89. (S) Ltr. 4 Jan. 1945
Fr: Maj. Gen. S.E. Anderson
9th Bomb. Div. (M)
A.P.O. 140, U.S. Army
To: Gen. H.H. Arnold
CG, AAF, Wash.
(File: Central Files)

Gen. Anderson gave a summary of Ninth Bomb. Division's combat experience with the A-26 and gave a detailed account of a mission conducted on 1 Jan. 1945. Gen. Anderson stated that once pilots became familiar with the A-26 they considered it better than any other airplane they had ever flown. Single-engine performance of the A-26 was excellent and formation flying presented no great difficulties after pilots became accustomed to the limited visibility caused by the high nacelles. Gen. Anderson listed the major deficiencies that had been found to hamper combat operations of the A-26, including canopy frosting, failure of brakes, and the gunner's escape hatch.

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SECRET
By Authority of
CG, 9th Bomb Div (M)
Initials:
Date 4 Jan 45

9TH BOMBARDMENT DIVISION (M)

APO 140, US Army
4 January 1945

General H. H. Arnold
Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces,
Washington, D. C.

(Through: Commanding General, Ninth Air Force, APO 696, U S Army)

Dear General Arnold:

Knowing your great interest in the A-26 aircraft, I am taking the liberty of writing you personally in order that you may have first-hand knowledge of the 9th Bombardment Division's experience with this aircraft to date.

We now have two Groups (the 409th and 416th) fully equipped with gun-nosed A-26 aircraft. The gun-nosed aircraft are led in combat by a bomb-nosed A-20. This arrangement works satisfactorily but has the disadvantages of reducing radius of action and decreasing the speed of the formation. To date we have flown 935 A-26 sorties, have had 4 A-26's shot down in combat, and 128 A-26's battle-damaged as follows: category A, 101; category AC, 14; category B, 9; categorn E, 4. This experience does not constitute a complete battled test but is sufficient to provide a fairly firm basis for judging the A-26's capabilities and limitations.

You will, I am sure, be particularly interested in one mission conducted on 1 January 1945. On this date we sent six A-26's into the immediate battle area. They were accompanied by eight P-47's. The P-47's were to be voctered on to a target by the SCR 584, were to bomb the target placing marker bombs for the A-26's, who would than also bomb and then go down and strafe. This mission was not a success, since the P-47's did not have marker bombs and the target selected was in a thickly wooded area where the A-26'scould not pick it up due to their limited visibility and the poor visibility approximately two miles, in the battle area on that day. Of the six A-26's sent out one was shot down and the other five received battle damage of varying seriousness. We did learn from this operation that a formation of six A-26's can not stay with a formation of eight P-47's even though the fighters are making what they consider gentle turns. As a result, two P-47's are being attached for temporary duty with an A-26 Group. They will run tests in conjunction with the A-26's to determine tactics to be employed when they operate together on bombing and strafing missions. A second mission of this sort will be run as soon as weather permits.

In general the A-26 is very satisfactory aircraft. Pilots take to it quicker than they took to either the A-20 or the B-26, and once they become familiarywith the A-26 consider it superior to anything they have flown before. One major reason for the pilots liking the aircraft is its superior single-engine performance. Recently a pilot of the 409th Ground took off with four 1,000-lb. bombs and a full load of fuel aboard. He lost an engine at approximately thirty feet but had no trouble at all. In fact, he did not just circle and land immediately, but gained altitude and circles the field until the remainder of the formation had taken off for their mission. We have experience no trouble with aircraft returning from

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To: General H. H. Arnold, CG, USAAF.

the battle area on a single engine.

The aircraft belly-lands very well when the bell-landing is predetermined and the pilot has sufficient time to cut engines and fuel supply prior to touching down. Under these circumstances, damage sustained requires only about one-fourth the man hours for repair as is required to repair the average damage sustained by an A-20 or B-26 when it belly-lands. However, we have recently had three aircraft belly-land immediately after take-off. In these cases the pilot did not have time to cut his fuel supply although he did cut his engines. In each case the aircraft caught fire at the base of the engine nacelle just forward of the fuel tank. This was apparently caused by arcing of severed battery leads which ignited fuel which had been released from broken fuel lines, all of which pass through the nacelle at the point where fire originated. The exact cause for these belly-landings immedia tely after take-off has not yet been determined. Conditions were, however, ideal for icing on that day. The wing of the A-26 is the laminar flow type. It was found in England during last winter that leading edge ice is critical with this type wing. On the day our aircraft belly-landed they all had trouble getting into the air and these three were unable to stay in the air. Conditions for icing were ideal and although the wings were defrosted prior to take-off, we suspect that ice formed on the leading edge during taxi-out and take-off and that this was the cause of the crashes. The only way we can prevent such icing is by application of a British compound to the leading edge of the wing. However, this compound is a paste and when applied forms a layer about one sixteenth inch thick along the leading edge, and this disrupts air flow. We have requested information from USSTAF whether or not the wing is too critical to warrant use of this compound.

Formation flying presents no great problem with this aircraft. Pilots are at first rather timid about gettin in close because the high engines impair visibility. Once they are used to this condition they fly as tight formation as they flew with the A-20 or B-26. They must however be particularly alert and drop down quickly when they are on the inside of a turn. If they do not do this they completely lose sight of their leader and must pull out of formation.

As you know, Wright Field established 31,000 lbs. as maximum landing weight. It was felt that the gear would not stand up under any greater weight. We have, however, on several occasions landed planes with four 1,000-lbs bombs and 700 gallons of fuel aboard. This makes a landing weight of approximately 33,200 lbs. As yet no gears have collapsed. This is not, hoever, standard practice and is done only in emergency since we feel that continuous landings with an over-lead would cause fatigue and eventual collapse of the landing gear. It does increase the pilot's confidence to know that in an emergency he can land with an over-lead with the expectation that the landing gear will not collapse.

As is natural with a new aircraft, we have uncovered several deficiencies which hamper combat operations and should be eliminated if possible. Many of these have been reported formally to the Air Staff and to Wright Field, but for your information I will cover briefly a few of the major items.

a. Canopy frosting. While frosting is probably no worse in this aircraft than in the A-20 and B-26, it presents a greater problem because the visibility from this aircraft is at all times less than the visibility from the A-20 or the B-26. We believe that an electric panel similar to that installed in some automobile windshields should be installed in the canopy of the A-26 to insure some visibility

at all times.

b. Brakes. The major seal of the brakes fails rather frequently with the result that no braking is possible even though the air bottle is used. We have recommended substitution of a 39-inch wheel for the present 47-inch wheel and are convinced that if this substitution is made all major brake trouble will be eliminated.

c. Phonelic valves. The phenol sections in hydraulic equipment sell due to absorption of hydraulic fluid under that heat and pressure with the result that seizing occurs and the hydraulix system becomes inoperative. We have recommended replacing the phenol with another phenol which will not swell or with metal parts.

d. A-4 release unit. On climbing to altitude moisture condenses in this unit and under present operating temperatures freezes, causing failure of the unit. This in turn prevents release of bombs and has caused us to bring many bombleads back to our airdromes. We believe that heaters such as those used on guns should be installed to prevent this.

e. Gunner's escape hatch. At present the gunner can escape only through the bomb bays and only if bombs have been released. This is a source of great wory to all gunners and we believe two things should be done to eliminate this worry. First, an escape hatch should be provided on the left side of the fuselage where the camera part is now located. Second, a compressed air system for actuating the bomb bay doors should be installed with controls so located that the system can be actuated by either the pilot or the gunner.

In closing I would like to emphasize that the airplane is a superior bombing platform, It is much more stable than the A-20 and more stable than the B-26. It would be an excellent instrument aircraft if the cockpit arrangement were modified so that the pilot could more readily read his instruments. We have recommended such a modification and I would only point out that the modification recommended is one indorsed by all of our pilots.

With best wishes to you and all of our Air Force for success in the new year, I remain

Yours sincerely,

SAMUEL E. ANDERSON
Major General, USA

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