

Air Power and Armies and Navies

Mitchell foresaw the fundamental changes that air power held for the conduct of warfare. Within this he also saw the ways that air power would forever alter the manner in which land and sea forces would conduct operations. Mitchell expressed this as: **“The relations of armies to navies and navies to armies are now very different from what they were, while both bear an entirely new relation to air power from that which they formerly bore each other. Even if hostile armies and navies come into contact with each other, they are helpless now unless they can obtain and hold military supremacy in the air.”**²⁰⁵

- The conceptions we have always had that wars must be waged by armies and navies must be revised.²⁰⁶
- A navy cannot work on land; an army cannot work on the water; an air service can work over both.²⁰⁷
- An army fights on land, a navy on the water, but an air force over both.²⁰⁸
- Just as the navy always thinks first of the battleships and makes aviation secondary to that, the army thinks of the infantry and makes aviation a secondary matter.²⁰⁹
- Neither armies nor navies can exist unless the air is controlled over them. Air forces, on the other hand, are the only independent fighting units of the day, because neither armies nor navies can ascend and fight twenty thousand feet above the earth's surface.²¹⁰
- As long as it was a question of land and sea power, that is, armies and navies, the matter was well understood because they had been continued and applied for centuries. The variation in their use has been very small and has consisted almost entirely in improving the instruments and equipment but not methods.²¹¹

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- The action of armies and navies on one plane or dimension—that is, on the surface of the ground or the surface of the water—is slow in execution as compared to operations in the air.²¹²
- This condition is due to the blind opposition of the Army and Navy Bureaucracies that have abrogated to themselves the policy of standing squarely in the way of progress, and constantly advocating the theories of the bow and arrow men of a barbarous age.²¹³
- An air force attack, . . . is as an aid to an army and does away with no specific arm, just as a navy may assist in a landing.²¹⁴
- Two basic contentions have always been advanced by armies and navies concerning aircraft. These are that antiaircraft weapons are a positive defense against aircraft and that battleships cannot be destroyed by aircraft. Both are absolutely and positively fallacious.²¹⁵
- In order to apportion the money for national defense properly, we should make an accurate estimate of all of the capabilities of each branch of the service, that is, what the Army can do, what the Navy can do, and what the Air Service can do.²¹⁶

Air Power and Armies

Mitchell wrote that: **“The role of armies and their way of making war will remain much the same in the future as it has in the past, if air power does not entirely prevent them from operating.”**²¹⁷

- The armies themselves, their operations, their strategy, and even their tactics are little different from what they were in the days of the Romans.²¹⁸
- In this war the ground troops seldom met their adversary face to face. . . . War on the ground resolved itself into an attack of masses that employed missile-throwing weapons to keep the adversary as far off as possible.²¹⁹

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- Of course, everything begins and ends on the ground. A person cannot permanently live out on the sea nor can a person live up in the air, so that any decision in war is based on what takes place ultimately on the ground. ²²⁰
- It was practically impossible to impress the men in the ranks, through their own officers, as to the value of aviation. . . . Wherever possible, we took the infantry battalions back of the line to our airdromes and took the noncommissioned officers and other soldiers up in the air. This impressed them with the necessity of cooperating with the airmen as much as possible, as they transmitted it on to the privates. ²²¹
- The army, in its conception of the use of armed forces, has been in a state of arrested development for many centuries. Its theory embraces the use of physical power of one man against another, aided by weapons which he can carry in his hand or transport close to him, whose action depends on the range of visibility, or what might be termed 'eye shot,' for their use. The dogma of the man raised in the army school is that armies must be brought together to determine a war. This theory is now obsolete and to tie an air force to an army means the virtual extinction of its efficiency and the proper theory of its operation. ²²²
- Armies will be used on land for insuring domestic tranquility, holding operating bases for aircraft and seacraft and, in a last analysis, together with air power against hostile armies. ²²³
- We could see the utter helplessness of the armies on the ground. They were merely thousands of men led to the shambles, as the result of a faulty system which was entirely oblivious to the meaning of modern war. ²²⁴
- Bit by bit the army was losing its mobility and, therefore, becoming incapable of obtaining a decision over the enemy. ²²⁵
- Enthusiastic tank officers think that in their arm of the service they have a branch that will revolutionize land warfare. . . . These tank officers are strong believers in

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aircraft also and think great results could be obtained, with comparatively little loss of life, from its use in conjunction with tanks, the aircraft striking at the enemy's rear areas, while the tanks make a direct attack on the front.²²⁶

- The advent of the airplane to warfare has given the commander of a great army a strategical reserve which was never dreamed of before the advent of this wonderful instrument.²²⁷
- You will never eliminate the land forces entirely from the air, but you will greatly affect them.²²⁸

Air Power and Navies

In Mitchell's era the strength of a nation was often measured by its battleships. Nations had grown to global power based on their naval might; however, Mitchell felt that air power and the aeronautical era had forever changed this situation.

He believed that surface navies were obsolete as they had no defense against air power. Consequently Mitchell wrote extensively and quite critically against naval forces. Praising the submarine, Mitchell condemned surface forces, especially for coastal defense that he felt could better be conducted by air power. He concluded that **"naval vessels will not be able to play the part they have in past wars, unless completely protected by aircraft."**²²⁹

- Eventually, you will find that, dollar for dollar spent, you will get more from an air force than from submarines, as an air force will both protect sea communications and destroy hostile vessels.²³⁰
- From a military standpoint the airmen have to study the effect that air power has on navies and what their future will be. They know that within the radius of air power's activities it can completely destroy any surface vessel or warships.²³¹

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- A Navy should be organized and equipped to take the offensive on the high seas, and not be employed along and close to the coast. Such Air Forces should be assigned to the navy as can go to ask [sic] with it and fight with it on the high seas.²³²
- Air Force, with the types of aircraft now in existence or in development, acting from shore bases, can find and destroy all classes of seacraft under war conditions, with a negligible loss to the aircraft.²³³
- Seacraft are much more vulnerable when they have steam up in their boilers, are moving at a high speed in formation, and when they are equipped with ammunition in their magazines and on their decks.²³⁴
- The problem of the destruction of seacraft by Air Force has been solved, and is finished. Our recent maneuvers show that an enemy having control of the air—which gives him control of the sea—may land air forces from airplane carriers on any of the Islands or Keys along our coasts, which cannot be attacked by troops or artillery and from these points launch air attacks against our great centers of population in the triangle Bangor-Norfolk-Chicago.²³⁵
- Hostile navies are no menace to our country if there is adequate air power.²³⁶
- The characteristics of air power, in comparison with sea power, are, first, the predominant feature of speed which air power possesses.²³⁷
- From its speed alone the air force has the power of taking the offensive against the Navy and engaging it under its own conditions. The only defense against an air force is another air force; and, as an indispensable prelude to any engagement on the water, there must be an air battle to determine which side shall control the area above the water which is to be used by a fleet.²³⁸
- Up to recently, military aviation over the water has been thought of by the ordinary person essentially in connection with navies.²³⁹

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- It should be noted that the whole development for the use of aircraft over the water is not in air tactics, in types of airplanes particularly, or in the securing and training of air personnel; but is essentially a development of floating airdromes.²⁴⁰
- It is the belief of the majority of Air Operations in all Services that the development of the Air Service will mean the extinction of navies on the surface of the ocean in the future.²⁴¹