters did not encourage most independent commands to more widespread employment of women.⁶⁶

Of the independent commands, the ATC was by far the largest, employing Wacs in such numbers as to make possible establishment of its own detachments to

a total of some 1,300 women overseas. By special War Department authorization, ATC was empowered to determine suitable overseas stations, and select, stage, and ship WAC personnel without reference to Air Forces headquarters or to the War Department. By the end of the war it had some 241 Wacs in Alaska, 236 at two stations in Africa, 460 at five stations in the European theater, 156 in Labrador, and 227 in the Pacific.⁶⁷

On the whole, the results of assigning Wacs overseas in such independent and often unsupervised situations compared unfavorably with the experiences of those under theater jurisdiction. While efficiency seldom was affected, morale, conduct, and the full utilization of skills suffered. Theater experiences had, with one exception, indicated that Wacs overseas were uniformly successful and presented few problems, but the example of the independent commands, as well as of the North African theater before the arrival of its staff director, strongly suggested that such success was by no means as inevitable as its universality suggested, but instead depended to some extent on close and careful selection and supervision.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Antilles Dept Hist Studies, Sec VI: Puerto Rican Induction Program and Use of Puerto Rican Troops, Ch. IX, p. 70. OCMH.

⁶⁶ ETO Bd Rpt, Vol. I, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Directory of the AUS Outside Continental U.S., AG 461 (6-1-45) OB-I-M, gives ATC WAC strength.

⁶⁸ (1) ATC Hist Rec Rpt, West Coast Wing, 1 Jan 43-30 Jun 44, pp. 50-53. (2) ATC Hist Rec Rpt 308, Alaskan Div, Nov 44-Sep 45. (3) Hist of 1306th AAF Base Unit, ICD ATC, Jul-Aug 45, pp. 18-21. USAF Hist Div. (4) Memo cited n. 59(1). (5) ETO ATC WAC Hist.