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BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

EARLY EVOLUTION OF NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMIES

1. This background paper discusses the early evolution of Noncommissioned Officer Academies (NCOAs) in the United States Air Force. It first discusses the reasoning why the Air Force needed NCOAs. It then will provide an insight into some early advocates of Noncommissioned Officer education, their ideas and concepts as to what type of curriculum should be incorporated in these schools. It will next disclose some unique problems faced by early NCOAs and examine criteria for attendance. It will then provide an insight in the differences in early Major Command NCOAs. Finally, this paper will compare the early curriculum with the curriculum of our modern NCOAs.

2. After the creation of the United States Air Force (USAF), it was recognized that the role of the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) had changed from its counterpart of World War II. The NCO was not only a technician in his field of expertise, but was also a middle level manager of people and missions. An early attempt at some kind of education for NCOs can be seen conducted by the 1946th squadron in stationed in Germany in 1948. It offered a NCO school with an Army type training program. The course offered; Military Law, Interior Guard Duties, Infantry Drill Regulations, Morning Reports, and Troop Information Programs. (11:115) In 1950, certain senior USAF commanders, recognized that a new breed of NCOs were developing. General John H. Cannon, Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe, is credited with establishing the forerunner of today's NCOA. The original school was located in Wiesbaden, Germany and was called USAF Europe Academy of Leadership and Management. It's curriculum was adopted from portions of the Senior Military Management Course and subjects

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offered by the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania.

3. The first recognized NCOA was established by Strategic Air Command, 7th Air Division, 3911th Airbase Group, West Drayton AB, U.K. Major General John P. McConnell, then Commander of 7th Air Division, saw the need for these academies to train NCOs and directed the entire 7th Air Division to establish necessary schools. (1:143-149)

4. With the idea set to create NCOAs throughout the USAF, several commands and bases began to create curriculum. In 1953, The 8th Air Force at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, established a 22 day course for its NCOs to attend. The class day was 6 hours in length and consisted of: Leadership and Command Principles, Personnel Management, General Military Subjects and miscellaneous subjects. This entire class had a total of 110 hours of instruction. (2:12-13) The 25th Air Division at McCord AFB, WA, in 1954, adopted a curriculum that consisted of; History and Organization of the Air Force, Leadership, Code of Military Justice, Training-OJT, Work Method Improvement Techniques, Management Techniques, Security, Care and Use of Weapons, and Passive Defense. (3:11-12) Early curriculum in the NCOAs of the USAF had no formal standardized command wide continuity. Some schools emphasized more military aspects to the courses than others. This can be further explored by an interview by former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, James M. McCoy. Chief McCoy attended the NCOA at Barksdale AFB, LA, in 1960. At that time the curriculum consisted of as he stated, "Dormitory inspections, and Military Training, we carried M-1 rifles and marched alot". (10:52-56)

5. In 1955 the 25th Air Division embarked on a different problem. Allowing female Air Force members to attend NCOAs. Problems such as dormitory arrange-

ments and how male counterparts perceived this was actively pursued. Even though Higher Headquarters did not endorse this innovative idea, McCord⁷ AFB was the leader in convincing the rest of the USAF that it was imperative to admit females to NCOAs. Seeing the necessity in this training the rest of the NCOAs Air Force wide eventually followed suit. (4:14-15)

6. Other situations in early NCOAs was the attendance criteria used by different NCOAs. One interesting aspect in early NCOAs was the requirement placed on attending the academies. The 25th Air Division was once again a leader in this aspect. It created a regulation in 1954 that made promotion to Staff Sergeant only attainable by graduating from it's academy. The regulation also stipulated that only "Highly qualified Airmen First Class would attend the NCOA." (3:11) Another unit that made attendance at the NCOA mandatory for promotion to Staff Sergeant was the 42nd Bombardment Wing at Limestone AFB, ME. The policy, established in 1954, required all qualified Airmen First Class to attend it's academy prior to promotion to the Noncommissioned Officer ranks. (6:2)

7. Other problems concerning early NCOAs was the emphasis placed by each Command on it's own unique specialization of that commands NCOA objectives. This situation created a lack of continuity in all NCOAs. The objectives of each Command Academy did not prepare NCOs for total Air Force ideas. Each school prepared NCOs for that specific Commands policies. (9:162-163) Regionalization of NCOAs would eliminate command emphasis and formally standardize course curriculum. (8:143-144)

8. NCOAs were constantly improving their objectives and curriculum in the early years. Some Major Commands were also innovative in other interesting attempts to emphasize the importance of educating military supervisors. Air Training Command (ATC) embark on one such program when it allowed civilians to

attend their academy. The commitment by the ATC to include civilian government employees in management training was attempted and this concept was studied in great detail. The study, conducted by ATC, recommended that the positive outcomes of civilian military supervisors attending the NCOA would improve relations of civilian supervisors and their military subordinates. (5:15-16)

9. USAF NCOAs also suffered other problems in its history. During the Vietnam War, Strategic Air Command shut down their NCOAs. The lack of trained personnel to send to the war prompted this move. This action was a set back for NCOA but two enlisted members of the USAF continued to champion the cause to reopen Strategic Air Commands NCOAs. Those two individuals were James McCoy and Robert Gaylor. Two dynamic individuals who both would become Chief Master Sergeants of the USAF. Their continued pressure on higher Headquarters lead to the reopening of Strategic Air Commands NCOAs. (10:56-63) Monetary concerns in the 1970's prompted a study into the closure of NCOAs. A study conducted by the 4-M panel concluded that money could be saved by eliminating NCOAs. However, the study concluded that eliminating NCOAs would severally impact the mission of the USAF. (7:--)

10. Today, NCOAs have adopted a curriculum that is standardized throught out the USAF. Unlike early schools, the Air Force has directed each Major Command to offer the same curriculum and course length Air Force wide. The differences in current curriculum compared to early curriculum is the emphasis placed on managing personnel and the importance placed in communicative skills. Unlike the early NCOA that placed importance on military aspects, todays NCOAs attempt to provide NCOs the most modern and up to date management and leadership skills to lead the USAF into the 21s century.

11. This background paper has provided the reader with a brief overview of the

problems encountered in the establishment of early NCOAs. It discussed the background for the establishment of NCOAs. It provided an insight into some early proponents and units that attempted to establish NCOAs. It looked at some ideas as to what kind of curriculum should be taught and portrayed problems discovered in early curriculum. It then discussed early attendance criteria. This paper then reviewed the problems encountered by early NCOAs due to Command emphasis versus Air Force emphasis and provided discussion into that aspect. It looked at some unique attempts to expand NCOAs to include civilians and situations that war and funding had on NCOAs. Finally, this paper briefly compared present curriculum with early curriculum. Enlisted members of the USAF have provided the Air Force with a vast repository of qualified and motivated individuals. Continued emphasis on the NCOA will perpetuate the heritage of enlisted members and provide the United States with the most professional individuals in the USAF. The Noncommissioned Officer.

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