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**CLASSIFICATION AND TRAINING  
OF ENLISTED PERSONNEL**

**A HISTORICAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Submitted by**

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**ENLISTED CLASSIFICATION AND TRAINING  
THROUGH THE YEARS  
1861 TO 1993**

History has taken many turns for the enlisted soldier. We have gone from riding horses, too spotting troop movement in balloons, too gunners in biplanes, and enlisted crews managing satellites in space. There are many historical experiences today's airman has in common with the soldier of yesteryears. Like our journey through the years, classification and training of enlisted personnel was with us, in some form or another. The earliest records start out around 1861 and continue through present day. We will look at short glimpses of how enlisted personnel were classified and trained from 1861 - 1917 in the Army Aviation Service (AAS), and then look at the classification of enlisted personnel in the Army Air Corps (AAC) from 1919 - 1947. Our travel through the years will culminate with post World War II to present day classification and training.

The United States Army Air Arm (AAM) was the name given (around 1872) for the observation balloon branch. Documentation on these early years for classification and training are very sparse. If you were a strong man and liked horses you were classified as a blacksmith. If you worked with wood or played an instrument your classification would be; fort carpenter or band member. If your mother or father taught you to count, your job was quartermaster. The regular duties of being a horse soldier

prevailed, out on patrol or guarding the fort. Training, when given in specialized fields was always from a more experienced soldier, almost like our modern day on the job training (OJT) program. (2:15) Classification and training took a huge turn with the arrival of aviation. The battle field observation balloon now required a group of very specialized soldiers to be utilized and trained.

The single most important factor that changed the classification and training of enlisted personnel was, the flight of the Wright brothers aircraft at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. This one single act ushered in a revolution that has it's repercussions even today. Soldiers who volunteered to work in the aviation program were not relieved from their regular duties, but were required to work on the aircraft in their spare time. The resistance for soliders to specialize in a aviation field was evident, you are a soldier first.

Classification and training in the 1920s changed drastically. The AAM multiplied 200 times, rising from approximately 9,000 men in 1920 to more than 2,000,000 by 1946. Procuring this force and assuring its effective use through proper classification and training was one of the most important items in building the

There were two categories of air force enlisted men: Air Corps (AC) and Arms and Services with the Army Air Forces (ASWAAF). Air Corps men were those who enlisted and were assigned to the air arm; they constituted about three-fourths of the total Air Forces peak strength. ASWAAF were men from other branches on duty with the Army Air Force. They included soldiers, quartermasters, ordnance, engineer, medical and finance personnel. The problem of Air Corps personnel procurement was

far more than a matter of mere numbers, and the problem of classification and training involved more than a casual sorting of enlisted men.

For the AAF, whose complicated equipment needed skilled mechanics, most of whom were not available from civilian life in sufficient numbers, was obliged to train about 65 percent of its enlisted personnel as specialists. The army had no formal aviation training courses available when the first aircraft was delivered in 1911, many had to go to school at the factory where the aircraft were being manufactured. (2:41) The use of the OJT program again was the primary tool for personnel to become qualified in their jobs. The need for formal training was evident, by the end of 1944 there were 23 major courses taught by the AAF. In the years from 1916 onward the AAF instated an alpha and mathematics test. (5:2) The inductees were interviewed by a skilled individual, Each inductee was asked questions on his background, education and hobbies in order to gain a fuller understanding of his potential use to the military. After the interview each inductee was classified during this time as class I through III. (8:27) As a result of the interview, enlisted personnel were assigned to a duty commensurate with their level of intelligence, either OJT, or a technical school. (3:1) Men who couldn't be used in one of these ways, was reported to AAF headquarters for transfer to an activity where his qualifications could be used, he became an infantry soldier (basic foot soldier). (1:21) This practice carried on until 1947.

There were numerous incidents of misuse of enlisted men of high intelligence and this was causing moral problems. Despite stern measures, it was up to the

commander to use personnel the way he saw fit. (4:2) An inspector general report in 1940 recommend: "Failure either to use them properly or to report them for transfer was to be considered a matter calling for disciplinary action" (1:59). This issue, however, was to plague the AAF. Another War Department inspection report was completed in 1946, of 21 bases and eight commands inspected there was a considerable number of personnel being utilized in semi-skilled and unskilled duties. (3:1).

In the years that led up to the National Security Act of 1947 and the birth of the Air Force. There is one thing that stands out for enlisted personnel, they were classified, trained and utilized as the commander saw fit, even if they were properly trained. I have to come to realize that this is where the saying "the needs of the Army Air Force come first" or in today's language the "needs Air Force come first".

When the Air Force started in 1947 the classification and training programs were the same used by the AAF. The programs did change from the early years of the AAF the need for specialized schools and testing of personnel was becoming paramount. After World War II (W.W. II) technology was changing rapidly and the classification and training programs had to change also. The term Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was no longer used (6:10) and the Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) was born. The Air Force need a way to track and classify all personnel in the Air Force. This program is still used today but has expanded from 56 MOSs during W.W. II to over 100 plus career fields in the Air Force. The new regulations treated classification and training as one idea. Their purpose was to classify and train an airman though his/her entire

service life. The old "potential", Semi-skilled or skilled" (7:6) classification were replaced with: three levels, this airman graduated a technical school or a direct duty assignment. They were qualified to do basic level work only, and were under constant supervision. Five levels, this airman completed OJT and could do more in-depth work either supervised or un-supervised. Seven levels, commander appointed them as a fully qualified technician and supervisor, they were Non Commissioned Officers.

The modern day system we use today for classification and training has changed 100 fold from the beginning and is still changing. We work under a Total Force Training concept with a specific strategy in mind. (10:) This strategy lets personnel manage training programs by validating training requirements according to how well they support the mission. (9:10) The program has clear cut objectives. Develop total force training programs to provide: Education and training for the "total force" (active-duty military, guard, reserve, and civilian). Effective support of force readiness and efficient use of resources, training is an essential part of operational readiness of all units. This insures the Department of Defense (DOD) has access to the best trained individuals, units, and forces possible to meet our Nations Objectives.

Enlisted classification and training also have clear cut standards that have to be fulfilled, these skill level training requirements are: complete an in-resident initial skills training course for award of a 3-level AFSC. Complete upgrade training and rank requirements for the award of the 5-level AFSC. Complete a formal advanced skills training course for award of the 7-level AFSC and complete the Senior Non Commissioned Officer Academy for the award of the 9-level.

## SUMMARY

Classification and training has changed over the years, if you were strong and liked to work around horses your career field was fort blacksmith and if you were good in mathematics your forte was to work as a Quartermaster (supply clerk).in the Army. Changing world events also brought on change for classification and training, the Sopwith camel had to be supported by specialized soldiers. This aviation qualification was an extra duty and not the primary duty of the soldier. The aviation field did set one thing into motion during the 1900s, soldiers had to be better trained.

The commander had total power over enlisted personnel for many years. When the enlisted soldier was assigned to a unit it was up to the commander to decide what MOS he was going to work in. The commander also had the power to determine his skilled or unskilled classification status. There was wide spread abuse of enlisted personnel for many years, fully skilled ordinance workers were assigned as cooks, trained engineers were working as grounds keepers. This power lasted until 1947 when the Air Force started building for its future. Classification and training started to become one idea.

The Air Force now has clear cut standards and objectives when dealing with classification and training of all enlisted personnel. These standards support the Air force mission and our Nations Objectives.

In closing, to borrow a quotation from General Hap Arnold: " Any Air force which does not keep its training ahead of its equipment, and vision far into the future, can only delude the nation into a false sense of security".



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**ABBREVIATIONS  
USED IN THIS PAPER**

*AAS Army Aviation Service*

*AAC Army Air Corps*

*AAM Army Air Arm*

*OJT ON THE JOB TRAINING*

*AC Air Corps*

*ASWAAF ARMS AND SERVICES WITH THE ARMY AIR FORCES*

*AFSC AIR FORCE SPECIALTY CODE*

*MOS MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY*