

AFEHRI File 100.058

Research Materials/Source Documents
STUDENT PAPERS

FILE TITLE: Women in the Air Force, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 1976

Summary Title: A snapshot of the issues effecting enlisted women during the integration of women into the the total force

AUTHOR: SMSgt William J. Bruetsch, SNCOA Student, undated, circa 1996

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative G.R. Akin date 29 DEC 97

EPC Representative [Signature] date 7 Jan 98

Scanner Operator [Signature] date 9 Jan 98

APPROVED BY: Gary R. Akin
GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF
Director
Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

fil 19-22
J.L.S.

WOMEN IN THE AIR FORCE

1 JANUARY - 30 JUNE 1976

*A snapshot of the issues effecting enlisted women during
the integration of women into the total force*

*By SMSgt William J. Bruetsch
SNCOA 96A*

*“Procurement and utilization of military women have changed dramatically in the past few years. The number of women entering the Air Force has increased significantly since 1972 and they contribute directly to the accomplishment of the Air Force mission. **We no longer view women in the military as merely providing a nucleus for force expansion during a crisis. They work alongside of men performing in almost every job. Consequently, we no longer consider women a separate resource.”***

*Lt Gen Kenneth L. Tallman
HQ USAF, Director of Personnel (1:1)*

With this announcement and effective 1 July 1976, the Directorate of Women in the Air Force (WAF) was phased out and its responsibilities were absorbed by the Special Assistant for Equal Opportunity for Women, Deputy Director of Personnel Plans for Human Resources Development (HRD) at HQ USAF. (1:1) On paper, this was the “final action” of the overall Air Force plan to reorganize and integrate women as part of the total force. As further explained by Lt Gen Tallman, “The Air Force has made great strides in insuring that women are an integral part of the total force. Our reorganization represents one more step in that direction.” (1:2)

This paper will examine the final six months of the WAF program and its effects on the enlisted women force. It will address force structure and composition, career field and advancement opportunities, training problems, and a look at issues relevant to the female enlisted force during this historic time. To

effectively understand the significance of the actions associated with this transformation of the total force, we must first understand the composition of the female enlisted force.

On 30 June 1976, Air Force women represented 5.88 percent of the total active duty force. The reported end strength of 34,200 active duty women included 29,235 enlisted women. Women in the Air National Guard represented 4.84 percent of the total Guard force and numbered 4,405 (3,925 enlisted women). Women in the Air Force Reserves numbered 3,810 (2,809 enlisted). This was 5.89 percent of the overall reported strength figure of 48,366 personnel. The active duty, Guard, and Reserve enlisted women's grade structures as of 30 June 1976 was:

<u>GRADE</u>	<u>ACTIVE</u>	<u>ANG</u>	<u>USAFR</u>	
Chief Master Sergeant	12	0	3	
Senior Master Sergeant	30	1	10	
Master Sergeant	79	9	45	
Technical Sergeant	183	90	88	
Staff Sergeant	1389	444	347	
Sergeant	8422	819	572	
Airman First Class	11278	996	611	
Airman	5367	986	781	
Airman Basic	<u>2475</u>	<u>580</u>	<u>352</u>	
TOTAL	29,235	3,925	2,809	(2:1,5)

These statistics show a serious imbalance existed with regards to enlisted women holding senior leadership positions throughout the Air Force. For example, of the total enlisted women's force of 29,235 personnel only 12 women held the rank of Chief Master Sergeant. This represented a percentage of less than five ten thousandths of the total enlisted women's force. Or, one chief

master sergeant for approximately every 4,100 women. Of the top three enlisted positions held by women, a total of 121 chief, senior, and master sergeants in the Air Force, were representative of less than one half of one percent of the total women's enlisted force. The lack of women senior leaders in the top three enlisted force ranks, as discussed later in this paper, would play an important role during this period of transition. Although a serious rank imbalance existed, this imbalance did not completely hamper the effort to integrate women, with regards to career opportunities, into the total force.

During this time frame (Jan-Jun 76), no career fields were opened or closed to women officers or enlisted women. However, test programs were developed and approved for the utilization of enlisted women as security specialists and as members of the USAF Honor Guard. (2:8) Career fields (Air Force Specialty Codes) still closed to women as of this time were:

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	
111X0	Defensive Aerial Gunner	
112X0	In-Flight Refueling Engineer	
113X0A/C and 11390	Flight Engineer	
114X0	Aircraft Loadmaster	
115X0	Pararescue Recovery	
272X0D	Combat Control Team Operations	
P304X4	Ground Radio Comm Equipment Repairman (Parachutist)	
H316X0F	Missile System Maintenance (Missile Combat Crew)	
H541X0F	Missile Facilities Specialist LGM-25 (Missile Combat Crew)	
811X0/A	Security Specialist	
99140	Sensor Operator	(2:Tab 6)

As mentioned earlier, a test program to integrate women into the security specialist career field was authorized on 23 February 1976 by Chief of Security

Police, HQ USAF. One hundred women recruits would be voluntarily trained in the basic security specialist and combat skills courses. This test period was scheduled to last one year and recruits began Basic Military Training during the October/November 1976 time frame. The entire group was expected to complete training at the Security Police Academy and be in place at test units by April 1977. The test locations consisted of Barksdale AFB, LA; Grand Forks AFB, ND; Nellis AFB, NV; and Osan AB, Korea. (2:9) In addition, women for the first time, were afforded the opportunity to apply for duty with the USAF Honor Guard. (3:5) However, probably the most significant career opportunity made available to women during this period was the acceptance and enrollment of Air Force enlisted women in the United States Air Force Academy Prep School. Ten enlisted members were initially named to attend the Prep School and the Air Force was considering another two to four to be enrolled at a later date. The first female cadet candidate to enter the school was Amn Jacqueline Olivia Ware. Airman Ware and the other women were given the opportunity, if they met the Air Force Academy requirements after graduating from the Prep School, to be among the 150 women programmed to enter with the Air Force Academy class of 1980--another first. (4:--)

Although new opportunities were opening for women, problems related to training and male supervisor perceptions continued to limit attempts to fully integrate women into the total force.

The Office of the Inspector General (IG), HQ USAF performed an inspection focused and designed to evaluate the utilization of women in the Air

Force to include their performance and acceptance in both the traditional and nontraditional fields. (5:1) This inspection was conducted from 18 August to 9 December 1975 and validated by the Air Staff on 24 January 1976. The overall assessment of the inspection indicated the program to bring more women into the Air Force and into new career fields had been successful, especially when considering traditional versus nontraditional jobs. However, a major finding indicated a significant difference existed between men and women when examining physical strength and stamina requirements for job accomplishment. Another hindrance, for complete integration, concerned men's traditional and often ingrained attitudes towards women which caused problems in base-level management of women. (5:2-3) The report's overall assessment recommended the Air Force to continue to, "... increase the use of qualified women in Air Force jobs, including those previously restricted to men, but should review physical and other job-related standards, as well as the availability of qualified women, to insure that only fully-qualified individuals (male and female) are enlisted." (5:2-3) According to the report some of the problems faced by enlisted women in the Air Force were:

- lack of physical strength and problems related to height, size, and reach;
- only 10 percent of women (compared to 58 percent of men) worked in the area of their highest aptitude

- if in a physically demanding career field, women were placed in “administrative” or “out-of-the-way” jobs where they were not required to pull their share of the load. However, they were still upgraded despite not being fully qualified;

- some supervisors “protected” women who could not or would not perform well;

- women received preferential treatment in shift assignments, squadron details, and punishment for disciplinary offenses;

- base-level OJT programs and maintenance quality control programs did not identify lack of physical capability;

- male supervisors who inflated airman performance report ratings and upgraded women to the 5 skill level because they erroneously believed these were requirements to retrain women out of their current career field. The truth of the matter was, women were not allowed to retrain as their records showed they were fully qualified. (5:3-5, 12, 17)

The problems and perceptions related to training were not the only problems faced by enlisted women during this attempt to fully integrate women into the Air Force. Along with the aforementioned problems, other social and institutional problems were noted by the IG as barriers to this effort as well.

At the forefront of the social issue question was what to do with women who became pregnant and what type of services do we provide active duty enlisted women with children. A multitude of problems faced pregnant Air Force

members. Air Force separation policies were revised in March 1971 to include provisions for waiver of involuntary separation for pregnancy. This issue was revisited in early calendar year 1975 when separation policies were changed making separation for pregnancy a voluntary rather than involuntary act. As of this time, the Air Force still did not have a maternity uniform in its inventory. Even the Chairman of the Air Force Uniform Board concurred as late as 20 June 1976 that expectant women should wear civilian clothing to work when the wear of the uniform is no longer practical. (6:2) Another concern was the amount of time lost from duty due to pregnancy. "A sampling of women in two large commands revealed that between 11 and 15 percent of the women in security police and aircraft maintenance were pregnant. Women in physically demanding jobs . . . were often put on light duty as early as the fourth month of pregnancy. **However, time lost for pregnancy is not included in manpower figures, and the full impact of this problem has not yet been determined.**" (5:4) The bottom line, the Air Force at this time had no idea how lost time to pregnancy would affect readiness levels because this data had never been collected or accounted for. It was also noted that procedures to manage pregnant women vary from base to base. Another problem, related to raising a family, included bases maintaining child care center hours that were impractical to Air Force members with families. The child care centers' schedules reflected a social calendar type schedule versus a work related schedule. (5:19) This in-turn forced supervisors to consider baby-sitting availability before making work shift

schedules and contributed to the perception that women received preferential treatment and should not be allowed in highly physical and demanding positions. On the institutional front, the issuance, availability, and utility of women's uniforms did not meet the needs of the women in the Air Force. (5:21) Although women had been assigned to the "industrial career fields" for three years, problems existed in the issuance of utility type uniforms to women in basic training and technical school. This in-turn forced women to wear uniforms designed for men and highlighted the shortage and problems of obtaining safety and other protective type of clothing and footwear. Further, some technical training centers did not issue combat boots to women as required because the school did not budget for these items. Women also complained, justifiably, "that neither clothing sales nor base exchanges stock enough military clothing for women." (5:22) The IG highlighted and confirmed this problem area by discovering one base exchange that did not stock any uniforms for women at all. The lack of a maternity uniform also contributed to a lack of productivity where the wear of the uniform is essential to recognition or authority, e.g., security police, medical staff, etc. It also causes confusion in offices where civilian and military members work side-by-side. Finally, although all WAF squadrons had been eliminated, there still remained a requirement to appoint an Installation Resident Consultant for Women (IRCW) per Air Force policy. "Her duties required her to advise commanders on matters affecting military women, and to counsel enlisted women if needed. However, the women selected at base level

are often young and inexperienced (**there just aren't very many senior female officers or NCOs at base level**"), often don't have the confidence of the women they represent, and sometimes become involved in matters that are expressly prohibited to them (e.g., conducting inspections, initiating disciplinary actions, etc.)." (5:23)

Although this paper presents just a snapshot of the events and issues of importance to women during this time. Hopefully, it shows a perspective of the significant items and events that occurred during the Air Force's attempt to initially integrate women, and especially enlisted women, into the Air Force's total force structure. It is important to note that out of a total active force of 29,235 women, only 12 Chief Master Sergeants and a total of 121 women serving in top-three NCO positions were in leadership positions to assist with this endeavor. During this time, opportunities to train into career fields (security specialist, and the USAF Honor Guard) previously off-limits to women were offered to women for the first time. More importantly, ten enlisted women were allowed to enroll and attend the Air Force Academy Prep School for the first time. Unfortunately, prior to the 1 July 1976 phase-out date, the IG identified a trend to scrutinize and circumvent the Air Force's attempt to integrate and train women placed in physically demanding, industrial type career fields. Male supervisor and counterpart perceptions and physical attributes of the female candidates tended to be the main points of contention to support arguments against placing women in these positions. Not only did women face this problem, the IG identified both

social and institutional problems related to the integration. These problems ranged from the affects of pregnant women on the total force, the lack of experienced personnel to fill advisory positions, and military clothing shortages that adversely affected the attempt to meet Air Force institutional and safety requirements. Women in the Air Force faced many diverse problems and perceptions associated with the integration of women into the total force package. At the time, the term WAF (Women in the Air Force) was not expected to be totally eliminated; however, other descriptive terms such as enlisted women were deemed more appropriate and professional. (3:6) Enlisted women at this time were now responsible to only one chain of command and they no longer shared management responsibilities with a "Women's Squadron" commander. (3:6) Although, an argument concerning the progress women made during this time could be debated, it could be ascertained that women were truly on their way to becoming an integral part of the total Air Force team. An Air Force team with an integrated membership--men and women alike.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Proposed News Release, *WAF Directorate to be Eliminated*, Approved by the Air Force Chief of Staff, undated, Extract from *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January 1976 to 30 June 1976*, Tab 17.
2. Staff of the Directorate, *Women in the Air Force*, *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January 1976 to 30 June 1976*, Jun 76.
3. Coffinger, M. K., Lt Col, USAF, *Final DPW Newsletter*, 28 June 1976, Extract from *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January 1976 to 30 June 1976*, Tab 16.
4. *Washington Times*, *First Ten Women Enroll At Academy Prep School*, undated extract from *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January to 30 Jun 1976*, Tab 13.
5. HQ USAF/IG *Report of The Inspection of the Utilization of Women in the Air Force PN 76-608*, Undated, Extract from *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January 1976 to 30 Jun 1976*, Tab 5.
6. Coffinger, M. K., Lt Col, USAF, AF/DPW Ltr, 6 Jun 76, *IG Inspection on the Utilization of Women*, Extract from *History of the Women in the Air Force 1 January 1976 to 30 June 1976*, Tab 5.