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*General Karpner-*

SURVEY OF FIGHTER PILOTS

IN EIGHTH AIR FORCE:

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EO 11652

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for your personal  
use?*

*244*

A Comparison with Heavy Bomber Pilots

Based on answers of 650 fighter pilots  
and 350 heavy bomber pilots to an  
anonymous questionnaire.

USAF HRA 168.6005-78

Research Branch  
Special Service Division  
Headquarters, European Theater of Operations

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THE DATA

This report is based on a survey of fighter pilots carried out from 29 June through 1 July 1944. The results are compared with data from an earlier survey of men in heavy bombardment groups, conducted during the week of 30 May through 6 June. Thus bomber pilots were studied during the period of maximum effort immediately preceding D-day, and the fighters at a time when operations, perhaps, were less intensive. Because of this, and because the invasion of Europe occurred between the dates of the two surveys, the differences in attitudes as between fighter and bomber pilots must be interpreted with caution.



NOTE ON INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Fighter pilots are young - even by comparison with bomber pilots. Only a fourth of the bomber but 4 in 10 of the fighter pilots are less than 23 years old. Men who are over 25 constitute 27% of the bomber pilots but only 13% of the fighter personnel.

	...Heavy Bomber Pilots	...Fighter Pilots
<u>Age:</u>		
22 years and younger . . . . .	24%	42%
23 - 25 years . . . . .	49%	45%
26 - 29 years . . . . .	27%	13%

The two groups of flyers may well differ in other background characteristics not measured by the present survey. In interpreting the differences in attitudes between bomber and fighter pilots, both the nature of the jobs which the men are called upon to do and these possible differences in background must be considered.



MAIN FINDINGSPART I. Attitudes toward Combat Flying

1. Fighter pilots are more likely than heavy bomber pilots to say . . .

...that they are sure they would sign up for combat flying, if doing it over again

...that they would willingly undertake another series of missions in ETO

...that they would willingly undertake another series of missions in some other theater

Among both the bomber and the fighter pilots, more men say they are willing to do further combat flying in another theater than are willing to undertake additional missions in ETO.

2. Although a majority of both groups of flyers feel that their missions are not becoming easier, the proportion saying that present missions are less difficult than earlier ones is larger among fighter pilots than among bomber pilots.
3. A little over half of the fighter pilots estimate they can fly two missions a day for at least three consecutive days before experiencing marked loss in efficiency. About the same proportion of bomber pilots say they can fly one mission a day for three or more consecutive days -- an equivalent amount of combat flying time.
4. Bomber pilots are more likely than fighters to feel that all or most of their missions have been worth the cost. Both groups of pilots are convinced of the value of their own type of outfit in winning the war.
5. Nearly all of the pilots in both groups express a desire to have more information about the kinds of assignments men can get after a rest period following completion of a series of missions. Fighter pilots are more likely than bomber pilots to feel that they themselves should be returned to combat flying. About 3 in 10 of both groups feel that they should be given assignments as instructors.

PART II. Attitudes toward Headquarters

1. As compared with bomber pilots, the fighter pilots are more likely to express satisfaction with promotion policy, and to say they feel higher headquarters understands their problems and needs.



PART III. Rest and Time-off

1. Fighter pilots are more likely than bomber pilots to report that they are in good physical condition.
2. Fighters are also more likely to report that they have enough time for sleep, that they average more than seven hours sleep per day, and that they have no difficulty in sleeping when they have the time.
3. Although the fighter pilots report fewer leaves or passes than do bomber pilots, they are much more likely to be satisfied with the practice of granting leaves in their outfits.
4. Most fighter pilots usually know in advance when a leave or pass is coming up; most bomber pilots usually do not get advance notice.

PART IV. Radio and Press

1. Fighter pilots are even more likely than bomber pilots to approve of the job Stars and Stripes is doing in reporting operations of the 8th AAF. (Nine in 10 men in both groups say it is doing a "good" or a "very good" job).
2. Over half of the fighter pilots say it makes no particular difference to them how the British press handles news of AAF operations. Of those who give opinions, however, 6 in 10 say the British papers give the AAF "too little credit".
3. Half of the flyers rarely listen to British radio programs. Of those who listen often enough to say, half of the fighter pilots and a third of the bomber pilots feel that British programs give too little credit to the AAF.
4. About two-thirds of both groups of flyers say they listen to AFN programs three or more times a week. In contrast, slightly less than one-third listen that often to the German radio.
5. Although the fighter pilots are more likely than the bomber pilots to listen to the German radio, they are even less likely to credit the German programs with truthfulness.

6. These findings are presented in more detail in the pages that follow.

DETAILED FINDINGSPART I. Attitudes toward Combat Flying

Fighter pilots are much more likely than bomber pilots to say they would willingly undertake another series of missions in ETO after a furlough in the States.

Question: As you see it at present, would you willingly take on another series of missions in the ETO after spending a 30 day furlough in the USA?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"Yes" . . . . .

29%

"Undecided" . . . . .

10%

15%

42%

"No" . . . . .

75%

29%



Both the fighter and the bomber pilots are more likely to express willingness to do additional combat flying in some other theater than to undertake another series of missions in ETO.

The proportion who say they definitely would be willing to take on another series of missions in some other theater is nearly twice as great among fighters as among bomber pilots.

Question: As you see it at present, would you willingly take on another series of missions in some other theater after spending a 30 day furlough in the USA?

Answers by . . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"Yes" . . . . .

23%

42%

"Undecided" . . . . .

25%

30%

"No" . . . . .

52%

28%

Bomber and fighter pilots do not differ so greatly in their attitudes toward additional flying in another theater, as they do in their attitudes toward more flying in ETO.



C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Eighty-five percent of the fighter pilots, as compared with only 52% of the bomber pilots, feel sure they would sign up for combat flying if they were doing it over again.

Question: If you were doing it over again, do you think you would choose to sign up for combat flying?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"Yes, I'm pretty sure I would" . . . . .

52%

85%

"Yes, I think I would, but  
I'm not sure" . . . . .

18%

8%  
4%

"No" . . . . .

27%

(3% did not answer)

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L



Combat flyers were asked questions about the assignment of men after they have been taken off for rest and rehabilitation following the completion of about 30 missions (or, in the case of fighters, after 300 combat hours).

Three-fourths of both groups of flyers say they do not know what the present policy of assignment is. Of the remaining men, over one-half of the bomber pilots and about three-fourths of the fighter pilots say they think the present policy should be improved.

Nearly all of the pilots (96% in bombers and 91% in fighters) say they would like to have more information about the kind of assignments men can get after a rest period following the completion of a series of missions.

What kind of assignments do the men themselves think they ought to have?

They were asked: "Considering what you personally can contribute to the war effort, what kind of an Army assignment do you think you ought to have at that time?" (After being taken off operations for rest and rehabilitation).

Answers by . . .

The Answers: \*

	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
Combat flying . . . . .	12%	29%
Non-combat flying . . . . .	21%	30%
"Instructor" . . . . .	27%	11%
Other ground assignments. . . . .	14%	25%
(Did not answer)	26%	5%

Although a fourth of the men did not write in answers, three facts are clear:

- (1) Fighter pilots are more likely than bomber pilots to say they ought to continue combat flying.
- (2) Bomber pilots are more likely than fighters to choose non-combat flying assignments (usually ATC or Ferry Command).
- (3) Assignment as an instructor is an especially popular choice among both groups of pilots.

\*The men answered by writing in their own words rather than checking a prepared list of alternatives.



Among both groups of flyers, 8 out of every 10 men say their type of outfit will play a "very important" part in winning the war. Nearly all of the remaining men say "a fairly important part".

Question: How important a part do you think your type of outfit will play in winning the war?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"A very important part" . . . . .	78%	81%
"A fairly important part" . . . . .	20%	18%
Other answers . . . . .	. . 2%	..1%



This almost unanimous belief in the importance of the job done by fighters or bombers, as the case may be, does not mean that the flyers are always convinced of the value of particular missions. Seven in 10 of the bomber pilots and eight in 10 of the fighter pilots say they have at some time felt that a particular mission was not worth the cost.

Question: Have you ever had the feeling that a particular mission wasn't worth the cost?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy

Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"No, never" . . . . .

27%

14%

"Yes, sometimes" . . . . .

63%

73%

"Yes, quite often" . . . . .

7%

11%

(3% did not  
answer)

(2% did not  
answer)

(This question is the only instance in which bomber pilots are more likely than fighters to give favorable answers.)



Although a majority of both groups of flyers feel that combat missions are not becoming easier, fighter pilots are more likely than bomber pilots to think that missions are easier now than when they started flying in ETO.

Question: In your opinion are most of the combat missions at the present time more difficult, about the same, or less difficult than they were at about the time you started combat flying in ETO?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

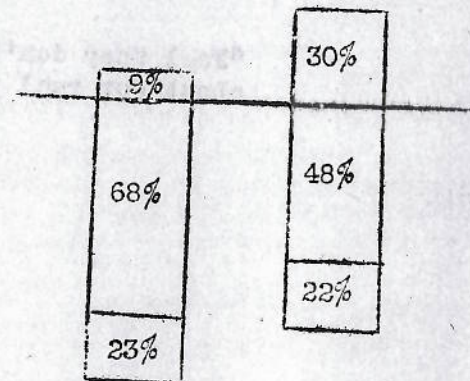
...Heavy\*  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter\*  
Pilots

"Less difficult now" . . . . .

"About the same  
as they were" . . . . .

"More difficult now" . . . . .



\*Excluding all men who say they have not been flying in combat long enough to give an opinion.



PART II. Attitudes toward Headquarters

Men in fighters are somewhat more likely than bomber pilots to say they feel higher headquarters understand their problems and needs.

Question: From what you have seen, how well do you feel higher headquarters understand your problems and needs?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"Feel they are very much  
aware of our needs" . . . . .

18%

28%

"Feel they are fairly well  
aware of our needs" . . . . .

66%

67%

"Feel they don't know very much  
about our real problems and needs".

16%

...5%



# C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Fighter pilots are considerably more likely to express satisfaction with the promotion policy that applies to them than are bomber pilots to be satisfied with promotion policy for officers in combat crews.\*

Question: How do you feel about the promotion policy for officers in combat crews? (asked of bomber pilots)

Question: How do you feel about the promotion policy for fighter pilots? (asked of fighter pilots)

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
Satisfied . . . . .	32%	53%
(No Answer) . . . . .	3%	10%
Not very well satisfied . . . . .	42%	26%
Not satisfied at all . . . . .	23%	11%

\*The actual distribution of the pilots by grade is as follows:

Percentage of . . .

<u>Grade:</u>	...Bomber pilots	...Fighter Pilots
Major or above	1	3
Captain	13	9
1st Lieutenant	51	40
2nd Lieutenant	32	45
Flight officer	1	1
(No answer)	2	2
	100%	100%

Thus, fighters are better satisfied in spite of the fact that on the average the bomber pilots surveyed have higher grades.

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L



PART III. Rest and Time-Off

Fighter pilots are much more likely than bomber pilots to say that they...

...are in good physical condition, and  
...usually have enough time for sleep

Question: In general, what sort of physical condition would you say you are in at the present time?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber Pilots      ...Fighter  
Pilots

"Very good" . . . . .		15%
	9%	
"Good" . . . . .	38%	52%
"Fair" . . . . .	48%	31%
"Poor" . . . . .	5%	2%

Question: In general, how do you feel about the amount of time you have for sleep?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber Pilots      ...Fighter  
Pilots

"Usually have enough time for sleep" . . . . .	53%	82%
"Would help a little to have more time for sleep" . . . . .	22%	13%
"Would help a lot to have more time for sleep" . . . . .	25%	5%



Nearly 6 men in 10 among the fighters but only 3 in 10 of the bomber pilots report averaging as much as 8 hours sleep per day during the ten-day period preceding the survey.\*

Men who report that they averaged less than 6 hours sleep are only 3% of fighter pilots but constitute 19% of the bomber pilots.

Question: On the average, about how many hours sleep per 24 hour day have you had during the last 10 days?

Answers by . . .

<u>The Answers:</u>	Answers by . . .	
	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
8 or more hours sleep . . . . .	27%	56%
7 hours . . . . .	22%	21%
6 hours . . . . .	32%	20%
Less than 6 hours . . . . .	19%	3%

NOTE: How much of the differences between the two groups of flyers is due to a difference in the work-load immediately before and immediately after the landings in France can not be determined from the data. However, in view of the intensive operations of 8th AAF fighters during June it is likely that the differences charted above reflect a real advantage of the fighters over the bomber pilots in amount of sleep.

\*For men in the heavy bombers this represents the average period beginning about 21 May for fighters, the average period beginning about 20 June.



Fewer than 4 in 10 of the bomber and about 5 in 10 of the fighter pilots say they almost never have trouble sleeping when they have the chance.

Question: Do you ever have any difficulty in sleeping when you have the chance?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber      ...Fighter  
Pilots      Pilots

"Almost never" . . . . .	36%	48%
"Occasionally" . . . . .	50%	42%
Often have trouble sleeping . . . . .	14%	10%

During the 4 weeks immediately preceding the surveys, a somewhat larger proportion of fighter than of bomber pilots did not have a leave or pass.

Question: During the past 4 weeks how many leaves or passes (for 24 hours or more) have you had?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber      ...Fighter  
Pilots\*      Pilots\*

2 or more leaves or passes . . . . .	17%	18%
1 leave or pass . . . . .	59%	52%
No leaves or passes . . . . .	24%	30%

\*Includes only men who had started combat flying 4 weeks or more before the date of the surveys.



BUT, as shown by the chart that follows, fighter pilots are far more likely than bomber pilots to be satisfied with the leave situation.

Over twice as many fighter pilots as bomber pilots express satisfaction with present practices in their outfits regarding the granting of leaves and passes.

Question: How do you feel about the present practice in your outfit with respect to the granting of leaves and passes?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots

...Fighter  
Pilots

"It is as good as it could be under the circumstances"\* . . . . .

35%

75%

"It could be somewhat better" . . . . .

21%

16%

9%

"It could be a lot better" . . . . .

44%

\*Includes a few men who did not answer

One possible reason for this very great difference is suggested by the chart that follows.



Nine in 10 of the fighter pilots but only 3 in 10 of the bomber pilots . . .

. . . Say they are given notice ahead of time to let them know when a leave or pass is coming.

Question: Do you usually know ahead of time when you can count on having a leave or pass?

Answers by . . .

... Heavy  
Bomber Pilots      ... Fighter  
Pilots

The Answers:

"Usually know a week or more  
beforehand" . . . . .

66%

"Usually given a few days  
notice" . . . . .

10%

20%

25%

7%

2%

"Usually find out about it  
just before a leave is granted . . .

52%

"Don't know how it works" . . . . .  
(or did not answer)

18%

NOTE: As shown by previous reports on the bomber personnel, 9 in 10 of the men in combat crews feel it is important to have advance notice, and those who do get such notice are better satisfied with the practice of granting leaves and passes than those who do not know of a leave beforehand.



The maximum number of days in a row that a man can fly in combat and still keep up his efficiency is estimated at three or more by about half of the bomber pilots. About the same estimate is made by the majority of fighter pilots for consecutive days of flying two missions a day.

Question asked bomber pilots:\* About how many days in a row do you think a man in your job can fly on combat missions of the sort you have been on and keep his efficiency at a reasonably high level?

Question asked fighter pilots:\* When flying two combat missions a day, about how many days in a row do you think a man can fly and keep his efficiency at a reasonably high level?

Answers by . . .

<u>The Answers:</u>	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
One day only . . . . .	6%	5%
Two days . . . . .	36%	36%
Three days . . . . .	40%	34%
Four or more days . .	16%	23%

(2% did not answer)

\*Note: According to the questionnaire reports, the average number of hours flown per combat mission (since starting operational flying) among the fighter pilots surveyed is 3.7. Operational records show that the average number of hours flown per heavy bomber mission during recent months is between 7 and 8. The two questions, therefore, refer to about the same amounts of combat flying time.



C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L  
PART IV. Radio and Press

Nine men in 10 among both bomber and fighter pilots say that Stars and Stripes is doing a good job in reporting 8th AAF operations. A somewhat larger proportion of fighter than of bomber pilots say it is doing a "very good" job.

Question: What do you think of the job Stars and Stripes is doing in reporting the operations of the Eighth Air Force?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
"A very good job" . . . . .	58%	67%
"A good job" . . . . .	33%	24%
A "fair" or a "poor" job . . .	9%	9%

About 6 in 10 of both groups of flyers say that the way British newspapers write up news of AAF operations "doesn't make any particular difference" to them. The remaining men say it "matters quite a bit".

Question: Do you have any particular feeling about the way the news of AAF operations is written up in British newspapers?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
"No, it doesn't make any particular difference to me what they say" . . . . .	63%	58%
"Yes, it matters quite a bit to me" . . . . .	37%	42%



Nearly half of the flyers -- both in bombers and in fighters -- say they do not listen to British radio programs often enough to judge how well they handle reporting on AAF operations. Two men in 10 among bombers and 3 in 10 among fighters think the British radio gives the AAF too little credit.

Question: All things considered, do you feel that the British Radio programs give the American Air Forces too much credit, too little credit, or about the right amount of credit for the job they are doing?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

	... Heavy Bomber Pilots	... Fighter Pilots
"Don't listen to them often enough to say" . . . . .	48%	46%
"Too much credit" . . . . .	..1%	
"About the right amount of credit" . . . . .	35%	25%
"Too little credit" . . . . .	16%	29%

Among those who listen often enough to give an opinion, 31% of the bomber pilots and 54% of the fighter pilots say that the British radio gives the AAF "too little credit".



Nearly two-thirds of both the bomber and the fighter pilots say they listen to AFN programs three or four times a week or more often. Only about one man in seven reports listening to AFN less than once a week.

Question: About how often do you listen to the American Forces Network, the radio programs put on by the US Army for the American Forces overseas?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber Pilots      ...Fighter  
Pilots

Almost every day . . . . .	46%	43%
Three or four times a week . . . . .	18%	22%
Once or twice a week . . . . .	19%	19%
Less than once a week . . . . .	14%	13%

(3% did not answer)

Slightly less than a third of both groups of flyers report regular listening to German radio programs. Fighter pilots are more likely than bomber men to listen to the German radio once a week or oftener.

Question: About how often do you listen to the German radio programs?

Answers by . . .

...Heavy  
Bomber Pilots      ...Fighter  
Pilots

The Answers:

Almost every day . . . . .	18%	16%
Three or four times a week . . . . .	11%	17%
Once or twice a week . . . . .	20%	28%
Less than once a week . . . . .	51%	39%



Although the fighter pilots are more likely than bomber pilots to listen to the German radio, they are even less likely to credit the German programs with truthfulness.

Question: How do you feel about the news and talks included in German radio programs?

Answers by . . .

The Answers:

...Heavy  
Bomber  
Pilots      ...Fighter  
Pilots

No opinion . . . . .

41%

27%

"Very little truth in  
what they say" . . . . .

38%

57%

"Some truth" . . . . .  
"A good deal of truth  
in what they say" . . . . .

20%

..1%

15%

..1%

(Of every 10 men who express opinions.....

.....6 men among bomber pilots, and  
8 men among fighters, say they feel there  
is very little truth in the German programs.)



Note on Reliability of Answers to the Questionnaire

At 6 of the bases surveyed, lists were compiled from official records to show the actual number of combat hours flown by the fighter pilots included in the questionnaire survey. The distribution of pilots by amount of combat flying shown in these records was then compared with the distribution obtained from men's questionnaire answers on the total number of combat hours they had flown.

Results of the comparison indicate that pilot's answers to the questionnaire are highly reliable. Men's answers agree very closely with the actual records.

DISTRIBUTION OF FIGHTER PILOTS BY AMOUNT OF COMBAT  
FLYING THEY HAVE DONE: Comparison of Official  
Records and Men's Answers to the Questionnaire

Number of Combat Hours Flown	Percentage of Pilots with each amount of fly- ing time, as shown by ...	
	...Official records	...Questionnaire answers
1 - 49	19	18
50 - 99	17	16
100 - 149	19	17
150 - 199	17	19
200 - 249	19	18
250 or more	9	12
All Pilots	100%	100%

(Based on records for 310 pilots  
at six different fighter bases.)



A NOTE ON HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

1. Intensive exploratory interviewing was conducted among fighter pilots at two bases. This work made it possible to adapt the questionnaire previously used in heavy bombardment groups to the particular needs of the fighters. Pilots' spontaneous expression of attitudes pointed to additional problems not previously studied, and helped to define specific questions of real importance and interest to the men.
2. Following revision of the questionnaire and approval by Command, the final questionnaire was administered to operational pilots at 11 fighter bases. Use of a standard sampling procedure at each base insured that the 650 flying officers surveyed would constitute a representative cross-section of fighter pilots in the Eighth Air Force.
3. In order to obtain frank replies, the questionnaires were administered under conditions of anonymity. No names or serial numbers were placed on the questionnaires, which were filled out by pilots in classes conducted by a specially trained research representative. The pilots showed keen interest in the questions, and the evidence is that they gave considered and frank answers.



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**P.R.C.**

*EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
Survey of Eighth AF in 1984  
and an attempt to determine the center  
of gravity, Jul 1984*

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