

Blind Pilots Land Craft Safely When Guided by Hanau GCA Men

FLIEGERHORST—"Hanau GCA, this is Army 64415, departing Charley Beacon inbound to Hanau Beacon at this time, heading 030 at 2500 feet."

"Roger, Army 64415, continue heading 030, maintain 2500 feet."

With these words another bad weather landing instrument approach and landing begins, handled by the Hanau GCA.

GCA stands for Ground Control Approach, and it is an all-weather radar station that assists aircraft desiring to make a landing when bad weather forces the pilot to land with instrument control only. He cannot see the ground.

After the pilot asks for GCA assistance, the radar operator identifies the aircraft by asking the pilot to make a turn of greater than 90 degrees. This maneuver enables the GCA operator to distinguish between the plane he must guide in and a myriad of other "blips" on his screen.

When the aircraft is identified the radar operator then gives the pilot instructions on how to bring the plane onto the glide path of the air field.

In doing this, the GCA operator utilizes a line that is visible on his radar scope. This line marks the glide path to the end of the run-

way in use. He can then tell the pilot how high or low, how far to the right or left, he must go to be "on target."

Once the aircraft has been guided to the end of the runway, the GCA tells the pilot to take over and visually land the plane.

In addition to assisting aircraft to make a safe landing, the GCA operators of the 503d Avn Bn have the responsibility of keeping military flights separate from commercial flights from Frankfurt Rhine-Main Air Post. This is due to the fact that the glide paths of the Hanau Army Air Field lie at a lower altitude but directly in the glide path of the Rhine-Main Air Port.

This necessitates very close cooperation with the approach and departure controllers of Frankfurt on all Instrument Flight Requirement (IFR) flights arriving at or leaving Hanau Army Air Field.

The Hanau Army Air Field GCA has had an accident-free existence since its birth two years ago. A record like this is important to maintain the GCA's Federal Aeronautical Administration Certification.

The certification requires the GCA crew to have a minimum of 200 IFR flights a month and requires each operator to handle 25 runs a month to maintain his personal certification.

The GCA facilities of Hanau Army Air Field are operated by four men of the 503d Avn Bn. Sp5 Walter J. McCleery is the Section Leader and senior GCA operator. The other operators are: Sp5 Alvin L. Dehart, Sp5 Herbert H. Fredericks and Sp4 Harold O. Hooker.

To become a GCA operator, these men have attended a course given by the US Air Force at Keesler AFB, Miss.

The course, lasting for 22 weeks, covers radar and air field tower operations and air route traffic control procedure.



EYES GLUED ON THE RADAR SCREEN, Sp5 Herbert H. Fredericks guides in a plane with Ground Control Approach.