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Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Collection - President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services (4)

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strength, utilization in segregated units, and greatly limited job opportunities.

These policies were rigidly adhered to. By VJ-day there were approximately 140,000 Negroes in the Air Force - roughly 8 percent of total strength - and virtually all of them were in racial units. Except for the all-Negro 99th Fighter Squadron, the 332d Fighter Group, and the 477th Bombardment Group,* Negroes in the Air Force were concentrated for the most part in air cargo resupply squadrons, MP companies, ordnance ammunition companies, aviation engineer battalions, signal construction battalions, quartermaster truck companies, airdrome defense battalions, air base security battalions, and medical detachments. That is, Negroes had been used chiefly in service capacities and for heavy duty work, regardless of their individual skills and aptitudes. The only notable exceptions to this rule, involving relatively few men, were the ground crews and administrative personnel attached to the three Negro flying units.

By the end of the war many high-ranking officers in the Air Force were convinced that the concentration of almost all Negroes in a relatively narrow range of duties had deprived the service generally of many skills which were lost by reason of segregation. The Air Force also discovered that the malassignment which resulted from segregation cut two ways. It not only condemned men of superior skill to jobs where their abilities were wasted; it also forced the placement of men of insufficient skill in positions for which they were not equipped. Any standardized military unit - whether manned by whites or Negroes - provides for so many officers and so many enlisted men of specified skills, depending on the function and mission of the unit. In a white unit,

*The 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332d Fighter Group saw service in the Mediterranean Theater. The 477th Bombardment Squadron had just completed training as the war ended.

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