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A STUDY OF THE SUCCESS OF SELECTED  
AIR FORCE PRISONERS FOLLOWING  
RETURN TO DUTY

Program Evaluation Branch  
3320th Retraining Group (ATC)  
Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado

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## INTRODUCTION

The 3320th Retraining Group provides Air Force prisoners an opportunity for return to duty. This specialized treatment and training program is designed to return to duty an individual improved in attitude, conduct and efficiency, and with the ability to perform productively in the Air Force. Further, the Retraining Group is given a second mission, to return to civil life those individuals who are not deemed appropriate for further Air Force service, prepared to resume a place in society as a useful citizen.

The basic concept is that of individual treatment by a specially qualified staff. The program is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual understanding where the dignity of the individual is maintained. Each individual is studied and assisted in recognizing and solving problems that relate to his previously unsatisfactory conduct.

Air Force Regulation 125-4, paragraph 6, directs that the Retraining Group conduct studies and evaluations into the effectiveness of the overall program. This study was made to determine the relative effectiveness of the Retraining Group program as it compares with a period of confinement in a local or consolidated correctional facility.

Air Force Manual 125-2, paragraph 6-9, establishes guidelines for assignment of prisoners to the Retraining Group. The criteria outlined therein are to be used only as guidelines, and failure to conform to any single criterion is not to be considered as automatically eliminating the individual.

Paragraph 6-12 of the same manual states that there is no quota for the number of prisoners to be assigned to the Retraining Group. It could be assumed from this that the Retraining Group, much like its civilian counterparts, would be overcrowded. This is not the case. During calendar year 1969, the last full year for which complete data are available, the Retraining Group received only 29.4% of the total Air Force prisoner population. This resulted in a monthly average of 145 retrainees in the Retraining Group. The Retraining Group is designed to support a prisoner load of 185 retrainees per month. Even at full capacity, the Retraining Group would receive little more than one-third (36.4%) of the total Air Force prisoner population.

The purpose of this study is to determine if, with critical background factors held constant, a period of incarceration in a correctional facility produces a better or worse success rate than a period of confinement at the Retraining Group. This project is a result of long-standing interest in this question. It is also hoped that this study will provide sound data upon which to base an argument that a greater number of individuals be sent to the Retraining Group.

The period chosen for study was January 1963 through 31 December 1964. This period was chosen in order that most or all chosen for inclusion in the study would have completed their enlistments. During this time frame, the Retraining Group received only 472 individuals selected from a total of 4456 airmen who met the following criteria: (1) were court-martialed; (2) received a sentence containing no discharge; and (3) were sentenced to at least sixty days' confinement at hard labor. The criterion for

success was defined as performance in an acceptable manner until completion of enlistment and receipt of an honorable discharge.

It was hoped that inclusion of some airmen with punitive discharges pending might be possible. Due to extreme difficulty in obtaining necessary data, this segment of the study was postponed with expectations that this aspect will be explored in the future. It was learned that 173 individuals, whose sentence included a Bad Conduct Discharge, had those discharges modified. But this information applied to Special Courts-Martial actions only, and no other information was available.

The opinion has been expressed that many prisoners are not sent to the Retraining Group because they do not need that which is offered; i.e., rehabilitation. The belief is expressed that whatever change in behavior is needed to avoid further difficulty occurred as a result of apprehension, trial, and conviction; or that resources available at the base of court-martial could be better utilized to bring about needed changes in behavior.

In conjunction with the above consideration, it is expressed by some that only those who need exposure to a rehabilitation program should be sent to the Retraining Group, while the remainder do not need exposure to a rehabilitation program for one of two reasons: (1) the individual is a less serious offender who is thought to need exposure to a local correctional facility only; or (2) the individual is a more serious offender or recidivist who is awaiting administrative discharge and does not show the potential for rehabilitation. If the data indicate that no significant differences exist between the two samples, and if the

above opinions are true, then the success rates of the Retraining Group and the local correctional facilities should not differ statistically.

#### METHOD

All necessary information was filed at the National Personnel Records Center (MPR), St. Louis, Mo. The first step was a screening of all Special Courts-Martial orders for the time frame chosen for study. This yielded the name and serial number of 4456 airmen who met the criteria. From the total, a random sample of 722 was chosen. These cases were identified randomly within major air commands to coincide with the percentage referred to the Retraining Group from each major air command. Random sampling was accomplished within the major air command samples by selecting from a stack of punch cards every fifth card until a sufficient number were chosen. It should be noted that prior to final selection all prisoners who had been referred to the Retraining Group were removed. Thus, a random sample of 722 airmen who met the criteria but were not sent to the Retraining Group was selected.

The Retraining Group sample was identified as the 470 retrainees who met the criteria. It was assumed that all those airmen who met the criteria and who were not sent to the Retraining Group were returned to duty upon completion of their sentence.

Having identified the population for this study, a stack of punch cards containing name and serial number was forwarded to National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. The requisite Master Personnel Records were pulled and sent to the Military Personnel Records Center at Randolph AFB, Texas. A team of Retraining Group personnel then

manually searched each file to obtain the necessary data. The data needed and the format used to collect that data are contained in Appendix A.

The collected data were then returned to the 3320th Retraining Group. The proposal called for a multiple regression analysis to determine significant difference in success rates. Due to a lack of computer support, this was not possible. Data were manually tabulated, and a comparative analysis was utilized. Data analysis necessitated the use of statistical tests to determine whether differences between the two samples were statistically significant or merely due to chance variation. Two tests were used: (1) the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests of difference between proportions; and (2) the students "t" test of differences between means. It was determined that the level of significance required for an observed difference to be considered statistically significant would be .01; i.e., the probability that observed differences are due to chance is equal to or less than one percent. This means that an observed difference could be due to chance variations only one out of one hundred times.

#### RESULTS

Table I indicates the number of cases identified versus the number actually found and tabulated. No reason was given for the missing information. An attempt was made to determine if these cases could be found in the active Air Force files but met with negative results.

Table I

## Cases Identified vs. Cases Tabulated

	Identified	Tabulated
Retrainee	470	394
Prisoner	<u>722</u>	<u>497</u>
Total	1192	891

As previously indicated, the random selection was accomplished within the major air command samples. Table II presents those cases identified and tabulated by major air command. The data in this table concern only those returned to duty and are presented for information only.

Table II

## Distribution by Major Air Command of Those Returned to Duty

	Retrainee		Prisoner	
	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Tabulated</u>	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Tabulated</u>
SAC	92	86	239	193
ATC	82	60	213	96
ADC	23	12	61	42
TAC	19	13	50	45
PACAF	19	13	50	41
USAFE	13	6	33	25
MAC	10	6	26	18
AAC	5	3	12	6
OTHER	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>31</u>
Total	278	211	722	497

Table III presents the return rates for both samples. An original assumption was made that all those confined at local correctional facilities were returned to duty. This was found to be inaccurate.

Table III

## Return Rates

	Retrainee		Prisoner	
	#	%	#	%
Returned	278	58.9	311	62.6
Discharged	<u>194</u>	<u>41.1</u>	<u>186</u>	<u>37.4</u>
Total	472	100.0	497	100.0

$$X^2 = 1.3740 \quad P < .01$$

A chi-square test of significant difference indicates that the observed difference between these two samples in terms of rate of return to duty is not statistically significant.

Table IV presents the success rates of the two samples. Due to the inaccurate assumption made concerning the non-retrainee sample, from this point only data relating to those non-retrainees who were returned to duty will be utilized. As Table IV indicates, the Retraining Group sample had a 12.5% better success rate than did the non-retrainee sample. This observed difference was found to be statistically significant at the desired level through the application of a chi-square test of significant difference.

Table IV

## Success Rate

	Retrainee		Prisoner	
	#	%	#	%
Success	153	72.5	187	60.0
Failure	<u>58</u>	<u>27.5</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>40.0</u>
Total	211	100.0	311	100.0

$$X^2 = 8.4713 \quad P > .01$$

Table V shows that no significant differences exist between the two samples. This table presents six factors evaluated when considering an individual for transfer to the Retraining Group.

Table V

Referral Data

	<u>Retrainee</u>	<u>Prisoner</u>		
Age @ Enlistment	18.26	18.38	t = 0.9375	P < .01
Level of Education	11.73	11.57	t = 2.5454	P < .01
Time Served to Court-Martial	2.60	2.16	t = 2.0047	P < .01
Age @ Court-Martial	20.43	20.99	t = 1.8983	P < .01
Number Having Previous Court-Martial	28	42	$X^2 = 0.0056$	P < .01
Number Having Previous Article 15	45	75	$X^2 = 0.5534$	P < .01

An analysis of each of these variables showed no significant differences in any areas.

Table VI presents the two samples as a distribution by rank attained prior to court-martial. The chi-square test indicated no significant difference between the samples.

Table VI

Referral as a Function of Rank

	<u>Retrainee</u>	<u>Prisoner</u>
E-1	1	0
E-2	109	163
E-3	62	108
E-4	15	20
E-5	6	2
E-6	0	2
Not Recorded	18	16
Totals	211	311

$X^2 = 7.9528$  P < .01

Table VII presents the two samples in a distribution as a function of the type of offense committed. All data concerning offense were categorized into eight offense types. These are: I - absence; II - dishonesty or fraud; III - sex; IV - violence; V - offense against authority or breach of discipline; VI - disorderly conduct; VII - dereliction of duty or abuse of authority; VIII - offenses categorized as against the good order and discipline of the armed forces. The chi-square test indicated no significant difference between the two samples.

Table VII

Referral as a Function of Offense Category

<u>Category</u>	<u>Retrainee</u>	<u>Prisoner</u>
I	45	91
II	109	148
III	0	0
IV	15	20
V	8	11
VI	3	9
VII	13	9
VIII	17	21
Not recorded	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	211	311

$$\chi^2 = 8.2292 \quad P < .01$$

Table VIII presents the final referral comparison, referral as a function of overall rating on the Airman Performance Report. This is the overall rating given to the individual on the last APR prior to court-martial. The chi-square test indicated no significant difference between the two samples.

Table VIII

## Referral as a Function of Overall APRs

	<u>Retrainee</u>	<u>Prisoner</u>
Unsatisfactory	4	2
Marginal	8	16
Good	58	92
Excellent	64	135
Exceptional	14	17
Outstanding	6	1
Not Recorded	<u>57</u>	<u>48</u>
Total	211	311

$$\chi^2 = 12.6498 \quad P < .01$$

As an adjunct to the original purpose of this study, it would seem appropriate to examine that segment of each sample that was not returned to duty. Table IX shows the two samples not returned to duty. The analysis of the data showed no areas of significant difference.

Table IX

## Referral Data of Those Not Returned to Duty

	<u>Retrainee</u>	<u>Prisoner</u>		
Age @ Enlistment	18.34	18.53	t =	0.9127 P < .01
Education Level	11.09	11.29	t =	2.1683 P < .01
Time Served to Court-Martial	2.12	2.48	t =	2.0307 P < .01
Age @ Court-Martial	20.26	20.99	t =	1.9103 P < .01
Number Having Previous Court-Martial	29	34	$\chi^2 =$	0.3822 P < .01
Number Having Previous Article 15	63	63	$\chi^2 =$	0.0010 P < .01

It should also be noted that in the comparison of Table IX and Table V, there were no significant differences.

Table X

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Values for "t" and "X<sup>2</sup>" in Comparing Table V and Table IX

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Age @ Enlistment	t = 0.8751	P < .01
Level of Education	t = 2.3568	P < .01
Time Served to Court-Martial	t = 2.0177	P < .01
Age @ Court-Martial	t = 1.9043	P < .01
Number Having Prior Court-Martial	X <sup>2</sup> = 0.4923	P < .01
Number Having Prior Article 15	X <sup>2</sup> = 3.8957	P < .01

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#### DISCUSSION

The data indicate that the Retraining Group return-to-duty rate for the time period of this study was not significantly different from that for the local corrections facilities. An original assumption, that all those confined within local corrections facilities are returned to duty, was found to be false. The reasons for discharge of these prisoners were not documented within the individual's personnel file, and the data gathered for this study indicated that those discharged from local correctional facilities in no way differed, in a statistical sense, from those returned to duty from base confinement facilities. While no explanation can be offered from the data, this is an area in need of further study.

The data did show a significant difference in success rates between the two samples. It is immediately evident that this difference in success rate is not a factor of the "selection" process.

whereby only the best of the prisoners are sent to the Retraining Group. The data prove conclusively that there are no statistical differences in background factors between the two samples. Therefore, the greater success of the Retraining Group must be attributed to the intensive rehabilitation program of the Retraining Group. The special emphasis placed on counseling and training serves to return to duty an airman highly motivated and better able to cope with the stresses of military adjustment.

The data reviewed showed no significant differences in background factors, and in addition, showed no significant differences with regard to Air Force related factors. Two items examined, rank and overall APR rating, indicate that the two samples performed acceptably within the military environment.

The data examined concerning the type of offense committed yielded no significant differences between the two samples. This refutes the argument presented earlier that those with more serious crimes are not sent to the Retraining Group. It is noted that many of those convicted of the more serious crimes, i. e., murder, rape, etc., would receive sentences that would place them outside the criteria for this study. However, an examination of those within Category IV, violence, indicates no statistical differences between the two samples. This information is presented only as a sidelight. Even though this study does not consider the more "serious" crimes, any offense resulting in a court-martial is serious, both to the Air

Force and especially to the individual involved. The fact that no significant difference exists between the two samples again shows that the rehabilitation program of the Retraining Group is responsible for the significant difference in success rates.

As an adjunct to the total study, data were presented that showed no significant differences between the two samples with regard to those individuals who were discharged with a less-than-honorable discharge immediately upon end of confinement. This fact, coupled with two other facts, (1) the Retraining Group's higher success rate and (2) the fact that there were no significant differences between those returned to duty and those who were discharged, indicates that the intensive evaluation and treatment program of the Retraining Group is responsible for the greater success rate. This should also indicate that, due to the lack of differences between the two samples, only those professionals who are experts in the field of corrections should determine who should be returned to duty and who should be discharged.

#### CONCLUSION

During the time period chosen for this study, the Retraining Group received only 14.8% of the total Air Force prisoner population. During 1969 the Retraining Group received 29.4% of the total Air Force prisoner population. At the same time, the Retraining Group has not been overcrowded or even filled to capacity. At a time when the great majority of prisons and correctional facilities in this country are overcrowded, the Retraining Group has continued operation at little more than

two-thirds capacity. Air Force level guidance has been to send all those who would benefit to the Retraining Group, and any doubt should be resolved in favor of sending the individual to the Retraining Group.

The data indicate that more individuals should be sent to the Retraining Group. There are no differences between those sent to the Retraining Group and those who are not sent.

Arguments presented in the past have been based on the premise that most individuals do not need that which is offered by the Retraining Group; i.e., rehabilitation. While it is true some selected individuals may not need exposure to the Retraining Group program, the difference in success rates indicates that more do need this exposure than are being offered the opportunity. Perhaps one suggestion might be to select those who do not need rehabilitation and return them to duty and then refer all others to the Retraining Group.

A second argument offered against sending an individual to the Retraining Group is: these are more serious offenders or recidivists who do not show potential for return to duty. The Retraining Group is aware that there are some individuals who will never be helped by a rehabilitation program, but the majority are amenable to treatment and can be helped. The Retraining Group is staffed by individuals who are professionals in the area of corrections and should be allowed to attempt to rehabilitate those who by their actions show a need for help. Often, the offense committed is only a symptom of some problem that the individual cannot solve on his own. It is the duty of the Air Force, in general, and specifically the Retraining Group, to attempt to identify

these problem areas and aid the individuals to solve these problems.  
Through proper identification and treatment, the Air Force will profit.  
This profit will be measurable in the number of highly trained men who  
are returned to duty and who successfully complete their enlistments.  
In addition, the total society will benefit in that fewer individuals  
will be returned to civilian life branded as misfits.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE\*

A Study of Success of a Sample of Air Force Prisoners Following Return to Duty

1. Name of Subject \_\_\_\_\_  
Last
First
Middle
2. USAF Serial Number \_\_\_\_\_
3. Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of formal education \_\_\_\_\_
5. Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year
6. Date of enlistment \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year
7. Date of discharge \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year
8. Type discharge received \_\_\_\_\_
9. TAFMSD \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year

10. For each court-martial

	1	2	3	4	5
Date of court					
Date of offense					
Type of court					
Article (s) of conviction					
Specification (s)					

13. List all periods of pretrial confinement

	1	2	3	4	5
Date entered					
Date released					

14. Assignment after each court-martial

Same command					
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Day
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Day
Month
Year

7. Date of discharge \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year

8. Type discharge received \_\_\_\_\_

9. TAFMSD \_\_\_\_\_  
Day
Month
Year

10. For each court-martial

	1	2	3	4	5
Date of court					
Date of offense					
Type of court					
Article (s) of conviction					
Specification (s)					
Plea (guilty) (not guilty)					

11. Sentence \_\_\_\_\_  
(finally adjudged sentence)

Confinement (days)					
Forfeiture (amount)					
Demotion (rank)					
Discharge (type)					

12. For each period of confinement

Place					
Date begun					
Date terminated					
Good time forfeited (amt.)					

\* Information for this questionnaire extracted from Master Personnel Records.

13. List all periods of pretrial confinement

	1	2	3	4	5
Date entered					
Date released					

14. Assignment after each court-martial

Same command					
Same base					
Same unit					
Same supervisor					

15. For each Article 15

Date					
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16. List all periods of correctional custody

Date entered					
Date released					

17. Over-all APR evaluation for each APR

Date							
Over-all supervisor's rating							
Over-all indorsing official's rating							

18. Rank

Date for each promotion							
Grade promoted to							
Date for each demotion							
Grade demoted to							

19. If available

a. Did prisoner request to come to RTG? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

b. Was he recommended to come to RTG? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

c. If yes, by whom

CM Board \_\_\_

Prisoner Disposition Board \_\_\_

SJA \_\_\_

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Squadron Commander \_\_\_