

IMPACT OF BATTALION AND SMALLER AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMBAT
UNITS ON INTEGRATION OF THE U.S. ARMY IN THE EUROPEAN
THEATER OF OPERATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II

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Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF BATTALION AND SMALLER AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMBAT UNITS ON INTEGRATION OF THE U.S. ARMY IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II, by Major Talgin Lee Cannon, 128 pages.

African Americans performed admirably and with valor in the wars prior to World War II. However, Commanding generals' attitudes on African American leadership competency and capabilities to master modern weapons remained in doubt after World War I. During World War II, the U.S. Army had to fight multiple modern militaries on several different fronts provided African Americans opportunities to change negative military attitudes towards them. Several African American units served with distinction during World War II. Large African American combat units, including infantry and cavalry divisions normally served within a prescribed command structure and were nominally excluded from interaction with white soldiers, with the exception of their commanding officers. Smaller functional combat units, anti-aircraft artillery, field artillery, and platoons integrated more frequently with Caucasian troops due to their unique task organization. This paper will examine these small unit integration experiences to determine their impact on the decision to integrate the US Army in 1948

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Military service historically created opportunities for African Americans to gain equality. The need for manpower necessitated a change in government policy to allow African Americans to be involved in America's wars was typically the driving force. World War II was no exception as the Saar Basin Offensive, Battle of the Bulge and the subsequent Ruhr Campaign necessitated a call up from all available units to fill personnel shortages along the front lines. Once again, opportunity arose for African American combat units to display their patriotism and push for equality on the battlefield. Senior U.S. Army officers and government officials developed policies and procedures from 1919 to 1945 in order to define the appropriate size of segregated African American combat units. These leaders approximated the size of African American combat units through their own personal prejudice and bias of African Americans ability to fight in combat. Decentralized operations in small combat units, battalion and below, had the greatest impact on changing European American perceptions of African American ability to serve in an integrated Army.

In the Revolutionary War, American leadership allowed five thousand African Americans to serve in direct response to the British promise of freedom for slaves who fought for Great Britain.¹ In the War of 1812, Major General Andrew Jackson established

¹ Morris J. MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1981), 4.

the Louisiana Free Men of Color for the Battle of New Orleans.² Military manpower was the primary reason for African American military service in the Civil War. President Lincoln recognized the lack of American volunteers left a void in the Union Army. Ultimately, 186,000 African Americans served in the Civil War.

A new development took place with the Republican Party's Reconstruction policies that resulted in the authorization of permanent African American combat units in 1866.³ The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments helped shape western America and fought multiple Native American tribes. These units plus seven thousand additional African American volunteers fought in the Spanish American War. African Americans believed military service equated to a display of equal patriotism in comparison to European Americans and would eventually result in earning equality.

Isolated race incidents created a bias toward African American combat units in the period after the Spanish American War. In August 1906 in Brownsville, Texas, African American soldiers in the 25th Infantry rioted in protest due to poor mistreatment by local citizens. President Theodore Roosevelt disbanded three companies and issued dishonorable discharges to all members. Southern delegates wanted African Americans banned from the Army. African Americans saw this as a deliberate effort to keep African Americans from fighting for their country.⁴ Another incident occurred in Houston, Texas,

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting On Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 7.

on 28 July 1917 involved the 24th Infantry. African American soldiers in reaction to maltreatment killed seventeen European Americans. Thirteen African Americans were hung for murder, and forty-one received life sentences.⁵ Despite these racial challenges, African Americans leaders urged mass volunteerism to serve in the Army in order to promote equality.

African American civil rights leaders believed World War I would prove to European Americans that African Americans deserved equality. The United States of America entered the war on the premise of promoting democratic values against German tyranny. African Americans leaders knew this was a chance to show unity against a foreign foe who were in direct contradiction of American values. Unfortunately, the Army's slow reaction to African American service displayed a prejudice on African Americans' ability to fight in combat.

The African American press was highly influential with African Americans on expressing opinions on American military policy concerning the use of African Americans in combat units. W.E.B. Dubois wrote in *Crisis*, "Let us not hesitate. Let us, while the war lasts forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy."⁶ Swept up in high patriotic fervor African and European American press initially gave positive reviews on the role of African American combat units. The Boston Post stated,

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ Ibid.

“This is the true ideal of service. No matter what the color of skin, we all recognize it.”⁷

The *New York Times* interview with an African American second lieutenant sums African American optimism of equality by military service in World War I. The lieutenant said, “I told him I was fighting for what the flag meant to the Negroes in the United States. I told him I was fighting because I wanted other oppressed people to know the meaning of democracy and enjoy it. . . . I told him that now is our opportunity to prove what we can do.”⁸

Army leadership had no desire to fight with integrated units, and kept units segregated throughout World War I. The majority of Army senior leaders were Southern and believed the social status quo needed to be kept in order to maintain order and discipline within the army. They doubted African American ability to serve in combat and preferred to assign them to labor units, which in their opinion African Americans were more accustomed to serving in these roles. Senior leaders typically assigned Southern officers to African American units, because of the belief they knew how to associate with them. Senior leadership doubt created poor training conditions; bad leaders assigned to African American combat units, and increased prejudice towards African American combat performance was ever prevalent in World War I.

The majority of African Americans had basic training in the American South, where Jim Crow was the law of the land. For some African Americans the army’s

⁷ Ulysses Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, *The Employment of Negro Troops (United States Army in World War II)* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1994), 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

segregation policy was the first exposure to institutionalized racism. Exposure to hostile Southern populations and leaders created further stress by strict application of local laws on the military installations. Ultimately, 404,348 African Americans served in World War I mainly in labor units. African Americans made up 11 percent of the Army.⁹

The only African American combat units were the 92nd and 93rd Divisions. The French army received all four infantry regiments from the 93rd Division. These regiments were National Guard units whose leadership and organizations stayed consistent throughout their deployment. In addition, their National Guard status gave them an advantage of unity that did not exist within the 92nd Division. France awarded the Croix de Guerre, the highest military citation, to three regiments and one company in the 93rd Division, and a battalion in the 92nd Division.¹⁰ General French perceptions of African American combat units were favorable. The 92nd Division experience was the exact opposite of the 93rd.

The 92nd Division faced insurmountable challenges from their inception. Racist Southern officers, poor training, soldier selection, and constant personnel changes set this division up for failure.¹¹ These factors led to the division's poor combat performance. The 92nd Division received several individual medals for valor but the overall perception from European American officers remained unchanged and justified their negative opinions towards African American combat units. They could not acknowledge the

⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

negative factors concerning the 92nd Division and concluded that regardless of race any army unit faced under such poor conditions would have similar dismal outcomes.

Reports of the poor combat performance of the 92nd Division led African American leaders to doubt the validity of army statements concerning the unit. W.E.B. Dubois stated this concern, “the America Army is going to return to America determined to disparage the black officer and eliminate him from the army despite his record.”¹² W.E.B. Dubois conducted a study of African American soldiers in Europe. He published his surprise on the abundant and clear racism in the U.S. Army in the March 1919 issue of *The Crisis*.¹³ The shock reverberated throughout the African American community on the poor treatment of their fathers and sons. Inevitably, African Americans no longer were willing to give their faith and trust to the military and political leaders for equality within the military. The result was a more aggressive National Association and Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) party demanding integration within the military. After World War I, senior Army leaders struggled with creating a policy incorporating African Americans within the Army. Questions emerged on size of the African Americans units, African or European American officers, how well African Americans could fight in combat, and many others emerged. Senior leaders used the World War I after action reports of the 92nd Division to establish and refine their policies of segregated units. For the next twenty years, the War Department established multiple panels to provide recommendations on how to efficiently mobilize African Americans in

¹² Ibid., 10.

¹³ Dalfiume, 21.

the Army. These panels would specifically address the size and composition of African American units. These adopted policies would shape the future for African Americans in World War II.

Literature Review

African American Army unit history during World War II was not documented by multiple sources, because mainstream America did not dedicate historians or press coverage to these units. Instead, the Army focused the majority of their historical documentation on white units. The majority of literature produced on African American combat units was written in the late twentieth century and early twenty first century. World War II veterans have significantly decreased in number by 2015. The demise of the America's Greatest Generation is even keener with African American combat unit veterans. Only a small number of African American combat units fought in World War II, and this is a small pool of veterans to gather information on their achievements during a normal human life span. Therefore, this thesis is mainly comprised of primary sources that essentially rely on one another to contribute the small but growing historical literature on World War II African American units.

Ulysses Lee's *The Employment of Negro Troops* is the primary historical publication for all African American units participating in World War II. Lee served in the Army from 1942 to 1952 as a commissioned officer and advanced to the rank of major. He served as an Officer and Editorial Analyst for four years and from 1946 to 1952, he served as a member of the Office of the Chief of Military History.¹⁴ Lee was the

¹⁴ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, viii.

author-editor of the Army's manual, *Leadership and the Negro Soldier*, published in 1944 provided white officers a guide on the proper treatment of black subordinates. The Military History Division asked Lee to produce a historical document of African American units for the War Department's records on August 1946.¹⁵ He completed the volume in 1951 where it went through several review boards. Lee did not focus nor did he intend to focus on the social situation of the 1940s, but he did paint a clear picture on the effects of segregation within the United States Army. *The Employment of Negro Troops* was finally published in 1965 by the Center of Military History. Every African American historian refers to Ulysses Lee's remarkable historical document. Bryan Booker's *African Americans in the United States Army in World War II*, published in 2008, adds to Ulysses Lee's work using a twenty first century lens.

Trezzvant Anderson's *Come Out Fighting* is a unit historical narrative of the 761st Tank Battalion. Trezzvant Anderson served as a private in the United States Army as a member of the black press corps. He joined the 761st Tank Battalion in France, and provided a detailed unit history of the 761st Tank Battalion. His work is one of the few historical narratives of African American combat units. He published *Come Out Fighting* in early 1946. His work is extremely valuable to African American history, because it is highly probable the 761st Tank Battalion would not have been recognized for their amazing achievements.

Charles W. Sasser's *Patton's Panthers*, adds to the famous story of the 761st Tank Battalion through personal interviews and historical archive documents. *Patton's*

¹⁵ Ibid., ix.

Panthers shows how separate tank battalions influenced the perceptions of senior white commanders on the combat acumen of African Americans. Sasser acknowledges that he had to fill in the gaps for individualist personalities, because they were no longer living and he had to rely on third party witnesses to complete this document.¹⁶ Nevertheless, he intelligently displays to the reader the emotions and opinions of these veterans. *Patton's Panthers* would make an excellent Army leader case study in Army school institutions.

Richard Dalfiume's, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts (1939-1953)*, published in 1969, is a historical analysis of the emerging civil right movement's impact on the government's decision to desegregate the military. Dalfiume provides insight on the domestic social aspects of the United States from 1939 to 1953. He provides in depth analysis on why the War Department began to adopt social policies within the armed services. His work shows the War Departments' struggles with transparency with the African American public concerning their policies of African American service members.

Morris MacGregor's *Integration of the Armed Forces (1940-1965)*, published in 1981, is a historical analysis of integration of the armed services. MacGregor served on the U.S. Army Center of Military History Staff from 1968 to 1978. MacGregor mainly focuses military's social transformation after World War II. This particular work provides a unique compare and contrast perspective on the various agencies and services journey to integration.

¹⁶ Charles W. Sasser, *The African American 761st Tank Battalion in World War II: Patton's Panthers* (New York: Pocket Books, 2005), x.

Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Michael Lanning's *The African American Soldier: From Crispus Attacks to Colin Powell*, published in 1997 provides an excellent overview of the achievements of African American leaders and units from the Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf War. The book shows the African American's journey to equality within the United States of America. He clearly links equality to military service by writing on African American contributions to the United States Military in war and peacetime.

Gail Buckley's *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm*, published in 2002, is similar to Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Michael Lanning's book mentioned above. He provides additional information on the achievements of African American combat leaders and units. He also provides examples of exemplary leadership and valor from the Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf War.

David Colley's *Blood for Dignity*, published in 2003, is the only existing novel documenting the achievements of the black infantry platoons. Colley used government documentation and oral histories of this small number of black infantry veterans. Colley clearly links decentralized operations in combat conditions with the creation of racial acceptance amongst lower Army echelons.

Christopher Moore's *Fighting for America: Black Soldiers—The Unsung Heroes of World War II*, published in 2005, highlights individual resilience, valor, and patriotism of African American service members in World War II. Moore provides detailed personal accounts of African American struggles for equality in America. This book denotes the resiliency of serving with patriotism for a nation that still treats specific ethnicities as second-class citizens.

The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II, published in 1997, was a commissioned study by the United States Army in 1993 to investigate whether or not racial bias was a factor in African Americans non-reception of the Medal of Honor during World War II. The board consisted of five members of various military backgrounds. The study used historical documents, eyewitness testimony, and the various Army award policies in order to forward potential African American nominees for the nations' highest award for valor. The board found that racial bias could not be directly linked to African Americans not receiving the award, but did note that every theater of operations had various award procedures.¹⁷ The board stated the lack of combat opportunities inherently prevented the majority of African Americans opportunities to receive valorous awards. The board also had to account for racial prejudice indirectly linked to lack of nominations for black soldiers. The board's finding resulted in seven African Americans reception of the Medal of Honor on 13 January 1997. First Lieutenant Vernon J. Baker was the sole living recipient to receive the award from President Bill Clinton.¹⁸

¹⁷ Elliot V. Converse III et al., *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1997), 180.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

CHAPTER 2
MOBILIZATION PLANS AND
SELECTIVE SERVICE

The unfavorable testimony of the 92nd Division in World War I led senior U.S. Army officers to develop solutions on how to best use and employ African Americans in the future. From 1920 to the end of World War II, senior Army officers struggled to establish an efficient policy of how to mobilize, train, and deploy African American troops. Furthermore, the lack of transparency confused the American public, in particular African Americans, on whether or not African American combat units would deploy in an advent of war. The National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began a campaign of military equality in response to the War Department's lack of transparency. The War Department published mobilizations plans in 1922, 1937, and 1940, which delineated the percentage of African Americans to be called up in the Selective Service Act, and the personnel management policy of the Reserve Corps.

The Army's senior leadership's prejudices became policy results in the 1920s derived from the Army War College's African American study results in 1925. The study reported blacks were physically unfit for combat service due to a ten ounce smaller brain than whites.¹⁹ The study reported African Americans had the following characteristics: subservient, acknowledged inferiority to whites, possessing a mob mentality, and unable

¹⁹ Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: the Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 258.

to face danger.²⁰ This is a horrible use of pseudo-science to prove a point and the study's results were not based on any scientific facts. The Army War College's negative stereotypical portrayal of African American performance had a great influence on future World War II commanders not wanting African Americans combat units.²¹ Nevertheless, the War Department believed the study to be true based on the educational differences between European and African American soldiers.

Only a quarter of African Americans achieved a score of one, two, or three on the Army's evaluation test in comparison to three-quarters of Whites. Eighty percent of African Americans were in the bottom category of the test in comparison to Whites at 26 percent.²² The Army War College study did not recognize that the majority of African American soldiers serving in World War I came from Southern states where only 25 percent of all people finished the fourth grade.²³ Seventeen percent of African Americans graduated high school in comparison to 41 percent graduation rate of whites.²⁴ Army leadership found it easier to blame African American faults as genetic, instead of placing blame on Jim Crow laws, which decreased any educational opportunities for African Americans. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson became a significant leader on prohibiting African American advancement in the Army.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 44.

²² Buckley, 258.

²³ Ibid., 259.

²⁴ Ibid.

After World War I, the Army began a significant drawdown of personnel. The four African American combat units mandated by Congress experienced reduction of personnel and several units relocated away from their headquarters. As a result, African Americans faced an uphill battle to enlist in the Army, because they could only go to specific locations in order to file an application. Many of these locations were hundreds of miles away from their hometown. The ability to become an officer was nearly impossible for African Americans. From 1920 to 1940, only one African American graduated from West Point.²⁵ In addition, the War Department published a policy in 1931 to stop recruitment for African American units.²⁶ This policy was not supposed to be released to the public, but the NAACP received a copy anyway. African American leaders perceived the War Department policy as a deliberate attempt to abolish African American combat units.²⁷ The NAACP wrote several inquiries to the Hoover administration to protest the policy, but their pleas were ignored.

Unbeknownst to the public, the War Department attempted to resolve what they referred to as the “Negro Manpower” issue. Although, they used stereotypical and biased personal reports and studies as a guideline they did attempt to come up with a positive solution for future mobilization of African American units. Senior leaders attempted to answer three controversial issues in 1922. The first was how to use African Americans as

²⁵ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

combat troops. The second was the size and composition of these units. The third was the selection of leaders concerning race.²⁸

The 1922 Protective Mobilization Plan consisted of the following guidelines in concern with African American troops. African Americans must be in combat roles, because whites would absorb high casualty rates. Senior leaders believed whites were needed for the future of the country. The African American is a citizen of the United States and is important to the Army war effort. Their citizenship status earned them the right to serve, and the United States as a democracy must afford African Americans an equal opportunity to obtain valor in battle.²⁹

The War Department decided African Americans must have combat roles in response to the first issue. Although, the War Department deemed African Americans less qualified based on World War I studies, they did recognize that in smaller units their performance was fair to good.³⁰ This assumption directly answered the second issue. The War Department's G-3 section recommended that African American units be no larger than a division size, and it was acceptable to attach small African American units to large white units. The War Department stated, "We know that white regiments and negro regiments have operated successfully side by side . . . there appears no good reason they should not be brigaded together."³¹ This is a surprising recommendation within the War

²⁸ Ibid., 33.

²⁹ Ibid., 32-33.

³⁰ Ibid., 33.

³¹ Ibid.

Department. African and white combat units were not attached to one another in World War I. The War Department dismissed this recommendation due to the lack of historical precedent, but military innovations in armor, field artillery, and air defense allowed African Americans to be attached to white Corps, Armies, and Army Groups in World War II. Note, even in 1922 the War Department did not see an issue of attaching African American units with white units and did not foresee this command relationship as integration.

The decision for the third issue, racial leadership composition, was oddly progressive for the War Department at that time. The War Department recommended African Americans have opportunities to become officers in African American combat units only. Although, the preponderance of leadership in African American units should be white. They recognized that equal standards must be upheld for white and African American officers in regards to intellect and leadership ability. The War Department recommended, “Establish a rigid standard and to require whites and negroes alike to measure up to it.”³² In theory, this would grant African Americans an opportunity to lead African American combat units.

Secretary of War John W. Hooks approved the 1922 Protective Mobilization Plan on 23 December 1922.³³ The plan required Reserve Corps commanders to block off regiment and battalion size units within their table of organizations and equipment for African American billets. This requirement mandated personnel billets for African

³² Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 33-34.

³³ Ibid., 34.

American officers. These units would remain unorganized until sufficient levels of African American officers were available.³⁴ The Reserve Corps unit billets were to be filled by the Selective Service Act and volunteers with the general mobilization of the Army in the advent of war. Unfortunately, this enabled too much power for Reserve Corps commanders to disregard the mandated policy by publishing false reports or with claims of units not activated due to lack of African American officers.

African American representation in proportion with population percentage remained drastically low until the Selective Service Act of 1940. Inactive reserves were units in theory, but still had low apportionment. In 1928, Corps Area commanders received orders to not show units predicted to receive African American troops.³⁵ The War Department did not want to acknowledge that corps commanders had the ability to disregard orders and this could provide the perception to the general American public that the War Department was inept.. By 1937, the strength of the Regular Army and National Guard was 360,000 of which only 2 percent were African American.³⁶ In response to Corps Area commanders' inability to follow orders due to bias or just confusion over the policy, the War Department attempted to modify the mobilization plan in 1937.

Army leaders acknowledged previous mobilization plans contained flaws and would repeat the same mistakes as World War I. In early 1917 prior to American entry in World War I, African American selection was disproportional due to the fact they could

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 36.

³⁶ Ibid., 38.

only serve in specific units. Complaints arose from whites about the low apportionment, which led to the Army's knee jerk reaction of drafting a higher percentage of African Americans from September to December 1917. Ironically, more objections occurred from whites on the rapid drafting, because they were losing their agricultural manpower. African Americans objected because recruiting stations refused to recruit blacks or deny them combat military occupation specialties.³⁷

The 1937 Mobilization Plan developed an unspoken agreement that African American units had a 50 percent over strength of officers in order ensure command and control, with the emphasis on control.³⁸ The emphasis on control was a direct reflection of the 1920 studies on negative perceptions of African American soldiers. The published mobilization regulations were not secret, but senior leadership emplaced a restrictive circulation. The War Department informed senior commanders to not discuss the plan outside senior command channels.³⁹ Once again, the Army failed to be transparent to the public regarding mobilization plans concerning African Americans.

The 1937 Mobilization Plan had significant changes from the 1922 plan and included nine additional provisions. Embedded within the regulation was unique verbiage to allow future discrimination against African Americans. The first provision mandated African American representation in the Army would equal the ratio of African American

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 39.

³⁹ Ibid., 39-40.

military age male population estimated to be 9 percent “when applicable.”⁴⁰ The specific language of when applicable would allow commanding general officers to ignore this requirement during development of African American combat units.

Provision number two stated each Reserve Corps Area would mobilize the equal proportion of available manpower in their respective area.⁴¹ Provision number three mandated commanders to ensure African and Whites are proportioned equally by percentage and distributed in all branches, unless national defense requires modifications.⁴² Provision number four allowed the War Department to mobilize African Americans units early.⁴³ Senior leaders believed African Americans needed more training, because of low educational levels, therefore mandating the necessity of an early mobilization.

The fifth provision required warrant officers and enlisted in African American units must be African Americans, this includes warrant officers attached from other organizations.⁴⁴ The sixth provision stated African Americans or whites could fill reserves officer billets. African American officers were restricted to National Guard officer billets.⁴⁵ The policy did not restrict whites from filling African American billets.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40-41.

This goes back to the rationale of qualified personnel regardless of race. It also makes it easier to replace or not train additional African American officers.

The seventh provision mandated African American officers would not exceed unit personnel authorization, and African American officers' eligibility solely based on merit.⁴⁶ The eighth provision required African Americans assigned to service commands must be no less than the percentage of African Americans in the total army. The final provision required African Americans who served at installation training centers to come from the same region as mobilization.⁴⁷

Army commanders' disdain to the 1937 policy was reflected in their unwillingness to comply with the new requirements. The provision of equal representation throughout all military branches received the most fervor. Combat unit commanders referred to the World War I studies as validation of not fulfilling these requirements.⁴⁸ These commanders were the previous students of the Army War College, which clearly demonstrated a validation of their prejudice toward African American combat troops. The Protective Mobilization Plan in 1940 clearly displayed the 1937 plan was not adhered to by unit commanders. African American representation was at 5 percent for all nine-reserve corps. The majority of this 5 percent were in service units.⁴⁹ It is important to note, the majority of these units only existed on paper, and billets were

⁴⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 44.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 42.

manned in accordance to general mobilization. By 1940, the events in Europe and a pending war with Japan led the War Department to begin the initial peacetime mobilization of the United States. In response to personnel reports and world events, the War Department in 1940 attempted to correct the flaws of the 1937 plan.

The 1940 plan had two key recommendations from the Army G-1. The first recommendation relaxed officer restrictions on separate battalions. The Army considered coastal artillery, anti-aircraft, and tank battalions as separate. It enabled white officers to fill African American officer billets.⁵⁰ The second recommendation defined the largest African American mobilization size as a regiment. This prevented African American National Guard units from forming brigade size headquarters. Most important was the fact it prevented any African American general officer from commanding a combat unit.⁵¹ This was in response to Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.'s, the African American commander of the 369th Coast Artillery Regiment,⁵² potential promotion to general. The War Department would never allow an African American to be in command of white soldiers.

The Army G-1 consistently debated that African American combat units be proportioned to share in anticipated combat losses. Other Army General Staff sections echoed similar recommendations, but the Army Chief of Staff, General George C.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Steven E. Clay, *U.S. Army Order of Battle, 1919-1941: Volume 2, The Arms: Cavalry, Field Artillery, and Coast Artillery, 1919-1941* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 1119-20.

Marshall, preferred to allow commanders to use their discretion. The War Department never factored that division or higher commanders may request for use of field artillery and anti-aircraft artillery units. This practice was allowed and senior leaders did not consider potential attachments as mixed divisions.⁵³

The 1940 Mobilization Plan had the following five provisions for African Americans. The first provision restated the percentage of African American representation within the Army be equal to the population. It also required earlier training for all African American units. The second provision restated African American combat service unit assignment were the same proportion to white units. The debate continued on whether or not African American combat units would deploy and in what capacity. The third provision required all African American units consist of African American enlisted personnel. Debate continued on the assignment of African American units to white divisions and the number or percentage of African Americans to be assigned. The fourth provision required African American units to have 50 percent over strength of officer billets. Black and white officer candidates would be trained at the same schools. This ensured all officers met the same qualifications. African American officers were sent only to African American units and only commanded African American troops. The final provision stated African Americans would have the same facilities as whites.⁵⁴ Senior leaders truly thought separate but equal facilities could exist on Army posts and still maintain the standards of training, health, and welfare, and morale of an African

⁵³ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 48.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 49-50.

American unit. The mobilization plan effort to maintain segregation proved to be a dismal failure and constant embarrassment to the War Department during World War II.

African American Perception During the Interwar Period 1919 to 1941

Some historians believe that America's civil rights movements began immediately after World War I with the return of African American veterans. The African American community realized World War I did not create the desired equality, but instead validated the prejudicial bias of national and military leaders. African Americans used the African American press to express outrage on the military's official release of African American's World War I combat performance. African American press also created external pressure on the government to change military policies by withholding votes from the Democratic Party after the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The emergence of Nazi Germany and the Nazi party's fascist ideology displayed a vast contradiction on American ideology of freedom and democracy and the actual American government promotion of unequal status. African Americans questioned the value of fighting for a country on democratic principles that it does not itself adhere too. What was the purpose of fighting for Europe's freedom, when there was no true freedom at home? To make matters worse, the military also placed restrictions on the ability of African Americans to serve the nation. The War Department's response was the standard practice of stating the military did not create the social conditions of America and it would remain policy not to change a social problem it did not create. African Americans perception of the military was that they would not get a chance to fight for their nation, or

that the military was going to send young untrained African American men to die in place of Whites. The Pittsburgh *Courier* wrote on 28 October 1939, “It is better to insist on training now . . . than wait until the conflict begins and be rushed as raw recruits into a slaughter that will kill us by the thousands before we learn to protect ourselves.”⁵⁵ The NAACP and other civil rights group began the Double V campaign with the goal of obtaining equality in America. James G. Thompson, a cafeteria worker at Cessna Aircraft published letter in the January 1942 Pittsburgh Courier edition, “The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so called democratic countries . . . then we let colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetuate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.”⁵⁶

The NAACP and other civil rights groups produced intense political pressure using the vote to get non-discriminatory policies in place for government job opportunities.⁵⁷ African American leaders realized they could challenge the Roosevelt Administration and Congress to make positive steps in equality by displaying American hypocrisy to the African American public. Furthermore, they realized Democratic politicians in African American urban populations relied upon their vote. The NAACP

⁵⁵ Dalfiume, 28.

⁵⁶ Buckley, 257.

⁵⁷ Dalfiume, 34.

concentrated efforts on the Army, because the Selective Service made it the sole military branch to receive the preponderance of African Americans.⁵⁸

Several African American press outlets began to attack the perceived hypocrisy of the Roosevelt Administration. The *Crisis*, published on July 1940, “the hysterical cries of the preachers of democracy for Europe leave us cold. We want democracy in Alabama, Arkansas, in Mississippi, and Michigan, in the District of Columbia, in the Senate of the United States.”⁵⁹ No longer would black leaders advocate unconditionally for blacks to volunteer to serve their country. For the first time in President Roosevelt’s tenure a popular black press, the *Afro American*, endorsed the rival presidential candidate, Wendell L. Wilkie, in the 1940 presidential election.⁶⁰ Wilkie was renowned for his desire to create equality for minorities within the United States, and abolish Jim Crow laws from the South.⁶¹ The *Baltimore Afro-American*, “In this regard, President Roosevelt not only forgot us, but he neglected us, deserted, and abandoned us to our enemies.”⁶² The Roosevelt Administration had to respond in some capacity in order to ease the American public.

President Roosevelt’s personal opinion on segregation is generally unknown, but it is acknowledged that he was sympathetic to unequal representation and opportunities

⁵⁸ MacGregor, 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁰ Dalfiume, 34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

for African Americans.⁶³ He was a master politician and rarely communicated his personal feelings about controversial issues. Generally, President Roosevelt tended to promote the status quo of Jim Crow laws, because he needed the critical Southern Democrat vote. He was popular among the African American community, because the New Deal Campaign promised opportunities for job equality. Roosevelt, did not like the African American press influence on the administration, but he had to address the criticism.⁶⁴ On 5 September 1940, Roosevelt put pressure on the War Department to publicize a policy stating African Americans will “have equal opportunity with white men in all departments of the Army.”⁶⁵ In particular, Roosevelt voiced concern over the overrepresentation of blacks in Army labor battalions. The War Department’s response was the modification of the Mobilization Plan in 1940.⁶⁶

The First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, had no reservation on vocally expressing her opinion concerning equality for blacks. She was a key figure on obtaining civil rights for African Americans and often championed the fight against the War Department for use of black combat units and equal treatment for black soldiers.⁶⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt often met with NAACP leaders, popular black pastors, black military leaders, and without reservation took opportunities to advance black equality. She said to a Washington, DC

⁶³ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Buckley, 259.

church group, “The nation cannot expect the colored people to feel that the U.S. is worth defending if they continue to be treated as they are treated now. I am not agitating the race question. The race question is agitated because people will not act justly and fairly toward each other as human beings.”⁶⁸ Her husband refused attempts to silence her for two reasons. First, her immense popularity with blacks assured their votes, and second he often agreed with her political opinion in private and would use this to his advantage when creating pressure on opponents to his agenda.⁶⁹

For the duration of World War II, Eleanor Roosevelt was a thorn in the War Department’s side. Black soldiers’ plight came to her attention, because she received hundreds of letters concerning maltreatment due to Jim Crow laws. In response, she wrote several letters to the War Department to appropriately address issues. Her efforts led the War Department to officially ban segregation on Army posts on 10 March 1943.⁷⁰ The ban ensured blacks had equal use of recreational facilities, theaters, and post exchanges. All Army posts removed Jim Crow ethnic separation signs. Another personal victory for her was the equal use of transportation on government installations and government owned transports in July 1944.⁷¹ Her main target of agitation was Secretary of War Henry Stimson.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 260.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson was a vocal antagonist for any African American equality within the military. Stimson received appointment to become Secretary of War in 1940. Prior to this appointment, he served as Secretary of War under President Howard Taft and as Secretary of State under President Herbert Hoover.⁷² Stimson was a firm believer of a segregated Army and his personal diary and memoirs reflect his opinion on the accuracy of the Army War College Survey of 1925 of Negro Troop Employment. Stimson's 1940 diary states, "Wilson [President] yielded to the same demand and appointed colored officers to several of the Divisions that went over to France, and the poor fellows made perfect fools of themselves . . . leadership is not embedded in the Negro race."⁷³ He was a typical white male in the United States in the sense his professed beliefs were in direct contradiction with one another. He claimed to President Roosevelt that he was sympathetic to blacks and they deserved civil rights, yet he was a fierce opponent to social integration.⁷⁴ Stimson did soften his position to a small degree on the use of black soldiers in combat during World War II, but he consistently remained a stark opponent to any social change within the military. Stimson's opinion and influence often matched Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall.

General Marshall realized the value of African American contribution to any war effort, but he also was an Army traditionalist. General Marshall preferred the status quo and did not believe the Army should be the public entity to test social experimentation.

⁷² MacGregor, 20.

⁷³ Buckley, 264.

⁷⁴ MacGregor, 20.

The common senior leader belief was that any military social integration would “produce situations destructive to morale and detrimental to the preparation of national defense.”⁷⁵ General Marshall did attempt to treat African Americans fairly throughout World War II. He refused to budge on integration, because the Army did not create social inequality within America, and it is the American government’s responsibility to change their ideals first prior to the Army. General Marshall reflected the senior commander’s officer attitude that integration would be destructive to army morale. He said, “experiments within the Army in the solution of social problems are fraught with danger to efficiency, discipline, and morale.”⁷⁶ General Marshall could not acknowledge that World War II would inevitably create progression within the Army, because the Roosevelt and Truman administration policies and war manpower demand created a progressive environment never before seen in United States history.

Key Progressive European and African American Leaders

The period from 1930 through 1945, several progressive leaders emerged within white and black communities to champion the fight for integration within the Army. Leaders such as Representative Hamilton Fish (R-NY), Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY), Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., the Honorable William Hastie, Charles Drew, and Assistant Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson are just a few who actively challenged the War Department to create equality for African American soldiers. Their

⁷⁵ Buckley, 264.

⁷⁶ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 141.

actions contributed to positive progressive changes within the Army. The War Department met opposing opinions with hostility, because it challenged the social status quo and military tradition.

Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., became the first Army black general officer on 25 October 1940. General Davis' career began in 1898 with his enlistment in the Army. He served as a first lieutenant in the Spanish American War with the 8th U.S. Volunteer Infantry.⁷⁷ He received a regular Army commission to the grade of second lieutenant as a cavalry officer on 19 May 1901.⁷⁸ He was the first African American to be promoted to become an officer in the Regular Army from the enlisted ranks.

He served with the 10th Cavalry during the Philippine American War, Mexico Border Patrol, and in Liberia.⁷⁹ During World War I, Davis eventually rose to the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel and was stationed in the Philippines.⁸⁰ From 1905 to 1940, he served four times as the professor of military science and tactics at Wilberforce University and twice in the same position at Tuskegee University.⁸¹ In 1938, he commanded the 369th Infantry Regiment (New York National Guard) and upon appointment to brigadier general, he commanded the 4th Cavalry Brigade, 2nd Cavalry

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁸ Michael Lee Lanning, *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attacks to Colin Powell* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1997), 103.

⁷⁹ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 79.

⁸⁰ Buckley, 265.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 265-266.

Division. He would be the first black officer in command over white officers.⁸² General Davis served as the subject matter expert on the War Department's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Polices from 1941 to 1944.⁸³ In late November 1944, he served as an assistant to the Office of Inspector General in the European Theater, and his influence was instrumental to the development of the first integrated black combat units.⁸⁴

William Hastie was one of the few African Americans to graduate from Harvard Law School and was a prominent civil rights leader. From 1933 to 1937, he served as the assistant solicitor in the Department of Interior. In 1937, President Roosevelt, appointed him the first African American federal judge in the United States District Court of the Virgin Islands. In 1941, President Roosevelt appointed Hastie to the position of Assistant Secretary in the War Department with the difficult duty and responsibility to develop a fair policy for black soldiers in the military.⁸⁵ This was in direct response to the NAACP's demands to the Roosevelt administration.

Hastie knew his appointment would receive a lukewarm reception from the War Department leaders. The NAACP also criticized his positions when strides towards military equality were not immediately reached, and he was often placed in a lame duck position.⁸⁶ His famous Hastie Survey intelligently addressed why segregation was a

⁸² *Ibid.*, 266.

⁸³ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 160.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 689.

⁸⁵ Buckley, 267.

⁸⁶ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 80.

detriment to the U.S. Army.⁸⁷ Eventually through frustration due to lack of cooperation with War Department leaders he resigned in protest in 1943.⁸⁸

Controversial and prejudicial War Department decisions on appropriate use of medical health care for black soldiers enraged the African American community. Charles Drew was a famous African American physician renowned for his research with blood chemistry and blood transfusions. He designed a method to cool blood plasma (blood protein and fluid) for the “Blood for Britain” program in the summer of 1940.⁸⁹ His efforts saved countless British lives during the height of the Battle of Britain in 1940. Drew became the director of New York City Red Cross Blood Bank in January 1941. The New York City Red Cross Blood Bank was responsible for the blood collection of the entire United States military.⁹⁰ The War Department ordered the use of white blood only in the winter of 1941.⁹¹

War Department leaders ensured segregation extended in all facets of the Army. The War Department policy was black blood would only be used for black soldiers, and vice versa. Although, it was appropriate for blacks to receive white blood transfusions.⁹² Obviously, there was zero scientific data to support this policy and it was clearly driven

⁸⁷ This survey will be discussed later in the paper.

⁸⁸ Buckley, 267.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 268.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

by prejudicial leaders. The irony of this decision from the War Department is that the person in charge of the entire United States military's blood bank was an African American. They would not recognize the foremost physician in the field of blood transfusion. This policy had a disastrous effect on morale of African American soldiers and community. This affirmed African American beliefs that the War Department would not provide an equal level of healthcare for blacks as for white soldiers. Charles Drew resigned in the spring of 1941 without a single protest to the policy.⁹³ Tragically, he died from a car crash in 1950, because a white's only hospital refused to admit him.⁹⁴

Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Hamilton Fish introduced two amendments to Congress in 1940 to broaden the Selective Service Act to ensure African Americans received equal opportunity to serve in proportion to the population and erase discrimination with mobilization. The Wagner Amendment proposed that minorities receive equal treatment for voluntary enlistment in the military. Southern congressional representatives viewed this proposal as an attempt to integrate the military. The amendment passed the Senate and allowed African Americans to volunteer for the Army without discrimination (at least in theory).⁹⁵

Representative Hamilton Fish's amendment focused on the draft. Congressman Fish, a New York Republican, was unique because he commanded Company K, 369th Infantry, and 93rd Division in World War I. He was a vocal advocate for equality within

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁹⁵ MacGregor, 11.

the military. The Fish Amendment's purpose was to erase discrimination within the draft and ensure draftees received equal training and selection. The key clause states, "there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race and color."⁹⁶ The Fish Amendment had little initial impact on the War Department's racial policy. Draft boards were controlled at the local level and the amendment itself did not eliminate segregation. The Fish Amendment began the road to integration within the Army. The policy established varied levels of African American combat and service units. It forced the Army to acknowledge their use and provide adequate training.

The War Department realized congressional influence would be a factor on the deployment and use of African American troops.⁹⁷ Typical of senior Army officials they only reacted to political implications of African American combat units. Rarely did these leaders consider the economic waste that segregation inherently created within the Army. The Fish Amendment meant the Army had to provide equal training and recreation. They failed to recognize the inherent faults of segregation and believed an overabundance of manpower would be available such was the case for mobilization for World War I.⁹⁸ The Army's segregation policy made Peacetime Mobilization difficult, because the execution of the Mobilization Plan of 1940 did not match policy. The War Department was woefully unprepared for the massive mobilization necessary when the United States entered World War II on 7 December 1941.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁷ MacGregor, 12.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 24.

CHAPTER 3
MOBILIZATION AND TRAINING
(1940 to 1944)

The execution of the Protective Mobilization Plan was flawed, because of poor guidance from the War Department and commanders' prejudice to activation of new African American units, particularly combat units.⁹⁹ The War Department's decision of limited dissemination throughout the Army backfired as the Army G-1 and commanders struggled to execute the policy. A small number of white units within the Army Reserve became re-designated as Regular Army black units in order to meet the first provision of the Protective Mobilization Plan. For example, 1st Battalion of 502nd Coastal Artillery Regiment (white) re-designated to 76th Coastal Artillery Regiment (Negro), and the 505th Coastal Artillery Regiment (white) re-designated 77th Coastal Artillery Regiment (Negro).¹⁰⁰ Within the training portion of this dissertation, there will be a sub chapter dedicated to white officer opinions on leading African American troops. Re-designation of units did not meet with widespread favor among commanders, particularly commanders who may have previously thought they would command white combat units instead of being redirected to command a black combat unit.

Senior commanders protested unit re-designation if it meant African American units, usually battalion size or smaller, were attached to their unit. For example, General Headquarters Air Force requested the proposed chemical company, African American, be

⁹⁹ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 70.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

exchanged for a white unit. The justification for this exchange was a black unit would lead to integration, because of the duties and responsibilities the unit was expected to execute on various bases. Essentially, chemical units operated in a decentralized fashion and the company was broken apart to enable positioning on multiple air bases. The War Department denied the request, because the Air Force did not need to utilize the black chemical company in the way they described in order to execute a peacetime mission.¹⁰¹ However, by explicitly stating peacetime this type of distinction allowed senior commanders to deny African American combat units during World War II.

Enlistments of whites for newly created units began on 1 August 1940. Enlistments for blacks began on 15 August 1940. The Army delayed enlistments, because adequate facilities were not available. The Army's decision to reinforce segregation led to black units being sent to temporary stations until an adequate base was located.¹⁰²

The Selective Training and Service Act, passed in 1940, attempted to create a perceived racial equality for military service. Civil rights leaders such as Charles H. Houston, NAACP, and Rayford W. Logan, chairman of the civilian Committee on Participation of Negroes in the National Defense Program, provided essential testimony to Congress. They requested Congress ensure the act passed with legal language to ensure no discrimination in the selection of men serving in all of the various military leader positions and job occupations. Representative Hamilton Fish and Senator Robert F. Wagner submitted amendments, as noted above, to include anti-discriminatory language.

¹⁰¹ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 70-71.

¹⁰² Ibid., 70.

The majority of congressmen did not object to this language and the bill passed with relative ease. There was no objection, because segregation in that period was not considered discriminatory. As long as the Army provided equal opportunity with training and selection to all races, regardless of color and creed, then the legality was unquestionable.¹⁰³ Common sense today would argue that segregation and discrimination are inherently linked. The simple fact that this distinction was not noted in the Selective Service Act of Training and Mobilization led commanders to utilize bias and stereotypes to limit the number of African Americans to join the Army.

Civil rights leaders noted the disparity in the language and submitted a memorandum to the War Department, read on 23 September 1940, to request additions to the act through executive actions.¹⁰⁴ The memorandum requested the following additions and changes be made. Utilization of black reserve officers to train black recruits. All branches, to include the Air Corps, opened for all black officers. Existing and proposed Army units mandated to accept black officers and enlisted men. Full integration of specialized personnel into all military services. Specialized personnel are physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and chemical warfare. Blacks appointed to key national and local agencies engaged in enforcement and execution of the Selective Service Training Act of 1940. Technique developments to ensure the Navy complies with integration and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 74.

provides equal opportunity for all naval job occupations. Techniques were developed to ensure black nurses receive equality within the Army, Navy, and Red Cross.¹⁰⁵

Unbeknownst to the African American community, the previous 1937 Mobilization Plan addressed several of these concerns. General Marshall informed President Roosevelt on 13 September 1940 that the Army already had a policy in place to draft black soldiers in equitable proportions. President Roosevelt requested this be made public, and on 16 September 1940, the War Department published a press issue titled *Expansion of Colored Organizations Planned*. Present and future African American units were released and it was stated that, “the creation of additional colored combat organizations is now under consideration.”¹⁰⁶

President Roosevelt created more apprehension in the African American community with the publication of the Presidential directive on the use of Negro Troops on 9 October 1940 in response to the civil rights leaders’ requests.¹⁰⁷ The policy contained the following messages: The Army will maintain a proportionate strength of black soldiers. Black units will be established in all major branches of service. Black reserve officers can be assigned to active black units, and only active black units. Opportunity for officer selection will be made available to blacks, when officer candidate schools are made available. Blacks are currently being trained in aviation occupations. This statement was false, because no blacks received Army pilot training in 1940. Black

¹⁰⁵ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 74-75.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

civilians will have equal opportunity to work at Army posts if they meet specified qualifications. Segregation was to remain Army policy, because “morale is splendid, their rate of reenlistment is exceptionally high, and their field training is well advanced.”¹⁰⁸ Black civil rights leaders had a vehement reaction to the policy letter, because of the perception that the War Department was either making false claims or justifying discrimination. Mobilization continued to plague the War Department for the duration of World War II.

The Selective Service Training and Selection Act utilization of the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) created a bias towards selection for military duties and military occupation specialty for African Americans. The test score results not only led to disqualification of Army service, but also had tremendous impacts on perception of black soldier’s intelligence, particularly in combat units.

The Army General Classification Test (AGCT) introduced on March 1941 was designed to select appropriate men for Army service.¹⁰⁹ The Army G-1 recognized the majority of candidates who received low test scores resided in the South. The test was administered by local draft boards to avoid white Southern backlash.¹¹⁰ The Army General Classification Test purpose was not to test native intelligence. The purpose was to test what the War Department considered four essential characteristics soldiers needed to execute assigned duties and responsibilities. The four elements are native capacity,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹⁰⁹ MacGregor, 24.

¹¹⁰ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 241.

schooling and educational opportunities, socioeconomic status, and cultural background.¹¹¹ Obviously, the test was designed with European American educational opportunities in mind, not African Americans.

Dr. Walter V. Bingham, Chief Psychologist of the Classification and Replacement Branch of the the Adjutant General's Office denied the AGCT was biased towards blacks. He claimed the AGCT only defined how well a person can adapt and adhere to military training. It tested not only education level from school, but also knowledge gained through society mediums like newspapers, radios, or movies. Dr. Benjamin failed to acknowledge that most blacks did not have access to the above mediums, and educational opportunities, specifically in the South, were not equal to white schools.¹¹²

The AGCT had five grade levels. The Army selected officer candidates from the grades one through two. Enlisted specialists and technicians came from grades one through three. The last two grades were expected to be assigned to semi-skilled and labor positions. The majority of African Americans test scores were in the last two grades.¹¹³ Blacks who had similar educational background to whites normally had similar scores. The AGCT distribution curve for whites was 7 percent for grade one, 24 percent for grade two, 38 percent for grade three, 24 percent for grade two, and 7 percent for grade five.¹¹⁴ African American scores from March 1941 to December 1942 displayed the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 242.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 242-243.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 242.

marked contrast from white test scores in the grade four and grade five averages. Grade 4 percentage was 35 percent and grade five average was 50 percent.¹¹⁵ The low-test scores created a problem for the War Department, because the normal practice was to send soldiers with low-test scores to labor battalions. This assignment allocation would directly contradict with the Mobilization Plan of 1940 and the Selection Service Act. The War Department recognized the necessity to create large African American units and renewed debate on the size and role of these units.

Despite professional opinion that the test did not score native intelligence, the War Department and senior commanders repeatedly used the AGCT scores as an excuse to discriminate against blacks. The War Department allowed local draft boards to reject blacks or assign them to labor battalions, because of low-test scores. Senior commanders created the stereotype that the scores reflected natural intelligence, which would disseminate throughout Army ranks directly affecting future officers' opinion on the use of black soldiers in combat roles.

The War Department recognized new units needed to be created within all Army branches in order to meet the requirements of the Fish and Wagner Amendments. African Americans had to fill appropriate personnel billets within these branches. They also had to provide adequate training and recreational facilities for these new units. This requirement was the same for European and African Americans in the rapid Army expansion and the War Department struggled to balance priorities on building "separate but equal" facilities.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 244.

Prior to war mobilization on 7 December 1941 an analytical survey conducted by Judge William Hastie pointed out Army policy flaws to War Department leaders. The Hastie Survey, published on 22 September 1941, attempted to change the Army's policy regarding African Americans. Hastie informed the War Department that current Army practice was counter intuitive to America's values and ideals of democracy. The survey stated, "Insistence upon an inflexible policy of separating white and black soldiers is probably the most dramatic evidence of hypocrisy in our profession that we are girding ourselves for the preservation of democracy."¹¹⁶ The survey pointed out two thirds of Army base locations were in the South. Hastie criticized commanders' use of upholding Southern values as harmful when training black units and would create a toxic atmosphere damaging morale. "The traditional morals of the south have been widely accepted and adopted by the Army as the basis of policy and practice affecting the Negro Soldier."¹¹⁷ The Army needed to cease rigid separation of units, because it was too expensive. The survey acknowledged the mistake of using the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) to keep African Americans out of combat units. The survey specifically cited the 77th Coastal Artillery as an example.

Hastie pointed out the majority of blacks assigned to the 77th Coastal Artillery had low test scores, but their training record showed their progression was faster than an adjacent white artillery regiment.¹¹⁸ This unit clearly showed exceptional training and

¹¹⁶ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 138.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 137.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 138.

command environment enable black units to be on par with white units. The Army should not withhold assignment of blacks with low-test scores from combat units on the premise of an inability to accomplish daily duties and responsibilities.

Hastie recommended the following changes be made within the Army. New black units be made to absorb the anticipated excess of black selectees.¹¹⁹ Eliminate black single companies and detachments, and attach to black combat regiments.¹²⁰ Isolated small black units on Southern posts transferred to larger posts. This would alleviate the need to create separate recreational facilities and save the cost for the Army.¹²¹ The War Department contrived a plan to begin experiments with integration.¹²² However, Hastie did not recommend integration experiments during wartime, since he knew this would be too much for War Department leaders to accept, because of Army traditions.¹²³

The War Department considered the first three recommendations as acceptable, because the Army already planned to implement a plan to create more black units. The War Department completely rejected any idea of integration, and considered Hastie as trying to bring on a social revolution.¹²⁴ Hastie's original point of the hypocrisy of fighting for democracy and freedom for other countries was not taken seriously by the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 139.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

War Department. Hastie wrote, “Until the men in our Army and civilians at home believe in and work for democracy with similar fervor and determination, we will not be an effective nation in the face of a foreign foe. So long as we condone and appease un-American attitudes and practices within our own military and civilian life, we can never arouse ourselves to the exertion which the present emergency requires.”¹²⁵

The United States initiated wartime mobilization after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The Army was not equipped to handle the vast expansion, and segregation created more issues to be resolved concerning housing, cadre, and training facilities. Housing was an issue, because the majority of Army bases were located in the South. In general, local citizens had negative attitudes towards receiving large number of blacks in their community. Therefore, the Army separated African American infantry divisions in order to accommodate Southern prejudice.¹²⁶ African American cadre were not available for new military occupation specialties, such as anti-aircraft artillery.¹²⁷ Coastal artillery and anti-aircraft artillery units had to grow their cadre. Protest arose from the Coastal Artillery Replacement Training Center at Fort Eustis, Virginia, because white cadre were used to train black soldiers.¹²⁸ Senior commander protests became a common theme for the War Department with utilization of

¹²⁵ Ibid., 140.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 107.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 108.

white cadre to train these small black combat units. Training facilities had to be separate on post and normally black units did not receive training priority.

The Selective Board pressured the War Department to fix the proportion of blacks in the combat units. They were embarrassed by the lack of transparency to the public and realized the legality of selection might be questioned.¹²⁹ The Army did not draft a single African American in the first requisition in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.¹³⁰ The Selective Service Boards recognized three hundred thousand blacks were not called to service, which was as direct violation of the policy.¹³¹ The War Department acknowledged the low numbers, but did not particularly care, because facilities were not built to handle the black population growth.¹³² The Selection Board created further mistrust with the black community by the way local stations notified black recipients for Army service. The board sent a letter of notification to recipients, but the letter did not equate to actual military service for blacks. Many blacks lost jobs due to this flawed procedure, and never served a day in the Army. For whites, the letter was a true selection to the Army.¹³³ Blacks could only be called up for service when appropriate billets and units became available. This was not a problem for white units, because those units were already emplaced. The segregated call-ups to service were a constant embarrassment for

¹²⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹³⁰ Dalfiume, 51.

¹³¹ MacGregor, 24.

¹³² Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 240.

¹³³ Dalfiume, 52.

the Selective Service, because African American numbers were not in proportion to the population. This War Department began the debate on the creation of a division to absorb the increasing numbers of blacks.

The Selective Service used AGCT scores to assign personnel to military occupation. The majority of African American scores were in the lower spectrum, which normally meant assignment to labor battalions. The War Department realized the perception of the majority of African Americans serving in labor battalions, would create public unrest. A *New York Times* editorial on 22 January 1941 said, “The white South made its Negrophobic bed and must continue to lie in it, even if this does result in drafting white fathers, while single Negroes remain in civil life.”¹³⁴ The War Department decided to re-create black divisions in order to absorb the numbers, which would create the perception of adhering to the Selective Service Act.

The Organization Mobilization Group (Army G-3) led by Colonel Edwin W. Chamberlain proposed changes be made in the Army’s manpower to adequately distribute growing numbers of blacks in 1941 and 1942. Colonel Chamberlain proposed African American recruits with low AGCT scores integrate into Army units as cooks, orderlies, and drivers. This allowed qualified African Americans to be sent to the combat units and dissolve unnecessary units. Colonel Chamberlain believed the low AGCT scores proved that blacks in large units could not meet the same expectations of training and combat efficiency as whites. He argued the Army was wasting money on creating segregated units and training facilities. This proposal met severe opposition, because

¹³⁴ Ibid., 52.

senior commanders saw this as integration.¹³⁵ Colonel Chamberlain responded, “there was no more integration involved than in the employment of Negroes as servants in a white household.”¹³⁶

Colonel Chamberlain’s view, albeit bias, does generate a few important points. First, he recognized the quality of soldiers sent to combat units was paramount regardless of race. Second, the Army was wasting money by keeping units segregated, but failed to see segregation was the true crux for the Army. By keeping units separated, regardless of size, the Army would continue to waste money and manpower, while creating the impression to senior commanders that black units were inferior. The War Department’s response was to reactivate the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions in 1942. The 2nd Cavalry Division was reactivated in February 1943 as an all-black unit.¹³⁷ The creation of the divisions allowed 15,000 authorizations each, and could easily absorb growth in personnel.¹³⁸ The creation of black divisions created opportunities for blacks to serve in combat, but it did not resolve the poor selection criteria used to assign soldiers to divisions.

Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission questioned the legality of the quota system in 1943, because of public backlash of the non-selection of

¹³⁵ MacGregor, 31-32.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

African Americans.¹³⁹ Southern delegates began to complain about the selection process. Representative Charles E. McKenzie, Louisiana, criticized the legality of the selection board in the *Congressional Record*. “Has it actually come to pass in America where the color of a man’s skin is the basis for his being deferred, even if he is single and has no dependents . . . I warn you gentlemen of the House, that such discrimination is detrimental to the morale of the Nation.”¹⁴⁰

By 1943, 46 percent of African Americans were rejected by local draft boards, in comparison to 30 percent of European Americans.¹⁴¹ The 13 percent higher rejection rate was largely due to local draft stations prejudice and confusion with the Army policy of induction. African Americans were disadvantaged from the start to serve in the Army. They had less opportunities and if accepted the majority barely met the Army’s general requirements.¹⁴² The irony is the same delegates who did not want blacks stationed in their communities were the same people complaining about unfair representation.

Personnel Assignment in a Segregated Army

The creation of all black divisions allowed the Army to send available blacks soldiers to the units in mass, regardless of AGCT scores. Since there were a limited number of black units, it was impossible to disseminate quality equally throughout the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 412.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 240.

¹⁴² Ibid.

force. White units could do so, because reception of low AGCT scores soldiers would not hinder the quality of the unit. The majority of black units could expect 50 percent of new soldiers to be in the grade five class.¹⁴³ African American divisions received the highest percentage of class four and class five AGCT scorers. The Army G-1 established no balance for reception of soldiers to black units. The majority of white officers used the AGCT scores as an assessment of overall intelligence.

Army psychologists warned leaders to not use the scores as an intelligence measure, but failed to add the difference of quality between the two ethnicities.¹⁴⁴ Although, this should be self-evident due to social construct within the United States in 1941. White officers used the scores to prophesize failure within units. It was inevitable that they would fail, because of reception of low quality black soldiers. Low-test scores proved blacks inferiority to whites. This also led to negative training environments. African American units, regardless of size, normally did not receive the most qualified white officers. Black officers also faced insurmountable challenges, because of the Army's segregation policy.

Prior to 1941, the only branch of commissioning for African Americans in a segregated Army was infantry.¹⁴⁵ Only two black combat arms officers and three chaplains existed within the Regular Army in 1940. The National Guard had 150 officers

¹⁴³ Ibid., 244.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 243.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 195.

and the War Department intended for them to stay with their respective units.¹⁴⁶ The Reserves had 353 officers with the majority in infantry.¹⁴⁷ The War Department assigned these officers to newly created black units. Black reserve officers still had to obtain Army approval to be officers in the Regular Army. In addition, they could be re-classified and assigned to units that were not their original Army branch.¹⁴⁸ Army leaders decided to place the bulk of reserve commissioned officers within the field artillery and anti-aircraft artillery branch.¹⁴⁹ Black officers could only be assigned to available and authorized billets mandated by the G-1 which led to misappropriation of assignments. For example, black medical practitioners in the Reserves were assigned to various black units. Since, the commissioning source at that time was only infantry; the Army felt it was appropriate to assign them to different roles. In other cases, black medical professionals were not assigned at all, thus created a void for a much-needed specialty.¹⁵⁰ The Army did not have enough Reserve and National Guard black officers to fill personnel billets for black units and subsequently published the Negro Officer Troop Basis.

The Negro Officer Troop Basis established the authorization by assignment and grade for all black units in the Army.¹⁵¹ Units would assign white officers in officer slots

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 192.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 196.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 208.

until black officers became available. All assignments were to be in the grade of second and first lieutenant, with the exception of promotion to the rank of colonel in the coastal artillery, field artillery, infantry, and medical branches.¹⁵² The Negro Officer Troop Basis prohibited black officers, with the exception of chaplain and medical officers, from being sent to units with officers in a junior grade. This guaranteed less promotion opportunities. Promotion was based on job availability not merit. This had a profound impact on morale within the black officer corps.¹⁵³ The War Department delegated to major commands the responsibility to field African American officers.¹⁵⁴ This of course resulted in mixed results and enabled senior commanders to place personal prejudice on unit assignments and deployments.

Army policy mandated Officer Candidate Schools be integrated in accordance with the 1937 Mobilization Plan. Officer Candidate Schools was the Army's first true attempt at integration. This is even more remarkable, because senior Army leaders did not view this as integration. Army leadership determined officer value in regard to training and leadership, regardless of skin color, but maintained strict segregation with Army units. General Marshall did not want a quota system, but insisted on equal training.¹⁵⁵ Black and white candidates roomed, ate, and trained together with little

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 211.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 208-209.

¹⁵⁵ MacGregor, 51.

friction.¹⁵⁶ Black and white officers in theory were considered equal for officer training, but unequal when it came to assignment opportunities. By August of 1942, black officers were less than 1 percent of the Army's 3,500,000 men in service.¹⁵⁷ The Volunteer Officer Candidate (VOC) program exhibited few African American officers were accepted to the War Department.¹⁵⁸ The War Department acknowledged there would never be enough African American officers to fill black unit officer authorizations. They reverted to the same flawed officer assignments decision they made in World War I.

Small black units, specifically black combat units received the most benefit from the War Departments publication of the Negro Officer Troop Basis. By July 1942, the Anti-aircraft command filled all authorized billets with the exception of the 369th. The 369th was already entirely black and deployed overseas understrength.¹⁵⁹ The Negro Officer Troop Basis only allowed black officers to be assigned and promoted by groups. This failed policy denied good leadership to black units.¹⁶⁰

The best black men available who could become commissioned officers were not selected for various reasons. Black non-commissioned officers preferred to retain their rank, because they did not want to face the racial challenges of the officer corps.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 211.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 209.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 210-211.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 212.

Particularly, many Southern communities vehemence against black officers was common knowledge. For example, the entire Mississippi congressional delegation requested zero black officers to be assigned there.¹⁶² Black officers were sent to over strength units and often held at training centers until enough black officers were available to be assigned. This meant they were assigned in mass, while white officers were directly assigned to a unit with specific duties and responsibilities.¹⁶³ The majority of white officers did not want to serve in black combat units.

The Army Staff preferred to send white Southern officers to black units, because they were perceived best to interact with blacks due to familiarity.¹⁶⁴ Army studies showed white Officer Candidate School graduates disfavored service in African American units, specifically the divisions. The study showed race was not the primary issue. The number one factor for the undesire to serve in black units was the poor treatment by peers and leaders within white divisions.¹⁶⁵ White officers received demeaning additional duties to monitor black soldiers off duty activities.¹⁶⁶ It was not unheard of for white officers in black units to send transfer requests to the War Department. The War Department attempted to dissuade mass transfers by adopting a policy that allowed white officers to transfer after 18 months of service within black

¹⁶² Ibid., 213.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 218-219.

¹⁶⁴ MacGregor, 37.

¹⁶⁵ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 185.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 186.

units.¹⁶⁷ Of course, this policy contributed to poor performance by black units, because of the constant officer turnover ratio led to multiple disruptions. White junior officers began to adopt the prejudiced attitudes of their senior commanders.

Senior commanders used the AGCT scores to justify poor unit performance. This justification became a common self-serving prophecy. Commanders' exaggeration of poor or mediocre performance was more profound with African American units and staff. A 1942 report from a special inspector informed the War Department that mediocre to poor white officers were assigned to black units and poor leadership is directly responsible for poor unit performance.¹⁶⁸ This self-serving prophecy became an unacknowledged Army trend. African American units only performed well when led by European American commanding officers. If they performed poorly, it was because of their African American officers. If there were no African American officers available in the unit, then poor performance must be from the poor unintelligent enlisted men, whose low AGCT scores proved these men were untrainable. A few Army major commands attempted to rectify the situation by requiring white officers with excellent ratings be sent to company commands in black units.¹⁶⁹ White junior officers' perception in black units was that they had less promotion opportunities, would not serve in combat, the assignment was punishment, and they were stuck in a career-ending job. At least white

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

officers had the advantage of an equitable promotion system and potential for reassignment, while black officers received unequal treatment from the start.

African American officers' promotions were in mass and not based on individual merit. The War Department's policy was to only promote the appropriate number of black officers in accordance with personnel authorizations. Promotion opportunities were a restriction for black officers the moment they received a commission. Black units were less numerous than white units, therefore lack of growth meant lack of opportunities. Furthermore, the black units became over strength in 1943 due to the lack of promotion opportunities and black officers' admission to Officer Candidate School regardless of the prejudiced AGCT in sufficient numbers.

White officers also treated black officers as subservient continuing the Army tradition that blacks served better under white Southern commanders. Senior commanders believed black officers actually preferred to serve under whites.¹⁷⁰ This misguided paternalistic attitude had negative effects on morale within black units.

First, black officers arrival to units disrupted the unit training. Black officers replaced white officers normally during critical training periods, which caused a readjustment in leadership. These training breaks created poor command climates, because trust had to be re-earned with leadership.¹⁷¹ The Army attempted to rectify breaks in training by allowing the previous white officers to conduct a relief in place with black officers when sufficient numbers were available. This often led to white officers'

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 214.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 217.

mistreatment of black officers by treating them as subordinate, although they both held the same rank. This Catch-22 situation resulted in low morale for black officers. The second problem was that some black enlisted men saw this as a leadership weakness or black officers as just substandard to whites.¹⁷² The reverse often was true, with black enlisted men siding with their black officers, thus causing strain within the command structure. Commanders often compounded this problem by retaining white officers. Therefore, some units had shortages of officers, while others were over strength causing further imbalances within the Army. It also created an antagonistic command climate for black divisions.

The War Department did not consider mixed staffs in black units as integration, although it is obvious this mixture met the definition of integration. The Army's unspoken policy of not allowing black officers in supervisory position of white officers attributed to friction within black division staffs. Most commanders refused to recognize segregation was the primary factor for friction, and often replaced black officers with whites in order to fix the so-called problem. The mixed staff presented a wonderful opportunity for the Army to learn the value of cooperation and collaboration between the two ethnicities, but instead continued the failed Army Southern traditions. A common practice for commanders was to place blame on black officers for any failures within the unit. It did not truly matter whether the failure was real or perceived.¹⁷³ Psychological

¹⁷² Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 217-218.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 221-222.

animosities existed on both sides, and it is simply remarkable that these units could accomplish the slightest task.

A few commanders attempted to bridge animosity with the establishment of equal policies for all to adhere to within the division. These commanders ensured additional duties were shared by all, regardless of race.¹⁷⁴ These units obviously performed better than their counterparts who had leaders who stuck to Southern traditions. One commander stated, “It has been my policy in the sixteen months I have had this regiment that there shall be no discrimination based on race, color, or creed. All officers of the regiment use the same messes, sleeping accommodations, and bathhouses.” It is apparent this commander understood the root problem. It cannot be expected for officers to get along when segregation allows separation from the start. It is impossible to foster a cooperative environment or build trust when a person is living with inequality. Solid progressive leadership from commanders was critical for black unit success.

African American regiments and smaller units did not face the friction or animosity that division staffs had to deal with. The majority of black tank, tank destroyer, engineer, and anti-aircraft artillery units reported little or no friction amongst the staff.¹⁷⁵ These small units normally deployed in their entirety and due to their technical expertise often were the subject matter experts. It is highly probable the small number of officers needed to staff these units allowed for a less threatening command environment. These units also fought utilizing decentralizing operations, which allowed for enhanced

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 222.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 224.

command, control, and responsibility for officers to make decisions on how best to use their weapon systems to engage the enemy. Army groups, armies, corps, and divisions normally requested these units as enablers to bring additional firepower or skill set to assist with mission accomplishment. As noted above, senior commanders did not consider attachment of small black combat units as integration.

Formation of Small Black Combat Units

Armored Force senior commanders protested strongly against the creation of African American tank units. They argued their combat arm was not a separate battalion function. The War Department G-3 said it was, because the public viewed it as such. The War Department created three black tank battalions. The 758th Light Tank Battalion, 1 June 1941; 761st Tank Battalion, 1 April 1942; and the 784th Tank Battalion 1 April 1943.¹⁷⁶ Chapter 3 is a case study on how well the 761st Tank Battalion integrated during combat operation in the European Theater of Operations.

The following black anti-aircraft units existed by the end of 1942: eight anti-aircraft artillery regiments, four barrage balloon battalions, six separate anti-aircraft battalions, and two separate searchlight batteries.¹⁷⁷ For field artillery there were one brigade headquarters, division artillery, seven field artillery regiments, and fourteen field artillery battalions.¹⁷⁸ Mobilization was efficient for these units. The perception of white

¹⁷⁶ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 120-121.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 121.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 122.

senior commanders was that anti-aircraft artillery units served well in this function, particularly if it kept them from the frontlines when attached to heavy artillery.¹⁷⁹

Tank destroyers became the new combat arms branch for the Army in World War II. Two African American battalions, 846th, and 795th, formed in 1942. Eleven total tank destroyer battalions existed by 1943. The Army used field artillery cadre to train the new formations. This thesis does not include a tank destroyer case study, but strongly recommends reading the history of the 846th Tank Destroyer Battalion. This specific unit experienced tremendous upheaval from enforcement of racial prejudice in training and had a disastrous combat experience in the European Theater of Operations.

Deployment Policies and Race Tensions (1942 to 1944)

Secretary Stimson established the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies on 27 August 1942 in response to pressure from African American civil rights group.¹⁸⁰ Judge William Hastie was the original chairperson for this committee. The group's purpose was to investigate and resolve discrimination issues within the Army. The committee's well-intentioned efforts were doomed for failure, because the Army's segregation policy was itself discriminatory. The committee instantly recognized Southern posts' Jim Crow policy was an anathema for the health and welfare of black units.¹⁸¹ Regardless, they faced an uphill battle to get the War Department to change the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 121.

¹⁸⁰ MacGregor, 34.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 36.

flawed policies. The Red Cross establishment of racially segregated blood banks increased tension within the black community in November 1941.¹⁸² The black press condemnation of this awful policy had a negative effect on black soldiers' morale, because of the perception that white commanders may not value their lives in comparison to white soldiers. The War Department increased tension with the publication of the Army's deployment criteria.

The Army G-3 announced black units would not be sent overseas if they were not at minimum at par with white units in the spring of 1943.¹⁸³ Army G-3 was concerned commanders would be unwilling to take to them to battle, and there would be a complete mismanagement of manpower. He said, "The Army is open to severe and just criticism for this wasted Negro manpower which, if left in civil life would contribute materially to an important phase of the war effort."¹⁸⁴ The policy was supposed to add weight to the May 1942 War Department directive to senior commanders to ensure black combat troops were sent overseas in proportion to the black population percentage in each theater command.¹⁸⁵ Senior commanders decided who came, regardless of published policy. Some commanders did not want to deal with host nations' hostile reaction to black

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 258.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ MacGregor, 37.

soldiers. Others just used traditional Southern prejudices for justification, and others only requested labor units continuing the same flawed practices used in World War I.¹⁸⁶

The War Department finally acknowledged the misapplication of the AGCT was the main culprit for untrained Army units, regardless of ethnical make-up in 1943. The War Department designed a new test, which was implemented in June 1943. The new test had the following changes: test intelligence not literacy, 94 percent of group five screened out, branches required to accept proportion of size for African Americans, no approved transfers based on AGCT scores, basic training graduates unauthorized for transfers to development battalions, African American units required to train 50 percent longer than whites, and African American units deployed overseas in proportion to white units, in order to share in casualty rates and honors.¹⁸⁷ Soldiers who had AGCT scores of five were sent to the development battalions to receive additional basic training. An anonymous commander summed up the issue with AGCT with one quote, “It would be a little silly to assume that all German soldiers are of Class three or better in spite of their claims of superiority.”¹⁸⁸ The new plan had mixed results. One positive outcome of the plan was the creation of special training battalions. Whites were 70 percent and blacks 30 percent of the normal composition ratio of these special training battalions. The level of quality training was high, despite the majority of the training held at Southern bases.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁷ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 260.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 406.

These battalions produced the equivalent of 12 divisions of available manpower.¹⁸⁹ These units demonstrated that training and leadership was the key. New training policies did not hinder senior commanders' personal prejudices. They still denied deployment of black combat units.

The War Department's 1943 deployment criteria also spelled the end for the 2nd Cavalry Division as a combat unit, because it did not meet training standards. The War Department converted the 2nd Cavalry Division to a labor service unit upon arrival in North Africa in March 1944.¹⁹⁰ This controversial decision gained the attention of Congress, because the renowned 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments were part of this disbandment. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments were two of the first four black regiments officially activated by an act of Congress.¹⁹¹ The black community expressed outrage, because this is a clear example of the War Department keeping black units from combat.

The Advisory Committee on Negro Troops attempted to alleviate issues in 1943. Truman Gibson replaced William Hastie, who resigned in protest in 1942, as the chairperson and advisor to Secretary Stimson. Gibson informed senior leaders that commanders were the problem, because they were not enforcing Army policy on proper proportion of deployed black combat units. General Marshall released a policy letter warning commanders to fairly address discrimination. Senior commanders blatantly

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 263-264.

¹⁹⁰ MacGregor, 33.

¹⁹¹ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 478.

failed to comply with the policy letter, and Marshall did not punish them for non-compliance.¹⁹² The Advisory Committee was adamant about deploying black combat units. In March 1944, Secretary Stimson finally agreed to send regimental combat team from the 92nd Infantry Division. Stimson and General Marshall considered their use as an experiment. Later, the War Department began to send smaller combat units in larger proportions, because this was more acceptable to theater commanders.¹⁹³ These smaller combat units were field artillery, anti-aircraft, and tank battalions. Senior commanders considered these enablers to the corps and division units, and considered small numbers of blacks as non-threatening.

Public backlash from the African American community became violent in the summer of 1943. Race riots at military posts occurred in Mississippi, Georgia, California, Texas, and Kentucky. The War Department became concerned by the level of racial upheaval within the Army.¹⁹⁴ Senior leaders struggled to grasp the Army's segregation policy and poor leadership was the root cause. Civil rights groups increased pressure on the government and demanded full integration, abolishment of the racial quotas and segregated blood plasma policy, desegregation of Army facilities, black units moved out of Southern posts, and black combat units deployed in combat roles in the Army theaters of war.¹⁹⁵ Senior Army officials finally decided to make progressive changes in order to

¹⁹² MacGregor, 42-43.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

quell social upheaval. They began to realize that regardless of the social context of America, the Army could not expect to operate as a cohesive unit without equality.

The War Department issued *Command of Negro Troops* in February 1944. This policy was a hallmark publication. For that time period it was unusually fair and balanced concerning race issues and discrimination of blacks.¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately, no policy change went with the recognition. On 8 July 1944, the War Department issued orders to open all post exchanges and theaters regardless of race. All government transport must be available to all ethnicities despite local laws and customs.¹⁹⁷ This policy spared violent civilian reaction throughout the South. An example of this abhorrent violence was the severe beating of Lieutenant Nora Green, a black Army nurse stationed at Tuskegee Army Air Forces Training School in Alabama. Lieutenant Green refused to move from a white bus seat and was jailed and beaten as a result. The NAACP protested to the War Department and Department of Justice, but it fell on deaf ears. Lieutenant Green received explicit orders from her command to not discuss the incident.¹⁹⁸ With social unrest at home, the War Department finally began to send black combat units to the European Theater of Operations.

By spring of 1943, 79,000 of 504,000 African Americans in the Army were overseas.¹⁹⁹ The Pittsburgh *Courier* published public dismay on 30 October 1943, “The

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Buckley, 261.

¹⁹⁹ Dalfiume, 92.

tactics appear to disclose a determination to prohibit Negroes . . . from reaching any of the front lines where they might gain glory and prestige for themselves and their race.”²⁰⁰ General Davis stated, “the colored soldier has lost confidence in the fairness of the Army to Negro troops.”²⁰¹ White regimental and lower commanders blamed the War Department ambiguous deployment policies. How could they be expected to have trust and confidence in black combat troops, if the War Department is converting these units into labor service units? Secretary Stimson stated, “had come to the conclusion that we must face the situation more seriously. . . . We have got to use the colored race to help us in this fight.”²⁰² It only took two years of war to come up with this conclusion, which was obvious to several panels and the American public.

The War Department decided to deploy elements of the 93rd Infantry Division and the entire 92nd Infantry Division for combat operations on 2 March 1944.²⁰³ This thesis refers future research be conducted on how well these two units integrated on the battlefield. Both these divisions experienced poor combat ratings from superiors and this can be attributed to the poor training environment and constant assignment turnover as the culprit. The 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions never trained as whole units like white divisions. Instead, they were spread all over the country on different Southern posts to train for a war in a hostile environment within their home country.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 96.

Small field artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, and tank battalion units deployed to the European Theater of Operation with white units. These units were regiment size or smaller and had a few advantages over their division counterparts. First, the units were self-contained and easily operated alone in an austere environment. Regiments had a simple command and control relationship. They had less staff and could be more direct.²⁰⁴ Regiments had a flexible task organization. They could be attached and assigned at whim by senior commanders. The Army's establishment of a flexible control group allowed black artillery headquarters to command and control white units.²⁰⁵ Army leaders did not consider it a breach in the unspoken policy of black officers in charge of whites, because of how artillery fights on the battlefield. Theater commanders requested black units if they displayed high combat acumen.²⁰⁶ It can be debated that senior commanders may have only been aware of the combat multiplier these regiments brought to their units, and had zero knowledge these regiments were black. Chapter 4, the 761st Tank Battalion case study, discusses senior commander's perception of a specific black separate battalion. In closing, Lieutenant Colonel Marshall S. Carter Commander of the 99th Coastal Artillery said it best:

I am sincere in my admiration for these troops and I say that with full knowledge, that if I get a chance to take them into battle, my own life, and all that I have to live for will depend on them. . . . There is not one iota of doubt in my mind that you people in Washington are building a mountain out of a molehill when you

²⁰⁴ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 122.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 644.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

speaking of the 'The Negro Problem in the Army.' My God, these men are human and only waiting to be led.²⁰⁷

The Saar Basin Offensive, Battle of the Bulge and subsequent Rhine Campaign proved to the Army and the United States the patriotic spirit of African Americans. The 761st Tank Battalion and the integrated 5th Platoons highlights the change of perception in regards to integration.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 183.

CHAPTER 4

761st TANK BATTALION “PATTON’S PANTHERS”

CASE STUDY

A colored soldier cannot think fast enough to fight in armor.²⁰⁸
— General George S. Patton, Jr

The 761st Tank Battalion has become renowned for their bravery, valor, and remarkable leadership despite General’s Patton’s disparaging remarks concerning the fighting acumen of African Americans. The 761st Tank Battalion was the first African American armored unit to serve in combat during World War II. The 761st Tank Battalion spent 183 continuous days in combat and served in six countries within the European Theater of Operations: France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Germany, and Austria.²⁰⁹ This unit defined decentralized operations, because the battalion operated as a separate tank battalion. This designation allowed division commanders to attach company to squad size elements to various regiments within their command. By the end of World War II, Patton’s Panthers served with seven divisions and three Field Army commands.²¹⁰ Ironically, General Patton’s requirement for combat power regardless of the source indirectly contributed to a growing change of opinions to African American combat soldiers. Patton said, “Who the (explicit deleted) asked for color? I asked for

²⁰⁸ Sasser, foreword.

²⁰⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting* (Salzburger Druckerei Und Verlag, 1945), xv.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

tankers.”²¹¹ The 761st Tank Battalion lived up to their motto “Come Out Fighting” and several prominent historians capture their many exploits in battle. This chapter’s focus is on the superb execution of decentralized operations within the Saar Basin, France, and the impact on future integration of the United States Army.

The 761st was not unique in their composition, but rather in their leaders’ attitude toward development of a cohesive unit. Progress was always visible and officers had opportunities to advance that did not exist in most segregated units.²¹² The battalion commander, Colonel Paul L. Bates was a Los Angeles native and became an All-American football player for Western Maryland University. He received armor training from General Patton and displayed superb leadership. Colonel Bates was not racially prejudiced and believed in excellence regardless of rank or positions. He expected every soldier to know how to operate every vehicle, weapon, and radio.²¹³ His peers shunned him, because of his pride and commitment to a black unit.²¹⁴ Colonel Bates promoted an environment of trust through confidence. He said, “They say black troops can’t fight, that you won’t fight. Well we’re proving them wrong . . . Because gentlemen, you must get ready. This battalion is going to war.”²¹⁵ Colonel Bates meticulous preparation for war

²¹¹ Sasser, 54.

²¹² Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 337.

²¹³ Sasser, 11.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

directly led to the battalion's recognition, while training at Camp Hood in the fall of 1943.

African Americans in the 761st faced the typical racial practices of the time and this chapter is not going to dwell on the many facets of racial discrimination. What was atypical was the racial composition of the officers. The 761st activated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, on 1 April 1942 to an all-white officer corps.²¹⁶ Two years later the battalion officer corps consisted of six white officers and thirty black officers. Black officers commanded at the company level, which was not a common practice in World War II.²¹⁷ The 761st received several visits from senior commanders and consistently received praise during training observations.²¹⁸ Brigadier General Ernest A. Dawley, commanding general of the Tank Destroyer Center at Camp Hood, Texas, took considerable interest in the unit and often spoke to them about combat.²¹⁹ Lieutenant General Ben Lear said, "All the reports coming up to Washington about you have been of a superior nature, and we are expecting great things of your battalion in combat."²²⁰ Their reputation amongst blacks grew so large that several blacks requested transfers to the battalion as they began to build a famed reputation.

²¹⁶ Anderson, 5.

²¹⁷ Lee and Center of Military History United States Army, 661.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 337.

²¹⁹ Anderson, 15.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Baseball legend Jackie Robinson briefly served as a platoon leader in the 761st and his ill-timed departure is an example of Colonel Bates loyalty to his men. Lieutenant Jackie Robinson was court-martialed, while serving at Camp Hood, Texas, for refusing to sit in the back of the bus. Jackie was transferred out of the 761st because Bates refused to court-martial him. His court martial began on 9 August 1944. Ironically, the 761st deployed this same day to England. Colonel Bates stayed behind to support his former officer. The court martial lasted seventeen days and resulted in a not guilty verdict.²²¹ Unfortunately, Lieutenant Robinson would not participate in combat with the 761st.

Saar Basin Offensive

The 761st landed on Omaha Beach on 10 October 1944 and became the first African American tankers in history to step foot on foreign soil.²²² In less than a month, they would be part of the Allied advance into the Saar Basin to secure northeastern France. Questions would be answered for the last time about the fighting acumen of black soldiers. The 761st was assigned to the 26th Infantry Division, XII Corps, Third Army for the Saar Basin Offensive.²²³ The objective was to seize the town of Morville and occupy key terrain in order to destroy German forces. Prior to the battle, General Patton made a speech that resounded within the souls of the 761st Tank Battalion:

Men, you're the first Negro tankers to ever fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you if you weren't good. I have nothing but the best in my Army. I don't care what color you are, so long as you up there and kill those Kraut sonsabitches. Everyone has their eye on you and is expecting great things

²²¹ Sasser, 29-33.

²²² Anderson, 17.

²²³ Ibid., 21.

from you. Most of all, your race is looking forward to you. Don't let them down and damn you, don't let me down."²²⁴

The Saar Basin offensive began at 0600 on 08 November 1944.²²⁵ For the next month, the only black tank unit fought with their white brothers in the 26th Infantry Division. Patton's Panthers lived up to their motto and came out fighting.

Colonel Bates attached Able and Baker Company to the task force comprising the 101st and 104th Infantry Regiments, 26th Infantry Division. He attached Charlie Company to support the second task force, which contained the following units: 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, an engineer company, and the 328th Infantry Regiment. The 761st's companies were to lead the attack and seize the key railroad junction in the town of Roldale.²²⁶ The author of Patton's Panthers, Charles W. Sasser, pointed out this historical moment, "COL Bates wondered with pride if this might not be the first time Negroes had led white Americans into battle."²²⁷

Decentralized operations' success depended on the level of combined arms cooperation and collaboration between tanks and the supported infantrymen. The 761st's tanks cleared the road into Morville to allow the infantrymen to advance. Tank crews were heavily reliant on the infantrymen to warn them of unseen dangers, specifically German panzerfaust units. Bad news struck the 761st during the early hours of the offensive. A German recon patrol penetrated Allied lines and wounded their battalion

²²⁴ Ibid., 7.

²²⁵ Ibid., 23.

²²⁶ Sasser, 72.

²²⁷ Ibid., 79.

commander. Major Charles Wingo briefly assumed command but fled the battlefield shortly after notification of his new leadership position. The official report on Major Wingo's condition was he suffered from battle fatigue. Major Wingo was not popular amongst the 761st, because of his often expressed prejudice toward the unit.²²⁸ It is important to note that World War II soldier's opinions would label Major Wingo a coward and a deserter. Private Leonard Smith's statement on Major Wingo's desertion, "He's always saying niggers ain't gonna fight. Now who is it done turned yellow and run off when hears the first shot . . . and it ain't even aimed at him."²²⁹ The 761st was unaware that Major Wingo was not in command during the Battle of Morville. Colonel Hollis E. Hunt took command on 09 November 1944.²³⁰ It personally speaks to their amazing junior officer leadership on their ability to recover from a potential vacuum of leadership and still successfully complete the mission. Several acts of valor occurred during the Battle of Morville, which deepened the bond between the 761st and the 26th Infantry Division. Lieutenant Ivan Harrison informed the reporter Trezzvant Anderson, "During combat, segregation did not exist. We fought side by side with the white infantry divisions."²³¹

Technical Sergeant Ruben Rivers, of Alpha Company, earned a Silver Star for getting out of his tank during heavy German fire and secured a cable on a dragon teeth

²²⁸ Ibid., 90-91.

²²⁹ Ibid., 92

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid., 97-98.

obstacle in order to clear the road for the offensive.²³² Bravo Battery's Technical Sergeant Roy "Love" King's crew had to abandon the tank when severely hit by a panzerfaust. TSGT King's men fought valiantly for hours underneath the tank and King realized a wounded white soldier was in the middle of the road. King's gunner asked him, "Do you think a white guy would do it for a nigger?"²³³ King's response was an attempt to rescue the wounded man and in the attempt they both lost their lives. Upon seeing this act of bravery, several 26th Infantry Division infantrymen died attempted to remove TSGT King's body from the battlefield.²³⁴ Charlie Company valiantly fought out of an ambush, where First Sergeant Turley and LT Kenneth Coleman lost their lives bravely fending off Germans to allow their men to escape the ambush.²³⁵ The 761st suffered fifteen killed and almost three times that many wounded in the first two days of Battle.²³⁶ They captured Moorville and unbeknownst to them at the time the 761st had the opportunity to make history during the Battle of Guebling.

Captain David William's Able Company's mission was to lead elements of the 26th Infantry Division in order to seize the town of Guebling on 18 November 1944.²³⁷ They were fully aware the Germans were going to put up a fierce defense of the town.

²³² Ibid., 90-91.

²³³ Ibid., 113.

²³⁴ Anderson, 35.

²³⁵ Sasser, 106.

²³⁶ Ibid., 121.

²³⁷ Ibid., 135.

Captain Williams was one of the few white company commanders in the 761st. His story is unique, because he personally volunteered to serve in an African American unit.

Captain William volunteered because of his outrage toward racial injustice of African American treatment.²³⁸ His men trusted him implicitly to lead them to victory.

Technical Sergeant Ruben Rivers received a Purple Heart when his tank was struck by an anti-tank mine during the initial advance into Guebling.²³⁹ The story of exceptional valor began at this moment. TSGT Rivers received a severe leg wound and refused orders to depart the battlefield. Rivers realized Alpha Company was the only element that could prevent the Germans from flanking the 4th Armored Division.²⁴⁰ Rivers gained a new tank and quickly raced through the town of Guebling. His platoon leader, Bob Hammond radioed his crew and said, “Don’t go into that town, Sergeant. It’s too hot in there.”²⁴¹ Rivers responded, “Sorry, sir. I’m already through that town.”²⁴² His bravery allowed Allied forces to gain a foothold into the town of Guebling.

Captain Williams briefly commanded the supported infantry battalion during the battle upon receiving word their battalion commander was wounded during the initial advance. He successfully organized the battalion to repulse a German counterattack.²⁴³

²³⁸ Ibid., 75.

²³⁹ Ibid., 135.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 137.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 142.

TSGT Rivers became worse that night and still refused to depart the battlefield. COL Hunt visited Able Company when CPT Williams informed him that he wanted to submit TSGT Rivers for the Congressional Medal of Honor. COL Hunt was not interested in Rivers receiving the highest military medal. CPT Williams informed him that Rivers destroyed two enemy tanks and killed over three hundred Germans in order to gain access to the town. COL Hunt grudgingly allowed CPT Williams to submit the commendation. CPT Williams submitted the award, but for unknown reasons the award never made it to the War Department.²⁴⁴ Tragically, on 19 November 1944, a shell from a Mark IV panzer killed TSGT Rivers. His bravery allowed the successful withdrawal of an infantry unit pinned down by heavy fire from the Tiger tanks. His platoon leader and friend, Bob Hammond, also died leading the defense of the pinned down infantry unit.²⁴⁵ No African Americans received the Medal of Honor in World War II.²⁴⁶

The Saar Basin offensive ended around 29 November 1944.²⁴⁷ The War Department wanted to know how well the black tank unit fought. COL Hunt reported to the War Department's Observer Board to provide the after action report during his temporary one-month command of the unit. COL Hunt gave a poor report. He said the unit clearly lacked initiative. The men performed well when properly led. Privates in particular displayed a lack of discipline, initiative, no care for soldiering, but displayed

²⁴⁴ Converse et al., 180.

²⁴⁵ Sasser, 142.

²⁴⁶ Converse et al., 3.

²⁴⁷ Anderson, 44.

loyalty to superiors. He stated only 15 percent of the black officers performed to standard. He also said none of the black officers had field grade potential. He claimed MAJ Weise fled the battlefield, because he was scared of his own soldiers. COL Hunt did admit to healthy fraternization between white and black soldiers. Finally, he stated the unit would be led better by white officers and the unit should no longer perform tank roles in combat.²⁴⁸ This damning report led the Observation Board to conclude, “The battalion was unfortunate in that the Battalion Commander (Lieutenant Colonel Paul Bates) became a casualty early in the day and as a consequence considerable confusion resulted.”²⁴⁹ Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The Saar Basin offensive produced two commendations from general officers for the 761st. These commendations are a direct contradiction of COL Hunt’s account of the fighting prowess of the 761st. Major General Manton S. Eddy, XII Corps commander, commendation dated 09 December 1944 stated:

The speed with which they adapted themselves to the front line under most adverse weather conditions, the gallantry which they faced some of Germany’s finest troops, and the confident spirit with which they emerged from their recent engagements in the vicinity of Deuze, Morville les Vic, and Guebling entitled them surely to consider themselves the veteran 761st.²⁵⁰

Major General William S. Paul, 26th Infantry Division commander’s commendation was dated on 14 December 1944 and stated, “It is with extreme gratification that the Corps Commander’s commendation is forwarded to you. Your battalion has supported this

²⁴⁸ Sasser, 197-200.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 196.

²⁵⁰ Anderson, 44.

division with great bravery under the most adverse weather and terrain conditions. You have my sincere wish that success may continue to follow your endeavors.”²⁵¹ The 761st’s role as a separate tank battalion gave it a visibility nominally not achieved by black units to commanding generals. Unfortunately, the 761st suffered 22 killed, and eighty-one wounded in order to gain their fame through personal courage and sacrifice.

This case study focused on the Saar Basin offensive, but it is important to note a few additional achievements of the 761st. The 761st was instrumental during the Ardennes operation. MG William Miley, 17th Airborne Division commander, stated, “During the Ardennes operation we had very little armored unit support, but of that we had the 761st was by far the most effective and helpful.”²⁵² The 761st was one of the first units to enter Germany prior to the Battle of the Bulge.²⁵³ They earned renown with their participation of the Battle of the Bulge and subsequent Rhine Campaign. General Patton said, “The Negro tank battalion attached to my command fought bravely in the critical Battle of Bastogne.”²⁵⁴ The 17th Airborne Commander stated he would rather have five tanks from the 761st than to have any larger comparable number from any other armored unit.”²⁵⁵ COL Bates turned down a command and promotion in order to return to his

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Sasser, 229.

²⁵³ Anderson, 44.

²⁵⁴ Sasser, 250.

²⁵⁵ Anderson, 54.

battalion for the Rhine Campaign.²⁵⁶ Finally, they were one of the first units to meet the Russian when the war ended on 5 May 1945.²⁵⁷

The press, with the exception of a few black correspondents, typified the nation's attitude towards black units. Thirty-two different African American combat units served in the European Theater of Operations and it was a rare occasion when these units were visited by the mainstream press.²⁵⁸ Patton's Panthers expressed bitterness when a news correspondent ran past them to interview white units for towns they seized.²⁵⁹ SGT Eddie Donald said the following after the Battle of Tillet, "You can find Tillet in many books on World War II, but you won't find one word about us."²⁶⁰ The 26th and 103rd Infantry Divisions' history only mentioned the 761st twice and one of these erroneously identified them as the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion.²⁶¹ The lack of coverage accounts for the lack of print material on black units. This also proves that senior leadership did not want too much visibility on black units. Good publicity of black combat units might have changed the American social environment. Therefore, it was possible for the Army to control the amount of information dispersed to the public.

²⁵⁶ Sasser, 261.

²⁵⁷ Anderson, 92.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 125.

²⁵⁹ Sasser, 263.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 232.

²⁶¹ Anderson, 125.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 127

The 761st Tank Battalion lost 34 men killed and over 200 wounded during their 183 days of continuous combat with no relief.²⁶² Within this period, eight enlisted received battlefield commissions. Three hundred and ninety one soldiers decorated for heroism. Seven of which were Silver Stars (three posthumously), 36 bronze star medals for valor, and 246 purple hearts.²⁶³ Captain Ivan H. Harrison took command of the battalion on 05 November 1945 and became the first black battalion commander in the European Theater of Operations.²⁶⁴ Captain Harrison submitted for the unit to receive the Distinguished Unit citation on 25 July 1945, while serving as the temporary battalion commander. General Eisenhower disapproved the citation on 12 February 1946.²⁶⁵

Several soldiers of the 761st believed they would face the usual racism upon return to home and their sacrifice forgotten. A few of them felt surprise when white veterans defended them against prejudice upon arrival in the United States. Impressions of African American combat units had begun to change within the U.S. Army. The bonds made in the foxhole were not easily forgotten. SGT Johnny Holmes said, “You ain’t got no black or white when you’re over here and the nation’s in trouble. You only got Americans.”²⁶⁶ The various division and corps commanders did not forget the sacrifices made by units like the 761st Tank Battalion to preserve the lives of their men and

²⁶² Ibid., 125.

²⁶³ Sasser, 345.

²⁶⁴ Anderson, 129.

²⁶⁵ Bryan D. Booker, *African Americans in the United States Army in World War II*, rep. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2008), 322.

²⁶⁶ Sasser, 258.

accomplish the mission. These same commanders would integrate the Army in the late 1940s.

Colonel Bates said, “When the history of this war is written it will be as though no black man ever fought and laid down his life for his country. History will ignore the black soldier.”²⁶⁷ Fortunately, history did not ignore the achievements of the 761st Tank Battalion. Captain David Williams novel, *Eleanor Roosevelt’s Niggers*, influenced President Jimmy Carter’s decision to finally recognize the 761st with the Presidential Unit Citation on 24 January 1978.²⁶⁸ Today, monuments and roads at Fort Hood, TX, honor the memory of the 761st Tank Battalion for past and present American generations to remember the valorous unit.²⁶⁹ On 13 January 1997, Technical Sergeant Ruben Rivers became one of ten African Americans to receive the Medal of Honor for World War II.²⁷⁰ History did not forget.

²⁶⁷ Sasser, 293.

²⁶⁸ Booker, 325-326.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 327.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

CHAPTER 5
THE 5TH PLATOONS

We knew the black platoons were a first. You could feel a change. We started something.²⁷¹

— Private First Class Clayton Des Journette

The Beginning of Something Beautiful

The 99th Infantry Division offense had stalled in the face of fierce German resistance on the western side of the Rhine River. The Battle of Remagen Bridge, 13 March 1945, had begun and Allied forces knew their victory would be a turning point of the war. Crossing the Rhine River would mean the invasion of Germany and the ultimate goal of victory was in reach. The Germans also realized this and put up a fierce resistance to halt the Allies invasion.

Heavy German fire pinned down the badly mauled K Company, 393rd Regiment, and 99th Infantry Division. They tenuously held their positions above the town of Erpine, and waited for the night German counterattack. They were in a desperate situation. The company commander was on leave and the acting commander, 1st Lieutenant Wilson, was wounded from a bullet grazing his head. The Germans were using every available weapon in their arsenal. Artillery, sniper, and anti-aircraft fire poured into K Company's trenches.²⁷² In the gloom of night and the horrors of the battlefield, emerged reinforcements to support the offensive.

²⁷¹ David P. Colley, *Blood for Dignity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 12.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

This reinforcement faced a different battle prior to their arrival on the frontlines. These men battled discrimination, inequality, prejudice, poverty, and desired acceptance from their nation. Shock reverberated from within the lines. Soldiers in the company began to cheer and hope arose at the sight of these silent figures moving steadily to their trenches. Then realization set in among the hopeful weary. For the first time in one hundred and fifty years, African American soldiers arrived to fight alongside their fellow white brothers.²⁷³

White soldiers responded with gratefulness and greeted them as fellow soldiers. A few were shocked. An anonymous white soldier said, “Christ, I thought I was going blind. I thought I was seeing things.”²⁷⁴ Other white soldiers thanked God for their timely arrival.²⁷⁵ PFC Harold Robinson, grenadier in the 5th Platoon, recalled, “They were all southern boys, but they sure were glad to see us. They welcomed us black troops.”²⁷⁶ Lieutenant Richard Ralston, the 5th Platoon Leader, stated, “They were overjoyed, and greatly relieved to see a new additional platoon join them. I imagine a lot of the white men were incredulous at having blacks join them. It would be natural.”²⁷⁷ This statement speaks volumes, because prior to March 1945, the majority of black soldiers served in

²⁷³ Ibid., 10.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

labor roles within the European Theater of Operations. Unification of America finally came in the face of battle on the frontline in an obscure forest in Germany.

Discrimination and Humiliation Home and Abroad

K Company black volunteers received their initial training for their assigned military occupation specialty in the numerous army posts located in the American South. The Army assigned the majority of black volunteers to army labor service units. These men experienced typical prejudice in training and grew to distrust white officers and enlisted men. It was normal for black men to be fearful of training in the South. Blacks experienced greater discrimination at their training sites in the South than any place in America. An anonymous black draftee wrote the following to President Roosevelt, "I have an unholy fear, not of the enemy, but strangely enough of my own fellow Americans . . . I pray that I will not hear on the morrow that one of my relations or friends here has been killed by a fellow citizen because his face is black."²⁷⁸ African American soldiers felt a fear normally reserved for the battlefield, during basic training prior to ever seeing any type of combat.

They had good reasons to be afraid. Rumors persisted throughout black ranks of atrocities committed on various southern bases. For example, a rumor of 1,200 black troops of the 364th Infantry Regiment murdered in Van Dorn, Mississippi in 1943. Violence erupted from black soldiers reacting to white civilian violence. Carrol Case wrote about this particular incident in her book, *The Slaughter: An American Atrocity*.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 26.

According to Case, the military police responded to the violence and were the alleged culprits who executed the entire regiment. The Army attempted to cover up the incident and informed the families they were killed in battle.²⁷⁹ The Army conducted an investigation of the alleged incident in 1998, because of fierce urgent requests from various civil rights groups. The investigation concluded on 23 December 1999 that there was no evidence to support the claim.²⁸⁰

Arthur Holmes, a black volunteer, described the Army's racial attitude toward blacks. He was fair skinned and could have passed for white. The Army accidentally listed him as white and later reversed the decision. Holmes informed the doctor he was black when asked about his race. The doctor offered to keep Holmes' status as white so he could serve in a white unit and receive better treatment.²⁸¹ Holmes responded, "I said I've always been black and I think I'll stay black. People were very prejudiced in those days. I didn't want to go to some white outfit where somebody would pick on me. I could have been killed."²⁸² Holmes clearly was more afraid of fellow Americans than the nation's enemies.

Several black volunteers fell victim to blatant prejudice at recruiting stations where they practiced assigning personnel regardless of the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) score. Black volunteer Bradford Tatum said, "One of the things that

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

disgruntled me most in the army was that I passed the test to go to OCS, but they wouldn't let me go."²⁸³ Tatum became a company clerk in the 390th Engineers. He was in an advantageous position to see Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and John C. H. Lee's request for black volunteers in January 1945.

African Americans faced repetitive humiliations, while based in the South. One of the deepest humiliations was the difference of treatment with German prisoner of war and blacks. Ransom noted this particular animosity during his recollection of an incident when transporting German prisoners of war to an internment camp in Indiana. White civilians who were angry with blacks guarding white prisoners insulted Ransom's unit. At a train stop, the black troops were forced to use the woods to relieve themselves, while the Germans were allowed to use the station's facilities.²⁸⁴ Another typical incident was Ransom's unit did not eat for two days during a rail movement from Alabama to Camp Pickett, VA. Local whites refused to sell their officers food at train stops.²⁸⁵

The Army's segregation policy of separate ethnic blood banks created frustration and distrust amongst black soldiers. Holmes related the bitterness felt about this particular policy, "We were bitter, very bitter about the things that were happening to us in the army."²⁸⁶ Many Southern blacks, like volunteer Fred Watt, stated the army camps

²⁸³ Colley, 40.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

were the worst treatment of his life.²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, these brave men still volunteered to fight for their nation, alongside the very men who may or may not have hated them.

Institutional prejudices followed them overseas in the United Kingdom and France.

African Americans received better treatment in the United Kingdom. In general, British treatment of blacks was good. The United Kingdom did not have segregation laws, but imported white Southern values created strife between the races. The War Department attempted to ease racial tensions in the United Kingdom. General Eisenhower issued orders to commanders stating segregation would not be tolerated in Britain.²⁸⁸ This directive did not deter discriminatory practices. Prejudice came in many forms. White American soldiers disseminated black stereotypes to British civilians. For example, one stereotype was that blacks had tails.²⁸⁹ Racial tensions were at the highest at clubs. White Southerners reacted negatively to interracial couples. This particular imported Southern value led to discrimination at a completely new level. White Southerners viewed blacks as preying on white women, because blacks were behaving out of the accepted American social norms. Violence between the two was the norm during these encounters and many blacks carried weapons for protection. Ransom recalled that blacks carried large knives for protection from whites.²⁹⁰ Sharpening bayonets was not meant for Germans, but for their own service members. Although,

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 38.

discrimination existed in the United Kingdom, blacks in general experienced a positive social atmosphere that did not exist in the United States.

African Americans enjoyment of equality in the United Kingdom ended upon their arrival in France. Segregation reared its ugly head. Army commanders placed some French towns off limits for black troops.²⁹¹ Black labor units in France were the unsung heroes for the accomplishments during the Allied offensive to free France from Nazi occupation. Black labor units conducted all the duties that were considered fitting for blacks by Army senior leadership. Labor units' duties consisted of detainee holding areas, transportation, re-building roads, port operations, and everything else other than combat.

Some volunteers, like Holmes, came from engineer units who served near the front lines. A white soldier halted Holmes, because his unit accidentally advanced into German lines in France. Holmes responded to the challenge, "You ever see any blacks in the German army."²⁹² This encounter, albeit good-natured, is a positive indicator that the frontlines had no place for a color barrier. Holmes was one of many who desired to fight Nazis and finally prove that blacks could fight. He said, "Now the infantry was a challenge. We'd heard about it and all the good things they were doing, notwithstanding that people were getting killed. And we were young and stupid."²⁹³ The aftermath of the Battle of the Bulge, 16 December 1944, provided the opportunity to make history.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 39.

²⁹² Ibid., 41-42.

²⁹³ Ibid., 43.

Need Creates Opportunity

The Battle of the Bulge heightened the need for manpower in order to continue the Allied advance into Germany. Americans absorbed 80,000 casualties during the first day of the Battle of the Bulge. By the end of December 1944, the number nearly doubled to 134,000. The subsequent campaigns after the Battle of the Bulge increased to over 140,000 casualties. Half of these casualties were non-battle injuries.²⁹⁴ The combat divisions were placed under a severe strain. A third of these divisions had a one hundred percent personnel turnover rate.²⁹⁵ Out of 61 divisions, five had a 200 percent personnel turnover rate.²⁹⁶ The 4th Infantry Division casualty rate was the highest at two hundred and 52 percent.²⁹⁷ By the end of January 1945, the Army in the European Theater of Operations had a manpower shortage of 82,000.²⁹⁸ The Army tried to maintain 70,000 replacements and two months of attritional battle overwhelmed the system.²⁹⁹ The army needed manpower and a few select commanders realized necessary, but unpopular decisions were needed for improvement of conditions on the front lines. Once again, history was going to repeat itself.

²⁹⁴ Colley, 43.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 44.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

President Lincoln's activation of African American units was strictly a war measure with the purpose of concluding the American Civil War. Similar to President Lincoln, General Eisenhower told senior army commanders to free up available manpower from rear units to include blacks.³⁰⁰ Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee, Communication Zone commander, became the champion for use of African American as combat infantrymen.³⁰¹

Lieutenant General Lee was unpopular with peers in the European Theater of Operations for multiple reasons. His peers saw him as pompous and his championship for black combat soldiers intensified their disdain. Lieutenant General Lee was a very religious man. He believed blacks should have equal opportunities and the Army's segregation policy contradicted teachings within the Bible.³⁰² Lieutenant General Lee was famous or infamous depending on point of view for convincing Eisenhower to stop discriminatory practices in the United Kingdom with the release of the aforementioned army policy.³⁰³ He personally advised General Eisenhower to include blacks for the Army's volunteer directive. He was the enforcement behind the policy and known for relieving commanders who would not comply. He had a good relationship with Brigadier General Benjamin Davis whom was serving as the European Theater of Operations

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 44-45.

Assistant Solicitor in 1944.³⁰⁴ Lee said the following in response to negative opinions of black infantrymen, “My chauffeur was a better shot than I. I have found them alert, willing with good disciplinary and health records when under good leadership.”³⁰⁵

Lieutenant General Lee’s quote directly describes the ability of any soldier, regardless of color, on their capability to fight when treated well by good leaders.

Lieutenant General Lee requested Brigadier General Davis and Brigadier General Henry J. Matchett, commander of the Ground Forces Reinforcement Command (GFRC), to devise a plan to train two thousand black infantry volunteers. His goal was individual integration of black soldiers into white infantry companies. This was the original plan and intent briefed and approved by General Eisenhower. The original plan mandated blacks had to volunteer for infantry service, because of the army’s segregation policy. The Army considered volunteers as exceptional, because the army did not originally assign nor forced them into infantry units. In contrast, whites did not have the option to volunteer for service. Blacks had to accept reduction in grade to Private First Class or Private as a volunteer requirement. White soldiers did not have to give up rank. The Army provided additional training for all volunteers. Once approved, Lieutenant General Lee seized the initiative and published the directive to his entire command. Subsequently he released twenty thousand soldiers in his command for infantry duty.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 45.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

Late December 1944, Lieutenant General Lee published the directive in the Communication Zone. The directive stated, “The commanding general [Eisenhower] makes a special appeal to you. It is planned to assign you without regard to color or race to the units where assistance is most needed, and give you the opportunity of fighting shoulder to shoulder to bring about a victory.”³⁰⁷ The directive would not allow service units to lose more than 3 percent of their personnel strength.³⁰⁸ Lieutenant General Walter B. Smith, Chief of Staff at Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces at Europe (SHAFE) did not approve of the plan to use black troops and attempted to dissuade General Eisenhower on their activation.³⁰⁹

Lieutenant General Smith sent a letter to General Eisenhower reminding him of the War Department’s segregation policies. He pointed out the negative impacts this decision would have on the Army. He voiced concern about the Negro press ability to use the directive as a means to push for further integration in the Army. Smith was also worried about the perception amongst the black community of only using blacks as infantrymen during times of emergency.³¹⁰ General Eisenhower modified the plan in response to this advice.

General Eisenhower personally re-wrote the directive and changed the last two sentences. The changes state, “In the event that the number of suitable Negro volunteer

³⁰⁷ Colley, 45.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

exceeds the replacement of Negro combat units, these men will be suitably incorporated in other organizations so that their service and their fighting spirit may be efficiently utilized.”³¹¹ General Eisenhower also changed the individual integration to platoon size integration. This allowed the Army to disguise the directive as following its segregation policy. General Eisenhower made distribution of the directive permissive instead of mandatory. This gave senior commanders discretion on how to disseminate the directive.³¹² The directive sent ripples throughout army senior leadership.

Brigadier General Davis captured senior army commanders’ response to the directive in a letter, 30 March 1945, to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. He described LTG Lee’s efforts to push the directive through SHAFE. He claimed LTG Lear, SHAFE deputy commanding general, and others were not keen on the idea. The division commanders on the other hand gave full approval for the use of black soldiers. “General Patton in particular was very sympathetic.”³¹³ BG Davis realized the monumental shift in Army policy would inevitably have positive future consequences for obtaining equality for black service members. He said, “The decision from the High Command is the greatest since enactment of the Constitutional amendments following the emancipation.”³¹⁴ Wholly integrated combat units through decentralized operations

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

would build unbreakable bonds and result in the destruction of the army's segregation policy.

The directive received mixed reaction from black soldiers. Blacks who did not volunteer had a host of justified reasons for distrust of the directive. Not one time during World War II had Army senior leadership earned the full trust and confidence of African Americans. The army's treatment of blacks as second-class citizens validated their reasons for not volunteering as infantrymen. They did not believe quality of life conditions would change for them in the Army. Another opinion was the Army was going to use them haphazardly against the Germans in order to decrease the white casualty rate.³¹⁵ Chester Jones, a non-volunteer, summed up their opinions best stated, "they said that I didn't have sense enough to be a combat soldier stateside—well if I didn't have it then I damned sure didn't have it in their emergency"³¹⁶ Commanders volunteered a few black soldiers who they did not want in the unit. They were considered troublemakers within the unit.

The majority of volunteers however hungered for the chance to prove themselves on the battlefield and prove they deserved equal treatment. Arthur Holmes said, "I never believed they would put us black boys up there with white boys."³¹⁷ They wanted to prove to any naysayers of the fighting spirit of the black man. "We were going to make liars out of the whites. We know what they were thinking all the time, that we weren't

³¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 54.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

man enough,” said Clayton Des Journette.³¹⁸ All of them knew they were historic pioneers for racial equality. Black volunteer, Bruce Wright, said, “The dirty jobs on the power structure was that once they included a black platoon in a white company, whether they liked it or not, it was integrated.”³¹⁹ This statement in itself is surprising in the sheer fact that in present day America this keen observation would be common sense. Infantry units on the front line must naturally integrate in order to be effective. It is impossible to separate color in the trenches.

Infantry Training

The Army had a flawed replacement system, because it deployed individuals to units. Replacement training focused on individual training. Shooting, cleaning, and dismantling a weapon, but it did not focus on squad and platoon tactics. Individual soldiers did not have time to identify with their gaining unit and establish the bonds of trust needed for a cohesive unit. A quick death rate for replacements was the result.³²⁰ Black volunteers began training in Compiègne, France in January 1945. Previous training for blacks consisted of a few shots fired from their M1 rifle. Hardly any of them had experience with weapon dismantlement and almost zero with using heavy or light machine guns.³²¹ The disparity in training was due to commanders’ fear of arming black soldiers. Commanders justified their actions by claiming blacks would get used to killing

³¹⁸ Colley, 53.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 54.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid., 55.

white soldiers, and they would use these skills to kill white Americans after the war. Wilfred Strange recalled being disarmed during the Battle of the Bulge. “We had been disarmed, and when we found ourselves surrounded by Germans we had no weapons to fight with.”³²² The IQ rating tended to be higher in black volunteers. The so-called troublemakers were highly knowledgeable of Army policy and regulations, more so than their junior officers. Therefore, they knew how to avoid unpleasant duties.³²³

Lieutenant Richard A. Ralston, 5th platoon, K Company, 393rd Regiment, 99th Infantry Division platoon leader, commissioned from the Officer Candidate School in 1943. This class had a 46 percent graduation rate. He was a sound and proven combat platoon leader from Long Beach, California. He lost half of his weapons platoon during the Battle of the Bulge.³²⁴ He was hand selected along with his platoon sergeant Oliver Socco to train and lead a black volunteer platoon. All of the junior officers were unaware they were going to be leading black troops. Ralston said, “Oh my goodness, CPT Simmons had said nothing about picking up black troops.”³²⁵ The assignment did not deter Lieutenant Ralston’s desire to do his best to lead these men.

Lieutenant Ralston instantly recognized the excellent raw qualities within the men. They were not strangers to violence. The majority of his troops grew up in ghettos or rural areas surrounded by discriminatory violent acts. Ralston said, “They weren’t

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid., 56.

³²⁴ Ibid., 60.

³²⁵ Ibid., 61.

scared of anything.”³²⁶ Lieutenant Ralston requested an additional two weeks of training in order to fully prepare his men for action on the front lines.³²⁷

The black platoons had a distinct advantage in training over the white replacements. They trained as a platoon and focused on squad and platoon tactics. They received realistic and rigorous training and learned about German infantry tactics. They knew how to dismantle light and heavy machine guns, grenades, and study small unit tactics. They learned in detail how to seize villages, attack bunkers, and traverse in formation in different types of terrain.³²⁸ They formed deep bonds of trust throughout the ranks, and all knew they could rely upon one another. Most importantly, they received outstanding treatment in training and were not subjected to the callous prejudice they received in the United States. The 5th platoon of K Company completed training in late February and received a visit by BG Davis. BG Davis provided a motivational memorandum focusing on the proud history of the African American soldier. He reminded them that they are representing not just America, but the black community as a whole. He quoted the Stars and Stripes article quoting General Eisenhower’s promotion of the unique integration directive, “live, and work together regardless of race or nationality, creed, or service, uniform or rank, so that we will win together a better world, secure, and free for all men everywhere at home as well as abroad.”³²⁹

³²⁶ Ibid., 63.

³²⁷ Ibid., 75.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid., 79.

No Racial Divide in the Trenches

Thirty-seven out of the fifty-three black volunteer platoons were sent to the front after training in early March 1945. The remainder were sent after they trained additional black platoons. Black platoons had forty-five personnel and one platoon assigned to each of the three regiments in a division. Although blacks had to give up rank to volunteer, several remained with sergeant status in order to lead their squads. A few platoons were formed into companies and served with the 12th and 14th Armored Divisions.³³⁰ Black platoons served in ten army divisions and three army groups.³³¹

The 5th of K's first combat was during their march to reinforce the beleaguered K Company near the Remagen Bridge. Prior to their first combat action, they received jeers from white combat soldiers in the rear. They defeated a German machine gun and took several prisoners. Unfortunately, one man was killed in the attack. They steadfastly resumed their advance and received a hero's welcome from a company who could care less about the color of their skin.³³²

The 5th of K Company participated in every major battle of the Ruhr Campaign. At the Battle of Honningen, 15 to 17 March 1944, these brave men collected over three hundred prisoners. Army after action reports stated that the Honningen battle was "fierce house to house battle."³³³ Several white veterans from K Company were amazed on how

³³⁰ Ibid., 51.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid., 98.

³³³ Ibid., 122.

the newly arrived black soldiers conducted themselves as veterans.³³⁴ This is a tribute to the outstanding training these men received prior to their arrival. PFC Boudreau earned immense popularity by his determination to kill Germans with his BAR. Various witnesses accredited PFC Boudreau's valor and he received credit for killing numerous German field grade officers and enlisted during the Battle of Honningen. Unfortunately, some of this respect came from his possibly killing unarmed German prisoners. He earned the nickname Blitz from his comrades.³³⁵ Lieutenant Brown of L Company remarked, "A higher percentage of men in the 5th Platoon aimed and fired their weapons than the white soldiers. All of them were just shooting hell out of everything. They were quite a bit more aggressive than white soldiers."³³⁶ Major General Walter E. Lauer, 99th Infantry Division Commander, stated "the Negro platoon of Company K, which had already distinguished itself in its few days in battle, accounted for the major portion of the three hundred prisoners taken. Sweeping through the town, it bagged a colonel and his staff of four, and killed many others."³³⁷ These are just a few comments amongst several praising the professionalism of the 5th platoons conduct in combat. The 5th of K Company in a few short days had already earned the respect of the division.

³³⁴ Colley, 121.

³³⁵ Ibid., 123.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid., 125-126.

After the Battle of Honningen, the 394th Regiment captured Rothenfeld, Rheinbrohl, and Hannenstein encountering light and sporadic resistance.³³⁸ At Neuwied, the Germans attempted to use propaganda of American racism to get blacks to surrender.³³⁹ The black platoons gained an infamous reputation amongst the German soldiers. The Germans equated American black troops to the French Senegalese troops. French Senegalese troops were infamous for collection of German body parts as trophies. African American soldiers did not conduct such practices. Wilfred Strange once told a German machine gunner to surrender or be eaten, and it worked.³⁴⁰ Germans used this fear as motivation to tighten up resistance. Black soldiers knew they would receive worse treatment by Nazi Germany as rumors of black prisoners of war execution began to reach the front lines. The 1st SS Panzer Division murdered eleven black prisoners of war during the Battle of the Bulge.³⁴¹

American commanders also began to perceive blacks as more aggressive. They believed blacks were more used to violence in their daily lives.³⁴² Naturally, bonds of friendship developed on the front lines between the two races. Fear and a common enemy tend to make different groups of people come together. White soldiers began to appreciate black culture and enjoyed the relaxed social atmosphere the black platoons

³³⁸ Ibid., 128.

³³⁹ Ibid., 54.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 129.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 128.

³⁴² Ibid., 130.

brought to their units. LT Ralston stated, “The blacks were very funny. Their sense of humor was more agile and alert than the whites . . . I’m guessing that’s why the whites gathered around us.”³⁴³ Army surveys conducted during and after the war showed African Americans took more pride in their units than white soldiers.³⁴⁴

On 23 March 1945, 5th of K Company began the offensive into the Ruhr Pocket. The offensive totaled three US Army Corps.³⁴⁵ The Battle of the Flak Hills began on 5 April 1945 at 8:00 a.m. with the 99th Infantry Division objective of seizing the town of Latrop and nearby high ground.³⁴⁶ The Germans put up stiff sporadic resistance due to the German army at this time was a hodge-podge of old men, teens, and veterans. The 5th of K Company feared the German’s effective use of flak guns. If Germans refused to surrender then the 5th of K called in airstrikes and tank support to eliminate the threat.³⁴⁷ K Company received follow on orders to seize the town of Wambach.

The Battle of Wambach was a fierce fight against hard core Nazis in the Panzer Lehr Division.³⁴⁸ Unfortunately, discrimination still existed on the front lines. Sampson Jones, a black volunteer, suffered a double amputation leg wound during the battle. His friend, Harold Robinson, recalled white medics who refused to assist the wounded Jones.

³⁴³ Ibid., 134.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 137.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 154.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 155.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 159.

Jones died from his wounds as a result. After the battle, Robinson saw the same medics playing cards in the ambulance.³⁴⁹ Positive perception changed for white soldiers, because of this tragic incident. Jack Dufalla, a white soldier, said, “That made me believe there is significantly little difference between blacks and whites. His flesh was red and his blood was also red.”³⁵⁰

The 99th Infantry Division captured 317,000 Germans of which 35 generals surrendered in the subsequent battles of the Ruhr Pocket.³⁵¹ Germany’s will to resist was not completely broken and the Americans faced stiff resistance. At any given moment, sudden random violence was brought upon Army units during this campaign. Upon completion, the 99th Infantry Division was attached to General Patton’s 3rd Army with the task to destroy the German Army in Bavaria.

The 5th of K Company encountered fierce German resistance when crossing the Ludwig Canal on 26 April 1945. Heavy volumes of German fire pinned down the platoon and Lieutenant Ralston was wounded while rescuing a black soldier. The fierce action left sixteen men wounded from shrapnel and bullets.³⁵² The 5th Platoon was out of action for the remainder of the fight, but several members volunteered to continue the advance across the Danube River with K Company. They took their objectives after countering fierce resistance. General Lauer said, “They routed out the well concealed enemy in cold

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 157-158.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 160.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 163.

³⁵² Ibid., 172.

fury and drove them away screaming for mercy.”³⁵³ Germany surrendered on May 6, 1945 and for the black platoons it was a return to segregation.

Dishonored

Black Platoons participated in the occupation of Germany. They were particularly keen at finding buildings for their company to rest in. A common practice was to turn unoccupied buildings into recreational facilities. The military police attempted to enforce segregation by refusing blacks entrance into the clubs. K Company commander, Captain Herbert Pickett, confronted a military police major where men refused to allow blacks use of the recreation facility near Leipzig. Pickett said, “You men go in there. I’m a Southerner but you are in the army and I’ll go to hell with you.”³⁵⁴ Incidents such as this were frequent, and loyalty for their fellow service men stretched beyond race. These men fought and died with one another for three months. Trust was implicit throughout the unit and displayed by putting white soldiers in black platoons and vice versa. It was common for black platoons to volunteer for duty with other units. The Army senior leadership unfortunately betrayed this trust once again.

SHAFE ordered all black volunteers report back to segregated units in July 1945.³⁵⁵ The outrage rippled throughout the black platoons and some members armed themselves in defiance of the order. Strawder, a black volunteer, said “All this mess was for nothing. How could they be so indifferent as to kick us out of our infantry

³⁵³ Colley, 176.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 184.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

divisions?”³⁵⁶ An incident occurred with white squads refusing to leave the black platoons they were attached to and vice versa.³⁵⁷ In some cases, fierce objections from white soldiers losing their black brothers resulted with them staying in the unit. A few white commanders protested the order and expressed dismay at this betrayal. A company commander commented on the unpopularity, “The white squad didn’t want to leave the platoon. I’ve never seen anything like it.”³⁵⁸ Several 99th volunteers spoke to General Eisenhower at Frankfurt about the issue and he agreed the orders were not right.

SHAFE arranged redeployment flights from Lucky Strike camps for some black platoons. Sit down demonstrations were held by two hundred black volunteers from the 99th at a Lucky Strike camp, because they were ordered to build barracks. SHAFE may have given this unpopular order because of the pending deployment of the 99th Infantry Division to the Pacific Theater where integrated infantry did not exist. It was up to General Douglas MacArthur to determine whether he would accept black platoons.³⁵⁹ LTG Lee was sent to defuse the situation and promised to return them to the United States with 69th Infantry Division personnel.³⁶⁰ Some men deployed with the 69th Infantry Division, but for others returned home with labor service units. BG Davis, SR expressed the betrayal implicitly, “These men appear to be broken in spirit. They feel that

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 192.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 193.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 186.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 184-185.

the high command that offered them the privilege of combat has broken faith with them.”³⁶¹ Army senior leadership was in for another shock that would shake the traditional segregation roots of the Army.

The Integration Demand

Army surveys of the black platoons began in May 1945. The survey interviewed 250 white officers and men who commanded or served with the black volunteers. Surveyors interviewed zero black volunteers. The survey also interviewed 1,700 enlisted white men in an anonymous questionnaire concerning black volunteers they served with or within close proximity. The recipients took all of the questionnaires independently. The resulting report stated “striking similarities” in the attitude of the varied ranks concerning black volunteers. The study became controversial for upper army level command, because of the favorable attitude toward African American service men.³⁶² Eighty four percent of officers said blacks troops performed very or fairly well. Zero stated they performed poorly.³⁶³ “They were the best platoon in the regiment. I wish I could get a presidential citation for them” a comment by a white infantry commander.³⁶⁴ Another common theme was the aggressiveness of the offense, utilization of firepower,

³⁶¹ Ibid., 187.

³⁶² Ibid., 189.

³⁶³ Ibid., 190.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 189.

loyalty, and teamwork. Senior army commanders delayed the study for official publication.³⁶⁵

Senior army commanders disliked the notion of an integrated army. The report made clear the desire of white officers and soldiers to integrate the army. The report displayed that white men in other regiments preferred to have black platoons than receive a white platoon from another division.³⁶⁶ The survey stated, “A majority of both officers and enlisted men endorse the idea of having colored soldiers used as infantry troops.”³⁶⁷

A black reporter from the Pittsburgh Courier interviewed a white soldier who served with the black platoons. In the interview, the white soldier recollected that the majority of his platoon was from Texas. He reported no friction between the races and the black soldiers performed extremely well on the battlefield.³⁶⁸ The report displayed the majority of white soldiers were apprehensive and reluctant upon notification of incoming black volunteers. By the end of the war three-fourths changed opinion after serving in these units.³⁶⁹

Senior army commanders attempted to explain the surveys positive results. First, since they were volunteers they may be the best black soldiers in the force. Second, some did not experience the full range of combat like duress under heavy artillery fire and

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 191.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 192.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 193.

overwhelming German attacks.³⁷⁰ These reservations are ludicrous, because the black platoons clearly had the same combat experience as white units during the Ruhr Campaign. The report did not include the number of white soldiers who replaced veterans in the European Theater of Operations in late 1944 and early 1945 who also did not see drastic combat nor volunteered for their assignments. Poor training resulted in a high casualty rate and poor combat performance for white replacement soldiers.³⁷¹ Brigadier General H.T. Mayberry, 99th assistant division commander, vehemently countered the accusation of lack of combat experience. “The Negroes participated in some intense heavy fighting. They were subjected on occasion to some artillery and mortar fire. Their performance was consistently good. One platoon leader told me “I’ll take these people anytime.”³⁷² Senior army leadership remained unconvinced of the success of integration.

General Brehon B. Somervell, commander of the Army’s Service Forces, disagreed with the report. He believed the sampling was too small. He did not want an embolden NAACP to argue for more rights and similar experiments. He expressed the same worry about congressional political ramification and the impact of the war in the Pacific Theater.³⁷³ General Omar Bradley, commander of 12th Army Group where the majority of black platoons fought, also discounted the reports. He opined that black volunteers were atypical of their race and only participated in mop up operations. Their

³⁷⁰ Colley, 190.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 193.

lack of full combat was a result of white units doing most of the previous fighting.³⁷⁴ General Bradley promoted further experimentation with the utilization of black companies and draftees with average qualifications.³⁷⁵ General George C. Marshall expressed interest, but did not want to publish the report. He maintained that segregation remain in the units. Senior ranking officials did not change their perceptions and attitudes. Black volunteers had to be the exception rather than the rule.³⁷⁶

Senior commanders' perception was a blatant disregard of the varied reports of integration within units who had black platoons. White senior commanders' expressed the same attitude when attaching black combat units to whites, because their small size and composition remained segregated. An integrated Army was already a reality, despite senior commanders' refusal to acknowledge the facts.

The black platoons served with honor and distinction. They formed unshakable bonds over seemingly unbreakable social barriers. Many felt betrayed by the Army and thought their sacrifice was all for naught. It was common for black volunteers to not acknowledge they served in black platoons. Strawder reflected, "I felt strongly at the end of the war that whites classified us as nothing. We were just absolutely nothing. We were the lowest heap."³⁷⁷ Fortunately, this was not the case. White combat veterans of the 99th Infantry Division and many others found their black brothers 50 years later, to the

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 194.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

surprise of many black volunteers who thought they were forgotten. Harold Robinson said at the 99th Infantry Division reunion, “I truly believe now that you are genuinely as happy to see us today as you were in 1945.”³⁷⁸ These brave men proved to the United States of America the fighting spirit and patriotism of the black community. Furthermore, they proved integration was socially acceptable for the Army. True integration occurred in decentralized operations in the frontlines of the European Theater of Operations.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 4.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The U. S. Army senior leadership slowly began to realize the irreversible momentum created with the success of African American combat units in decentralized operations. The Battle of the Bulge highlighted the Army's poor capability for providing available manpower during a crisis. The integration of the black infantry platoons and separate tank battalions attached to white divisions changed the perception amongst white officers towards African Americans. The purpose for fighting against Nazi Germany and Japan directly contrasted with the situation in America. Questions began to emerge amongst society, particularly black society, on why the nation could fight for freedom and equality for non-Americans but allow repression of their own citizens. The end of war brought massive demobilization, and the Army's black percentage ironically increased from 9 percent to 15 percent by 1947.³⁷⁹ The War Department anticipated the increased percentage and created a panel to provide recommendations for the efficient use of Negro soldiers.

The Gillem Board, chaired by Lieutenant General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr. convened on 27 September 1945. The panel consisted of two army generals and one army air force general.³⁸⁰ Lieutenant General Gillem commanded the XIII Corps in the European Theater of Operations during World War II and was one of the authors of the 1925 Army

³⁷⁹ MacGregor, 153.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

War College studies.³⁸¹ The Gillem Board particularly focused on the success of small black combat units and the integrated fifth platoons. The Gillem Board's results and findings were quite progressive for the period.

The board stated the black platoons should be the basis for future Army experimentation of integrated units. The success rate of these units clearly challenged the Army's predisposed position regarding segregated units.³⁸² The board concluded that black units fought better under white leadership, thus making black divisions unnecessary.³⁸³ The report failed to mention the lack of black field grade officers and battalion or higher commanders. The report led to the supposition that white officers are inherently suited to command. The poor combat record of the 92nd Infantry Division and sparse use of the 93rd Infantry Division led the board to conclude that black combat divisions should be abolished. The board blamed black junior officers and non-commissioned officers for poor combat efficiency.³⁸⁴

Oddly, the board placed segregation as the root cause for poor leadership. Army segregation policy did not allow promotional growth. Black officers and non-commissioned officer could only compete against one another. The board recommended

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Draft of the Gillem Board Report, ca. 1946. Security Classified Records, Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, 6.

³⁸³ Ibid., 5.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 41.

the Army promote base solely on merit and not race.³⁸⁵ The board did not address the Army's policy on not allowing black officers to be in charge of white soldiers.

The report noted the best results came from racial units grouped at battalion and below. They found officers perceptions concerning black soldiers began to change when in combat conditions. The report specifically mentions the Battle of the Bulge and the need for the Army to utilize all available manpower for an efficient response to emergencies.³⁸⁶ The Army, out of sheer necessity, must rely on all available manpower regardless of race, and inevitably, racial units would be mixed in order to complete the mission. Instead of waiting on a military crisis, the board reiterated the recommendation of assigning lower echelon black units to white divisions. The Gillem Board failed to recommend full integration for the Army.

The Gillem Board argued that segregation was a flawed policy for the U. S. military. Segregation forced all services to spend extra money on "separate but equal" recreational facilities, barracks, and training facilities. Segregation forced severe administrative burdens concerning promotions, schools, maintenance of the 10 percent racial quota, and recruitment. The board realized segregation was the root cause of morale problems within black units. It was impossible to treat individuals differently and expect respect and commitment from subordinates. Only in combat were conditions truly equal for blacks and whites. It is important to note the Navy reached the same conclusion by the end of World War II. The Navy officially integrated on 27 February 1946 with the

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 43.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

publication of Circular Letter 48-46.³⁸⁷ A few senior Army leaders integrated their units regardless of Army policy. Major General James Gavin requested the black paratrooper battalion, 555th, be attached to the 82nd Airborne Division in order to receive recognition during the division's victory parade in New York City.³⁸⁸ The 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion came under the command of Colonel William Westmoreland on February 1946.³⁸⁹ African American civil rights groups viewed these attachments as the Army's denial of full equality for African American soldiers. They wanted blacks to be fully integrated with white soldiers and not as separate unit attachments.

The American civil rights movement began to gather irreversible momentum following World War II. Black veterans began to take advantage of the G.I. Bill and began to press the government for more equality. They did not fight a war to free the world from tyranny in order to face oppression at home. Civil rights groups placed pressure on President Harry Truman to desegregate the military. The NAACP supported cases challenging America's biased judicial system in regards to housing, schools, employment, and military inequality.³⁹⁰ African Americans leaders once again used the pressure of the vote against the Truman Administration. President Truman began to doubt the legitimacy of a segregated military in a democratic nation. President Truman said,

³⁸⁷ MacGregor, 153.

³⁸⁸ Booker, 165.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

³⁹⁰ Christopher Paul Moore, *Fighting for America: Black Soldiers in WW II* (New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 2005), 322.

“The top dog in a world which is over half colored ought to clean his own house.”³⁹¹ The Army Staff resisted desegregation and opposed President Truman using the typical argument of the Army is not the institution for social reform. Segregationists in Congress supported the traditional Army senior leadership and eliminated the Fair Employment Practices Commission and President Truman knew he would not obtain Congressional approval to pass a law to enable military integration.³⁹²

On 26 July 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 and officially desegregated the United States military. The first paragraph stated, “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all person in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.”³⁹³ Executive Order 9981 established the President’s Commission on Civil Rights whose purpose was to report to the Secretary of Defense on the implementation of the president’s executive order. The Army resisted the order to desegregate and translated the executive order as attachment of black units to white divisions. Army Chief of Staff, General Omar Bradley, opposed the order and argued the “Army is not the place for social experimentation.”³⁹⁴ President Truman forced General Bradley to write a formal apology to him, because of his near insubordination to the President’s decision to

³⁹¹ Dalfiume, 138.

³⁹² Moore, 323.

³⁹³ Executive Order 9981, 1.

³⁹⁴ Booker, 331.

desegregate the Army.³⁹⁵ The Army continued to drag its feet and did not complete integration until after the Korean War. The sacrifices of the small combat units like the 761st Tank Battalion and the black infantry platoons in the European Theater of Operations during World War II planted the seeds for integration within the Army.

Decentralized operations provided a common bond between soldiers regardless of race. Small African American combat units in World War II proved this and slowly changed perceptions of white officers and soldiers. The Army has made tremendous strides with the pursuit of equality within the force. African Americans rose in the ranks and General Colin Powell became the highest-ranking officer in the military as the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff in 1989. The Army also has made tremendous strides with equality for women.

The Air Defense Artillery branch opened the high to medium altitude military occupation specialty to women in 1973. Army senior leaders used the same logic that incorporated African Americans to artillery units in World War I and II.³⁹⁶ The idea was women would not be placed in direct threat of combat; therefore, they would not sustain high levels of combat. They also believed women were physically and mentally unfit for direct combat. Army senior leadership used the argument that the nation was socially unprepared for female casualties on the battlefield and it was not the Army's place to be a social experiment. Nevertheless, Air Defense Artillery served as the example for the Army integration of women in combat roles for decades to come.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Mary French, "Women in ADA," *Air Defense Artillery* (September-October 1988): 30.

Women deployed in unprecedented numbers to fight in the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The nation also realized that dangers from combat in proximity to the front lines are not a valid argument due to emerging missile threats from America's adversaries. In 1993, the Pentagon authorized women to join military occupation specialties in combat aviation and combat ships.³⁹⁷ Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003 to 2010) and Operation Enduring Freedom (2001 to present) are stark reminders that the current complex environment does not always follow the traditional linear battlefield lines. In 2003, the Air Defense Artillery branch opened up the short-range air defense military occupation specialty for women, and became the first branch to place women on the front lines. The debate continues today on opening infantry and armor military occupation specialties to women. Decentralized operations had a tremendous impact on how Pentagon senior officials viewed women in combat military occupational specialties.

Diversity debates continue today with close examination of Army policies and procedures required from Army senior leadership in order to make democratically informed decisions. It is imperative the Army becomes more transparent when handling social issues. The Army needs to apply historical lessons learned from the numerous panels on African American Manpower conducted in the 1930s and 1940s. These panels created progressive works for that period, but failed short of informing the public on the Army's thoughts and ideas of enacting socially controversial programs. This lack of transparency caused the public to view the military with distrust.

³⁹⁷ Kerk Brown, "Ending Combat Exclusion: The Right Woman for the Job" (Strategic Research Project, United States Army War College, 2012), 4.

A professional military must maintain transparency with the public we serve in order to maintain the trust between civilian authorities and military leaders. The present day Army is currently downsizing the officer and enlisted ranks through the Officer Separation Board and Enhanced Selective Early Retirement Board. The 2014 Officer Separation Board displayed a disparity between black and white officers selected for separation. African American majors had a 4 percent higher separation rate than white majors. Meanwhile, Hispanics had a 3 percent higher rate than whites and Asian-Pacific were equal to whites in percentages.³⁹⁸ The board selected one thousand and two hundred captains for separation. African American captains were fully 60 percent of the officers selected for separation. Blacks had a one in five-selection rate in contrast to whites who had a one in ten-selection rate. African Americans make up 10 percent of the Army officer corps and whites make up 80 percent of the officer corps.³⁹⁹ This disparity raised questions in the African American community about the legitimacy of the selection board.

The Army could have avoided this perception by being transparent with the board procedures instead of seemingly reacting to negative public responses. Army leadership stated the board's set of criteria removed officers based on their evaluations, and the primary reason for separation was derogatory information within the officer's file. The Army needs to establish panels to discuss the diversity of the Army in order to enhance

³⁹⁸ Brendan McGarry, "Army Officer Firings Blamed on Bad Evals, Not Race," Military.com, accessed 15 April, 2015, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/08/29/army-officer-firings-blamed-on-bad-evals-not-race.html>.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

professionalism within the force and to increase trust with the American public. There is also a growing concern of the lack of mentors for African American officers.

The 761st Tank Battalion and the black infantry platoons clearly show a link to excellent leadership with the execution of decentralized operations. Colonel (retired) Irving Smith III makes the claim that the current Army system is still failing black officers in his editorial *Why Black Officers Still Fail*. Smith claimed African American officers had to seek out mentorship in a predominately white officer corps. He also claimed white officers normally did not have a black officer mentor.⁴⁰⁰ Therefore, the racial divide might still exist in the Army. Smith used statistics to support the idea that the “good old boy” network allows African Americans to be passed over for selection to colonel at much higher rates than white officers. This thesis remains neutral in accordance to Smith’s opinion, but it is important to note he distinctly states the Army needs to establish panels to discuss diversity within the Army.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more holistic view of Army history for present and future generations. The Army fails to provide all available history to current Army soldiers. The Army tends to focus the various ethnic cultural histories based off the calendar like Black History Month. Instead, the Army should use the institution’s diverse history to inform current and future Soldiers of examples of leadership. It is odd that the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has murals depicting Confederate generals. These same generals were traitors, and fought a destructive four-year war for the sole purpose of owning a human being. In contrast, the Command and

⁴⁰⁰ Irving Smith III, “Why Black Officers Still Fail,” *Parameter* (Autumn 2010): 9.

General Staff College Hall of Fame failed to capture the full exploits of Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee. The citation for Lieutenant General Lee never mentioned that he was the architect for promoting the creation of the black infantry platoons. Current soldiers would never know the importance of this man's heroic actions and the impact he personally had on Army integration by reading just his Hall of Fame citation. The only reason why the Command and General Staff College Class of 2015 knew about his exploits was his grandson mentioned the historic event in his acceptance speech on 17 April 2015.

The Army does not have to wait for cultural events to educate soldiers on its proud history. Many heroes within the 761st Tank Battalion, like Reuben Rivers and Paul Bates are great examples of leadership. The African American story of fighting for equality and recognition on the battlefields of the European Theater of Operations are excellent examples of resiliency.

Several African American units require further study by other historians: 452nd Anti-Artillery Battalion, 333rd Field Artillery Group, and the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion. These units also fought alongside white units in decentralized operations in the European Theater of Operations. Decentralized operations prove that a common bond formed through proximity and necessity allowed the Army to integrate regardless of race. The key ingredient for success is solid leadership that promotes equality and builds trust. Combat has a remarkable way of creating equality, because bullets do not discriminate. The Army's experience of World War II concerning small African American combat units proved this theory. White junior and field grade officers took their experiences with black combat units and began to slowly apply equality within the Army. The myth that

black soldiers would or could not fight were particularly dispelled during the Korean War. Women are also going through a similar journey and more study needs to be done on the impact of decentralized operations with female combatants in Iraq and Afghanistan. Decentralized operations in small combat units, battalion and below had the greatest impact on changing European American perceptions of African Americans ability to serve in an integrated Army.

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