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STUDENT REPORT  
ROLES, MISSIONS, AND POLITICS:  
THE USAF AND THE B-36, 1945-50  
MAJOR DAVID L. STRINGER 87-2390  
*"insights into tomorrow"*

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## PREFACE

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This material is submitted to the faculty of the University of Alabama in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's degree in history.

In any investigation of a period as recent as 1945-1950, there is far more material than any one person could catalog, let alone read. Most works concentrate on the policy developments of the time, but I chose to cover the public rivalry between the Air Force and the Navy, culminating in the B-36 controversy. This interservice blood feud has been generally mentioned cryptically in works such as Reynolds (394-8), Deputy CNO (161-2), Futrell (129-134) and Dixon I (4-5), or prejudicially (Thach, 54-56), and Schratz (64-71). Weigley (370-381) has the best short summary. This account may have some additional relevance in the light of the current trend toward "jointness" among the services.

My thanks go to Professors Earl Tilford and Maarten Ultee of the University of Alabama, Majors Steve Havron and Tracey Gauch of Air Command and Staff College and most of all to my wife, Diane, and my daughter, Katie, who gave me the time to write this report.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major David L. Stringer, the son of a USAF officer, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. A 1970 graduate of St. Louis High School in Honolulu, Hawaii, he graduated in May 1974 from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. with a bachelor's degree in Foreign Service. In May, 1987, he earned a master's degree in History from the University of Alabama. He is a 1974 Army ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate and graduated from the Squadron Officer School in 1977 and Air Command and Staff College in 1987.

Major Stringer has worked as a fighter maintenance officer in Florida, The Philippines and Germany; as a special projects officer at Nellis AFB, Nevada and as a staff officer in HQ USAF and HQ USAFE. In July 1987, he will assume command of the 20th Aircraft Generation Squadron at RAF Upper Heyford, UK. He is married to the former Diane [REDACTED]. They have one daughter, Katherine.

One of the first controversies involving military aviation occurred shortly after the US declaration of war, when there was a great turmoil over the organization of US aviation. Gen Pershing had appointed Col William Mitchell to be Chief of Air Service, American Expeditionary Force, on 13 Jun 17. In this capacity Mitchell helped shape the Bolling Commission report, which called for a big American aviation contribution to the war (Futrell 11). On 3 Sep 17, Mitchell assumed a subordinate post upon the arrival of Brig Gen William Kenly. When Kenly was subsequently assigned to the United States on 27 Nov 17, his replacement, Brig Gen Benjamin Foulois brought a staff with him. Mitchell called them "carpetbaggers" (Futrell 12). Pershing eventually appointed a West Point classmate, Brigadier General Mason Patrick, to succeed Foulois. Mitchell soon got the first combat slot in the US First Army (Dixon 2:4, Futrell 12). While Patrick would eventually report that aviation should not be separated from the forces it supported, Mitchell had other ideas. Moving to Washington as Director of Military Aeronautics on 6 Mar 1919, he fell into difficulties with his new boss, Maj Gen Charles Menoher, the chief of the newly formed Air Service (Futrell 15-19). Mitchell would continue his fight for a separate aviation department through congressional and executive hearings and through books like Our Air Force, published in 1921, in which he stated:

. . . the flying officers, who learned their work in the face of the enemy, are gradually being taken over by officers of superior rank put into the air forces from other branches of the army, such as the Infantry, Cavalry, and Field Artillery, and from the Navy, who know nothing to start with about aviation, and who will never be capable of learning it in the same way as those who have served during the War (Mitchell 1 (xix). Also see Holmes (24) and McClendon (50-70).

Having been isolated by Menoher, who made Mitchell his assistant with little to do, Mitchell challenged the Navy in testimony before Congress in January 1921 to permit a live bombing test of aircraft against battleships (Futrell 20, Dixon 2:5 and Wok 7). After the July tests succeeded, Mitchell's report to Menoher called for the organization of a Department of National Defense with coequal Army, Navy and Air Force elements. When Menoher would not make the report public, it was leaked to the press. When Menoher told the Secretary of War that it was a choice of Menoher or Mitchell, Menoher was replaced by Maj Gen Mason Patrick on 5 Oct 21 (Futrell 21). Mitchell remained before the public during the Lampert Committee investigations of the House of Representatives and in articles he wrote for the Saturday Evening Post in the winter of 1924-5 (Futrell 25). To preempt the Lampert Committee report, President Coolidge quickly formed his own board, headed by Dwight Morrow, which heard

similar witnesses (Futrell 27). In his book, Winged Defense, Mitchell once again called for radical changes:

1. There should be a Department of Aeronautics charged with the complete aeronautical defense and the aeronautical development of the country.
2. There should be an aeronautical personnel entirely apart from the Army and Navy.
3. There should be a Department of National Defense with sub-heads for the Air, Army and Navy.

It remains for Congress to translate these principles into law (Mitchell 2:xix).

While the Lampert board, as expected, backed Mitchell's idea, the President's Morrow board did not (Futrell 27-28). Having publicly asserted "incompetency, criminal negligence and almost treasonable administration of the national defense by the War and Navy departments," Mitchell was charged with conduct prejudicial to military discipline. His conviction and the two board reports were announced in December 1925 (Futrell 26, Hommes 30-39, Wolk 10-12, and Arnold 2:116-122). Mitchell resigned on 1 Feb 1926 (Dixon 2:5, Futrell 26).

Major Hap Arnold was also relieved of duty in Washington in 1926 for "attempting to influence legislation" (Copp 48-51, "Mission Accomplished"). In the intervening years, the tone of the debate cooled. Hap Arnold and Ira Eaker wrote a book called Winged Warfare in 1941 saying:

We are deeply indebted to that great organization, the United States Army, which we have served respectively for thirty-four and twenty-four years. We yield to none in honor of its traditions and accomplishments. We would take from it not one word of the praise it justly deserves for the tremendous work it has accomplished in the field of aviation. We yield to none in admiration of our great Navy, one of the finest organizations on earth, for its unmatched efficiency, and particularly for having created the finest fleet air arm in the world. The reader will find in this volume no sniping at these two primary and stout old arms of our nation's defense (XV).

The push for a separate Air Force was shelved for World War II, but as early as June 1945 Hap Arnold, now Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, wrote to his troops, "We stand now at the peak of our offensive power. . . . Those few men who can be spared will be returned to civilian life as rapidly as possible" (Arnold 3:back cover). These words would describe the dilemma facing the nation: how to continue American military dominance while returning the country to normal. The normalization process

was in full force shortly after the Japanese surrender with over \$15 billion in aircraft contracts cancelled (Hershey 1). Equally forceful were the cries for defense reorganization. Many carried the torch for aviation. In an editorial, Robert H. Wood of Aviation News said, "Never has it been more urgent for Congress to understand fully the role and value of air power, and the necessity to keep it with continued aeronautical research, development and production" (Wood 4). At the same time, Aviation News did not foresee a single department of defense: "Reason: politically infeasible. To form such a combine would mean that the strongly entrenched and tradition-wise congressional committees having jurisdiction over the Army and Navy would have to vote themselves out of existence." It also said, "As for the Naval Air Force. . . . It will take something more than a political atomic bomb to blast Naval Air from the Navy Department" ("Department of Defense").

The Navy Department agreed, stating in November 1945 its desire for a joint chiefs of staff consisting of the heads of the Army, the Army Air Force, the Navy and the Naval Air Force. It had no objection to an independent Air Force as long as that did not mean a single military department. Finally, the Navy wanted to keep the Marine Corps and its air forces as well as remain a cabinet-level department with direct access to the president (Wolk 37-38, "Navy Department Statement of Unification"). The new Air Force Association (AFA) would permit that position to be rebutted without direct involvement by the Army Air Forces. In January 1946, blessed by Arnold, the fledgling organization set up an office in Washington, D.C. under its president, Lt Gen Jimmy Doolittle. The official Army Air Forces journal carried an article and a back cover advertisement for AFA and arranged to turn over the magazine itself in July ("Air Forces Association," "The Air Force Association" and "Gen Doolittle").

The Navy made air power the principal weapon in its arsenal. In his report for 1945, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal said "The carrier is today the spearhead of the modern fleet just as the battleship was 25 years ago" (Hershey 2, Wolk 93-95). Adding a different view was Secretary of the Army Royall, who said in February 1946 that "separation at the top fosters separation all along the line, while unity at the top through the establishment of a single department for our armed forces will permit us to capitalize fully upon what we have learned" ("Spaatz Takes Over"). When he cited Eisenhower's and Arnold's support for his position, Gen Spaatz took pains to emphasize that Gen Arnold had not come out against a separate Air Force; rather, he had only preferred unification over a separate Air Force as the better of two good alternatives (Spaatz).

Taking up the cause in June 1946, Assistant Secretary of War for Air W. Stuart Symington supported the president's plan for unification, giving all land-based aircraft (including the Navy's

patrol, transport and antisubmarine assets) to the Air Force. When Symington said, "has the Navy any more right to land-based planes to protect its fleet than the Army and Air Forces have a right to build and operate carriers to protect its troops?" he publicly opened the rift with the Navy ("Final Unification Plan"). Adding to the furor, Spaatz and Maj Gen Curtis LeMay, commander of the B-29 force against Japan, told a Congressional committee that those B-29s were 13 times more capable than the Navy carrier task force it was assigned to protect ("Old Salts Sizzle," Lanier). This was the same time when the first photo of the giant XB-36 was published ("AAF's Largest Bomber"). Adding to the B-36's attraction was its relatively cheap cost in dollars and manpower when compared to a conventional force. President Truman pushed hard for a balanced budget, but had hoped to provide for a system of universal military training (Truman 31-37, 53-55, Manchester vl:501). When demobilization of the Army slowed, 20,000 soldiers in Manila demonstrated in January 1946 (Manchester vl 498-9). Sympathetic demonstrations of American soldiers spread around the world and coupled with congressional pressure, anything other than a small armed force was out of the question (Manchester: 496-502).

The two atomic tests at Bikini Atoll on 1 and 5 July prompted these words in the New York Herald Tribune: "Never again can ships of the fleet be assembled in a critical period as they were in Pearl Harbor" (Warner). Of the 67 aircraft airborne when the bomb fell, however, none were lost (Bangs 1). By contrast, many surface vessels, including two aircraft carriers, were battered or sunk (Bangs 2, Depart of State Bulletin, "Operation Crossroads," Daly). The inability of the Navy to decontaminate the Bikini vessels for at least a year after the tests was further bad news (Minifie, "Bikini Fleet"). The attractiveness of air-delivered nuclear weapons was such that Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire said that the total damage inflicted by the Army Air Forces during World War II could have been done with only 100 planes, each with an atomic bomb ("Bridges"). The XB-36 could not have debuted at a better time (8 Aug 1946), especially since it was credited with a 10,000 mile range ("Biggest Bomber Flies," Jacobson 5).

The Navy countered with a record long distance flight of its twin-engine Neptune patrol bomber. Using a rocket-assisted take-off and exceeding its maximum gross weight by almost 50%, The Truculent Turtle, piloted by Cmdr Thomas Davies, flew 11,260 miles from Perth, Australia to Columbus, Ohio on 1 October 1946. The achievement gave rise to Navy plans to make the Neptune an atomic bomb carrier, but the weight of the current weapon over 42,000 pounds, required an aircraft of at least 100,000 pounds. Such an aircraft greatly exceeded the landing capacity of the current aircraft carriers. The Army Air Forces countered by announcing on 7 Nov 1946 that the B-36 "could carry an atomic bomb to any inhabited region of the world and return home without

refueling in the event of an enemy attack (Kroger 1, Johnson 3, "B-36 Bomber Disclosed," Shrader).

Despite the demobilization pressures on the nation, Spaatz had called for a 400,000-man Air Force as the minimum necessary ("Spaatz Reorganizes"). By February 1947, however, the Army Air Forces announced its intention to cut its forces in Europe from 38,000 people and 950 planes to 9,000 people and 175 planes (Wood 8). The Republicans in Congress moved to cut \$6 billion from the defense budget, prompting Spaatz to predict that such a cut would reduce AAF strength by over 35% (Wood 2).

The Bureau of the Budget moved in April 1947 to resolve the question of who should own land-based air power by deleting the Navy's request for Neptune and Mercator patrol bombers ("No Money"). The Navy presented a study by Bernard Brodie which asserted that air defense technology is superior to long-range bombing, therefore, using undefended bombers on nuclear strikes would waste precious atomic weapons. Believing that the 5,000-mile missile was at least 25 years away, the Navy recommended a coordinated series of attacks on an enemy from carrier and submarine task forces, as well as from land-based forces within 500 miles of the objective. The AAF's response noted that the strategic bomber was the only vehicle proven to deliver atomic weapons and that the inherent advantage of the attacker combined with long range aircraft and missiles was the only means of carrying the war deep into enemy territory (Hotz 2).

The Navy's budget request, announced in May 1947, centered on aviation, with 22 carriers and 6,130 planes. Rear Admiral H. B. Sallada, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, said that jet aircraft had neither the reliability nor the range of conventionally-powered aircraft (Kroger 2). This was supplanted, at least in part, by a Navy Department announcement of 1 Jun 47 that it "considers it a waste of time, energy and money to content itself with refinements of existing weapons" ("Navy Reveals"). The AAF aircraft procurement request was cut by the House to fewer than those for the Navy (561 to 579), but its research request included money for a 3,000-mile drone, an air-launched missile with a 300-mile range and initial development of a 5,000 mile missile ("House Committee"). In June, the Senate added back 53 patrol bombers as both services agreed that submarine reconnaissance should be the Navy's job ("Senate Restores"). In a move reminiscent of the Lampert Committee/Morrow Board controversy, President Truman in July appointed an Air Policy Commission, beating to the punch Congressional leaders who would eventually appoint their own Aviation Policy Board ("Truman Board").

On 18 September 1947, when James V. Forrestal took the oath as Secretary of Defense, he began a policy of parity in

appropriations ("Budget Wrangle," "Forrestal's 3-Way Dollar," Wood 1, "Symington's Tip"). With the President determined to balance the budget, each service saw itself significantly short of necessities. This produced unavoidable conflicts. In The New York Times of 15 Nov 1947, Admiral W. H. Blandy called "fallacious" any theory that a war could be won against a powerful enemy in 24 hours by using an atomic bomb. He also said that the Bikini tests, which he had conducted, did not prove the Navy obsolete. Calling air transport "too expensive," he said "ground forces must be available to take and hold enemy territory. For the United States, whose only probable enemies lie overseas, sea transport. . . will continue to be necessary for the indefinite future" ("Navy Not Obsolete"). The Air Force countered by telling the President's Air Policy Commission in December 1947 that it needed 70 groups of aircraft in the active force, totalling 6,689 planes; as well as annual procurement of 3200 planes to both replace losses and rotate enough aircraft to maintain a 61-group Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. Symington said that such a program would sustain the aircraft industry without additional subsidy ("Air Force Seeks"). The depth of detail in the USAF testimony stunned both the press and the Navy, which had previously regarded such discussions as secret ("The Aviation Week," "Symington Surprises"). The stakes were high--the Air Force wanted \$6 billion, five times what it got the year before ("Congressional Sentiment").

Pending the results of the President's Air Policy Commission, the USAF announced in December its plans to buy 1150 aircraft, 75% of which were jet-propelled ("Air Force Orders"). The Navy announced in January 1948 its procurement of 1208 aircraft, only 5% jet-propelled ("Navy Orders"). The net result for the 1949 budget was a 35% increase for the Air Force and a 42% increase for naval aviation ("Big Increases"). The President's Air Policy Commission urged adoption in January of the Air Force 70-group program and estimated that the threat of atomic attack on the United States could occur anytime after 1 Jan 53. No further increase in Navy strength was endorsed unless the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended it (Finletter, "Bigger Air Force"). The Navy concentrated its budget efforts on descriptions like "sea-going air power is complementary to and not competitive with the USAF" and described carrier task forces as fire brigades to cool off hot spots. For the future, the Navy wanted carrier-based atomic bombers ("New Concept"). The Congressional Aviation Policy Board Report appeared in February 1948, favoring both the full Air Force and Navy programs for its "offensive" air power scheme, while blaming JCS and service rivalry for the failure to resolve defensive roles and missions (United States Congress, "Report on Air Policy," "Lack of Strategic Plan"). The Republican Congress favored increases in airpower over the Truman administration's push to revive both the draft and Universal Military Training ("Congress Forcing").

The Key West Conference of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late March attempted to resolve the roles and missions dispute, but except for rumors of an 80,000 ton carrier, there wasn't much resolution ("Congress Forcing," "Navy Reveals New Air Program," "Something for Everybody"). The AFA featured a blistering editorial against the carrier and large carrier-based bombers in its April issue (Straubel 1). Forrestal attempted to back the President's program by calling for a budget which increased the Army's share by 44%, the Navy by 16% and the Air Force by 10% (55 groups). He also tried to keep the disagreements among the services quiet by forbidding public comment on departmental matters ("Fight"). The services would have none of it (Eisenhower). Under questioning Symington and Spaatz emphasized that the 70-group program was the minimum for national defense and that industry would supply the planes as soon as money was available ("Fight"). Symington said on 13 April ". . . we know we have the greatest navy in the world, greater than all the other navies in the world put together" (Wood 6). The announcement of air refueling techniques for SAC's B-29s gave further credence to the USAF claim to round trip bombing of Russia if necessary ("Fight," "B-29s," Hotz 1).

Congress began in April 1948 to center around the Air Force position. Senator Burnet Maybank of South Carolina said "Balanced military strength does not mean that the Army and Navy have to be given a dollar apiece every time another dollar is added to the Air Force budget ("Congress Still Battling"). More important, longtime Navy backer Representative Carl Vinson of Georgia lined up behind the Air Force ("Navy Loses Vinson"). A visit by Vinson to Forrestal at the Pentagon did not change either man's mind, and the House voted 343 to 3 to give the Air Force its 70 groups ("Forrestal Fails," "New Air Force Test"). Vinson commented,

We must accept serious numerical inferiority to Russia in ground forces, at least at the start of any conflict. . . . In surface forces, Russia is not at present a threat. In sub-surface forces there [is] call for appropriate countermeasures. . . . It is in the air that we are capable of competing with Russians and they are capable of competing with us. . . . In the event of a war, it is the Air Force which will be first into action. . . ("New Air Force Test").

In late April 1948, Forrestal tried to compromise by suggesting 11 more groups for the Air Force using planes from storage ("Congress Scores"). The Navy announced in May plans to add new and used aircraft to bring its strength up to 14,500 planes, requiring 3300 new aircraft per year to meet attrition and modernization (Hotz 6). In May, Congress approved 2727 aircraft for the Air Force, almost three times what the President's budget had originally requested ("New Funds," Hotz

10). The Navy replied by diverting \$300 million from guided missile ship construction to build a prototype 65,000 ton carrier; 20,000 tons larger than the current leader, Midway. The most notable feature, a flush flight deck, would allow very large aircraft to land on the 190-foot wide platform; giving the Navy the ability to operate bombers almost 4 times bigger than those it presently had ("Navy Plans," Hotz 10). When Admiral Louis Denfeld, Chief of Naval Operations, told Congress that the JCS (whose decisions had to be unanimous at that time) had approved the carrier, Spaatz told newsmen that he did not agree and thought that a carrier couldn't successfully attack a defended land target ("Carrier War"). Truman responded to Congressional increases for the Air Force by both cutting USAF operations and maintenance request and hinting that he wouldn't spend the increase anyway ("Size of the Air Force"). The result of the President's action was to make aviation a campaign issue ("Report on Procurement," "Keynote Blast").

The Navy attempted to counterattack, blocking Air Force attempts to make details public of both Capt Chuck Yeager's supersonic flight and the XF-86's ability to do the same. The Navy also used its reserve officers to spread stories favorable to the naval perspective ("An Old Story," Wood 7). Even retired Admiral Ernest King, partially disabled by a stroke, blasted the ineffectiveness of AAF B-17s involved at Midway ("Admiral King," "An Old Story," Buell 508). The Berlin Airlift, beginning in late June, temporarily drew both services' attention back to business. Sixty additional B-29s deployed to England and flew missions as far away as Saudi Arabia. Sixteen F-80s flew from Michigan to Bavaria and an additional 75 deployed aboard a Navy carrier to augment European forces ("Berlin Airlift," Hotz 13, Symington 2).

In September, however, the Navy began to beat the drum for both the 14,500 aircraft fleet and a supercarrier ("Navy Now Expanding," "Navy's 14,500 Planes"). It awarded the carrier contract to a company in Newport News, Virginia on 8 Aug 48 ("Super-Carrier Contract"). Not available until 1955, the supercarrier was competing with the B-36 which had already flown for over two years ("Navy Reveals New Night Fighter"). In the late summer, the Air Force had tested the B-36 on missions as long as 8,000 miles with a bomb load of 25,000 pounds at altitudes exceeding 37,000 feet, eluding jet interception ("Industry Observer" 1,2, Hotz 8). The bomber had also been supported by extensive base construction in Maine, Ohio, Florida, South Dakota, Alaska, Okinawa, The Philippines, Iceland, Newfoundland, and Greece. The hangars proved to be the pacing factor ("Air Base," "Air Force Building," "Army Bomber"). It had also overcome skepticism from inside the Air Force and from those like Hanson W. Baldwin, The New York Times' military correspondent and a former Naval Academy Alumni Association

president, who felt the plane could not be economically built (Baldwin, Fadool 43-44, Hotz 8).

At the National Aviation Clinic in Detroit during October 1948, Rear Adm E. A. Cruise blasted the idea "that the complete solution to our nation's security is in some magic device or worse still, by accepting capabilities for our existing weapons which are figments of the imagination." He also said his talk had been approved in Washington (McSurely). Admiral John W. Reeves, Jr. said on 21 Nov 48:

There are situations in which a fast carrier task force . . . might be the only weapon. . . . Undoubtedly an atom bomb hit on a carrier could sink it or make it unusable. Similarly, one atom bomb hit on an air base could make it unusable for. . . your lifetime. . . , and a land base is easier to hit ("Navy's 14,500 Planes").

President Truman's reelection, along with the election of a Democratic Congress, gave new life to the \$15 billion limit on defense. The choice between the supercarrier and the B-36 would have to be made ("Battle of the Budget," "New Prospects"). The Navy tried to get interested in a plane-submarine combination, but that was even further from construction than the supercarrier (Hotz 9). In the meantime, Cmdr Davies of 'Truculent Turtle' fame, flew a Neptune off the Coral Sea using auxiliary rockets, to demonstrate what existing carriers were capable of ("Navy's Biggest"). AFA Chairman Doolittle blasted the Navy for keeping its own aviation, "a wasteful extravagance" (Doolittle, "Air Force Strategy"). In an effort to kill the 70-group legislation, Forrestal ordered all proposed bills to go through his office before they went to Congress ("Air Force Fight"). The Hoover Commission on Government Reorganization's task force on national defense was chaired by Ferdinand Eberstadt, who helped draft The National Security Act of 1947 and was vice-president of The Navy League, proposed in December that the Secretary of Defense's authority be increased, including appointing a chairman of the JCS and strengthening his control over the defense budget ("Hoover," "Shooting the Breeze").

Both services were disappointed in January when the President's budget was submitted. The Air Force was cut to 48 groups/\$4.6 billion and the Navy got an equal amount. Forrestal warned them not to provide any other information on aircraft procurement. Truman said that the number of groups was misleading and that numbers of planes was a better yardstick. Symington used a statement written the previous summer and released the day before the President's budget to disagree, emphasizing the essential nature of 70 combat groups to air supremacy by 1952 (Hotz 14, "Symington Says:"). AFA followed in the February Air Force with a lead article entitled, "The Case Against Flat-Top" (Straubel 1), pointing out the vulnerability of

carriers, the perfidy of admirals and the expense of carrier aviation (Straubel 1). The Navy named its supercarrier USS United States on 3 Feb 49 ("U.S.S. United States").

Rep Vinson, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, moved to boost Air Force funds and hold the Navy to the Truman request, cutting the latter's procurement by 315 aircraft and halving its total inventory. With costs for the United States rising, and absent a firm idea of what aircraft it wanted to equip her with, the Navy's prospects looked bleak ("How Congress Plans"). Even a move by the Navy in February to cut carriers, aircraft and bases prompted comments from members of Congress like these of Sen Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming: "We've already got the biggest Navy in the world. As long as we keep up to snuff on antisubmarine warfare, I don't think we have to worry" ("Congress May Settle").

As noted, the B-36 had already survived in the budget for two years. Given its long range, large capacity, high ceiling and solid production rate (one per week), the B-36 appeared to be an attractive way to concentrate scarce atomic, logistics and personnel resources (Pincus, "Industry Observer" 4 and 5, "B-36," "USAF in Evolutionary Period"). Its high wing loading, combined with its enormous prop wash, gave it the edge over the fighters of the day, whose armament (machine guns and cannon) and power plants lacked the ability to reach the B-36 at its operating altitude (with 4 jet engines, above 50,000 feet) (Johnson 5, 10-12, Knaack 11-173, Swanborough & Bowers passim, Heinemann & Rausa 163-198, Gunston 174-5, 378-9, Wagner 280-509, "Industry Observer" 3). Nonetheless, with the budget stakes high and the true service ceiling unmentioned by anyone, the B-36 was labeled a "sitting duck" in what Symington called the "best hatchet job I have ever seen in Washington" ("Hatchet Job"). Forrestal urged newsmen to discount claims made for new weapons during early development, including both the B-36 and the supercarrier ("Forrestal Asks"). Symington and Spaatz's replacement, Gen Hoyt S. Vandenberg, made speeches backing the bomber and in mid-February 1949 treated the President and Congress to an airshow capped by a flyby of 16 B-36s ("Super Show"). The AFA weighed in with a March article on how good the aircraft was ("Exposing the Milk Wagon"). The same issue featured B-29 pictures of carriers in the Gulf of Alaska around a quote of Vice Admiral Gerald Bogan, "I don't know how a B-29 could have seen us, much less knocked us out. . . ("I Don't Know"). In March, the Air Force announced the addition of four turbojet engines to improve B-36 performance and altitude (Hotz 3). Two weeks after a round the world flight of a B-50 using aerial refueling on 28 Feb 49, the Air Force sent a B-36 on a 9600 mile mission, lasting 43 hours. Dropping 10,000 pounds of bombs enroute, it landed with two hours of fuel left plus its reserve (Jacobson and Wagner 11, "Globe Hop," "New B-36 Record").

The new Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, a former Assistant Secretary of War for Air, was appointed with Truman's general endorsement of increased powers for the office, including sole representation in the Cabinet and the National Security Council (The Tydings Act was signed in August) ("Johnson," "More Powers," "Johnson's Role," "The New Defense"). Johnson soon made USAF Gen Joseph McNarney his principal military advisor and restricted release of all information by the services to via his office alone ("Pentagon Posture," Hotz 4). The Air Force announced plans to buy 36 more B-36s and the House Appropriations Committee failed to add any additional money for naval air, cutting 3 large carriers from the fleet ("Navy Even," "More B-36s"). The Navy laid the keel for the United States even as the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Clarence Cannon, said "Only land-based bombers could reach Moscow with a lethal charge. . . . Why should we waste vast sums. . . on naval planes. . . limited to a range of. . . 700 miles at the most. Navy flat tops in the Baltic and Mediterranean could not possibly survive" ("Cannon States Case," "Super Carrier"). On 23 Apr 49, Johnson cancelled the United States, but he did so without consulting either Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan or Chief of Naval Operations Denfeld. Sullivan resigned ("Carrier Off").

On 2 May 49, Vandenberg told the American Legion that the B-36 was a "capable performer" while saying "it is by no means the solution to all our security problems. The Air Force has never held that this airplane is a suitable basket for all our eggs" ("Air Groups"). The Navy sought a direct challenge to the bomber. In a press conference on 16 May, they asked for practice intercepts of the B-36 using the Navy stable of fighters ("Fighter Designers," "Navy's Needle"). Vinson endorsed such a test ("USAF, Navy," Wood 7). At the same time that the supercarrier was losing supporters on Capitol Hill, rumors of a probe on aircraft procurement began to appear, linking Convair, makers of the B-36, with Johnson, a director of Convair until he became Secretary of Defense and Symington, who had favored mergers of aircraft companies as a way to make them more financially robust. Convair and Northrop, makers of the B-35 and B-49 Flying Wings, had explored such a merger, and a contract by which Convair would produce many Flying Wings was abruptly cancelled by the Air Force ("Probe Rumors," "Carrier Battle," "Buying Probe," Anderson 91-113).

Representative James E. Van Zandt, a Captain in the Naval Reserve, had actively pushed for the test of the B-36 against the Navy's best fighter, the Banshee ("USAF, Navy," "Probe Maneuvers"). In late May, he publicly charged Floyd Odlum, Chairman of Convair, Johnson and Symington with collusion to bias the procurement of the B-36; and Symington alone with misconduct related to Air Force renegotiation of contracts after he left Emerson Electric Co. Van Zandt also quoted anonymous sources who

asserted that the late Secretary Forrestal had opposed the handling of the jet modification to the B-36 ("B-36 Procurement"). Instead of the special committee Van Zandt had proposed, Vinson chaired an investigation of both the supercarrier and the B-36 and cancelled the B-36 versus Banshee test ("Probe Maneuvers," Symington 1, "B-36 Probe Widens," "Air Strategy").

Johnson rescinded the Forrestal "gag rule," prohibiting comment by the individual services on departmental matters, as the Air Force announced its plans for 80 more B-36s in the 1950 budget ("Gag Withdrawn?" "Convair Problem"); but in late June, Johnson announced his support for Truman's original Air Force budget of \$4.6 billion ("Air Force Faces"). The Navy's inability to clearly articulate what the supercarrier was or how it would be used, cost it public support, particularly with three-fourths of US veterans having served in the AAF or Army (Eller, "Crisis in Naval"). The Navy responded by scuttling its plans for an aircraft of 100,000 pounds gross weight in favor of what would eventually develop into the 70,000 pound Skywarrior ("Navy Studies," Heinemann and Rausa: 201-7). While Van Zandt raised questions of inertia on the part of Vinson, among others, and censorship on the part of Johnson, the latter tried to mend fences with an article endorsing carrier aviation as an integral part of the Navy ("Johnson Supports," "B-36 Probe," "Gag Issue").

The hearing got underway in August. Maj Gen Federic Smith, Deputy Director of Programs, tracing the B-36's history, described the B-36 as superior to its competition in range and better than each competitor in individual ways. The Air Force cited Soviet aggression in the Berlin Blockade, excellent B-36 performance in test and use of a performance envelope rather than top/bottom speed figures as reasons for its selection. Smith completed his remarks by outlining internal opposition to the B-36 during its development and the history of USAF involvement with Convair. Robert Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air during 1941-5, testified that the B-36 won its design competition in August 1941, well before either the current or previous owners of Convair took over. Lovett went on to say that at the time, there was little hope of bombing Japan from China or island bases (Hotz 15). As the hearings continued, the Air Force revealed that B-36s equipped with jets had flown over 435 mph at 50,000 feet and over 10,000 miles with a bomb load of 10,000 pounds. When confronted by Symington to produce his evidence, "Van Zandt admitted he had nothing but newspaper clippings and a nine page anonymous letter" (Hotz 7).

The author soon revealed himself. Cedric Worth, special assistant to Undersecretary of the Navy Dan Kimball, wrote the document using material gathered from Glenn Martin, the aircraft manufacturer; an officer on the CNO staff and Cmdr Tom Davies, the pilot of The Truculent Turtle. Along with Vice Admiral

Arthur Radford and Capt Arleigh Burke, Davies sat next to the witness stand at the Vinson hearings ("Letter Writer," "Audience Brass"). Vinson exonerated the Air Force, saying "not one iota, not one scintilla of evidence" had been unearthed. Van Zandt conceded his charges were without foundation. Worth was suspended from his job but expanded on the role of Davies in preparing the memo. "Worth also testified that he had given information for articles to Hanson W. Baldwin, New York Times military commentator" and others. The committee announced its intent to investigate the Worth affair in October (Hotz 11). The Navy announced a court of inquiry to determine who besides Worth was involved in the memo ("Court of Inquiry 1," "Navy's B-36").

In mid-September 1949, Navy Capt John G. Crommelin, then assigned to the Joint Staff was called before the court of inquiry which recessed before hearing him. Crommelin, who had testified in House hearings in 1947 that "if there is to be a separate Air Force, naval aviation should go along with Army aviation," now released his statement to the press charging a conspiracy to destroy naval aviation and, "endowed with the stupendous bureaucracy of the Pentagon and a colossal propaganda machine financed by the taxpayers and indoctrinated under a General Staff with a two to one vote in the Joint Chiefs of Staff could. . . absolutely destroy the system of checks and balances in the Defense Establishment" ("Capt Crommelin's Statement," "Court of Inquiry 2"). Also saying, "the Navy's fighting spirit is going to pot and I can't stand it any longer," Crommelin asked for "another congressional investigation, even at the risk of his career." Crommelin was quickly hailed by Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey and other flag officers ("Capt Crommelin's Statement," "Navy Inquiry," "Airpower"). Vandenberg immediately ordered his people to keep quiet ("Air Force Order"). Denfeld and Secretary of the Navy Francis Matthews transferred Crommelin to the CNO's staff and recommended that views on the issues Crommelin raised be sent through channels ("Court of Inquiry" 2). On 4 Oct 49, Crommelin admitted he had released to the press a letter classified confidential from Vice Admiral Gerald F. Bogan charging that Navy morale had sunk "almost to despondency" ("Texts of Documents"). Crommelin was suspended from active duty and the Navy announced that charges would be drawn up against him ("Navy Unrest").

While Symington again said "There should be a joint military team of land-sea-and-air"; Admiral Arthur Radford, Commander in Chief US Pacific Fleet, would have none of it (Wood 3, "Admiral Arthur W. Radford," Findley). In testimony, Radford said that the B-36 was a "billion dollar blunder" forced on Secretary of Defense Forrestal and that the Air Force withheld information on the B-36 from the Navy. He also charged that the Air Force's concentration on strategic bombing forced it to neglect its fighter and tactical support development, saying that the "main weakness of the German Air Force was its failure to develop

superior fighters." Asserting that the Air Force wanted to eliminate naval aviation and that the mass strategic bombing of World War II was immoral, he also said "We must realize that the threat of instant atomic retaliation will not prevent [war], and may even invite it." Under questioning by members of the House Armed Services Committee, Radford recommended the B-47 or the B-49 as better choices than the B-36. Rear Admiral Ralph Oftsie, Naval member of the US Strategic Bombing Survey, said the Navy believes "strategic bombing as practiced in the past is both militarily unsound and morally wrong." Most of the other Navy witnesses divided into two groups: those who said that Navy fighters could shoot down unescorted B-36s and those who felt that carrier aviation was a useful tool in the nation's arsenal (Hotz 5, "Report Urges," "Admiral Arthur W. Radford," "Policies," "Statements").

Symington replied in testimony that Oftsie's statement was similar to an anonymous attack on strategic bombing sent to several hundred newspapermen by James C. Stahlman of the Nashville Banner, who was also a Naval Reserve Captain ("The Editors"). Stahlman denied any service involvement. Symington also said that the B-36 program would cost less than \$1 billion when complete, and in any case was only one and one-fourth percent of the Defense outlays in fiscal 1949-51. He denied any improper action on B-36 procurement or that neither the Navy nor Forrestal knew the Air Force wanted more B-36s. Symington went on to deny that the Air Force had neglected other types of aircraft in favor of the B-36. Vandenberg strongly endorsed both the long range atomic deterrent and carrier aviation and described his opposition to the supercarrier as motivated by such a vessel's lack of mission. General Omar Bradley also made his famous statement on service cooperation:

. . . [Pearl Harbor], and the subsequent lessons we learned, day by day, until September 1945, should have taught all military men that our military forces are one team--in the game to win regardless of who carries the ball. This is no time for fancy dans who won't hit the line with all they have on every play, unless they can call the signals. Each player on this team--whether he shines in the spotlight of the backfield or eats dirt in the line--must be an All-American ("Texts in Service," "Air and Army," "Symington Counterattacks").

Navy sentiments displayed during the hearings had been already displayed, at least in part, in the pages of US Naval Institute Proceedings at least a year earlier (Lanier, Moran, Vogel). Denfeld, who had earlier deplored Crommelin's actions and supported both strategic bombing and B-36 purchases, now saw his position as either backing his people or the administration ("Texts in Service Hearings," "Symington Counterattacks"). He chose the former in a public statement to the committee and

Matthews and Truman relieved him on 20 Oct 49 in favor of Admiral Forrest Sherman ("Admiral Denfeld Loses Post," "Admiral Sherman"). Sherman's first act was to disband the CNO staff division, headed by Capt Arleigh Burke, which had helped prepare Navy testimony ("Op-23 Disbanded").

When the House Armed Services Committee adjourned in October 49, it gave the Air Force, the B-36, unification and joint strategy a clean bill of health. Vinson specifically endorsed Johnson's cancellation of the supercarrier ("Secretary Johnson," "Johnson's Air"). The B-36 versus Banshee comparison was deferred to mathematical analysis ("Evaluation," "B-36 vs Banshee"). Truman continued his opposition to more than 48 groups for the Air Force (Hotz 12). Johnson announced further cuts in both Air Force and Navy strength ("Navy to Cut," "Planes USAF"). Symington was nominated in Apr 50 to chair the National Security Resources Board and Thomas Finletter, who chaired the President's Air Policy Board in 1948, was named to replace him ("Finletter Named," Wood 9). After the Korean War broke out, Truman decided to double military aircraft production and, tagged as the culprit in reducing defenses, Johnson resigned on 12 Sep 50 in favor of General of the Army George Marshall ("Industry to Double," "Turnover"). The war also gave CNO Sherman the chance to note that carriers were "artillery of great mobility. . . . You can move a plane fast, but not its base" ("Carriers," Jussup). The success of the B-36 was epitomized by the 4 Sep 50 cover story of Time, which featured Lt Gen Curtis LeMay flanked by 4 B-36s with the caption: "For the Sunday punch, a daily windup" ("Background").

Crommelin and other Navy principals have been portrayed as victims or heroes:

Captain Crommelin was forced into retirement, along with supporters Vice Admirals William H. P. Blandy, Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Fleet, and Gerald F. Bogan, Commander First Task Fleet, Pacific Fleet, both of whom had agreed that Navy morale had reached rock bottom. Admiral Denfeld was removed as CNO a week after the hearings and only the personal intervention of President Harry S. Truman in Captain Burke's behalf thwarted subsequent attempts to block his promotion to rear admiral (Schratz 67).

This statement is similar to one Crommelin made in February 1950:

[Crommelin] charged that Admiral W. H. P. Blandy, recently retired as Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet; Vice Adm. Gerald Bogan, also recently retired; Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, who retires next week; and Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, had all been 'exiled' and 'sent far away

from the secret Pentagon chambers' ("Capt Crommelin Speaks Out").

That statement is similar to views expressed in the Senate by Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Marine Corps veteran in the Pacific, in January 1950 ("Denfeld Commission," 554). Admiral Denfeld was invited to remain in the Navy at another four-star post but after a three-month leave chose to retire instead, effective 1 Mar 50 ("Admiral Connolly Offered," "Adm Sherman, Adm Connolly to USNA," "Adm Louis E. Denfeld," "Adm Denfeld Leaves Navy"). Denfeld, labeled a martyr on his departure, wrote a series of articles for Collier's giving his view of the controversy ("Admiral Denfeld 'Martyr,'" "Adm Denfeld Strikes Back," "Adm Denfeld Deplores"). In July 1950, Denfeld announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination for Governor of Massachusetts ("Adm Denfeld Seeks Office"). He did not get the nomination (Hanson 88). Adm Bogan, whose letter, released to the press by Crommelin, led to Denfeld's fall; was relieved as Commander, First Task Fleet, US Pacific Fleet on 7 Jan 50 after telling the press that Navy officers could not expect loyalty from Secretary Matthews ("Adm Bogan to Retire," "Admiral Bogan Relieved"). Declining his assignment, he told a group in San Diego, "I hope the Republican party and the Navy will see better times" ("Admiral Bogan Relieved").

Admiral Blandy had, in fact, disagreed with Radford's and Oftsie's view that WWII strategic bombing had been immoral.

Blandy said the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey report 'shows clearly that this form of attack had a very great effect on German's oil and steel industries, and her transportation plus a marked effect on her general national economy and the morale of her people.'

Blandy said however that British 'area bombing' by night was 'quite ineffective' and that no strategic bombing was effective until long-range escort fighters and very large numbers of bombers were available ("Symington Counter-Attacks": 14).

His retirement announcement and related stories in the press made no mention of any connection, positive or adverse, with the B-36 controversy ("CINC Lant Retires," "Flag Officer," "Praise Admiral Blandy," "Admiral Blandy 'Applauded'"). There appears to have been an effort to remove Captain Burke's name from the list of those promoted to rear admiral in December 1949 ("Denfeld Commission," "Navy Admirals," "Burke to Flag Rank"). Burke finished his distinguished career in 1961 as Chief of Naval Operations. Admiral Radford completed his service as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1957 (Schoenebaum 79-80, 492-3).

In October 1949, Matthews allowed Crommelin to accept an invitation to speak at an Armistice Day celebration in his hometown; Montgomery, Alabama ("Invite," "Capt Crommelin's Statement"). Advised by Admiral Denfeld in late October that he could submit a written explanation of his conduct in releasing the classified Bogan letter, Crommelin did so ("Captain Crommelin Explains"). New CNO Sherman told Crommelin that he could appear as scheduled in Montgomery, but told him he would be held responsible for what he said. Sherman found Crommelin's written explanation of his previous conduct unsatisfactory and gave Crommelin a letter of reprimand and an assignment to the Western Sea Frontier in November 49 ("Reprimand Capt Crommelin"). In the Armistice Day speech, Crommelin said "There is no place in this democracy of ours for a 'yes man.' . . . We in America live and work under a highly intelligent democratic code which does not confuse lip service with discipline, as do all totalitarian states" ("No Place"). Crommelin then wrote Sherman asking that his reprimand, which had been made public, either be revoked or that he be given a General Court Martial. Sherman declined to do either ("Crommelin Case Closed"). When asked by the press in December 1949 why he hadn't dismissed Crommelin, "Sherman replied that he had known Crommelin for many years--they had both had their ships shot out from under them--that he had high regard for Captain Crommelin's achievements in the past and had confidence in his future achievements" ("Press Hears"). Stationed in California in February 1950, Crommelin announced to the press that he had been ordered to refrain from any further criticism of the Defense Department. Crommelin

added that he was ready to 'stand up and be counted' among those opposed to 'Prussian Pentagon policies,' which he termed 'undemocratic and alien.' These policies, he said, 'are masquerading in the Pentagon under the Holy name of unification. We have anything but cooperation as our national defense setup now stands ("Capt Crommelin Speaks Out").

Matthews then ordered Crommelin to half-pay furlough status effective 1 Apr 50 ("Furlough Capt. Crommelin"). Crommelin then made plans to enter the Senate race in Alabama ("Crommelin Eyes Senate"). In May 1950, the court of inquiry convened in August the year before cleared all offices involved in the Worth case, including Crommelin. Worth, who was blamed, had already departed and the board recommended no further disciplinary action against him ("End of Cedric Worth Case"). Crommelin requested retirement effective 1 June 50 to campaign in Alabama. Matthews approved his retirement in the grade of Rear Admiral in light of his outstanding combat record ("Captain Crommelin May Be Admiral," "Crommelin Makes Rear Adm."). Crommelin challenged Alabama's senior Senator, Lister Hill; and lost; 125,534 to 38,477 ("Washington Roundup," Hanson: 86).

Lord Trenchard, father of the Royal Air Force, once said of Billy Mitchell: "[He] tried to convert his opponents by killing them first" (Copp:39). In the din that accompanied the cancellation of the supercarrier, rational discussion of options gave way to charges of conspiracy and incompetence. In the wake of the Japanese surrender, Hap Arnold had this to say:

No one arm, no one service, no one of the United Nations could or would claim the credit for what everyone must now realize was a vast and well-co-ordinated joint effort. It took, working together, all arms of the U.S. services, all services of our fighting, co-operating Allies, and the enormous industrial powers of the United States (Arnold 1:1387).

Those words have not lost their truth.

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