

Government 1521  
Bureaucratic Politics:  
Government, Military,  
Social and Economic Organizations

D. Carpenter

Lecture 09: Learning and Control Between  
Wars and into WWII

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Outline of Material – Lecture 09

I. Battle over independence of Air Force

II. Emergence of independent AF

III. Army War Mobilization before Pearl  
Harbor [next time, WWII and Cold War  
developments]

Discussion

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The Contest over an  
Independent Air Force

Demonstrated capacity in WWI; creates issue of  
how and whether

Q: why didn't U.S. air forces split off  
organizationally from U.S. armed forces earlier?

It was in fact proposed...

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### General William “Billy” Mitchell, Calls for Unified Air Force (1920)

It is necessary to organize an Air Service into different branches, with proper proportions of each branch to the other. For instance, in Europe 70 per cent. Of offensive aviation was pursuit. Consequently, as we had no pursuit aviation, we were completely in the hands of any foe that might attack us.

The forces that actually come in contact with and fight with the enemy are called tactical units. The air tactical unit of aviation is the group of one hundred airplanes, divided into four squadrons of twenty-five airplanes each. This corresponds in a way to the infantry battalion, and is the fighting unit of aviation....

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### General William “Billy” Mitchell, Calls for Unified Air Force (1920)

**Pursuit aviation**, whose mission is to gain control of the air, fights in groups, wings, and brigades. ...

**Bombardment aviation** is organized similarly to pursuit aviation...Its mission is to drop explosive projectiles on enemy targets. Whenever an attack of a military object depends on an explosive, an aerial bomb attack is the most efficient, because air projectiles carry a far greater proportion of explosives than any other missile. ....

... **Attack aviation** is organized like bombardment aviation.... Its mission is to attack at low altitude with gunfire and lightweight bombs. On land it is directed against personnel, military trains, tanks, railroad trains, anti-aircraft posts, searchlight posts, hostile airdromes, and any target susceptible of fire attack. On water it attacks all classes of vessels capable of being destroyed single-handed by means of fire attack.

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### General William “Billy” Mitchell, Calls for Unified Air Force (1920)

**Anti-aircraft artillery, machine guns, searchlight defenses, balloon barrages, liaison systems, a meteorological system, and a system of airways are auxiliary to an air force. And air force can now be handled in the air by itself by means of radio telegraphy and telephony.**

It is believed that, in the future air force, lines of communication will be supplied by airships. This remains to be proved, however, and is one of the important developments of light-than-air craft at the present time. Recent experiments have been very successful.

An air force, judged by results in the European war, will contain about 70 per cent. pursuit aviation. It would appear that the proportion for this arm in the United States, in a future great war, might be 60 per cent. pursuit, 20 per cent. bombardment, and 20 per cent. attack aviation....

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### General William “Billy” Mitchell, Calls for Unified Air Force (1920)

The question now is, What shall be done in the future? ... What is needed is a comprehensive study of the problem which will assign to an air force a definite place as a defensive arm of the United States. *What the airmen recommend at the present time is that the navy constitute the first line of defense, that the air force constitute the second line, and that the army constitute the third line of defense.* As soon as the air force is provided with suitable floating airdromes having sufficient speed to keep away from naval vessels, and supplied by airships, *we believe the air force will be the first line of defense and that surface navies, at least, will disappear....*

In case of any operation involving defense of the coast (which presupposes the elimination of our navy), an offensive war on foreign soil, or any operation involving an army, the first element to enter into combat with the enemy will be the air force.

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### Admiral William Moffett, Naval Aviation Chief, Criticizes Mitchell (1925)

...[I]t was shown that the present law as it passed the House contained the proviso “the the Army Air Service shall control all aerial operations from land bases and naval aviation all aerial operations attached to a fleet.”

If the wording quoted had become law *it would practically have wiped out naval aviation development* and would, had war come meanwhile, have seriously crippled the fleet. Fortunately, the Navy Department discovered the existence of this legislation as a rider on an Army appropriation bill in time, and after energetic protests on the part of the Secretaries of War and Navy the legislation was amended in conference by members of Congress who appreciated its far-reaching effect.

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### Admiral William Moffett, Naval Aviation Chief, Criticizes Mitchell (1925)

The law, as amended ...reads:

*And provided further,* that hereafter the Army Air Service shall control all aerial operations from land bases, and naval aviation shall have control of all aerial operations attached to a fleet, including shore stations whose maintenance is necessary for operations with the fleet, for construction and experimentation, and for the training of personnel.

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Admiral William Moffett, Naval Aviation  
Chief, Criticizes Mitchell (1925)

We have all heard statements to the effect that our coast can be bombed by aircraft from foreign shores. In my original statement I told you that there was no plane in existence at the present time, and none in sight, which could fly in one flight from Europe to our coast with a military load. I do not think that statement can be refuted. ... The greatest assurance against such an attack is a Navy second to none under the sea, on the sea and over the sea....

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Admiral William Moffett, Naval Aviation  
Chief, Criticizes Mitchell (1925)

Following the World War, the United States Navy was confronted with the stupendous problem of adapting aircraft to the needs of the Navy. During the World War naval aircraft was used only for patrol purposes. The actual use of aircraft on battleships and the development of aircraft carriers were not considered. For the past four years the Naval Bureau of Aeronautics has been concentrating on the problem of developing aviation with the fleet. This not only includes the development and equipment of aircraft carriers, but also the supplying of aircraft for every type of floating craft, from the battleship to the submarine. The past four years might be called years of experimentation in the development of the proper type of aircraft for naval aviation....

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Admiral William Moffett, Naval Aviation  
Chief, Criticizes Mitchell (1925)

“I claim that aviation is a gun, a bomb, a torpedo, a mine, a spotter, and a scout, all in one, fragile it is true comparatively, and at present limited in its operation but with infinite possibilities. I claim that as long as our fleet is not evenly balanced as to its aviation, both in materiel and personnel, it is as if the fleet were short of guns, torpedoes, mines, and men, and that until this shortage is made up more money should be allotted to aviation and less to surface ships – if money for both cannot be obtained – I am for ships, surface and subsurface, but the ships without their aviation will be crippled or lost, our fleet defeated and the war lost.”

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## Air Corps victory was in part political and reputational

Following: one tenth of army's personnel, "the Air Corps spent about one fifth of the War Department's appropriations and built a strong base of public support. By the eve of World War II the air fleet had virtually supplanted the battlefleet as the uniquely American first line of defense – at least in the public imagination." [Millett and Maslowski, *For the Common Defence*, 401]

- Jan 1939: 1,700 planes, 19,600 personnel
- Nov 1941: 10,100 planes, 292,000 personnel

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## Timeline of Air Force Org Progression during WWII

June 1941: Gen. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, sets up Army Air Forces to control both Air Corps and Air Force Combat Command.

Early 1941: implicit hierarchy for non-combat activities within War Dept; Flying Training Command – increasing emphasis on training.

War Dept reorg 1942: 3 autonomous U.S. Army Commands: Army Ground Forces, Services of Supply (later Army Service Forces), and Army Air Forces

Nat Security Act of 1947: Dept of Air Force established.

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## II. Development of Army A. Creation of Armored Force

July 1940 (War Dept directive): creation of Armored Force

- 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division: Fort Knox
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division: Fort Benning

1939-1941: Idea of paratroopers – inserting troops behind enemy lines with planes – emerges. Pushed again by Gen. Marshall.

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B. GHQ Maneuvers – 1941, in Carolinas, Louisiana

“The GHQ maneuvers, in which almost half the entire Army participated, were the culmination of a progressive training program from the individual through the various units to the Army level. These huge exercises tested not only soldiers but commanders, equipment, and organizational and tactical doctrines. By the time they had ended in the fall of 1941, the United States, for the first time in its history, had ‘a field tested, almost combat-ready Army before the declaration of war.’” [Coffman, 393]

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Coffman:  
Massive Planning and Mobilization for WWI before Pearl Harbor

- Chief of Staff of Army: George C. Marshall
- Benning promotion: George S. Patton, commander of third Cavalry Regiment
- 1940: Creation of Armored Force [War Dept directive]
- Cultural and org conflicts between regulars and enlists

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Coffman:  
Massive Planning and Mobilization for WWI before Pearl Harbor

“After the Louisiana maneuvers of 1940, an unusually qualified battery commander who was disgruntled by the poor air support decided to state the case. Not once during four months of field problems had an air observer actually adjusted the fire of his battalion.”

Capt William W. Ford: “had some experience as an air observer but, more to the point, he was a qualified pilot”

Ford proposes lighter, unarmored aircraft, remaining close to the firing [field artillery] batteries. Low authority, but plan gets adopted.

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