

Army Air Forces Discharge Emblem

By: Jack Waid, HQ AFMC/HO



Paths to the Present
FLASHBACK

(Mostly extracted from case history: AAF discharge Emblems; A history of the inception, design, and production of the distinctive AAF discharge emblem.)

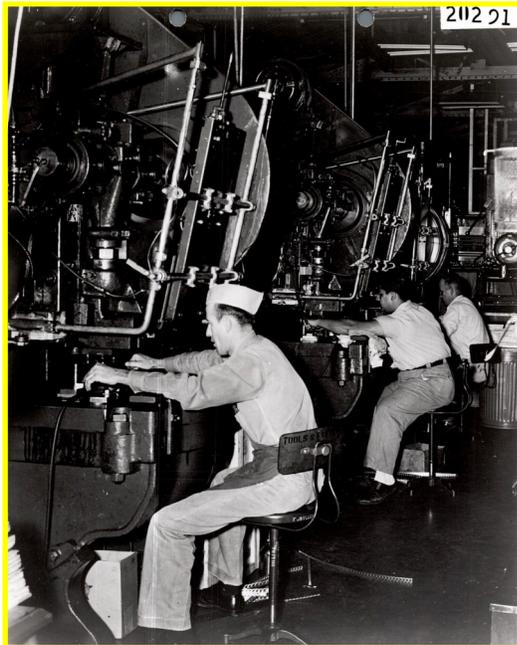


Finalized AAF Discharge pin.

War Department servicemembers to fight. These service members would need firearms, ordnance, armor, ships, aircraft, tactical vehicles etc. A quick note illustrating the manufacturing transition to wartime production, there were approximately 3 million civilian automobiles manufactured in the US during 1941. Only 139 additional cars rolled off the assembly lines for the rest of the war.

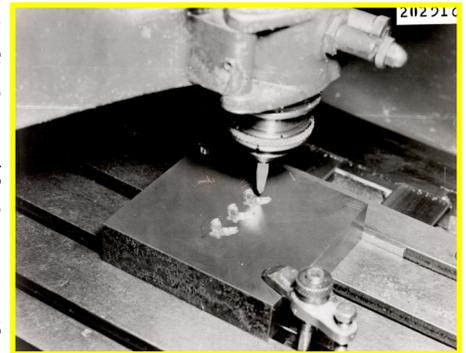
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toy train company started producing items for warships, including compasses. The Mattatuck Manufacturing Company made upholstery nails and switched to making cartridge clips for Springfield rifles. Silk ribbon factories-built parachutes and Typewriter companies-built machine guns. Undergarment manufacturers-built mosquito netting. Roller coaster builders-built bomber repair platforms. Soft drink companies filled hand grenades.



3 punch presses emboss and blank 18,000 buttons in 8 hours.

A mere month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii — President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the establishment of the War Production Board (WPB) in January 1942. The WPB had two primary missions: to convert factories from peacetime production to manufacturers of weapons and military equipment. Secondly, the WPB guided the effort to conserve and ration materials such as those needed for



Insignia for embossing cut in the die.

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All this labor stimulated the economy, which had been in a depression, with up to 25% unemployment at one point. The War Production Board lasted until just after the end of World War II in October 1945. Do with less-so they'll have enough! And because the service members in the AAFs had given so much General Henry "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General Army Air Forces (AAF), wanted to do something special for his "Airmen," through the issue of a discharge emblem or pin.



Burrs removed by tumbling in a barrel with steel shot.

viewpoints upon the Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel. General Anderson desired AAF veterans to return to civilian life with the best possible impression of the Air Forces as they would be its strongest supporters during the postwar period.

Although originally discussed as an insignia for the AAF Aid Society, the idea evolved into a plan for a distinctive discharge pin. General Anderson, during a meeting 5 July 1945, had presented the question, "shouldn't every man who gets out of the Air Forces have a button or something? What has the War Department to do with that?" Since the War Department's discharge button was not popular, Office of Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel, felt that an AAF button would be approved. Therefore, the idea was presented to the Chief of Air Staff, Washington, with the recommendation that an AAF emblem be approved and procured by the Quartermaster and be distributed by Personnel Distribution Command, Louisville, KY. Major General C. C. Chauncey, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Washington, forwarded to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Washington, the proposal for an AAF emblem which would be a "Clip on Tab" and would not destroy the identity of the official button of the War Department, which would not approve a separate AAF discharge button. Deputy Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Washington, stated in February 1946 that G-1 did disapprove [of] the idea when it was submitted in July 1945.

Soldering the studs to backs of insignia.



The inception of the plan for a distinctive Army Air Forces (AAF) discharge emblem in April 1945 was envisioned as an insignia for the AAF Aid Society whose membership consisted of all honorably discharged Air Force veterans. The Office of Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel, Washington, pointed out that AAF personnel "in common with thousands of others, do not like the present plastic lapel button." General H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, AAF, Washington, during a discussion with Major General F. L. Anderson, Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel, Washington, had placed the responsibility for the future of the AAF from the morale and public relations

The plan lay dormant until September 1945 when Colonel H. D. Krafft, Chief, Awards Branch, Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel, Washington, stated the feasibility and desirability of having an Army Air Forces button had been determined, and on 22 October 1945 Colonel J. E. Smart, Secretary of Air Staff, Washington, instructed Assistant Chief of Air Staff-1, Washington, to direct Air Technical Service Command (ATSC), Wright Field to manufacture and distribute such a button. An informal directive to ATSC was forwarded 24 October in order to initiate the program. Since "It is the desire of the Commanding General, AAF, that a service button be given to every member of the Army Air Forces honorably discharged," on 2 November, Brigadier General



(Above and below left) Soldering the studs to backs of insignia.

W. E. Hall, Deputy Assistant Chief of Air Staff-1, Washington, directed ATSC to produce at their depots 2,375,000 buttons which would be stored and distributed by Continental Air Force, Bolling Field, D.C., & Personnel Distribution Command, and Brigadier General I. W. Ott, Chief, Maintenance Division, Kelly Field, TX, (SAATSC) undertake the production of these buttons. SAATSC requested that the Office of Quartermaster General, Washington release facilities to aid in the manufacture of these buttons, but as the Office of



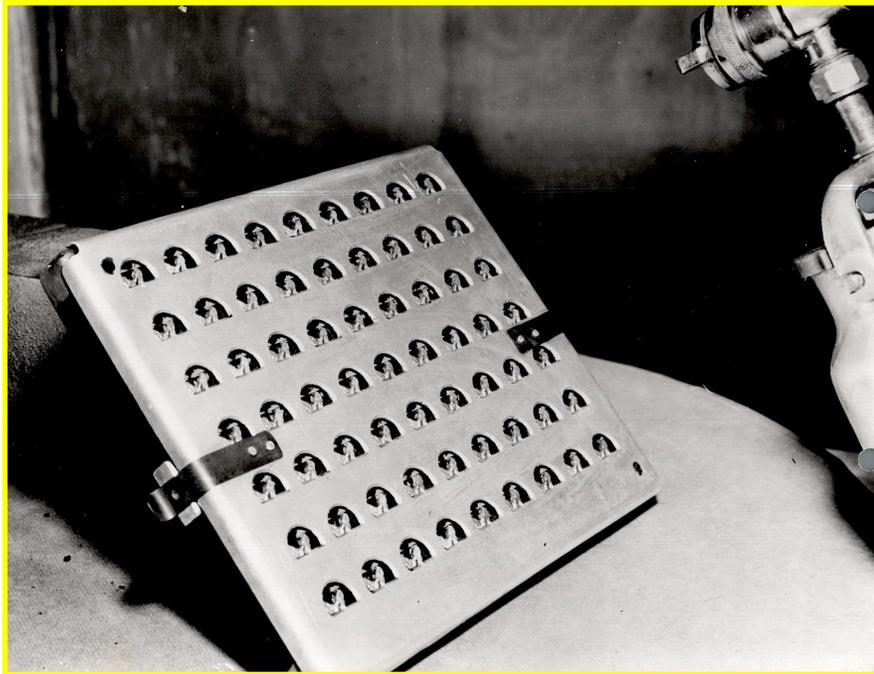
Quartermaster General had only six contractors available whose production capacity was already strained, no assistance could be given.

One of the major problems in the production of the discharge pins revolved around the procurement of grip fasteners for the buttons. B. A. Ballou and Co., Inc., Providence, R. I. (Ballou) quoted a price of \$.98 per gross for these clips and indicated that they could be supplied beginning 25 days after receipt of the order. Purchase Order 46-1900 (Contract No. 41-142 ac-739) was issued Ballou covering procurement of 13,959 gross of clips at a cost of \$13,679.82, and verbal approval was given by Lieutenant Colonel E. W. Brackett, Chief, Local Purchase Branch, Procurement Division, Wright Field, subject to review of the written instrument. Upon review of the Purchase Order, Ballou advised SAATSC that it would be impossible for them to meet the requirement of adherence to provisions of the Walsh-Healey Act in production of clips for the AAF. If separate production under the Walsh-Healey Act were begun, delivery would be delayed approximately eight weeks. In response to Procurement Division's inquiry

as to the status of the SAATSC contract with Ballou, Colonel R. C. Harmon, Judge Advocate, Wright Field, submitted the opinion that P. O. 46-1900 amounted to a counter-proposal to Ballou's bid of 18 October and would not be binding unless deliveries had been made; an explanatory statement from Ballou would clear the issue with the General Accounting Office; and an order for a smaller quantity would be legal if procedure was bona fide and not a subterfuge. Colonel J. W. Sessums, Assistant Deputy CG, Engineering, Wright Field, in a draft of a Replacement & Reserve (R&R), 28 December, recommended procurement of as many clips as possible from Ballou without forcing him to operate under the Walsh-Healey Act. SAATSC could then investigate other sources or make plans for the manufacture of clips as shipments from the Depot were being held up pending receipt of clips. This would not be an evasion of the Walsh-Healey Act, as no more orders with that company were contemplated, but merely an attempt to expedite delivery of pins in accordance with the wishes of General Arnold. Colonel Don Coupland, upon replacing Colonel Sessums as Assistant Deputy CG, Engineering, placed the blame for the proposed cut back on excessive cost, and on 29 December suggested that an order for \$9,000 or \$10,000 be issued in lieu of \$13,000. By January 1946, the clasp situation became so critical that Colonel Coupland was ready to "get or make any type of fastener that anybody can dream up. Beat the deadline and spend what is necessary." However, on 4 January, SAATSC was directed to reduce by Supplemental Agreement their contract with Ballou to 9,700 gross of clips. Ballou agreed to expedite delivery of clips on their smaller contract and begin shipment immediately upon receipt of the Supplemental Agreement.



General manufacturing layout.



In accordance with the directive from General Hall, the Supply Division at Wright Field requested Continental Air Force and Personnel Distribution Command to take action preparatory for receipt of the discharge buttons. Although both Commands indicated that they had no previous knowledge of this responsibility, Personnel Distribution Command immediately appointed an accountable property officer. Continental Air Force presented a much more difficult problem, for following the initial contact they refused to take any steps until instructions were received from AAF Headquarters, Washington.

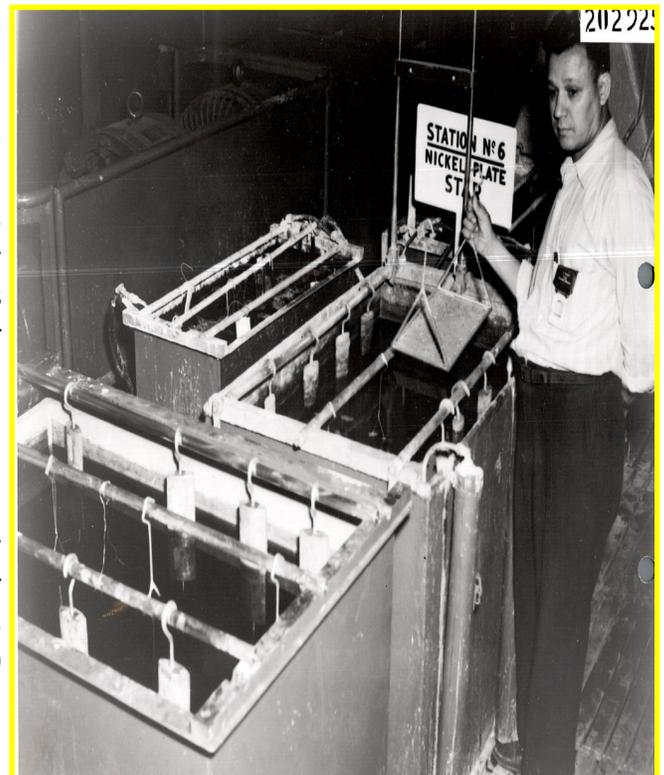
Above: Coat of lacquer sprayed on wings before plating.

Furthermore, on 11 December, they forwarded directly to SAATSC instructions for the shipping of the buttons to various points for distribution. It was not until 2 January that Continental Air Force finally informed Wright Field of their action, which only came after Wright Field had twice requested such information. Despite the action of Continental, which ATSC was not able to understand, the Command authorized SAATSC to comply with the shipping instructions but forbade SAATSC to recognize any additional instructions received direct from Continental Air Force.

Final distribution of the individual buttons was not difficult at Air Force separation centers but presented more of a problem for AAF discharges from Army Service Force separation centers. AAF liaison officers were maintained at these centers and through them the buttons might be distributed. However, on 3 January 1946, Personnel Distribution Command indicated the impossibility of getting an AAF button to men discharged through Army Service Force Centers. Therefore, buttons were being mailed to veterans previously or currently discharged through Army Service Force Centers. As "this matter is very close to General Arnold's heart," Brigadier General L. W. Johnson, Chief, Personal Services Division, Washington, expressed the desire that Personnel Distribution Command make every effort to see that each AAF veteran received a button.

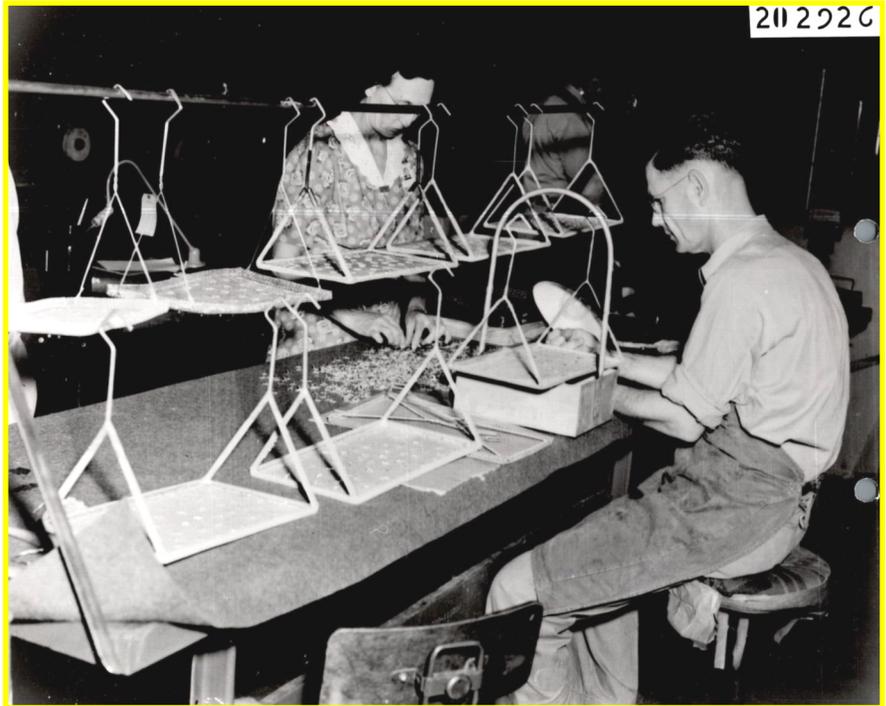
Status reports forwarded to Colonel Smart periodically gave a clear picture of the "bang up job Beverly [Brigadier General G. H. Beverly, Commanding General, SAATSC] has done", as of 27 January 1946, approximately 35,000 discharge buttons were being produced per day.

Right: Nickel plating on the stars.



Original estimates on cost for the production of AAF discharge button were placed at \$.025 per unit. A report from SAATSC in February 1946 showed a cost of \$.10004 per button which did not include the cost of clips at \$.00680 each.

J. C. Polleck and Co., Inc., Chicago, Illinois, inquired on 6 February 1946 about the accuracy of a rumor that a distinct insignia had been authorized as a honorable discharge emblem for Army Air Force personnel. In reply, Brigadier General R. C. Hood, Jr., Deputy Assistant Chief of Air Staff-1, Washington, stated on 5 March 1946 that the rumor was probably based on an Air Forces "identification pin" which had been given to personnel upon separation. General Hood stated that it was not a discharge emblem and had no official status; also, its distribution had been discontinued.



Nickel plated onto the stars.

General D. D. Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, War Department, Washington, saw the AAF discharge emblem at Kelly Field, TX on 25 February 1946, and his office subsequently requested information about the emblem. A summary of the background of this case was forwarded by the Deputy Assistant Chief of Air Staff-4 on 27 February 1946. On 5 March 1946, General Carl Spaatz*, Commander General, Army Air Forces, Washington, directed SAATSC to discontinue manufacture of the buttons and to ship all available supply to Army Air Forces Headquarters at once. SAATSC was not to distribute any of the buttons to individuals, commands or agencies.



Lacquer removed from wings by rinsing in lacquer thinner.

From a macro perspective we can see the immense changes that have occurred in manufacturing. The mere scale is almost breathtaking. Additionally, the main focus of this outreach product was a micro view of one of the smallest items produced during the war.

* General Spaatz succeeded General Arnold in February 1946 as the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces.



Red dot placed in the star.



Drying with infrared rays.

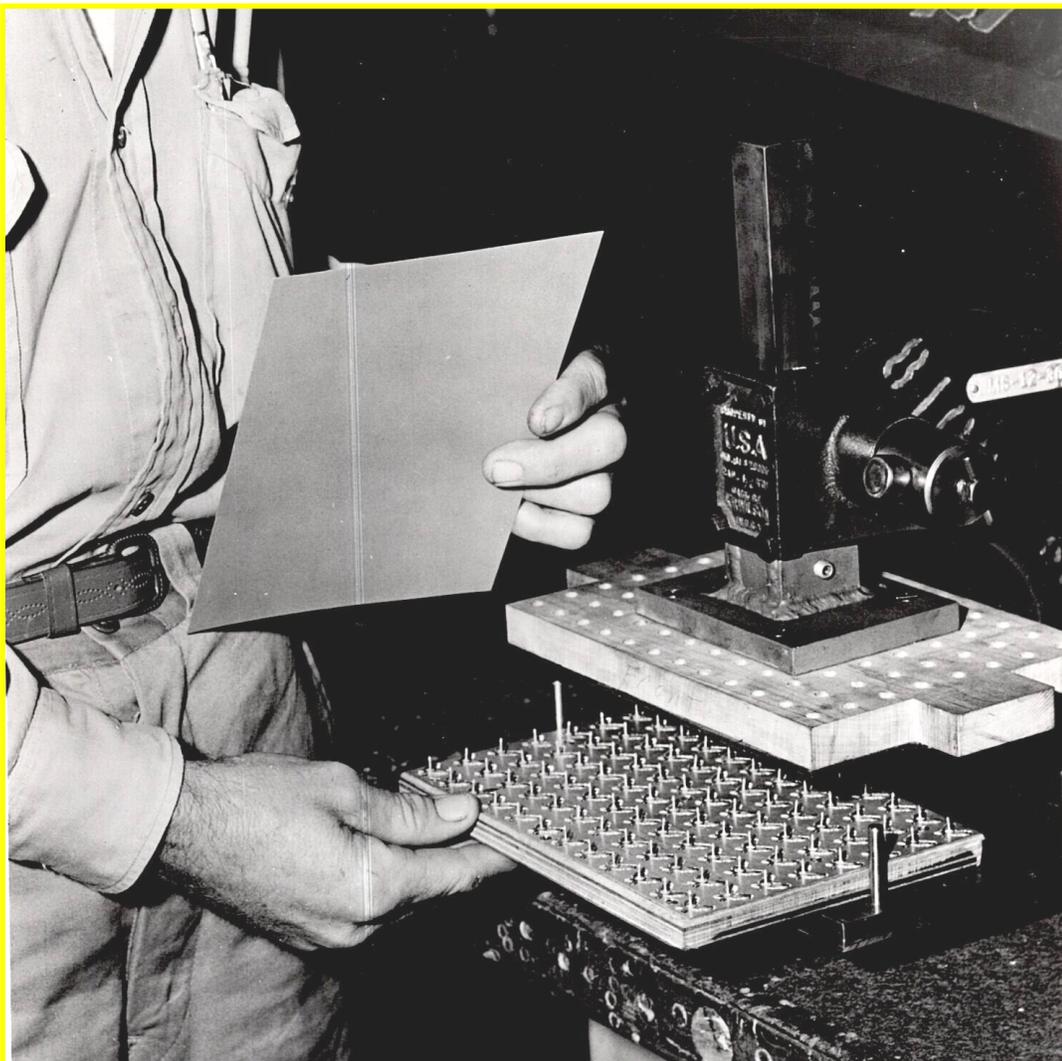


A stamp on a South Bend 9A lathe, manufactured in 1942, states: "This machine conforms to orders of the War Production Board." The lathe was built because it could be used to shape materials needed for warfare. It could also be used to train apprentices for war-related factory work."

Additional plate with slightly different wording.



Pin Inspection.



Pins mounted on blue cardboard.



480 pins in each



Finalized pin examples.



Note the San Antonio Air Dept (SAAD) AAF marking.



Army - Discharge Button
AC 1305.1 - Policy Plan.

4

Attention is directed to the following features of this "Clip on Tab".

1. The Honorable Discharge button (Eagle and Circle) retains its identity.
2. The Clip on Tab identifies the wearer as an AAF veteran.
3. The design of the Clip on Tab is adaptable to use by AGF and ASF.
4. The Clip on Tab being secured to the lower portion of the discharge button would assure upright position of the discharge button at all times.
5. It does not displace the Honorable Discharge Button.
6. It can be manufactured and issued independently of the Discharge button.
7. Taken by itself it has no significance, thus could not be used for ulterior purposes by unscrupulous individuals.



- Clip on TAB - referred to above.



Contemporary example using the actually discharge pin for all service members, with the added idea of the Army Air Forces (AAF) banner attached.

Memorandum discussing the use of the current discharge pin with the added acronym of "AAF" added below.

J. O. POLLACK AND COMPANY, INC
Manufacturers of Souvenirs, Metal Novelties, Emblem Jewelry
337 West Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois Telephone Central 8040

C
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Please address your reply
to Division No. 10

February 6, 1946

Commanding General
Army Air Forces
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

We have heard rumors that a distinct insignia has been authorized as an Honorable Discharge emblem for the personnel of the Army Air Forces.

We would appreciate word from you as to the correctness of this rumor, and if this is the case, we would appreciate an illustration showing the new emblem.

Our firm hold a license from the War Department permitting the manufacture and sale of all authorized insignia.

Very sincerely yours,

J. O. POLLACK & CO., INC.

By (Miss) /s/ B. Golden

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Memorandum from a manufacturer, asking about a rumor related to the distinct AAF discharge insignia.

AFFPS/Col Agan/ag/6519

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5 March 1946

Miss B. Golden
Division No. 10
J. O. Pollack & Co., Inc.
337 West Madison Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Miss Golden:

Thank you for inquiring about the official status of an Honorable Discharge Emblem for the Army Air Forces prior to beginning manufacture of such an emblem.

The rumor you have heard is probably based on an Air Forces identification pin which has been given to Air Forces personnel upon separation from the service. This pin is not a discharge emblem and has no official status. Its distribution to separated Army Air Forces personnel has been discontinued.

Authorization to manufacture such an emblem under the license you hold from the War Department cannot be authorized by this Headquarters.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Reuben G. Hood, Jr.

REUBEN C. HOOD, JR.
Brigadier General, U. S. Army,
Deputy Chief of Air Staff

Air Force Lapel Button

Commanding General, AAF

AC/AS-4

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27 Feb 46

ECB/hia/4869

1

1. On 20 July 1945 a memorandum was dispatched by the Deputy Chief of Air Staff to G-1 stating General Arnold's desire that a distinctive lapel device to indicate honorable service with the Army Air Forces in World War II be issued to personnel who has served with the Air Forces and have been discharged therefrom. This memorandum was accompanied by a sketch of proposed insignia. This suggestion was referred to the Commanding Generals of the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces who did not concur and was returned by G-1 with disapproval indicated.

2. On 11 September 1945, General Arnold again brought to the attention of AC/AS-1 his desire in the matter of such an insignia and possibilities of securing same by other than War Department means was explored. On 22 October 1945 General Arnold directed that the proposed emblem be given to all persons discharged from the AAF. It was found that facilities existed to produce proposed insignia within the Air Forces and on 2 November the Commanding General, ATSC, was directed to begin manufacture of buttons as per example furnished. A total of 3,375,000 buttons was ordered to be made at the San Antonio, Air Technical Service Command at a cost of 2 1/2 cents per button. Distribution of the buttons was directed through PDC and CAF. Production was begun on approximately 15 November 1945 and as of 14 December 1945, 274,560 buttons had been manufactured and distributed. Current production rate is approximately 20,000 per day.

3. Buttons are given to all Air Forces personnel discharged through AAF separation centers at the time of discharge, this being handled by CAF. AAF personnel discharged through Army Service Forces separation centers receive their buttons with a letter from the Commanding General, PDC, approximately 30 days after separation. Some distribution of the buttons has been made directly by this Headquarters upon personal request of separated personnel.

4. Attached is memorandum to the Chief of Staff for your signature which gives in less detail facts as set forth above.

1 Incl.
Memo to G/S
for sig.

(Signed) JOHN G. MOORE
Colonel, Air Corps

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50.

Memorandum to Commanding General, AAF discussing the AAF discharge pin . Eisenhower sharing information about the AAF pin.

Col Barber/hia/4869/AFACD
Wrn 27 Feb 46

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Subject: Air Forces Lapel Button

1. With reference to your request for information regarding the above subject, General Arnold desired that all persons who have served honorably with the Army Air Forces during World War II be given an insignia which they might wear with civilian garments to indicate such service. It was felt that such insignia could be worn at the discretion of the individual to identify himself to others affiliated with the Army Air Forces rather as similar devices such as school rings, fraternity pins, etc. serve in civilian life.

2. The device which met with General Arnold's approval, it was found, could be manufactured by Air Forces facilities and accordingly ATSC was directed to produce sufficient buttons to provide one for each person who has served with the Army Air Forces. Distribution of the buttons is being made by CAF and PDC either by mail or personally.

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COPY

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WA36
UTS V WARA NR10 WD
FROM SPAATZ WASHDC 042203Z
TO COMMANDING GENERAL
SAN ANTONIO AIR DEPOT
SAN ANTONIO TEXAS

1946 MAR 5 16:19

GENC

AF 221. PD THE MANUFACTURE OF THE AIR FORCE BUTTON TO BE GIVEN TO
AIR FORCE PERSONNEL ON DISCHARGE WILL BE DISCONTINUED AT ONCE.
ALL THE AVAILABLE SUPPLY WILL BE SHIPPED TO THIS HEADQUARTERS NONE
WILL BE GIVEN OUT BY YOU TO INDIVIDUALS OR ISSUED TO ANY COMMAND OR
AGENCY ALL WILL BE SHIPPED HERE

0057Z

AF 221

COPY

51.

General Spaatz's 5 March 1946 message to San Antonio Air Depot, halting work on the pin and shipment all pins to HQ USAF.



AFMC History & Museums Program

HQ AFMC/HO

4225 Logistics Ave, RM S133 - Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio 45433 - DSN: 713-1797 - Comm: (937) 713-1797

For general inquiries, archives, and/or research questions, contact: R. Ray Ortensie

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