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Report date: August -November 1944

Title: Organization and Training of Pathfinder Troops

Author: Headquarters, XVIII Corps (Airborne)

Abstract: The documents includes: Pathfinder Training (Airborne) aids

memorandum, 21 August 1944; Organization and Training of Pathfinder Troops, 27 October 1944; and Pathfinder Training

report, 9 November 1944.

Number of pages: 4 p.

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Pathfinder Training

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HEADQUARTERS, XVIII CORPS (AIRBORNE) Office of the Commanding General

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APO 109, U.S. Army-3 9 November 1944

Subject: Pathfinder Training.

Commanding General, lOlst Airborne Division, APO 472, U.S. Army.

"Organiza tion 1. Reference to letter, this headquarters, subject: and Training of Pathfinder Troops", dated 27 October 1944, request that necessary orders be issued by your headquarters to place the personnel of the division requiring Pathfinder Training on temporary duty at the Pathfinder Group (Provisional), Chalgrove Field, England.

- It is desired that the personnel report for duty for a two three week period commencing on or about 14 November 1944.
- The Pathfinder Officer, 101st Airborne Division will report to Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division to assist in movement of personnel to the Pathfinder School. Upon receipt by this headquarters of departure field, time of departure, and number of aircraft required necessary planes will be provided by this headquarters as required.
- 4. Necessary instructions for the return of this personnel to their respective units will be issued to your headquarters upon completion of their training.

By command of Major General RIDGWAY:

HERBERT L. NELSON, Lt Colonel, A.G.D., Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS, XVIII CORPS (AIRBORNE) Office of the Commanding General

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Subject: Organization and Training of Pathfinder Troops.

Commanding Generals: 17th Airborne Division, APO 452, U.S. Army 82d Airborne Division, APO 469, U.S. Army 101st Airborne Division, APO 472, U.S. Army

1. One (1) officer in each airborne division will be designated Division Pathfinder Officer. This officer, with one (1) enlisted assistant, will be placed on temporary duty by this headquarters with IX TCC Pathfinder Group (Prov), APO 133, U.S. Army, and will report to Captain Brown, Pathfinder Officer XVIII Corps (Airborne). Names of recommended officer and enlisted assistant will be submitted to this headquarters without delay.

- 2. It will be the duty of the Division Pathfinder Officer to supervise pathfinder training and coordinate the employment of all pathfinder teams within the division. In the event of a combat operation the Division Pathfinder Officer and his enlisted assistant will jump as Pathfinders, normally on the DZ assigned to Division Headquarters.
- 3. Pathfinder teams will be maintained within each airborne division on the basis of one (1) team consisting of one (1) officer and nine (9) men per Parachute Infantry Battalion.
- 4. The senior officer assigned to do duty as a Pathfinder in each Parachute Infantry Regiment will be designated Regimental Pathfinder Officer. It will be the duty of this officer to supervise the training of Pathfinders within the regiment to which he is assigned and to coordinate with the Division Pathfinder Officer concerning training and employment of Pathfinders.
- 5. Officers and enlisted men designated as Pathfinders in each division will receive a minimum of two (2) weeks specialized training at IX TCC Pathfinder School. Upon completion of such training they will return to their parent organizations. They will be kept available for such further pathfinder training or missions as this headquarters may direct and will be employed as Pathfinders when participating in practice and combat jumps requiring use of such personnel.
- 6. Each airborne division will furnish this headquarters with an estimate showing the number of men requiring Pathfinder Training to bring required number of Pathfinder Teams within the division up to full strength.
- 7. Careful consideration will be given to the selection of personnel who are to comprise Pathfinder Teams. Each man must be intelligent, courageous and must possess a high degree of initiative.

By command of Major General RIDGWAY:

Heaben Villelson

HERBERT L. NELSON. Lt. Colonel, AGD, Adjutant General.

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Information Copies to: CG, IX TCC, APO 133, U.S. Army.

CO, IX TCC Pathfinder Group (Prov), APO 133, U.S. Army.

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APO 109, U. S. Army 21 August 1944

MEMORANDUM:

TO

: Chief of Staff.

PATHFINDER TRAINING (AIRBORNE)

1. Aids:

- a. The aids which are now employed in marking drop or landing zones are of two (2) varieties:
 - (1) Lights, panels and smoke.
 - (2) Eurekas.
- b. In addition a radio beacon for use with the aircraft radio compass is being tested.
 - 2. Operation and maintenance of Aids:
- a. A reasonably intelligent soldier can be taught the operating principles of this equipment in a matter of hours.
- b. No repairs can be made in the field other than the tightening of connections, etc., hence extensive technical training in maintenance and repair becauses extraneous.
- c. A lecture should be given upon the necessity of selecting favorable terrain for the placing of aids. An inspection should be made after each practice drop to insure that these instructions are thoroughly understood and followed.
- 3. Ground Training for Personnel Initially personnel should be trained in the individual duties of each member of the Pathfinder Team. Next, exercises in establishing the team on the ground should be held during daylight hours, followed by thorough training in establishing the team during darkness. Sufficient number of drops should be held under simulated combat conditions to insure that each team is thoroughly competent to execute a combat mission.

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4. Conclusions:

- a. Pathfinder Teams should be trained under division control; after completion of training teams should return to their organization and take part in normal unit training.
- b. Recommend that Officer in charge of division pathfinder teams should be member of Division G-3 Section and when not engaged in pathfinder activity perform duties in the G-3 Section.
- c. All pathfinder teams should be available, on call, for training in division aids and developments and refresher courses.
- d. Teams should be formed under control of Officer in charge of Division Pathfinder's at least one (1) week prior to an operation for necessary briefing, organization, equipping, and special training.
- e. During training period normally four (4) drops under simulated combat conditions are sufficient for the training of each team.
- f. Complete training of each team can be accomplished in a two (2) week period, weather permitting.

A. D. SURLES, JR., Lt. Col., G.S.C., G-3.

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