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Report on Visit to
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PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT GOVERNING THE OPERATION OF THE AIR STAFF

Establishment of the Air Staff

The United States Air Force was established as a separate service by the National Security Act of 1947. The Air Staff had been the headquarters staff of the Army Air Forces prior to 1947. As a part of the Army, the Army Air Forces was influenced by the doctrine of the general and special staff under which the Army general staff was organized. During the first year after establishment of the United States Air Force, the air staff was in a state of transition. First, it had to assume responsibility for functions formerly accomplished for the Army Air Force by the general staff and the corps and services. Then it had to decide how it would operate. Fortunately, the new United States Air Force was not bound in by a rigid organization imposed by law as was the Army. While the Air Force inherited some limitations, the National Security Act was brief in its legal description of the Air Force and left to the Secretary of the Air Force the functions to be performed by the UnderSecretary, the assistant secretaries and the air staff.

Principles

The first basic principle followed was that the organization of the Air Force and of each segment within the Air Force would be designed around its basic task. The organization would be functional meaning that it would be judged by the way it accomplished its work. Every necessary function will be assigned to a specific agency. The principle of functional organization was followed in both the Air Staff and the major commands. The air staff was originally organized around the four deputy chief of staffs, i.e. the DCS/operations, DCS/Material, DCS/Personnel and DCS/Comptroller.

The second principle followed was "flexibility." This meant that the air staff would be changed to fit new conditions and obsolete functions would be eliminated when they have served their purpose. The air staff has followed the principle of flexibility by organizing itself around tasks as they come up by making frequent minor changes and by reviewing broad organizational requirements and making major changes when required.

The third principle is maximum delegation of authority or sometimes called decentralization. This applies at every level. Decisions are made at the lowest level usually the office of a director. The offices of the directors are the working level of the Air Staff. Directors work directly with each other, keeping deputies informed and do not follow formalized channels.

The fourth principle followed by the air staff is simplicity. The essence of this principle is that lines of authority should be direct and clear and the growing of functions and duties should be logical. Simplicity implies clarity, ease of understanding, delineation of responsibilities, and uncomplicated channels.

The fifth and the last of the basic principles is coordination. A device to achieve coordination is the Board system. The effort of the air staff is built around broad areas of staff procedures which tie one functional area to another like beads to a string. To assist in achieving the integration and coordination of view-points among the offices of the air staff necessary to planning programming and budgeting, the air staff utilizes four major boards and the air council. These are advisory bodies which formalize the coordination necessary to carry on air staff business.

Another device for coordination is the creation of special offices from time to time which can give special attention to a particular problem or particular area. In these cases the need for the special office is temporary and the special office should disappear as soon as the temporary need is met.