

WAR DEPARTMENT
Bureau of Public relations
PRESS BRANCH

December 19, 1944

I M M E D I A T E

R E L E A S E

STATEMENT BY MISS JACQUELINE COCHRAN
ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WASP PROGRAM

In a statement released by the War Department today, the accomplishment of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots program were reviewed by Miss Jacqueline Cochran, Director of Women Pilots for the AAF. The WASP program is to be deactivated Wednesday, December 20.

Miss Cochran's statement follows:

"The WASP have flown military aircraft substantially more than seventy-five million miles as their contribution in the air to the war effort. The major portion of this mileage was flow on operational duties; the minor part in training.

"The WASP are being demobilized because the pilot shortage which existed in 1942 and which caused the women pilot program to be started has now been effectively corrected. If continued in service longer, the WASP would be using flying time on domestic operations that could be spread to better advantage among the available male pilots who are awaiting their assignments abroad or who have returned from their completed combat missions and are available for domestic duties. Also the reduction of flying training has released for domestic flying from the civil contract schools many qualified pilots who have been instructing cadets. Thus the WASP have successfully fulfilled their main objective.

"The experimental features of the women pilot program have been successfully completed. The experience gained proved that this country has an enormous reserve of efficient pilot material among our young women. Scores of thousands of women, capable of being trained to perform flying duties of a widely diversified nature, are available in case of need, with the few months time to train them as the only delay. More than 30,000 applied to join the WASP although there was no recruiting program. The WAS had as low an elimination rate during training as the flying cadets. They were purposely assigned to varying kinds of duty with different Commands and Air Forces and flew all types of AAF aircraft. They flew at night as well as by day, in simulated bombing and strafing, in searchlight and radar practice missions, in target towing and in ferrying. They flew as many hours per month as male pilots in similar work.

"Substantially more than twelve thousand hours were flown in the overall program by the WASP per fatality. The rate of fatalities among WASP was approximately the same as among male pilots doing similar work.

"Such weak spots as were disclosed during this experimental woman pilot program, which had no precedent to serve as guide, were almost entirely incidental to the fact that the WASP were not militarized. On the whole, however, the loyalty and good sense of the individual WASPs overcame these inherent organizational weaknesses. It was primarily to meet these problems that militarization of WASP was proposed early in 1944 at a time when expansion of the WASP program seemed likely. The subsequent progress of the war and other changing circumstances relating to availability of pilot material changed the need for militarization from the standpoint of the Army Air Forces because it changed the need for the WASPs themselves. As a consequence the WASP are not entitled to any veterans' benefits and the next of kin of those who died have no Government-sponsored insurance or similar allowance.

"Failure to militarize was not the reason for demobilization of the WASP but rather successful completion of their double mission as above stated. The Director of Women Pilots did not make the original recommendation to deactivate the WASP but followed through wholeheartedly because of the logic of the pertinent facts and the timeliness of the action. Although the WASP wanted to continue to fly with the Army Air Forces their disappointment over demobilization is over-shadowed by the satisfaction that the war has progressed so favorably and our Air Forces are so strong that women pilots are no longer needed.

"On behalf of WASPs generally gratitude is expressed to General Arnold and all the other military authorities who gave the Women Pilots their opportunity to serve in the air in the war effort."