

84th AERO SQUADRON

OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL

A final responsibility of the Technical Training Command that should be mentioned was basic military training for nonrated officers. They were needed to relieve flying officers of their nonflying duties during the wartime expansion of the Air Corps and the Army Air Forces. (The Army Air Forces came into being on 20 June 1941. On 2 March 1942, as a result of a War Department circular, the Army Air Forces became a subordinate but autonomous arm of the US Army.) To provide this training, on 17 February 1942, General Arnold directed the Technical Training Command to establish an Officer Candidate School (OCS). General Weaver located it at Miami Beach, where it activated on 21 February 1942 and continued to operate until June 1944, when it moved to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center at the site of what later became Lackland Air Force Base. In June 1945 the Officer Candidate School again transferred to Maxwell Field, Alabama. The Officer Candidate School began as a 12-week course, but it expanded to 16 weeks in 1943. It also began as a uniform program for all officer candidates, but after 1943 the last phase of training was divided into specialized training for adjutants and personnel officers, as well as supply, mess, intelligence, guardcompany, and training officers. Later, it expanded to include physical training and technical officers as well. Then, in October 1944 as enrollment declined, the school dropped the specialized training altogether. Through the end of the war, the school graduated a total of 29,106 officers. These graduates had entered the school from a variety of backgrounds. Some were warrant officers or enlisted men who met the standards for admission to officer training. These sources were not adequate to meet all of the needs of the Army air arm, , so it commissioned some individuals with special qualifications directly from civilian life. These people required some military training, so Technical Training Command also set up an Officer Training School (OTS) at Miami Beach to provide six weeks of military instruction. It became an integral but separate part of OCS in June 1942.

Most OTS students were 30 years old or more, with the bulk of them in their 30s or 40s. They came from all walks of life, but most were teachers, businessmen, or professionals. The majority was slated for administrative or instructional duties in the Army Air Forces, but others became ferry pilots. Beginning in the winter of 1942, Medical, Dental, and Sanitary Corps officers also attended Officer Training School in courses separate from those for other officers. On 26 June 1943, OTS terminated its activities, but by that date it had trained a total of 13,898 students, of whom 13,284 graduated.

OFFICER TRAINING SCHOOL

In the late 1950s, the four officer sources--Air Force Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Officer Candidate School (OCS), and direct commissioning--were not producing the needed mix of skills and knowledge, especially in technical, engineering, and scientific fields. With four-year maturation periods, the Air Force Academy and ROTC were slow in responding to programmed manpower requirements. The Air Force was also reluctant to rely too heavily on direct commissioning. The solution was to tap into a significant manpower pool that had largely been ignored--graduating college seniors who had not participated in ROTC.

To train those graduates, the Air Force resurrected a concept tried during World War II--an officer training school (OTS). On 1 July 1959, the Air Force activated OTS at Lackland AFB. The first class entered OTS on 18 November 1959 and graduated on 9 February 1960. Believing that college graduates needed a shorter, but more intense course than OCS, the Air Force established a three month course for OTS, versus six months in OCS. At the same time, the Air Force created the Airman Education and Commissioning Program (AECPP), allowing qualified airmen to complete degree requirements and earn a commission through OTS. The OTS system had several advantages over OCS. It provided a more expeditious and responsive procurement system, and training costs per graduate were less. Also, OTS met the Air Force's desire to make a college degree the minimum educational standard for its

officers. Officer Training School expanded rapidly, turning out 320 graduates in FY 60, 2,265 in FY 62, and 5,371 in FY 63. The school quickly outgrew its quarters on Lackland and in 1961 moved to nearby Medina Base. With the tremendous growth of OTS and the establishment of AECP, OCS was phased out on 1 July 1963.

Officer Training School soon turned into the major supplier of Air Force officers. Not only did OTS absorb OCS's production quotas after 1963, but the Vietnam War soon accelerated officer procurement. At its peak, OTS produced 7,894 officers in FY 67. The unpopularity of the war on college campuses resulted in significant drops in ROTC enrollment, and OTS had to take up the slack. After the war, AFROTC scholarships proved very attractive and the military became more accepted on campuses. Eventually, the ratio between ROTC and OTS reversed itself, with ROTC doubling and even tripling OTS production. By the end of 2002, OTS had produced over 108,000 Air Force officers.

OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL

With the enormous expansion of the Army Air Forces (AAF) in the early years of World War II, an increasing burden was placed on officers, especially the small group of flying officers. To ease that burden, a large number of administrative officers had to be trained to relieve the flying officers of their non-flying duties. In 1942 Lt Gen Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the AAF, directed Maj Gen Walter R. Weaver, head of the Technical Training Command, to establish an Officer Candidate School (OCS). In response, General Weaver quickly opened an officer candidate school in February 1942 at several Miami Beach, Florida, resort hotels. Officer candidates were selected from two categories: former aviation cadets eliminated for flying or medical deficiency and warrant officers and enlisted men. Their qualifications included age limits of 18 to 36 years, demonstrated capacity for leadership, and a score of 110 or higher on the Army general classification test. These requirements remained in effect without major modification until after V-E day. In succeeding years, , these requirements changed in response to the fluctuating need for officers. Initially the OCS course was 12 weeks in length,

and the academic curriculum was uniform for all candidates. In January 1943 the curriculum was divided into two phases. The first phase involved military indoctrination and leadership, while the second prepared candidates for duty in a particular field. To handle the expanded curriculum, officials extended the OCS course to 16 weeks in June 1943. The school remained at Miami Beach until it moved in June 1944 to the Aviation Cadet Center in San Antonio, Texas. In June 1945, only two months before it was temporarily suspended, the school moved to Maxwell Field, Alabama. During the war, over 29,000 men graduated from Officer Candidate School. After the war, the Officer Candidate School closed for a short period of time and then resumed its 16-week course in September 1945.

The following February, OCS returned to San Antonio. Although only a shell of its former self, the school continued to graduate newly commissioned reserve officers at a rate of 300-600 per year for the next 17 years, save for the Korean War when there was an increase in production. The curriculum remained substantially the same during this period, although the course was extended from 16 to 24 weeks in length.

There were some changes in eligibility requirements, . When OCS reopened in 1946, only enlisted men and warrant officers were eligible. The following year, the school was open to civilians, who had at least two years of college or passed a college-level test. In 1948 women also became eligible. Then in 1952 the educational requirements for OCS were lowered. Two years of college were no longer necessary, and high school graduates could now enter. In 1955, , OCS applicants were required to have completed one year of active duty.

In the late 1950s, the Air Force also modified OCS's mission. From producing primarily administrative and other nonrated officers, the school began to send about one-half of its graduates to preflight school, responding to the Air Force's need for more aircrew members. In 1959 when the Air Force, realizing that it had to expand officer procurement to meet its growing needs, opened Officer Training School (OTS), OCS's days were numbered. For over 21 years, OCS had afforded airmen an opportunity to earn an Air Force commission. Faced with the Air Force's increased

emphasis on college graduates for its officer corps and the concomitant growth of OTS, as well as the establishment of the Airman Education and Commissioning Program (AECM) in 1960, OCS was phased out on 1 July 1963. During its existence, OCS produced over 41,000 officers.

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources