

Air War Plans Division 1

The Air Plan That Defeated Hitler

ASPJ STAFF



In August 1941, four men, all former instructors at the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) at Maxwell Field, Alabama, reported to the Air War Plans Division (AWPD) in Washington, D.C., to lay the foundation for a comprehensive, strategic air war plan. Lt Col Hal George called upon Maj Laurence Kuter, Maj Ken

Walker, and Maj Haywood S. Hansell Jr. to answer a request from President Franklin D. Roosevelt for a “production plan to defeat our enemies”—one that would outline specific air requirements for industrial mobilization should the United States become embroiled in a war. After nine days, the team delivered a briefing to Gen Henry Arnold and Gen George C. Marshall that specified production requirements for 13,083 bombers; 8,775 fighters; 2,043 observation and photographic aircraft; 2,560 transports; and 37,051 trainers—an astounding total of 63,512 aircraft. Although these numbers were impressive, the planners exceeded Roosevelt’s tasking by recommending a strategy for prosecuting the war against the Axis powers. That strategy assumed that airpower could achieve strategic and political objectives in a fundamentally new way.

Building upon untested airpower theories (taught throughout the 1930s at ACTS) that relied upon self-defending, high-altitude daylight bombers, the team first envisioned a strategic defensive in the Pacific theater while prosecuting an all-out air war against Germany. Air forces would concentrate for 18 months before launching an intensive six-month air campaign against Nazi Germany. The forces that had assembled at bases in Great Britain would focus on industrial target systems—the “industrial web”—that supported the German war effort. Electrical



power, rail and canal transportation, petroleum production, and other industries formed the backbone of any industrial power. The AWPDP staff also recognized that the German Luftwaffe would mount a strong defense. Consequently, the enemy air force became an “intermediate objective of overriding priority.” Allied strategists later incorporated elements of AWPDP-1 into AWPDP-42 and the plans for the Combined Bomber Offensive that commanders used to prosecute the air war against Germany.

To Learn More . . .

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