

64. (S) Memo 18 May 1944  
Fr: Maj. Gen. H.A. Craig  
AC/AS, OCS&R, Wash.  
To: Brig. Gen. P.W. Timberlake  
Dep. C/AS, Wash.  
(File: AC/AS-4)

AC/AS, MM&D (Wash.) had been requested to have eighteen A-26 airplanes, in the proportion of one-third bombardier noses to two-thirds gun noses, ready for departure 1 August 1944. The airplanes were scheduled for the Ninth Air Force in the ETO. AC/AS, Training (Wash.) had been requested to have eighteen trained crews ready by 1 August 1944. If possible, pilots were to be selected from instructor pilots who had some flying time in twin-engined airplanes. The date was set for 1 August 1944 because AC/AS, MM&D, could not guarantee delivery prior to that date of airplanes having re-worked canopies, and an earlier date would result in an unsatisfactory degree of training for combat crews. Conversion of the eight B-26 groups in the United Kingdom was to be effected by four A-26 Mobile Training Units, and was expected to be completed by March 1945.

452-1-W  
Bombers, A-26

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| By Authority of<br>The Commanding General<br>Army Air Force |          |
| 26/5/44   | slm      |
| Date  | Initials |

ADDRESS REPLY TO  
HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY AIR FORCES  
WAR DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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27, AA 7

**WAR DEPARTMENT**  
HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY AIR FORCES  
WASHINGTON

*Handwritten initials and date: JH 6/3/44*

**FILE**  
1 MAY 1944  
AFRDB

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF (BRIGADIER GENERAL TIMBERLAKE):

Subject: Introduction of A-26 Aircraft to the European Theatre.

1. Status of the project to dispatch eighteen (18) A-26 airplanes to United Kingdom for service test is outlined below:

a. Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Materiel, Maintenance and Distribution, has been requested to have ready for departure by 1 August 1944 eighteen (18) A-26's. The Ninth Air Force has stated its desire to have its A-26's in the proportion of one-third (1/3) bombardier noses and two-thirds (2/3) gun noses. The exact date when bombardier noses will be available is uncertain, but this proportion is to be met as closely as possible.

b. Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Training has been requested to have ready for departure by 1 August 1944 eighteen (18) trained crews. If possible without lessening potential training efficiency, pilots are to be selected from instructor pilots who already have some time in twin-engined aircraft. Since training time is limited, this action is desirable. Further, such personnel should be valuable in the conversion program in theater. After gaining combat experience, their caliber should be sufficiently high to permit their being used as flight leaders or squadron commanders to crews following them.

c. Colonel John R. Kelly, formerly A-3 of the 901st Army Air Force Air Base Unit (Tactical Wing) is project officer for this movement. He will monitor the project and go with the airplanes overseas.

2. The target date for this project was set at 1 August 1944, because of the following important considerations.

a. Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Materiel, Maintenance and Distribution cannot guarantee delivery prior to that date of airplanes having the re-worked pilot's canopy. Of the airplane's unsatisfactory features which have come to light here, one of the most vital is the restricted vision from the cockpit. The Proving Ground Command's report on the A-26 took cognizance of this and stated "the wide frames of the cockpit structure interfere with the pilot's vision to a considerable extent". Formation flying, at best, is difficult with the A-26, due to inherent visibility

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limitations and, since the airplanes on this project are to be subjected to combat test, all possible improvements in visibility are believed mandatory. The removal of the wide canopy frames, which will be accomplished on the reworked canopy, will be of pronounced value in this respect.

b. In the interval between the setting up of the project and the target date, Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Training estimates that only the minimum acceptable amount of training can be given the crews, and that an earlier date would result in a degree of training definitely unsatisfactory for combat crews. Training of crews in the United States is part of the program approved by the theater, as set out in paragraph 3c below.

c. By taking the first eighteen (18) A-26's available (without improvement in cockpit vision) it would be possible to get them to the theater somewhat sooner, by having them flown by the Air Transport Command. On examination, however, the seeming advantage in this alternative is not actual. Air Transport Command personnel are not yet familiar with the A-26, and therefore, a period of training for its pilots would be necessary. On arrival in the theater, a transition training period would be necessary for the B-26 combat crews in the theater. Two training periods for two separate groups of personnel would, it is believed, delay the combat test of the project beyond the time it can be expected under the present plan.

3. Conversion of the B-26 groups in the United Kingdom to A-26 type aircraft is to be accomplished in the following manner:

a. Four (4) A-26 Mobile Training Units, consisting of nine (9) to eleven (11) instructors and complete mockups, turrets, sighting stations, computers, hydraulic systems, etc., are en route to the United Kingdom along with four (4) A-26 aircraft which are to be assigned to one Group until the ground crew conversion is accomplished, after which they are to be moved along with the mobile training unit to the next group to be converted.

b. It is estimated that the first group will receive their sixty-four (64) complete war aircraft and crews, trained here, during the month of October and from then on there will be sixty-four (64) in December, seventy-five (75) in January 1945, ninety-three (93) in February, and one-hundred twenty (120) in March, which will complete the conversion of the eight (8) B-26 groups in the United Kingdom. It is then planned to convert the B-26 units in the Mediterranean theater.

c. There were two plans devised for the purpose of accomplishing the above mentioned conversion. Both were submitted to the theater by cable dated 21 December 1943, and the theater accepted the plan above. The other plan contemplated returning forty-eight (48) men each month, beginning in February 1944, from each B-26 group now in the theater, for training here and

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return. The plan accepted by the theater, it is believed, will work out with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, since it follows the accepted program of training combat crews in the continental Air Forces' Replacement Training Units, with no change in the present system.

*Timed  
PWS*

**PATRICK W. TIMBERLAKE**  
Brigadier General, U. S. A.  
Deputy Chief of Air Staff

*H. A. Craig*

**H. A. Craig**  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Asst. Chief of Air Staff  
Operations, Commitments & Requirements

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