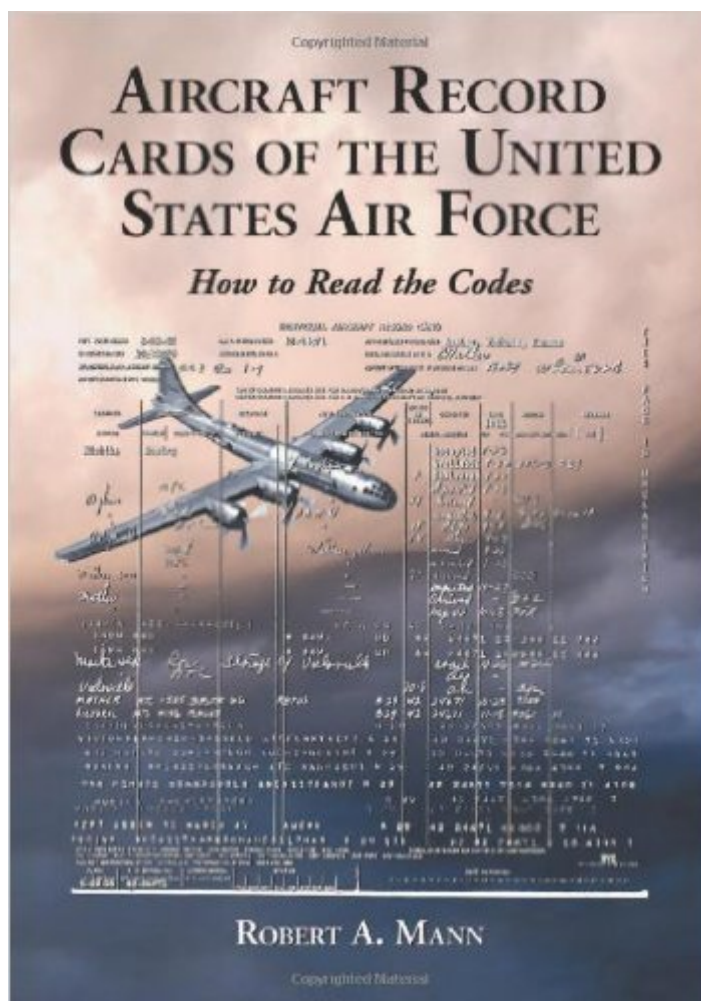# Aircraft Record Cards Of The United States Air Force: How To Read The Codes

Synopsis

This work details the methods of deciphering and reading the coding found on Individual Aircraft Record Cards (IARCs). The work shows how to read the 21 formats of record cards to help the reader or researcher identify the reporting or possessing unit, activity, station, and important dates for individual aircraft. The author also details where and how to obtain IARC microfilm rolls.

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AIRCRAFT RECORD CODES OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE: HOW TO READ THE CODESROBERT A. MANNMCFARLAND PUBLISHING, 2008QUALITY SOFTCOVER, $49.95, 288 PAGES, APPENDICES, GLOSSARYThe United States Air Force and its predecessors have maintained a variety of records relating to the aircraft operated by the service. Starting in 1923, the Air Service maintained individual records for each aircraft added to the inventory listing location and activity from its acceptance by the service until its retirement from the inventory. Such records have had a number of official names-Aircraft Master Record, Individual Aircraft Record Card (IARC), etc.-but are most commonly called "Aircraft History Cards." Originally, these records were manually compiled from unit inventories, morning reports, and so on, but the increased use of automated systems in the 1940s allowed automatic compilation and machine printing of the IARC entries after 1940.IARCs don't record the entire history and activity of an individaul aircraft. They don't include information about missions or crews, nor do they record exact locations or manners of loss. Rather, they serve as a compilation of the locations, transfers, and "controlling activity" (the unit responsible for reporting the aircraft) of the aircraft at a set time. The records for Army Air Forces (AAF) aircraft

transfered overseas during World War II stop upon arrival in theater and don't resume until the aircraft either returns to the U.S. or is removed from the inventory. Gaps exist for both Navy and Army Air Forces aircraft during 1943-1944, apparently due to changes in record-keeping policies and systems. Other gaps may exist on some cards and most cards contain a variety of data formats. The exact type of information and its manner of presentation changes over time and can best be described in chronological groups:*Through 1940-This period actually covers a variety of record card styles, but the data is hand-written or typed. The information follows the printed columns on the card. The information generally consists of reporting location, inventory date (month and fiscal year), and flying time (both total and during the inventory period). The reporting activity is generally the base, rather than the unit. Transfers between bases are included as separate listings which include the authority for the transfer.*1940 to November, 1942-During this period, U.S. Army Air Forces switched to the use of electronic accounting machine (EAM) technology for inventory reporting and this allowed the automated compilation and printing of IARC data. The data and card presentation remains constant from the forms in use before the change, but the cards are machine printed, rather than handwritten. Some data is abbreviated; location, for example, is given by a seven-character abbreviations.*November, 1942-April, 1944-At the end of 1942, the responsibility for maintaining the inventory and individual aircraft status information was shifted from Headquarters, Air Material Command to one of several Statistical Control Units(SCU) within the U.S. or overseas. IARCs were still prepared as before for newly purchased aircraft and added to the main IARC file to track each aircraft from the factory to its initial assignment within the U.S. or to an overseas shipping destination. The 15th SCU was responsible for tracking aircraft inventory and status information for aircraft within the U.S. and developed its own form for recording this data. The 15th SCU forms radically changed the data presentation-flying time was no longer recorded, some unit information was recorded for the first time, and location either appears as the abbreviations used previously or as a four-character shipping destination code. No effort was made to transfer 15th SCU data to the IARC master file, so that no activity was recorded on IARC cards during this period. Further, the inventory records on aircraft outside of the U.S. were maintained by SCUs in theater, as a result the entries on IARCs end with their transfer overseas, save for the final entry showing their removal from the inventory or until they returned to a U.S. location.*April, 1944 to September, 1949-At the beginning of this period, entries again appear on the main IARCs, although the concentration on U.S. based aircraft continued until after the end of World War II. There are no records for aircraft transfered overseas once they leave the U.S. until they are dropped from the inventory, return to the U.S., or until the reporting requirements changed after the war. During this

period, the entries recorded a change in the status of the aircraft-either a transfer of station or a change in the usage of the aircraft. Entries recorded the reporting and other involved station and unit and the type, nature, and date of the change. The exact presentation of the data varies slightly over the period but generally involves a number of codes used to speed transmission of the data.*September, 1949 and Subsequent-Beginning in September, 1949, IARCs entries were printed in batches, giving rise to groups of entries followed by a "bookkeeping" line indicating the serial number and number of entries printed. The data presentation for each entry remains similar to the entries from the previous period. During the machine-printed period (from 1940 on) IARC entries become more and more difficult to understand due to the increasing data density and the use of one-or two-character codes for a variety of information. Currently, U.S. Air Force personnel are preparing a guide to understanding the U.S. Air Force IARC, which will treat the various code groups and data presentations in greater depth.This detailed and timely work details the methods of deciphering and reading the coding found on IARCs. This work shows how to read the 21 formats of record cards to help the reader or researcher identify the reporting or possessing unit, activity, station, and important dates for individual aircraft. The author also details where and how to obtain IARC microfilom rolls.Lt. Colonel Robert A. Lynn, Florida GuardOrlando, Florida

Coveres most of the codes. Still some missing.

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