

# Pathfinder

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## Air War School

Students in most universities have it easy. They don't for instance, have to worry about exam questions such as "Can we kill 10 million people, beginning one day next week?"

Someday any one of the 2,000 students at America's Air University might have to answer that question and put an affirmative reply into bomb-laden action. As officers of the U.S. Air Force the "students" have a unique scholastic goal. In Air University classrooms and offices at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Ala., little placards remind them: "The ultimate objective of air power is to force the capitulation of an enemy nation by air action applied directly against the vital points of its national structure."

One day this week 700 of AU's students—lieutenants and captains—will be graduated from their first 16-week course at the university. They will have finished an air war kindergarten: the Air Tactical School, which teaches the use and command of the smallest Air Force units, squadrons of from 6 to 25 planes.

**No Backward Glance.** Master of the graduation ceremony will be AU's boss, a trim, bristle-haired four-star general who has made it a point to forget more about air warfare than most men have ever known. His doctrine—think forward, not backward—has made Gen. George Churchill Kenney more than AU's administrator. In his year on the job he has become a living symbol of the university's motto, *Proficimus More Irritanti* ("We Proceed Unhampered by Tradition").

Throughout the university the motto holds true. At the Air Command and Staff School, attended by about 60% of Tactical School graduates—after they become majors or lieutenant colonels—no ideas are taboo, no doctrinal sacred cows are protected. The man who tries to fall back on textbook theories of war is likely to fall by the wayside.

To answer a question concerning a theoretical air assault, for instance, students actually consult outside agencies all the way from USAF supply headquarters (How many fighters are available at X Field?) to the State Department (Will X nation grant us use of a certain airfield?). In classes, students are encouraged, almost goaded, into disagreeing with their "teachers," who are officers selected for flexibility and general—not military—know-how and common sense.

Many a Staff School student, for instance, has had to argue his classroom point with Gen. Kenney himself. "The ones I really like," says Kenney, "are the

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**General Kenney.** *Capitulation is the main objective.*

ones who win those arguments.”

At AU's apex is the Air War College. To its senior officer-students the question of destroying an enemy's will to resist is grimly real. Killing 10 million citizens of an enemy nation, for instance, is no haphazard problem to the Air War College. In the statistics of modern war, a loss of approximately 4% of a nation's population saps its will to resist; 10 million would be slightly in excess of 4% of the largest of democracy's potential enemies.

Air Force concern with that statistic is natural. To the USAF has been assigned the primary responsibility for counteroffensive blows against an enemy.

**Accent on Peace.** But neither Air War College students nor their instructors count a victory in terms of destruction alone. Most desirable of all, the college emphasizes, is the use of air weapons as peace power.

Even on the fringe of a shooting war, the alternative of psychological warfare is considered. AU guest lecturers range all the way from industrial leaders, scientists and statesmen to top publicists; from them, officer-students learn not only the national “why” of defense but also how to tell about it.

As Gen. Kenney put it: “We don't protect peace or win a war with weapons alone. We do it with all the citizens, resources and heart of our nation . . . and at the Air University that's the real idea at the base of the curricula.”