

**INTEGRATION OF US MARINE CORPS AVIATION WITH THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE IN FIRST WORLD WAR: LEGACY AND
IMPACT**

By

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A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

School of History and Cultures
College of Arts and Law
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16 April 2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the precarious early years in Marine Corps aviation, the difficulties between the Americans and British before, and during the First World War and the integration with the Royal Air Force—all to see the positive impact of the integration on the future of Marine aviation. In 1912, the first United States Marine was admitted as a student aviator at the Naval Aviation School in Annapolis, Maryland. Then-1st Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham sparked a movement within the seagoing service, a movement that he shepherded through the earliest days of military aviation into a small combat force that competently performed in the First World War and later solidified its existence through service in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. The Marine Corps' aviation component suffered through competition with their Navy brethren's desire to eliminate the whole Corps in the early twentieth century. Under Cunningham's leadership, the Marines arrived in France ready to perform antisubmarine warfare duty only to find themselves without the requisite aircraft. It was this unfortunate event that led to the Marines service with the Royal Air Force, which in turn provided the Marines with skills that were utilized again during the small wars era during the interwar period of 1920-1939.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those earliest aviators who willingly went aloft without parachutes, armor, brakes or fear, in machines made of canvas and wood held together with glue and wires.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my sister Cheryl—who had to put up with the stacks of books, and papers that migrated around our apartment and cluttered up the joint and of course, for simply dealing with me on a regular basis. My professional colleagues, and personal friends at work should not be forgotten—Laura, Paul, Angela, Nick, Ed, Mary Ann, Major John “Jack” Elliott, USMC (retired) and Jim Donovan (deceased).

Research is not done in a vacuum and the able skills of fellow historians, archivists and librarians helped me beyond words: Mark Evans (Naval History and Heritage Command), Cindy Evans (Library of the Marine Corps), Alisa Whitley and Chris Ellis (Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division), Mark Mollan (National Archives and Records Administration-DC), Peter Elliott (Royal Air Force Museum), Eric Voelz and Theresa Fitzgerald (National Archives and Records Administration-St Louis), Robert Benoit (deceased), Pati Threatt and Kathie Bordelon both of McNeese State University Archives in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Financial backers cannot be forgotten—the generous folks at the Royal Air Force Museum, and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. Lastly, but certainly not least, thank you to Peter Gray and James Pugh for their patience, support and wisdom.

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**INTRODUCTION:
INTEGRATION OF US MARINE CORPS AVIATION WITH BRITISH ROYAL
AIR FORCE DURING FIRST WORLD WAR**

When the American Congress declared war against Germany on 6 April 1917, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) consisted of just 462 commissioned officers, 49 warrant officers and 13,214 enlisted men.¹ While the United States Marine Corps did have trained pilots and mechanics in 1917, the whole of the section on 6 April 1917 consisted of just five officers and thirty enlisted men, and the Corps had sent its first Marine for aviation training just five years prior.² To say Marine Corps aviation was in its infancy is an understatement indeed. However, more than thirty years later, Marine Corps aviation was robust, experienced, and well-equipped with men and capable aircraft such as the Vought F4U-4 ‘Corsair’ and the Grumman F4F ‘Wildcat’ that assisted the infantry forces to march across the Pacific and defeat the Japanese forces.

This transformation is rooted in the experiences of the earliest Marine aviators in the First World War when they arrived in France in the Summer of 1918 without aircraft and equipment. Despite the anti-amalgamation commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, General John J. Pershing, Naval—and Marine—aviation were quickly incorporated into the Royal Air Force (RAF) squadrons where they were given practical training and on-the-job experience in aerial combat, antisubmarine warfare, and what is known today as close air support. It is asserted that if not for the amalgamation of these Marines by the British, Marine Corps aviation would have languished during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s as it may have been viewed as a failed experiment; instead, those aviators who remained on active duty through this period, took their experiences with the British and

¹ Edwin N. McClellan. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1920), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 124.

applied them to operations during the ‘Small Wars’ in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, as well as China.

To explore this thesis, the origins of US Marine Corps and Navy aviation must be examined. In addition, the cooperation, or lack thereof, between the Americans and the British had an impact on the relations of the men within the operational squadrons stationed in France. Further, how Marines and their aircraft made it to France must also be examined before the events of the amalgamated squadrons can be discussed. The experiences of the US Marines while in service with the RAF left an indelible mark on the Marine Corps. Those experiences were passed down to the newer generations during the Interwar Period (1920s–1930s) and subsequently the Second World War. The few veteran Marines of the First World War who remained in the service took their hard earned lessons and passed them to the next generation and this will be explored herein.

The Literature

United States Navy and Marine Corps Aviation

To understand the context of the relations between the USMC and the RAF, it is imperative to know how the Marines and the Navy came to create Naval Aviation in the United States. In late 1930, Major Edwin McClellan was stationed at Headquarters Marine Corps as the only Marine Corps historian. He was a prolific writer, producing many articles for *Marine Corps Gazette* covering all aspects of the Corps’ history, including aviation. Also stationed at Headquarters was Major Alfred A. Cunningham, and the two Marines corresponded regarding the early days of aviation. McClellan’s article ‘The Birth and Infancy of Marine Aviation,’ published in May 1931, is detailed with information that Cunningham provided and yet is lacking from the official records.³ The history of Marine aviation is intertwined with that of the Navy, and one must first understand how Marine Corps aviation

³ Edwin N. McClellan, “The Birth and Infancy of Marine Aviation.” *Marine Corps Gazette* Vol 15, No 5, (May 1931): 11-13 and 43-44.

made its way on to the combat scene with the Navy, and how the Americans were accepted and treated by the more experienced British. Not a true separate armed service during the First World War, the Marine Corps was forced to procure aircraft and pilots from the US Navy; when Marine Corps aviation went to war, it did so under the US Navy. One would surmise that the Marine Corps, nearly one hundred years later, has produced an official history of either Marine aviation or the Marine Corps in the First World War, and despite the small publication of Major Edwin N. McClellan's *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (1920), no definitive official history of Marines or Marine aviation in the First World War has been published to date.⁴ The brief *Marine Aviation: The Early Years 1912–1940* (1977) by Edward C. Johnson, most remarkably glosses over the topic of integration into Naval aviation during the First World War.

Although without a formally recognized office or title, he [Alfred A. Cunningham] became de facto director of aviation for the Marine Corps. In 1917, he represented both Marine and naval aviation [sic] on the interservice board which selected sites for coastal air stations. He recruited men for Marine air units, sought missions for them to perform, and negotiated with the Navy, the Army, and eventually with the British for equipment and facilities.⁵

Johnson may not have delved into the particulars, but his citations yield excellent locations for finding those missing specifics of Cunningham's actions to get Marines to France. Johnson's use of the official records is admirable, however, he uses a significant amount of personal interviews decades after the facts, which leaves aging minds and memories to tell the tales.

Amateur historian, retired Marine, and veteran of the First World War, Roger Emmons was prolific in detailing the events and persons of the Marine Corps' aviation contribution to the war; however, even Emmons' material lacks any specifics regarding the integration of USMC aviation into the larger Naval aviation, and further lacks detailed

⁴ Edwin N. McClellan. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*.

⁵ Edward C. Johnson. *Marine Corps Aviation*, 11.

footnotes. Emmons' two-part articles in *Cross and Cockade Journal* 'The First Marine Aviation Force' mentions Cunningham's observation mission to France and subsequent report to the General Board, but does not give the details of Cunningham's recommendations.⁶ Of course being articles, which are short in nature, they lack sufficient space to provide much in the way of specifics. Emmons' second part of the article, which appeared in the following issue of the journal, ever so briefly introduces readers to the fact that Marines were assigned to squadrons of the Royal Air Force, starting in August 1918. It is true that Marines, in larger numbers, were flying with the British in August, however, Emmons completely overlooks those pilots who flew in June and July with the British and participated in combat actions over France.⁷ Emmons' articles are not supported by footnotes so readers are left to wonder if these are the tales remembered decades after the events, stories that have already been hashed-rehashed, or are actually based on official records. Emmons appears to be far more interested in the romanticized stories of the Marine flyers in France, likely due to his intended audience of other First World War aviation enthusiasts.

Noted military historian Graham Cosmas entered the foray into Marine Corps aviation with his 1977 article 'The Formative Years of Marine Corps Aviation, 1912–1939' in which, even he, minimizes the work put forth by Cunningham to ensure that Marines were in the air and the fight.

In these hectic months, Cunningham, newly promoted to captain and with no official position beyond command of the Aviation Company and personality de facto director of Marine Aviation. He persuaded Major General Barnett [Commandant of the Marine Corps] to enlarge the air arm; he recruited officers and men for it; and he negotiated with the Navy and the Army for aircraft, equipment and flying fields.⁸

Under the direction of Edwin H. Simmons, the Marine Corps Historical Program's published

⁶ Roger M. Emmons, "The First Marine Aviation Force," *Cross and Cockade Journal* (Summer 1965).

⁷ Roger M. Emmons, "The First Marine Aviation Force," *Cross and Cockade Journal* (Autumn 1965).

⁸ Graham Cosmas, ed. *Marine Flyer in France. The Diary of Captain Alfred A. Cunningham. November 1917–January 1918*. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1974), 85–86.

histories and other works took on an air of the 'heroic' style of writing; however, Cosmas' sources are sound and his brief history is well supported by those sources.

Further investigation into the histories produced by the US Navy has yielded several additional works produced; however, again no official history of significance or depth has yet been published by the armed service. *A History of US Naval Aviation* (1925) by Marine Captain W. H. Sitz is informative, but it too lacks any substantive details about integration. Given the opportunity to write a detailed history of how his fellow Marines were utilized in the air over France, Sitz relegated the Corps' participation in the Northern Bombing Group to a disappointing two-sides of a single page.⁹ Without footnotes or a bibliography, Sitz's brief history is left lacking any serious credibility.

Lastly, 'Combat Effectiveness: United States Marine Corps Aviation in the First World War' by Lieutenant Commander Michael J. Morris, which appeared in the fall 1997 issue of *Over the Front* has provided more details on the assignment of Marines to British Royal Air Force squadrons than all other material reviewed; even so, the information is limited due to the nature of the publication.¹⁰ With that said, the source material found in his footnotes is a rich source of material and review of this topic.

An interesting source for photographs not commonly seen, and little more regarding the history of Naval aviation, is *America's First War: The United States Army, Naval and Marine Air Services in the First World War* (2000) by naval historian Terry C. Treadwell.¹¹ The work, rightfully so, combines Marine Corps and Navy aviation together into a single chapter and again recounts the same tried and true stories of combat over France. Treadwell appears to dedicate far more time to the Army Air Service and the pre-war events in aviation

⁹ A. H. Sitz, *A History of US Naval Aviation*. (Washington, DC: Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, 1925).

¹⁰ Michael J. Morris, "Combat Effectiveness: United States Marine Corps Aviation in the First World War," *Over the Front* (Vol 12, No 3, Fall 1997).

¹¹ Terry C. Treadwell, *America's First Air War: The U.S. Army, Naval and Marine Air Services in the First World War*. (Shewsbury: Airline, 2000).

than the other services and provides only a brief overview of the United States' contribution to air power in the war.

While not an official history produced by the Navy or Marine Corps, naval biographer Archibald D. Turnbull and public historian Clifford L. Lord's *History of United States Naval Aviation* (1949) has yielded far more specifics and than all previous works mentioned. A significant number of pages detail the meetings that took place before war was declared, including establishing the Office of Naval Aviation under Captain Noble Irwin, and the British counterpart assigned to the United States.

Secretary of the Navy's order of March 7, 1918, made Irwin Director of Naval Aviation, enabling him to "draw enough water" in the administrative ocean of the Navy Department. Thus it became possible to hold well-organized weekly conferences with all the bureaus, and, as a means of stimulating inter-Allied cooperation, Flight Commander H. B. Hobbs, representing the Royal Air Force, could be invited to appear at the conferences in his official capacity.¹²

Marines are not neglected in this book—the reconnaissance mission of Marine Captain Bernard L. Smith to France is detailed as well as his findings; the events of the Marine pilots in the Azores conducting anti-submarine patrols are not omitted nor are the events to secure basing locations in Great Britain and France. The book offers the impression of the fatherly British watching over the inexperienced Americans.

It was from the ever-watchful British Admiralty that Sims got his first news, coupled with an inquiry as to this extensive planning for France while relatively little had been done about England. . . . It is safe to say that had conferences been held at the level of the high command . . . air bases in England and Ireland would have been chosen ahead of any bases in France, for supporting aerial operations against U-boats . . .¹³

Turnbull and Lord use exhaustive sources from official documents, board reports, and published histories—many of which are cited herein.

Another excellent work, which could contend for official status is the more recently

¹² Archibald D. Turnbull and Clifford L. Lord. *History of United States Naval Aviation*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 98.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 120.

published *Stalking the U-Boat: US Naval Aviation in Europe During World War I* (2010) by Geoffrey L. Rossano.¹⁴ Far more in depth and at the operational and strategic level of warfare, Rossano provides details not before seen in the area of aviation integration and uses the records and resources in depth to support his history. While Rossano does focus more heavily upon the US Navy over the Marines, what he does include regarding the Corps is far more than any previous publication. Rossano partnered with aviation historian Thomas Wildenberg to write *Striking the Hornets' Nest: Naval Aviation and the Origins of Strategic Bombing in World War I* (2015).¹⁵ While this subsequent work provides additional information related to the Corps' involvement with the RAF and its own missions in late 1918, very little new information is found and the citing of Rossano's previous book in the endnotes is frustrating for readers.

W. Atlee Edwards' article 'US Naval Air Force in Action 1917–1918' was written at the behest of Admiral William S. Sims, then editor of the periodical and former commander in Europe. Edwards starts off with a point that still resonates today.

It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that less is known of the activities of the U.S. Naval Air Force in action than any phase of America's efforts during the Great War. This is, doubtless, due to two reasons: first, the work was not spectacular and, secondly [sic], the Armistice intervened before our air program had fully matured. Almost without exception accounts of air operations have been written for popular consumption and have, therefore, concerned themselves principally with the romance of the air, . . . ignoring for the most part of the vast amount of preliminary work, the careful planning and the arduous training which made these aerial fighters and their heroic exploits possible."¹⁶

Regrettably, Edwards starts off strong but does not support his thesis with actual details of the 'preliminary work' or 'careful planning.' Instead, Edwards provides an overview of the actions of naval aviation, and the strength and distribution of German forces.

¹⁴ Official publication herein is defined as a publication researched and produced by historians of the government or military service.

¹⁵ Geoffrey L. Rossano and Thomas Wildenberg, *Striking the Hornets' Nest: Naval Aviation and the Origins of Strategic Bombing in World War I*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015).

¹⁶ W. Atlee Edwards, 'The U.S. Naval Air Force in Action 1917–1918,' *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* Vol 48, No 11 (November 1922): 1863.

However, Edwards recovers with a good overview of locations of air stations built, an extensive review of the submarine blight (Sims' influence is easily recognized in this portion of the article), and the efforts of the Northern Bombing Group. Additionally, Edwards details the events surrounding the reassignment of the Northern Bombing Group to the RAF's control.

Although the Northern Bombing Group was originally created to exterminate the submarines from the coast of Belgium it eventually wound up as part of the British Army in the great drive of 1918, but not until after it was offered to General Pershing and declined on the grounds that it could be used to greater advantage where it was an in conjunction with the British.'¹⁷

While not the thesis of the article, this line by Edwards leaves the reader wondering if Pershing was less inclined to take the naval aviators because of his bias against the naval service or because he actually thought they were better served by working with the British. Of course, as an article, room is limited and Edwards covered the salient points—most salient of all was that his patron, Admiral Sims, was seen in a positive light.

Overall, the literature produced about American Naval Aviation has continually lacked detailed information on the Marine Corps' participation, the accomplishments made and those who persons who were trained by the British and contributed to the war in the air. The likely cause for this omission of information is likely the small nature of the Marine Corps' overall contribution compared to that of the Navy, and thus overshadowing of the Corps' activities by its sister service.

While the focus remains on the integration of the United States' Naval Aviation into that of the British, one must examine the attitude and feeling of the British on the American Army Air Service and vice versa to get a fuller understanding. Unlike the Navy and Marine Corps, in 1978 the Army Air Service managed to produce an official history of its service in

¹⁷ Ibid., 1877.

the First World War.¹⁸ The four-volume history is quite detailed and provides excellent information on the feelings of the Americans toward the British. Air Force historian Maurer Maurer is quite frank about the lack of trained pilots, the lack of sufficient aircraft, and the issues of too many allied aircraft varieties. 'Facing the Air Service at all times was the newness of the aviation forces in the United States, the practical nonexistence there of mechanical training centers, the variety of types of foreign planes, airplanes, and tools with which our mechanics would have to deal, and the great amount of construction necessary in the American Expeditionary Force.'¹⁹ Maurer is also candid about the inferior support actually provided by the Americans to the British. Under the subheading of 'Our Debt to the Royal Air Force,' Maurer states:

The assistance given by the Royal Air Force to the Training Section of the Air Service was invaluable. While the contribution in completely trained pilots delivered to the American Service was small, the value of the training given to instructors in methods of instruction in flying, gunnery, bombardment, navigation, and night flying can not [sic] be overestimated. The British officers, furnished to the Training Section as instructors and advisers, performed in all cases the most valuable work. The price paid to the British by the American Air Service for the training of American pilots, and the assistance rendered them through American personnel in England and their use of American pilots in active service on their front, were by no means disproportionate to the benefits received.²⁰

Maurer's multi-volume work clearly holds up well over time. The history is solidly researched and the various appendices of each volume supplements the authors own words well.

The first work published on the Army Air Service was printed in 1919, authored by Arthur Sweetser.²¹ Journalist, statesman, and author, Sweetser's work was that of the everyman view of the First World War and later on the creation and functioning of the

¹⁸ Maurer Maurer, *The U.S. Air Service in World War I (Vol I-IV)*. (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1978).

¹⁹ Maurer, *The U.S. Air Service in World War I (Vol I)*, 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

²¹ Arthur Sweetser, *The American Air Service; A Record of its Problems, its Difficulties, its Failures, and its Final Achievements* (New York, London: D. Appleton and Co, 1919).

League of Nations. His foray into aviation seems slightly out of his normal body of work until one realizes his service during was not limited to reporting but in the uniform of the American Air Service. *American Air Service* is an excellent overview history of the Air Service, and Sweetser was easily aware of the French and British desires for American aid and how to entice the Americans into offering themselves as fuel for the fire. ‘Both Missions felt free to make a strong appeal for the Air Service, not only because the only Americans they had seen in action were the Lafayette Escadrille fliers, but even more because they sensed that the imaginative appeal of air fighting would prove the best basis for asking American aid without seeming to be endeavoring to push us into the maelstrom.’²²

European early air power and World War I historian John H. Morrow’s *The Great War in the Air* is far more comprehensive than that of Sweetser—Morrow had the luxury of time and distance from the events as well as access to the many records of the belligerent countries’ air services in order to produce his work. Written in a chronological format and focusing on each country for a given year, Morrow delved deep into many archives to come up with an excellent comprehensive history. Morrow clearly outlines and details the varied personalities and internal politics, which affected American aviation and how it fought in France.

At the front of the U.S. Air Service command was riven with internal rivalries, which the May (1918) appointment of Brig. Gen. Mason M. Patrick as chief to replace Gen. Benjamin Foulois did not resolve. Only when Col. Billy Mitchell became the top American air combat commander . . . did tensions ease.²³

Morrow hints at the integration of Americans and British but does not fully explore the relationship; as an example, at one point he states that Trenchard was Mitchell’s ‘mentor’ but does not explain how or in what way the relationship existed.²⁴ The sources listed in Morrow’s bibliography are excellent and detailed; certainly a gold mine for anyone

²² Ibid., 59.

²³ John H. Morrow, *The Great War in the Air* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 337.

²⁴ Ibid, 336.

researching the topic—sections delineate sources not only by type (primary, secondary, etc.) but also by country.

Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Flying Corps, and Royal Air Force

Starting with a review of the various official histories produced by the military historical offices of the United Kingdom published in the years after the war, one can see that these works have primarily focused on the creation of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and the combination of these organizations into the Royal Air Force, combat operations of squadrons, the individual pilots, and the airframes flown.

The six volume history *War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force* by Walter Raleigh and H. A. Jones spends very little time and energy on the details of how the Americans were integrated into British aviation, let alone any discussion of issues of integration.²⁵ While this history, produced by the Air Historical Branch, may lack any information on the American participation in the war, or any descriptions of training American pilots upon their arrival in France, it does cover major operations, policies, and creation of the Royal Flying Corps. Another source as valuable as Raleigh and Jones is *The Royal Air Force in the Great War* (1936) produced by the Air Historical Branch.²⁶ Again, as with Raleigh and Jones, the book has no mention of the Americans who were trained by the British; however, the work does provide plenty of details on the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service actions in the war and the subsequent merging of the two to create the Royal Air Force.

The commercially published histories such as *The Royal Flying Corps: A History* (Norris, 1965), *Flying Corps Headquarters* (Baring, 1968), *Fleet Air Arm* (Kemp, 1954), *Into*

²⁵ Walter Raleigh and H. A. Jones, *The War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force (Vol 1-6)*. (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1922-1937).

²⁶ Air Historical Branch, *The Royal Air Force in the Great War*. (London: Imperial War Museum, 1936).

Wind: A History of British Naval Flying (Popham, 1969) and *Birth of Independent Air Power* (Cooper, 1986) are good overview histories of the RNAS, RFC, and RAF and their policies—each work lacks any mention of Americans and their training or integration into the fight against the Germans and therefore are included as background sources only.²⁷ Included in this general overview is Goulter’s article ‘The Royal Naval Air Service; A Very Modern Force,’ which appeared in the edited *Air Power History: Turning Points from Kitty Hawk to Kosovo* (2002). Goulter, as with the others, leaves out any mention of American’s integration or training of their pilots. Each provides the basic history for British aviation in the First World War but does miss the opportunity to discuss American aviation that the British clearly aided in building.²⁸

John Abbatiello’s *Anti-Submarine Warfare in World War I: British Naval Aviation and the Defeat of the U-Boats* (2006) is a product of the author’s dissertation and is an excellent work on the antisubmarine warfare (ASW) campaign fought by the Royal Naval Air Service.²⁹ Abbatiello ensures that, while focused on the British war effort, the American contribution to the ASW campaign is not overlooked and additionally covers the future planning that had taken place in the event that the war had continued into 1919. ‘The key feature of the American involvement in bombing the Flanders bases was that they would continue the assault into 1919 *alone*. . . . The Admiralty welcomed the American contributions simply because it had no choice in the matter.’³⁰ Abbatiello’s history fills the gap of knowledge on the ASW mission and honestly debunks any myths surrounding the number of actual U-boats destroyed during the war.

²⁷ Geoffrey Norris, *The Royal Flying Corps: A History*. (London: Frederick Muller, Limited, 1965), Maurice Baring, *Flying Corps Headquarters, 1914-1918*. (Edinburgh, London: Blackwood, 1968), Hugh Popham, *Into the Wind: A History of British Naval Flying*. (London: Hamilton, 1969), and Malcolm Cooper, *The Birth of Independent Air Power: British Air Policy in the First World War*. (London: Allen & Irwin, 1986).

²⁸ Christina J. M. Goulter, “The Royal Naval Air Service: A Very Modern Force,” in *Air Power History: Turning Points from Kitty Hawk to Kosovo*, ed. Sebastian Cox and Peter W. Gray (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 51-56.

²⁹ John J. Abbatiello, *Anti-Submarine Warfare in World War I: British Naval Aviation and the Defeat of the U-Boats*. (London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁰ *Ibid*, 78.

While the histories of British military aviation, and specifically naval, do cover the events of the war, none provide any information on the integration of Americans, let alone the extensive training of pilots and mechanics nor the operations conducted together. No doubt that the years of war prior to the Americans arrival left the amount of American participation and integration a small aspect and one easily overlooked.

Personalities

Early aviation history was driven by several key personalities within each branch of the armed services of both the United States and Great Britain. Before delving into the general attitudes of each country, it is necessary to review the attitudes of key men—Frederick Sykes, Hugh Trenchard, John M. Salmond, John H. Towers, and William S. Sims—where the information is available; regrettably, no detailed biographies have been written on Alfred A. Cunningham, Mark L. Bristol, or Noble E. Irwin—American naval aviation pioneers.

Of the British personalities, one begins with Andrew Boyle's 1962 biography of former Commander of the Royal Flying Corps, Chief of the Air Staff and Commander of the Independent Air Force, Trenchard's is one of the most biased biographies written.³¹ Boyle's biography is flattering and not as critical of the man. The recently published *Boom: The Life of Viscount Trenchard—Father of the Royal Air Force* (2016) by Russell Miller has the luxury of distance of time from the subject and provides more realistic portrait of the man, however still very encomiastic just not as pronounced as Boyle's.³² Regrettably, Trenchard was a difficult subject as he left very few published works that illuminated his thoughts. More specifics on his thoughts are pending a thorough review of his personal papers.³³

Upon the arrival of Marine aviation in France, the RAF's Chief of the Air Staff was

³¹ Andrew Boyle, *Trenchard* (London: Collins, 1962).

³² Russell Miller, *Boom: The Life of Viscount Trenchard—Father of the Royal Air Force* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016).

³³ Trenchard, Hugh M. Papers. Microfilm. Collection AC71/19.

Brigadier General Frederick Sykes. US Air Force officer Eric Ash's admirable biography of the man captures the bittersweet feelings of the British at the entry of the Americans into the war, 'The Americans had no equipment, no weapons, no ammunition, no aircraft. Hence their initial arrival hindered Britain's fight against the enemy.'³⁴ The need for manpower and equipment was real, however, the ability of the Americans to assuage that need was a delusion, and Sykes was in a quandary—how to win the air war and gain the resources needed from the Americans. Ash paints the portrait well:

The link to American production was an important step into the birth of the RAF and IAF, but it created problems for Sykes once he assumed command. In the first place, the Americans failed to live up to their part of the contract to supply "Liberty" engines. . . . Secondly, American airmen demanded greater representation in decision-making and forced Sykes' council to spend considerable time and effort trying to placate American interests. . . . Thirdly, in exchange for the American supplies that never materialized, the Air Ministry had agreed to organize, train and equip the American air service. Sykes had to contend with this drain on British resources and manpower.³⁵

Ash's work on Sykes reinforces the notion that the relations between the Americans and British was complicated and strained due to the American potential for aid that were unrealized.

Regrettably, the only biography of John M. Salmond, *Swifter Than Eagles; The Biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Maitland Salmond* (1964) is that by Australian-born military historian John Laffin.³⁶ Produced while Salmond was still alive and far too laudatory, Laffin's biography lacks any criticism of Salmond and the work is a disappointing piece from a prolific historian.

In America's Naval aviation circles, the power brokers were lower ranking men than their British counter-parts, yet just as invaluable to the war effort and combat aviation. John H. Towers was well known in British circles after spending much of the early years of the

³⁴ Eric Ash, *Sir Frederick Sykes and the Air Revolution 1912-1918* (London, Portland, OR, 1999), 98.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 114–115.

³⁶ John Laffin, *Swifter Than Eagles; the Biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Maitland Salmond* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1964).

war in London with the American Assistant Secretary of War and later as assistant Naval Attaché. Naval historian Clark G. Reynolds's 1991 biography of Towers easily captures the frustration the pilot endured in those early years before America's entry into the war. 'Towers wrote to Bristol that "the individual officers have been fine," but that the Royal Navy "very strictly enforced orders not even to *talk!*"' And when he tried to arrange an inspection trip to Paris, the embassy sent his army counterpart instead. In fact, Britain's lack of cooperation was deliberate. As Towers remembered it, 'At first they resented the evincing, on the part of the Americans, of any interest in what was going on. It was their war.'³⁷ Reynolds continues to show how Towers pressed forward and was not deterred by the British proverbial stone wall. Despite his best efforts, maybe because of them, Towers was returned to the United States before America entered the war and was placed in charge of the Bureau of Navigation. Reynolds concentrates his efforts in the years after the First World War and Towers' struggle to create a strong Navy air arm in an era of battleship supremacy, which misses his significant role within the earliest days of American Naval aviation.

The man in overall command of US Naval Forces in Europe was William Snowden Sims; despite his position of command, Elting E. Morison's 1942 (initially published a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and later reprinted in 1968) biography of the Admiral lacks any perceptions, feelings or other commentary on the use of Naval aviation in the First World War.³⁸ Where Morison does strike well is putting forth the friendly attitude Sims felt for the British and his long-standing friendship with Admiral John R. Jellicoe, and yet is lacking in the newly formed friendship with Vice Admiral Lewis Bayly, commander of all destroyers in Queensland. Morison excellently provides details on the higher-level efforts of the US Navy in the war, the perceptions of Americans and the British are helpful, and his bibliography is

³⁷ Clark G. Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers. The Struggle for Naval Air Supremacy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 90.

³⁸ Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968).

detailed and very useful; regrettably, the lack of information on Naval aviation is discouraging. As much as Morison's research and writing are heralded, his status as son-in-law to Sims leaves one questioning the historian's objectivity to the subject matter. Admiral Sims' autobiography *The Victory at Sea* (1984) is a history of warfare on the seas and gives limited information on aviation used in ASW and regrettably provides little personal insights on numerous topics.³⁹

While no biography has been written of the Marine Corps' first aviator Alfred A. Cunningham, Graham Cosmas edited the flyer's diary covering the period in which Cunningham was on a liaison trip to England and France in late 1917 and early 1918 and produced the *Marine Flyer in France. The Diary of Captain Alfred A. Cunningham. November 1917–January 1918* (1974). Often written when time was limited, Cunningham's diary offers significant doses of the Marine's complaints against the US Army administrative system, the weather, his desire to receive mail from his wife, but little more. While Cunningham does comment on the facilities and foreign officers, he does not give great detail or personal insight. An example is his arrival at the *Army Ecole de Aviation*, in Tours, France; he stated: 'It is quite a big place with 10 very large wooden hangars and several Bessioneau canvas hangars. No flying on account of the wind. They have about 65 Caudron training planes and 2 Nieuport of chasse model but old. This place can be made into an excellent school but is in bad shape now.'⁴⁰ Cosmas unfortunately did little, save for textual edits; no annotations or analysis of the diary entries by the Marine flyer, let alone any supplemental information from official records.

There still remains significant gaps in published biographies of many significant men involved in the earliest days of Naval aviation, such as two war-time Directors of Naval

³⁹ William Sowden Sims, *The Victory at Sea* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984).

⁴⁰ Graham Cosmas, ed, *Marine Flyer in France. The Diary of Captain Alfred A. Cunningham. November 1917–January 1918* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1974), 14.

Aeronautics, Captains Mark L. Bristol and Noble E. Irwin, and the edited diary of Cunningham is no substitute for a solid biography. This thesis will expand upon the areas lacking in the areas of early Marine Corps aviation and its pioneers through the official records and personal narratives of key personnel.

American and British Attitudes

The last selection of works examined was those in which the relationship between the United States and Great Britain could be placed in perspective and better understood; what were the attitudes of the two countries' aviation and naval establishments—were they amenable and open about combining their efforts to defeat Germany, or was the alliance simply one of convenience—in the end, were the relationships advantageous to Marine Corps aviation?

US Army historian David Trask lead the way into the Anglo-American relationship with his work *Captains and Cabinets. Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917–1918* (1972).⁴¹ Trask's book is an excellent high-level overview of the allied countries' naval relations as America enters the war on the high seas, but does not include any discussion of naval aviation. Overall, he acknowledges the perception of a harmonious relationship between the two, but does explore that the two were often in conflict over naval strategy and policy, such as the American belief that the British were not forceful enough against the German U-boat.

Years later, two well-known and respected historians delved deeper into the naval and aviation cooperation aspect of the relationship between the United States and Great Britain—taking their lead from Trask. In April 1980, US naval historian Dean Allard's article 'Anglo-American Naval Differences During World War I' was published by the Society for Military

⁴¹ David F. Trask, *Captains and Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1972).

History's journal.⁴² Allard's article, while not covering aviation, does give good perspective on the beliefs of the major naval players such as Admirals Sims and William S. Benson. He sums up the chief American interest (and therefore divide between the United States and Great Britain).

A prominent theme in all these issues was the isolation of American policy based on national self-interest and distinctive strategic concepts. In contrast to the model developed by the British and Admiral Sims, Washington officials . . . did not believe that America's primary role was to provide unqualified assistance to the Royal Navy. Instead, the United States fleet gave priority to establishing and supporting an independent American Army in France, an effort that was entirely separate from the defense of the mercantile convoys serving Great Britain or of the general defeat of the German U-boat.⁴³

Royal Air Force historian Sebastian Cox's 2004 article in *Air and Space Power Journal* details the short history of integrating the US Army aviation into the Royal Flying Corps and its successor the Royal Air Force during World War I.⁴⁴ Cox covers the issues over training, combat, and strategic policies—the desire for American pilots and equipment and the inability of American's to provide what they promised. Despite the shortcomings of the American military establishment to provide the equipment and men needed (and wanted) by the British, the efforts of the British essentially established American aviation as a viable military service. 'The links that were established during the First World War, though they lay dormant for two decades, were very quickly reestablished during the second great conflict a generation later.'⁴⁵ Cox's article is an excellent overview using previously published materials as extensive research in primary sources for an article of this length would have simply been untenable.

Anglo-American Naval Relations 1917–1919 edited by Michael Simpson is a collection of documents covering the time before the United States enters the war through to

⁴² Dean C. Allard, "Anglo-American Naval Differences During World War I," *Military Affairs* Vol 44, No 2 (April 1980).

⁴³ Dean C. Allard, "Anglo-American Naval Differences During World War I," *Military Affairs* Vol 44, No 2 (April 1980): 80.

⁴⁴ Sebastian Cox, "Aspects of Anglo-US Co-operation in the Air in the First World War," *Air & Space Journal* (2004), 27-33.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

May 1919.⁴⁶ The collected documents published are a mix of policy and operational documents sent between the leaders of each country, their designated ministers, and the military commanders in the fight. The documents are not relegated simply to the ships of the line and their actions, but all aspects of Naval interactions including aviation. In the introduction to Part II (American Entry into the War, April to June 1917), Simpson provides a short, but useful overview but does not offer commentary throughout. Another edited volume of the same sort is *The Naval Air Service Volume I 1908–1918*, edited by retired Royal Navy Captain and military historian Stephen Wentworth Roskill.⁴⁷ The documents chosen, used in concert with Simpson’s edited volume, make a worthwhile contribution to the aviation aspects of the First World War, with excellent introductions placing the documents in full context.

While the relations between the national governments and even the militaries of the Americans and British has been well documented and covered in scholarly publications, the individual interactions require exploration which will be addressed in this thesis in order to understand how the men of the two nations worked and fought together.

Research Methodology

Reviewing the personal papers collections of the key Marine Corps and Navy officers was essential in order to explore the integration of the air services of the US Navy and Marine Corps. As personal observations and thoughts are often contained within personal correspondence or documents retained by the individual rather than the official documents of the organization, the papers collections of Alfred A. Cunningham (USMC), John H. Towers (USN), and Roy S. Geiger (USMC) were examined. The same methodology holds true with regard to the integration of the Marines into to the Royal Air Force—the papers of John M.

⁴⁶ Michael Simpson, “Anglo-American Naval Relations 1917-1919,” *Naval Records Society* (1991).

⁴⁷ Stephen W. Roskill, “Documents Relation to the Naval Air Service, Vol I, 1908-1918,” *Naval Records Society* (1969).

Salmond (RAF), Hugh Trenchard (RAF), William S. Sims (USN) and again those of Alfred A. Cunningham will be examined in detail.

A collection of records that have proven quite beneficial, and yet are often overlooked, are those personal military service records of US service members. In the time before computers and electronic records, the military service records often contain copious amounts correspondence, official documentation related to service, as well as key dates and details regarding the person's service. Key Marines were identified for their involvement in the integration of US Navy and Marine aviation and therefore their records were examined—Alfred A. Cunningham, Roy S. Geiger, William N. McIlvain, and Bernard L. Smith.

The impact of the integration of the Marines into the RAF is important and identifying the number of Marines assigned to the RAF in the war is key to understanding how many hours were flown, how many missions, and what types of missions were flown. Starting with the official muster rolls of the First Marine Aviation Force, held by the Marine Corps History Division, the lists of names were reviewed to identify the names of the Marines on detached duty to the RAF during the months of August to November 1918. Utilizing the 217 and 218 Squadron Record Books and Record of Flying Times, the list was cross examined to determine the exact amount of time each Marine served with the RAF and if any combat missions were flown. Within the 'World War I Aviation' Collection at the Marine Corps History Division is the official logbook for the First Marine Aviation Force in France in 1918; it too was utilized in conjunction with the information found in the records of 217 and 218 Squadrons. A chart was compiled of the names in the appendices of the thesis. Lastly, in conjunction with the official records, several oral history interviews with Marines who served with the British will be reviewed for pertinent information. The interviews were conducted nearly fifty years after the fact, and therefore their usefulness will be heavily scrutinized.

Thesis Content

It is quite clear that Cunningham's efforts to get Marine pilots integrated into Naval aviation has not been thoroughly explored, nor are those specific efforts of Towers and his predecessors to get US Naval aviation into the fight in Europe. It seems that previous authors have merely skirted the issues with general statements to the facts but do not support them with concrete commentary. It is left to the researcher to pour through the personal papers and archives to glean these missing specifics. At the higher levels, such as those of men like Trenchard and Sims, due to their status, historians are more aware of their impressions and desires due to their preservation of personal papers, but lose the operational level view of the integration. The biographies do give readers a good understanding of these men's positions and personal views on the topic. The material must be explored in order to determine the exact nature of the British and Marine Corps relations during their integration.

Today, even with a separate and equal Air Force, each of America's branches of the Armed Forces maintains an aviation component. The Marine Corps and the Navy each fiercely guard their aviation assets from budget cuts or doctrinal curtailment. Understanding the Corps' infant-like entry into the First World War in the air is vital to understanding how and why airplanes and aviators in the modern Marine Corps remain so unwaveringly protected and defended and as an integral portion of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force concept. Without the efforts of Cunningham, whose deals behind closed doors garnered the Corps' entry into Naval aviation (and thereby the war effort), the Marine Corps today would look and function very differently and quite possibly have disappeared from the arsenal of the American military establishment.

To understand the times in which these events occurred, the relationships between the national governments of the United States and United Kingdom, as well as their military relationships is necessary and thus will be explored in Chapter One. The chapter deals with

the tensions that occurred between the two nations leading to the entry of the United States—specifically the question of if the United States would ever enter the war. The tensions continued once the Americans entered the war, conflicts arose around the question of amalgamation of the US military into the British and continued throughout the remainder of the war. Published personal diaries, letters and papers of key persons are utilized as well as official War Cabinet records to examine the relations.

It is the goal of chapter two to explore the relationship between the US Marine Corps and Navy. As the chapter reveals, this relationship was wrought with conflict over mission, appropriations, and manpower. In order for naval aviation to function, the two had to collaborate and accomplish the mission together. However, various levels of the Navy hierarchy were convinced the Marine Corps was unnecessary; therefore, appearing to wait for an opportune time to attack the Corps. Despite the differences, the two naval services were able to create a singular air component, which will be explored in the chapter as well.

With the Marines' arrival in France and aircraft unavailable, the Corps had to find another means of completing its mission and the Royal Air Force was the means. In Chapter Three, the relationship between the RAF and USMC will be explored highlighting the specific operations of the combined 217 and 218 operations and the first independent operations of the Marines. This combination of British RAF and American Marines will be discussed in the context of the lasting impact made upon the Americans that resulted in doctrinal leaps in use of aviation during the Interwar period and later in the Second World War.

Chapter Four will highlight an event a different aspect of the integration of both the RAF and USMC, through the curious case of Marine Captain Edmund G. Chamberlain, a pilot who experienced combat with the RAF but was later court martialed by the Americans for falsification of his record with the British. The Chamberlain affair allows for a window

into the relations of the British and Americans at the individual level, and an avenue to view on how Americans were received and perceived. In Chapter Five, the lasting impact of the service of the Marines with the RAF will be examined. The Marine Corps aviation during the Interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s will be reviewed to determine if the experiences of the Marines with the RAF had contributed materially to the naval service's capabilities.

Chapter One

NATIONAL POLITICAL AND MILITARY ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1914–1918

Introduction

Before Marine aviation could arrive in France and begin combatting the German U-boat menace with the British, the British and American governments and military still had to work out their differences. Leading to the entry of the United States into the war, the years of relations between the two countries had not been completely amicable. It was not a forgone conclusion that America would enter the war, and if so, on the side of the British. This chapter will explore the historical relations between the two, the months leading to America's decision to enter the war, and the major conflict point of military amalgamation. The relationship between the two nations was tenuous at best, and the fate of Marine aviation depended on a positive relationship between the national governments as well as the military leadership. Had the points of conflict between the United States and Great Britain not been mitigated, the integration of the Marine Corps' aviation component with the Royal Air Force would have been a non-existent event.

To explore the tenuous nature of dealings between the two nations, this chapter will examine the national leadership and the military leadership of both countries by utilizing the published writings of President Woodrow Wilson and Prime Minister David Lloyd George and the published works of the military leaders General John J. Pershing and Field Marshal Douglas Haig. Relations within the British and American navies and specifically the aviation portion will be examined in chapter three.

Interactions between the United States and Great Britain were often tense and strained and therefore worth an examination before delving deeper. Aiding the understanding of the complicated events leading to the US and British alliance in 1917 are several works covering events prior to the American entry into the First World War, those during the war, and those

since the end of the war, which are utilized in examining these events. These works include H. C. Allen's *Great Britain and the United States—A History of Anglo-American Relations 1783–1952* (1969), David R. Woodward's *Trial by Friendship—Anglo-American Relations 1917–1918* (1993), David Dimbleby and David Reynolds' *An Ocean Apart—The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (1988) and *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* by Seth Tillman (2016).⁴⁸ While not an extensive review of the relations, this chapter will examine the dealings to provide the historical context in which the events of 1917–1918 occurred as well as the complicated relations between the United States and Great Britain leading to their alliance.

Historical Context

The relations between the United States and Great Britain do not start with the coalition force created in 1917; they are, however, impacted by the previous fourteen decades since the Americans broke with the British during the American Revolution. To understand the interactions between these two nations during the First World War, one must also examine their dealings and interfaces in the many decades leading to their alliance in the war. The relationship between these two countries was one born of revolution, forged through conflict and ultimately one of strained partnership in 1917–1918.

The relationship between the United States and Great Britain was a complex one starting with the American Revolution in 1775, when the Americans rejected the distant British rule without representation. While not initially a revolution for independence, rather one of the ability to participate in their government, the Colonists eventually realized that due to distances and unique struggles of the North American lifestyle, they had grown apart from

⁴⁸ H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States. A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), David R. Woodward, *Trial By Friendship. Anglo-American Relations 1917-1918* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart. The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988) and *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

their brethren across the Atlantic and separation was the only answer.⁴⁹ The new American nation and the older British Empire emerged from nearly a decade of warfare as separate and distinct countries; however, their shared history, linked through the Atlantic and borders in common continued to draw them into political intrigues and even war as the decades progressed.⁵⁰

Despite the end of the American Revolution in 1783, the British and the new nation were once again in conflict less than three decades later; the chief cause of disagreement was the impressment of American merchant sailors by British privateers. Unwilling to allow the British to return any Americans to subjugation, the United States declared war in June 1812. The war remained the singular focus of the young American nation, while Great Britain continued to remain more focused on the Napoleonic War on continental Europe. Despite the lack of sole attention on the Americans, Britain was able to burn the American capital and earn several victories over the United States; the Americans also struck several blows against British naval vessels, but in the end the war ceased in stalemate with the Treaty of Ghent just three years later.⁵¹ The early history of these two nations started bloody and combative.

The American Civil War erupted and pitted the industrial northern states against the agricultural southern states; the same southern states that produced the cotton that kept the mills in England well supplied.⁵² Complicating matters internally for the British was the need for cotton and that the British banking investments in the large southern plantations drew the British toward the Confederate cause, and yet, the abolitionist movement of the north (funded in part by residents of Great Britain) pulled public opinion in the opposite direction.⁵³ The

⁴⁹ H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States. A History of Anglo-American Relations 1783–1952*. (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), 219.

⁵⁰ For a detailed history of the American Revolution, see Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution 1763–1789*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵¹ For a history of the War of 1812 see Henry L. Coles, *The War of 1812*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

⁵² For more information on the American Civil War see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵³ Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, ed., *U.S.-U.K. Relations at the Start of the 21st Century*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 11.

British found it difficult to create stable and equal policy toward either belligerent's cause. Great Britain did ultimately actively support the Confederacy during the war, and after the Union victory in 1865, the Americans directed their ire toward the British claims of raids upon American shipping during the war, culminating in 1871 when the Treaty of Washington was signed.⁵⁴ The first one hundred years of international relations between the British Empire and the United States certainly did not bode well for the next hundred years; however, fortunes began shifting with the times.

The two nations left the Gilded Age and were thrust into the first world-wide war of the new century. As post-war industrialization created new millionaires in the upper classes of American society, the two nations drew closer together, and the new wealth of the former colony even began to intermarry with the old nobility of the empire.⁵⁵ The two were on the friendliest terms in their mutual history, and yet still struggled as the war waged on. While the United States remained neutral through nearly three years of the war, it was not completely out of the European affairs.

As British financial resources were increasingly drained by the war, its dependence upon the United States increased. The British relied heavily upon the financial backing of loans from the United States as well as materiel supplies from the Americans. This dependence upon the Americans was discussed in the War Cabinet in November 1916 as a Treasury memorandum was circulated detailing the depth to which the Americans supported the British. The concerns regarding remaining favorable with the Americans lest they end their support, or dictate British actions were included. 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in a few months' time the American executive and the American public will be in a position

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Davis R. B. Ross, Alden T. Vaughn and John B. Duff, *The Emergence of Modern America, 1865–1900*, (New York: Crowell, 1970). Further reading on the "Dollar Princesses" can be found in Julie Ferry, *The Transatlantic Marriage Bureau: Husband Hunting in the Gilded Age. How Americans Heiresses Conquered the Aristocracy*. (London: Aurum Press, Ltd., 2017).

to dictate to this country on matters that affect us more nearly than them.’⁵⁶ The British acknowledged that the United States held the power in the relationship and that it behooved them to remain on good terms as well as to continue to make progress on the military front as well to show that Britain remained a good investment.

It is readily apparent that the United States’ and Great Britain’s relationship has been one of complications since it began. While united by a shared history, common language, and religion, the years of separate sovereignty often overruled their commonalities and as the war proved, even allies often are not allied in their desires and thinking thus causing friction. Two major stress points that caused the tension between the two were the slow decision of the United States to enter the war, and once entered, the disagreement between the two on how their militaries would specifically operate with one another.

National Relations: Will the United States Enter the War?

As demonstrated, the relationship between the US and Great Britain was not as strong as the post-First World War and thus conflicts may have derailed the American entry altogether. These points of tension are explored herein. When war broke out in Europe in the last days of July 1914, American President Woodrow Wilson made clear that the United States would remain neutral and not be drawn into the affairs of Europe; less than a month removed from the first shots fired, Wilson issued a Presidential Proclamation in which he acknowledged the many nationalities that made up Americans and that each person may have loyalties elsewhere across the Atlantic. On 18 August 1914, the president implored his fellow citizens to hold fast against the tide of sentimental and familial desires to join the war in Europe stating: “The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that try men’s souls.”⁵⁷ The United States’ neutrality was a major point of strain on the

⁵⁶ CAB 42/23/7 War Council Minutes, 1. Financial Dependence of the United Kingdom on the United States of America dated 6 November 1916.

⁵⁷ Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *Selected Addresses and Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1918), 45. Hereafter cited as Hart, *Wilson Addresses*.

relations between it and Great Britain and as the United States was drawn more into the events in Europe, its neutrality remained a major concern for the Allies. Even as a number of American lives were lost, and political intrigues increased, the American president remained steadfast in his conviction of keeping his nation out of the European war. This thesis will demonstrate how American neutrality was a major source of anxiety for its relations with Great Britain.

Later that year, Wilson dispatched his envoy Colonel Edward M. House to Great Britain with the goal of bringing about peace between the belligerents. Then-Minister for the Exchequer, later Munitions Minister and subsequently Prime Minister, David Lloyd George recalled House's visit in 1914. House visited in a 'role of disinterested and benevolent adviser, to urge a better understanding between everybody and everybody else.'⁵⁸ The two countries were diametrically opposed in their ultimate desires for the outcome of the war. As his war memoirs point out, Lloyd George and the Allies were aware that America was torn in her support of one side over the other due to large populations of German-Americans and old sentimental leanings toward the French and a slow-to-blossom friendship with Great Britain.⁵⁹ President Wilson described his own reason for remaining neutral as a matter of keeping the United States a separate sovereign nation in the world—he feared that if embroiled in the war, his nation would lose its singular identity. In his February 1916 letter to Senator William J. Stone, Wilson made this case:

What we are contending for in this matter [avoidance of war] is of the very essence of the things that have made America a sovereign nation. She cannot yield them without conceding her own importance as a nation and making virtual surrender of her independent position among the nations of the world.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol I*. (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1938), 394.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 394.

⁶⁰ Hart, *Wilson Addresses*, 107.

As the war continued, the president remained rooted in his neutral principles, and yet he attempted to broker peace between the warring nations. In early December 1916, the German Government issued an offer of peace via the United States. While a politicized and controversial memoir, the writings of David Lloyd George offer a limited view into the mind of the leader of Great Britain before America's entry into the war. David Lloyd George recounted the events within his *War Memoirs*; without Germany's acceptance of its culpability for the war, peace was unlikely. On 18 December 1916, it was agreed that a response to Germany would be sent via the United States; the response was to refute the unwillingness of the Germans to accept their responsibility for the war and yet offer general terms for peace without specifics.⁶¹ Wilson provided the Germans the British response and offered additional commentary, which continued to reveal his desire not to be fully engaged in the war, let alone its end. In his response to the Germans, Wilson stated that he was not proposing peace, not even offering to mediate a peace, but simply wishing to facilitate it.⁶² Peace was as close in December 1916 as it had ever come, and yet Wilson remained steadfast in his determination to keep the United States out of European affairs. However, the use of Wilson as the intermediary for peace between the Allied and Central Powers, Lloyd George believed, drew the United States closer to the Allied cause. 'There is no doubt that the Allied answers to the German and Wilson Note favourably impressed American public opinion, and there was a perceptible change in the atmosphere across the Atlantic from that date.'⁶³

Instead of accepting the chance for peace, Germany chose to continue to fight in the hopes for outright victory. Despite the German decision not only to reject peace, but to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson remained reluctant to ask Congress to declare war. In his 3 February 1917 address to Congress, Wilson asked only for the break of

⁶¹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 658.

⁶² Hart, *Wilson Addresses*, 170.

⁶³ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 664.

diplomatic ties with Germany and not a declaration of war. He refused to believe Germany was so against the United States. 'I can not [sic] bring myself to believe that they [Germany] will indeed pay no regard to the ancient friendship between their people and our own. . .'⁶⁴

Despite the break of diplomatic ties with Germany, the United States did not join the war.

The British continued to haemorrhage men and materiel; hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping losses in February alone meant that without a rapid change in the situation—either the addition of the United States on the side of Great Britain or the outright defeat of Germany—Great Britain would starve and thus be defeated in rapid succession.⁶⁵ No doubt, the delay in American active response to the aggressive Germans left the British leadership with concerns about any American participation and strained relations further. The records of the Imperial War Cabinet reflect the increasing concerns of the lack of manpower to fight the war and the efforts to draw more from Canada, and yet the need to leave enough men behind to protect the thirty-five hundred mile frontier and against the large number of enemies against the British living in the United States.⁶⁶

Lloyd George's own words about Wilson's lack of effort to even prepare for the possibility of war easily expose his feelings of disdain for the Americans; he remarked that the president's refusal to consider entering the war was no longer based on reality, rather 'an article of religious faith' and detached from reality.⁶⁷ Interestingly enough, Lloyd George's memoir does not mention the frustration that must have been felt by the British as tons of shipping was lost while the American president continued to wait for an overt act by Germany; the Prime Minister's memoir directs his commentary toward the lack of preparedness by the American's during this waiting period. 'Had those two months been

⁶⁴ Hart, *Wilson Addresses*, 182.

⁶⁵ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 685.

⁶⁶ CAB 23/40/0/0006 War Cabinet Minutes, 4. The Military Situation: The Need for more Men dated 30 March 1917.

⁶⁷ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 981-2.

utilized for preparation, the American Army would have been adequately represented in the trenches in France at the end of March 1918.’⁶⁸

The overt act that the British thought would trigger the entry of the United States seemingly appeared in mid-January 1917. On 17 January, the British code breakers of Room 40 intercepted the German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmermann’s telegram to the Mexican government.⁶⁹ The Germans informed the Mexican government that unrestricted submarine warfare would resume on 1 February and Mexico should consider an alliance with Germany in order to neutralize the United States. Further, the telegram included ‘Germany’s promise to assist Mexico “to regain by conquest her lost territory in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.”’⁷⁰ The delay that occurred between the decryption of the telegram and the notification of the Americans was caused by the time it took to decipher the encrypted message, and also the concern that the German’s would find out that their codes had been broken. However, the delay between the notification of the American’s on 27 January 1917, and the American declaration of war on 6 April, most certainly was frustrating for the British. Considering the British turned over the most damning of documents, it is quite likely they held high hopes of an immediate declaration of war by the United States, and yet more than a month passed before such action. In fact, such was the belief of the British chief code breaker, William Reginald ‘Blinker’ Hall. As the American press broke the story, Hall reached out to the British Naval Attaché in New York, Captain Guy Gaunt in order to begin opening channels of communication with the US Chief of Naval Operations. Gaunt informed Hall that such planning was premature.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 991.

⁶⁹ Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram*. (New York: Ballantine Book, 1979), 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁷¹ Thomas Boghardt, *The Zimmermann Telegram. Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America’s Entry into World War I*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 181.

The American process for declaring war is not a simple one; the president does not declare war, Congress does. In 1917, relations between the president and Congress were tenuous at best; Congress contained a large percentage who were isolationists and obtaining any war declaration—despite the inflammatory nature of the telegram—was not a forgone conclusion.⁷² On 2 February 1917, British Ambassador to the United States, Sir Cecil Spring Rice wrote to Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour that progress toward peace—either by negotiations or American military involvement—was being made. His tone was optimistic; however, two weeks later his tone was subdued as Congress was slow to act and seemingly content to continue delaying actions.⁷³ Congress' multiple factions continued to stress the situation with its debates. The pro-isolationist faction of the lower chamber fought against the interventionists over the perceived notion of British interference with American neutrality. As stated, quite aptly, by Thomas Boghardt, 'the telegram failed to become a unifying factor.'⁷⁴

As the American Congress continued to debate itself on the necessary actions, the Germans continued to inflict shipping losses in the Atlantic. On 12 March 1917, the American cargo ship *Algonquin* was sunk off the coast of Great Britain; that same day the Germans sank three other American-flagged ships.⁷⁵ While it was eventually the continued loss of shipping that forced the Americans into the war, the Americans response remained too slow and perplexing to the British. Spring Rice's exasperation poured into his 23 March 1917 letter to Balfour.

Opinion was considerably shocked by the sinking of the "Algonquin," and the public were prepared to consider it as the "overt act." It required, however, the sinking of three more American ships . . . really to arouse the public and the Administration.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid., 145.

⁷³ Stephen Gwynn, ed., *The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice. A Record. Vol II.* (London: Constable & Co, Ltd, 1929), 376-378.

⁷⁴ Boghardt, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, 158.

⁷⁵ Rodney Carlisle, 'The Attacks on U.S. Shipping that Precipitated American Entry into World War I,' *The Northern Mariner*, Vol 17, No 3 (July 2007): 53.

⁷⁶ Gwynn, *Spring Rice*, 387.

Wilson requested and obtained a declaration of war against Germany, which was granted by the Congress on 6 April 1917. Stephen Gwynn, editor of Spring Rice's letters, captured what the ambassador must have felt upon hearing of the declaration—the frustration and anxiety lifted from years of waiting for the eventual American entry into the war. 'His [Spring Rice's] difficult task had been to watch and wait . . . to refrain from counting with certainty and prematurely on American help.'⁷⁷ With the entry of the Americans, there was likely a deep sigh of relief initially; however, the American entry into the war provided only little ease to the minds of the British. Quite simply, the American army was not ready for war on the scale of that of the Western Front.

Military Relations: Amalgamation

Despite overcoming the initial friction of the American entry into the war, points of conflict continued between the two nations and threatened the newly formed alliance. The strained relations at the national level of both countries were only stressed further as the United States entered the war in April 1917, and the two armies were to come together against Germany, because of the topic of amalgamation. For this purpose, amalgamation is defined as the idea that American soldiers were to be trained by the British and subsequently drafted into the British Army. The suggested course of action, amalgamation, was presented to the Americans nearly as soon as they entered the war; and, as will be discussed, became the next major source of strain on relations between the United States and Great Britain. It is not the intent of this thesis to argue for or against amalgamation, rather to show that it was a major conflict point for the two nations.

The British believed, and understandably so, that the American military was simply not going to be ready enough to fight a war and that adding an additional area of responsibility along the Western Front would effectively cause a weak point in the line at

⁷⁷ Ibid., 389.

which the Germans could easily penetrate. When the United States entered the war, it did so with a Regular Army numbering just 5,791 officers and 121,707 enlisted, and no division sized formations. Mobilizing the National Guard was required, and yet that did not bring the Army up to full-strength.⁷⁸ The American military establishment barely had regiments, let alone larger organizations such as brigades, divisions, corps, or field armies. The number of skilled, prepared, and trained senior officers necessary for staff and command duties was equally abysmal. Of the 5,791 regular officers on active duty in April 1917, only 379 had completed command and staff education.⁷⁹ The forces with the most combat experience within the American military were within the US Marine Corps and elements of the Army itself. The Marine Corps, while numbering just over ten thousand officers and men, had gained valuable combat experience in China, the Philippines, and the Caribbean in the fifteen years leading to the outbreak of war in Europe.⁸⁰ The Army had witnessed its share of combat in China and the Philippines just as the Marine Corps; however, the Army and National Guard forces that participated in the Punitive Expedition in Mexico against Pancho Villa in Mexico fought only the heat, insects, and drillmasters.⁸¹ The British were correct to be worried that the United States would be unable to field its own fighting force. Therefore, having additional manpower simply folded into their forces, which were already organized and experienced, made the most sense to the British, and thus they pressed the Americans to adopt the policy of amalgamation.

In April 1917, the Allied Missions arrived in the United States; the British Mission under Arthur J. Balfour was ready with the plan for amalgamating the Americans into the British Army. Major General George Tom Molesworth ‘Tom’ Bridges informed the

⁷⁸ Mitchell A. Yockelson. *Borrowed Soldiers. Americans under British Command, 1918*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 3.

⁷⁹ Mark E. Grotelueschen. *The AEF Way of War. The American Army and Combat in World War I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12.

⁸⁰ Edwin N. McClellan. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*. (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1920), 4.

⁸¹ Yockelson, *Borrowed Soldiers*, 4.

American Army Chief of Staff, Major General Tasker Bliss that the best way Americans could help was to send five hundred thousand untrained men immediately to England where they would be trained and drafted into the British Army.⁸² The British were expecting very little from the Americans, in fact Lloyd George stated in May 1917:

It is upon the shoulders of France and Great Britain that the whole burden of the war rests. . . . America is still an unknown. We must not count upon her aid in a military way for a long time to come.⁸³

The appearance that America was in the war in name only certainly caused stresses on the relations between the two nations. The Americans, particularly Pershing, understood the British position. He noted in his memoir that he knew the British worried the American forces were not to be sufficient enough to impact the war but also suspected there was more to British motives. Pershing felt the Allies, the British in particular, saw the Americans as a necessity to win the war, but looked up on them as late arrivals after so many years of simply playing witness to the devastating war.⁸⁴ The United States, feeling desired strictly for manpower and supplies, it is understandable that the Americans remained wary of their new allies' intentions. Pershing clearly states this feeling in his memoirs: 'Our belief in the existence of such an attitude on the part of the Allies naturally stirred in our minds a feeling of distrust, which was emphasized, and which, therefore, continued to be a factor in all our relations up to the end.'⁸⁵

Just days after the American declaration of war, the British War Cabinet began outlining the ways in which the Americans should be asked to render assistance. As outlined in the War Cabinet meeting minutes of 9 April 1917, the British were not only in need of American wheat, steel, shipping, and shipbuilding, but they had detailed plans for American

⁸² Donald Smythe. *Pershing. General of the Armies*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 8.

⁸³ John J. Pershing. *My Experiences in the World War*. Vol. I. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), 75. Hereafter cited as Pershing, *My Experiences*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 79.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

troops. Of course, the ultimate desire being for the immediate receipt of large numbers of American forces at brigade strength at least, but lesser requirements also being that as many trained Americans as necessary for an advanced force ready in France by August/September for service in a quiet sector and of course, the possibility of Americans serving as drafted recruits in the British, Canadian, or French Army outright.⁸⁶ Amalgamation, whether as individual recruits within the British military, or larger units trained and in service under British command, remained a thorny issue between the new partners.

While retaining national identity was a major factor against amalgamation for the Americans, Pershing was keenly aware of what he perceived as failures by the British. Upon arrival of the British Mission in the United States, Major General Bridges outlined his proposal for the Americans. Bridges stated that the Americans would be trained in the English depots and then drafted into the British Army—the training consisted of just nine weeks in England and an additional nine days in France. During Pershing's early days in England, he visited British training camps, watched the men demonstrate an attack, guard against gas, and fight in the trenches. His keen eye noted that most of the men he watched were unfit for duty on the front due to wounds or illness. Pershing further noted that many

British officers realized that the period of nine weeks' training for recruits was insufficient, but such preparation was for trench warfare only. Much to my surprise, they gave little thought to the possibilities of open warfare in the near future, if at all.⁸⁷

Maintaining the health and survivability of one's forces was at the forefront of Pershing's mind and if that meant remaining a separate and distinct force, then it must be.

⁸⁶ CAB 23/2/34, War Cabinet Minutes 116 of 9 April 1917.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

On 20 July 1917, Pershing finally met with Field Marshal Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force—his counterpart within the British military.⁸⁸ Haig's own papers lack any detailed commentary on his impression of America's entry into the war; however, from April to July, Haig was undoubtedly consumed with the major battles that took place at Arras, Vimy Ridge, and the major offensive planned for Passchendaele. Interestingly, both men comment in their respective personal documents regarding their initial meeting; however, Haig limited simply to stating that Pershing is unlike the typical American.⁸⁹ Pershing, though, provides more details regarding the meeting of the two great men. While he does not specifically comment upon amalgamation, or if it was even discussed, Pershing does realize that the relationship between the French and British had not been one of complete unity.⁹⁰

A proponent of open warfare, Pershing remained critical of the Allies' efforts on the Western Front and the great loss of life in battles of attrition. It is easy to understand just why the idea of placing American men under British command was so odious to him.

The theory of winning by attrition . . . , which was evidently the idea of the British General Staff, did not appeal to me in principle. Moreover, their army could not afford the losses in view of the shortage of men which they, themselves, admitted.⁹¹

To Pershing, if the British were seemingly willing to allow the continued war of attrition, then it seemed logical that placing Americans into direct control of the British was undesirable.

Compounding the problem and adding to the strain between the Americans and British was the shipping complication—over the months of May, June, and July 1917, more

⁸⁸ 20 July 1917 Diary Entry, Douglas Haig. *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig. 1914-1919*. Robert Blake, ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 245. See also Gary Sheffield and John Bourne. *Douglas Haig. War Diaries and Letters 1914-1918*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

⁸⁹ Haig, *The Private Papers*, 245.

⁹⁰ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol I, 113.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

shipping was lost in the Atlantic than was reaching Europe. Pershing had received reports from American Naval Commander Admiral Sims that based on the attrition rate, 'there would soon be insufficient Allied shipping left to bring over an American army . . . and that the Allies would find it difficult to keep up their supply . . . necessary to carry on the war.'⁹² The need for American bodies in the British military was critical to continue to battle the Germans but without sufficient shipping to ensure the flow of those Americans, the war's conclusion was drawing near. With these issues, among many others, weighing on his mind, it is not hard to understand why Haig was desirous of amalgamation and eager to have American men in the fight. As the British continued to press Pershing on amalgamation, they also continued to stress that they were already bearing the majority of the burden. In their January 1918 War Cabinet meeting, they requested amalgamation once again, with a reminder that they were 'maintaining nearly the whole of the maritime transport of our European allies.'⁹³

In late spring 1918, the Germans launched a major offensive on the Western front dubbed 'Operation Michael', in which they advanced forty miles in eight days, managed to capture seventy thousand British prisoners, and decimate a number of British divisions.⁹⁴ This offensive, while not an outright victory for Germany, it exacerbated the internal strife between Lloyd George and Haig, each blaming the other for the failures on the field of battle. In addition to placing blame on Haig for his perceived failures in the latest German offensive, Lloyd George additionally blamed President Wilson for his inaction and seeming indifference to the urgency of the war. With a sense of urgency and because of the several combat divisions made ineffective by the German offensive, the Prime Minister returned to placing

⁹² Ibid., 120.

⁹³ CAB 23/5/15 War Cabinet Minutes 323, Cooperation of United States of America, 2, dated 16 January 1918.

⁹⁴ For extensive coverage of the German offensives in 1918, see David T. Zabecki, *The German 1918 Offensives; A Case Study in the Operational Level of War*. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

pressure on the Americans for more forces.⁹⁵ On 28 March 1918, Lloyd George appealed directly to President Wilson requesting one hundred twenty thousand men per month between the months of April and July, which would be brigaded with the British.⁹⁶ Wilson again provided a qualified approval to send what was possible but left the final disposition of American troops to Pershing, and thereby frustrating the British once again with an apparent lack of understanding of the severity of the need for Americans. The convoluted method of decision making within the United States surely left the British frustrated; requesting troops or brigading of troops via the Balfour Mission to the president, or through their ambassador or even directly to the president never seemed to receive clear and concrete responses. No matter the channels through which the requests were made, the question of amalgamation was always deferred to Pershing.

By the 1 May 1918 Supreme War Council meeting, the United States had managed to place 23,548 officers and 406,111 enlisted men in France under the structure of four divisions.⁹⁷ Despite the number of American combatants in France, during the meeting on 1 May, Haig criticized Pershing for lack of understanding regarding the critical nature of the war and the British. Haig derided Pershing as ‘very obstinate, and stupid,’ and that Pershing ‘did not seem to realise the urgency of the situation.’⁹⁸ However, as the summer of 1918 progressed, more Americans arrived and divisions were formed, trained, and readied for the front under the British.⁹⁹ During this time, Haig and Pershing agreed that Americans would only serve as reserves if the situation were dire enough to require their employment.¹⁰⁰ This agreement, dubbed the London Agreement was Pershing’s only concession to the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 263.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 253.

⁹⁷ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol II, 20.

⁹⁸ 1 May 1918 Diary Entry, Gary Sheffield and John Bourne, eds., *Douglas Haig. War Diaries and Letters 1914–1918*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005), 409.

⁹⁹ The British did not solely train American forces. Many divisions, such as the famed 2d Division with its two regiments of US Marines were trained by, and fought alongside the French. However, the purposes of this thesis, only the British are considered.

¹⁰⁰ Yockelson, *Borrowed Soldiers*, 79.

amalgamation question. Pershing's decision only to allow for emergency usage of the American divisions 'undercut Haig's plan to use American replacements to restore his shattered divisions.'¹⁰¹ Friction between the British and Americans continued as the issue of amalgamation did not simply go away; rather it transitioned from the idea of individual American soldiers being trained by, and thence melded into British units, into the reluctant desire of the British to amalgamate whole American divisions. Despite the minor change in the British position, American leaders remained steadfast in their desire to build and fight with an all-American Army.

Relations between the United States and Great Britain continued to be tested—in August 1918 when King George V visited the front lines and decorated members of both countries' forces. During an informal meeting between Pershing and the king on 12 August, the monarch made it clear he was eager to have as many as Americans as possible 'serve with the British Army' and further suggested American forces should use the port of Dunkirk to hasten the flow of soldiers to the British area of responsibility.¹⁰² The two continued conversing with regard to the friendly relations between the nations and the desire to continue the positive interactions, but it was clear that the amalgamation issue had not been resolved.

After meeting with the King, Pershing immediately met with Haig regarding the latter's plan for removing several American divisions from the British in order to begin creating the all-American army. Haig attempted to sway Pershing away from the decision by stating that withdrawing the American divisions would cause criticism 'from the British troops in the field but also from the British Government.'¹⁰³ Pershing's response was firm and clear: 'I reminded him [Haig] of our agreement that these troops were at all times to be under my orders and that while they had been placed behind his armies for training they were

¹⁰¹ Cassar, *Lloyd George at War*, 263.

¹⁰² Pershing, *My Experiences, Vol II*, 215–216.

¹⁰³ Haig, *Papers*, 323.

to be used there in battle only to meet an emergency.’¹⁰⁴ While firm with Haig, Pershing understood the feelings of the Field Marshal; he understood the losses that had been experienced by the British, the non-stop combat and that defeat was never far away.¹⁰⁵ Despite the seemingly cordial attitude of both men after the conclusion of the meeting, Haig was clearly still dismayed about the removal of the Americans as he recorded in his published papers on 25 August. ‘What will History say regarding this action of the Americans leaving the British zone of operations when *the decisive battle* of the war is at its height, and the decision is still in doubt!’¹⁰⁶ Pershing lashed out at the British as well stating, ‘due to differences in national characteristics and military systems, the instruction and training of our troops by them [the British] retarded our progress.’¹⁰⁷ Despite the progress of the war in the favour of the Allies, the Americans and British remained at odds with one another regarding the use of American troops. Rufus Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading, British Ambassador to the United States visited Pershing in Paris in early September and seemingly attempted to force Pershing’s hand regarding amalgamation. While the two discussed shipping, and the increase in British shipping for American usage, Lord Reading seemingly hinted that the increase was dependent upon ‘a greater proportion of our troops for service with their armies.’¹⁰⁸

Less than two months later, the hostilities ended; the need for Americans to buttress the British forces ceased. The focus of efforts and energies was placed upon the competing desires for how peace would be accomplished, what reparations were to be, and which country or empire would remain after November 1918. The amalgamation issue disappeared the moment the fighting ceased. The Allies—British, French, and Italian—all had desires for

¹⁰⁴ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol II, 217.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Haig, *Papers*, 325.

¹⁰⁷ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol II, 230.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 256.

American forces. While the relations were strained, and at times even veiled hostility, the Americans and the British managed to work together with the other allies to defeat the Germans.

Conclusion

While the United States looked upon the First World War as a European War, the Allies increasingly drew the Americans into the intrigues with requests for supplies of food, munitions, and equipment. As the events in Europe spilled into a global war, notably due to Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare and attempt to lure Mexico in against America, it was no longer possible for the United States to remain oblivious and neutral. Despite these factors, the Allies were held in a state of uncertainty for nearly two months while the United States continued seemingly to debate the matter before declaring war. It seemed as if the Americans were simply waiting to see which side would fail before entering the war, all of which strained relations between the two nations.

Once the Americans joined the Allies, the concern shifted to how American forces could most effectively be utilized. Both the United States and Britain were aware that America's military was severely understrength, untrained, and ill-equipped for a war on the scale of the Western Front. The war had already taken its toll on the British; the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans saw the rise in the amount of shipping sent to the floor of the ocean along with the much needed supplies, not just weapons and munitions but basic sustenance. British survival was at stake if events did not turn in their favour rapidly.

Much to the chagrin of the British, the American entry into the war was not the desired blessing, and this caused further anxieties for the British. The British deemed amalgamation of American men into the British army as the most logical and rapid solution to their manpower shortages. However, the American desire to remain a separate and

independent power was in direct contravention to the British wishes. It is true that the American military was sorely unprepared for the war in Europe; however, despite the slow start, the United States did manage to field sixty-five infantry divisions and an additional cavalry division under the command of nine corps with strength of about two million men.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, while the American army did form an independent force, and served on its own front, men of the 27th and 30th Divisions (II Corps) served directly with the British. In the fifty-seven days the 27th Division served on the front, it suffered 8,334 killed, and wounded and in the sixty-nine days the 30th served on the front, it suffered 8,415 killed and wounded.¹¹⁰ Notwithstanding initial fears that Americans would not fight, these men did and made the ultimate sacrifice just as their British counterparts had.

Oddly, as the American Army commander fought against amalgamation, the US Navy and the British Royal Navy were to become quite intertwined. The earliest days of strain and distrust between the two nations were seemingly forgotten as the American Navy, replete with its aviation contingent, arrived in Europe. However, the creation of American Naval Aviation, a combination of Navy and Marine Corps aviation components, was another point of stress which may have had an impact on future integration with the Royal Air Force., and therefore is discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War. American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions. Vol II.* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 444–445.

¹¹⁰ Yockelson, *Borrowed Soldiers*, 220.

Chapter Two
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:
UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS AVIATION

In the earliest days of Marine Corps aviation personalities shaped the institution. It was through the strong management and personal connections, combined with the fortuitous assignments of the early Marine aviators such as Alfred A. Cunningham, Bernard L. Smith and William M. McIlvain that made the Corps able to establish an effective combat aviation element. These men, despite the contradictory efforts of key Naval personnel to abolish the Marine Corps just four years earlier in 1908, forged relationships, made the most of their key billets, and pressed their forward-thinking ideas ahead at a time when the Marine Corps was not even sure it needed or wanted aviation. The early aviators, under Cunningham's dynamic leadership, had to contend with old rivalries with the Navy and were not only able to establish an aviation section within the Marine Corps, but also prove its worth against the submarine menace, establish its combat effectiveness over land, and support combat ground forces all in less than a decade.

This chapter will examine the relationship between the US Navy and Marine Corps aviation in the years leading up to America's entry in the First World War and before they were solidified into the singular Naval Aviation. Before exploring the relationship between the RAF and USMC aviation, it is necessary to understand how American Naval aviation came into existence and the tensions between the two sea services. To examine this relationship it is imperative to understand that it was not always simple or unified—years of complex political and fiscal conflicts had predated naval aviation. Years in which many prominent members of the Navy and powerful politicians attempted to marginalize, and outright abolish, the Marine Corps had fractured the Navy Department's two armed services. This splintering was but one of several attempts by officials of the Navy, US Army, and legislators to disband the Marine Corps, leading to institutional paranoia within the Corps,

which will be explored further in the chapter. Further, this chapter will determine how the Marine Corps started its own air component despite its well-established mission of ship-born detachments, landing parties, and garrison protection at shore-based barracks, as well as how it came together with its rival service to create a singular aviation asset overcoming the animosity toward, and bias against, the Marines by US Navy officers.

Institutional Paranoia: The Struggle to Retain a Marine Corps

It is suggested that inherent within the Marine Corps is an institutional paranoia, which drives the organization and its leadership to continually remain vigilant against outside forces which would seek to dismantle it. In his 1984 autobiography *First to Fight*, retired Marine Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak summed up the trait of the Marine Corps that has been present since its earliest days. Krulak distilled the underlying thought of the collective Corps well: ‘Beneficial or not, the continuous struggle for a viable existence fixed clearly one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Corps . . . paranoia.’¹¹¹ A character trait carried by many Marines, paranoia began when the first blow was struck to disband the Marine Corps, less than two years after the reestablishment of the Corps.¹¹² Krulak’s history of the Marine Corps’ struggle for survival centres on paranoia and is required reading for all Marines, ensuring that Marines remain ever mindful of their services’ fragility. Krulak used the first battle between the Navy and Marine Corps as a prime example:

One articulate spokesman for those in the Navy antagonistic toward the Marines was Captain Thomas Truxtun [sic], variously of the frigates *Constellation* and *President*. Holding strong views on the propriety of a limited and subordinate posture of Marines at sea, he did not hesitate to cross swords with the Marine commandant and the secretary of the navy. In 1801 he said, “It is high time that a good understanding should take place between the sea officers and Marines and that an end be put to their bickerings. If this cannot be done it may be thought best to do without Marines in ships of the U.S. by adding an equal number of ordinary seaman to the crew of each

¹¹¹ Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the Marine Corps*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 15.

¹¹² Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 32. Well documented is the attempt by Navy Captain Thomas Truxtun of the *Constellation* to have the Marines removed from his ship, as well as the stringent objections made by the Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Marine Corps William Ward Burrows. This is the earliest known attempt to disband the Marine Corps.

ship.” He made his views plain on rank and precedence, too. “The fact is, the youngest sea lieutenant in the Navy takes seniority over the oldest marine officer in the service.” Truxtun’s [sic] words sounded what was to be a century-long running battle with the Marines—a battle that contributed greatly to the paranoia so often identified with the Corps.¹¹³

Understanding this paranoia helps one understand the depth to which every Marine feels as if the Corps will disappear with the stroke of a political pen, if not for their own collective efforts to establish unique and necessary means of warfighting, which separates them from their sibling armed services of the United States. The paranoia is a derivative of the numerous attempts by various organizations and individuals to diminish or outright disband the Marine Corps.

The relationship between the various branches of the armed forces of the United States can be contentious; budget seasons can bring out the worst in the senior members of the military, all of whom are simply vying for the most in defense appropriations from Congress. With the invention of the airplane and its military applications realized, the Navy and Marine Corps were at a precarious time in their histories; the two services needed to get along in order to gain the benefits of adding aviation to their arsenals, or their often-tentative relationship would doom their efforts. As will be discussed, the efforts to disband the Marine Corps by the Navy could have been seen as masked attempts to simply procure more (men, materiel, appropriations) that the Navy seemingly already shared with the smaller Marine Corps.

Noted Marine and Marine Corps historian Robert Debs Heinl’s June 1954 article ‘The Cat with More than Nine Lives’ published in US Naval Institute *Proceedings* provided a detailed history of just where the Corps earned its paranoia to that point in time. After nearly one hundred eighty years of existence, the US Marine Corps had fought off every

¹¹³ Krulak, *First to Fight*, 4.

conceivable attempt to diminish, amalgamate, or outright abolish the smallest of the armed forces—whether the attempts were made by the US Army, Navy, or even presidents—paranoia was the norm for the Commandants, the members of the senior officers, and the supporters of the Corps.¹¹⁴ Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, there had been no fewer than ten attempts to abolish the Marine Corps; often the idea of up-and-coming Naval officers who believed that Marines no longer served a purpose onboard ship or senior Army officers who thought the Corps was encroaching on the roles and responsibilities of the land forces.¹¹⁵ With each successive battle against the detractors, the Marines became increasingly suspicious for the next attempt to abolish the Corps and on the offensive to prove their worth to the public and the government.

This institutional paranoia spread throughout the Corps and continues to the present. The events of the 1908 attempt to disband the Marine Corps are well documented within the published histories of the Marine Corps. Heintz published his popular history in 1962. *Soldiers of the Sea* was the first full history of the Corps that not only included World War II and Korea, but also the developmental events, which impacted the Corps survival such as those in 1908.¹¹⁶ Previous histories, particularly that by Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf, Heintz's professional predecessor, published his compiled history in 1939; however, Metcalf's was simply a straight forward history of the Corps' military engagements.¹¹⁷ Heintz's history was less a work of scholarship or objectivity as he often punctuated the text with his personal colorful commentary, and he frequently interjected cagey comments toward those individuals. In describing one of the many attempts by William F. Fullam to disparage the

¹¹⁴ Robert D. Heintz, "The Cat with More Than Nine Lives," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (June 1954): 659-671.

¹¹⁵ Robert D. Heintz, "The Cat with More Than Nine Lives," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (June 1954): 659. Heintz's article outlines the details of the previous attempts to disband the Marine Corps, the key players involved and the outcomes of each of the attempts since 1829 through 1954.

¹¹⁶ Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962*. (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1962).

¹¹⁷ Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*. (New York: Putnam, 1939). Metcalf had twice been the director of the Marine Corps Historical Program before Heintz's tenure.

Marine Corps, only to be rebuffed, Heidl simply inserted his personal comment, ‘Exit Captain Fullam.’¹¹⁸ However, despite his interjections, Heidl describes the 1908 attempt concisely and clearly. The events of 1908 are also well documented within Allan R. Millett’s *Semper Fidelis* first published in 1980.¹¹⁹ Millett, a retired Marine and university professor, omits Heidl’s vibrant vocabulary and strictly provides a detailed history of the Corps, leaving out commentary or analysis of events. Millett’s history was updated and republished in 1991, further ensuring that younger generations of Marines are fully versed in the formative events in the Corps’ history and that the paranoia remained within the institution.

The events of 1908 built on the growing institutional paranoia of the Marine Corps and with key individuals involved, it can be seen as an event that possibly had an adverse effect on the Chamberlain court martial which will be discussed in Chapter Four and therefore is worth exploring herein. To understand the extent this paranoia played during the Chamberlain affair, one must understand the 1908 assault upon the Corps that took place the decade before the Chamberlain court martial. The latest attempt came on 10 December 1906 when the Bureau of Navigation Chief, Rear Admiral George A. Converse suggested to the House Naval Affairs Committee in his annual report, that Navy vessels no longer required the services of Marines and in fact the Marines would be better served to be stationed collectively onshore and ready for expeditionary duty.¹²⁰ This most recent attempt to remove Marines from Navy ships was a mirror to the failed attempt first made in 1891 by then-junior Naval officer Fullam. The tables had turned, and by 1906 Fullam was no longer a junior officer with little voice in the greater din of Naval politics, and those who thought as he did (dubbed Fullamites) were in well-placed positions to spearhead the task of eliminating the

¹¹⁸ Heidl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 138.

¹¹⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, “General Condition in the Navy,” *The United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces* Vol 44 (15 December 1906): 421-422.

Corps, including Commander William Sowden Sims, Naval Aide to the president.¹²¹ The small Corps of the pre-First World War period was susceptible to amalgamation into the Army if not outright dismantling. Technological changes and better standards within the Navy no longer required a Corps of Marines to operate rifles from fighting tops or to maintain good order and discipline onboard ships of the line. Gone were the earliest roles and missions of the Marines, which will be discussed further.

Fullam entered the fray with his own letter to the Secretary of the Navy echoing the words of Admiral Converse and was buoyed by his well-placed friend, Commander Sims, a most aggressive member of the reform movement in the Navy. Through Sims, Fullam's argument that Marines were no longer needed on ships was put before the president. Sims submitted a lengthy report to Roosevelt outlining the reasons for the removal of the Corps; he cited the two previous recommendations by the Bureau of Navigation to remove Marines from ships, which were beat back by Marine Commandant George F. Elliott.¹²² Sims suggested a surgical approach to removing the Marines; by-pass Congress and use the presidential power of Executive Order. 'The effect of removing the Marines from the ships would be electrical, because the demand is universal.'¹²³

While Sims was an active participant within the movement to remove Marines from the ships or disband the Corps altogether, the biographical works published on Sims omit this part of his life. Both Morison's *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy* and Benjamin F. Armstrong's *21st Century Sims* do not cover the controversy stirred by Sims while serving in the Theodore Roosevelt White House.¹²⁴ Simple reasoning can be used to determine a

¹²¹ Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), 178.

¹²² William S. Sims to Theodore Roosevelt, 16 September 1908. William S. Sims Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

¹²³ Jack Shulimson and Graham A. Cosmas, 'Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Sea-Going Mission,' *Marine Corps Gazette* 65, no. 11 (November 1981): 55.

¹²⁴ Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942) and Benjamin F. Armstrong, ed., *21st Century Sims: Innovation, Education, and Leadership for the Modern Era*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015).

possible reason why this was the case by reading the acknowledgements of both works. Neither author consulted any persons other than those of high rank within the US Navy (retired and active) and those persons closely associated with the US Navy; leaving out the close relationship with the Marine Corps, thus overlooking this event in both service's history. Further, as will be discussed, the attempt was unsuccessful and therefore such a blemish possibly not desired to be remembered.

By 1908, the US Army added its opinion to the discussion when Army Chief of Staff Major General Leonard Wood proposed that the Marine Corps should be incorporated into the Army's Coast Artillery. Wood, a favorite of President Theodore Roosevelt, had served with Roosevelt in the famed San Juan Hill expedition of the Spanish-American War. The two Rough Riders were in agreement that the Marine Corps carried too much influence with policy-makers in Washington, was self-aggrandizing, and that the Navy and Army would benefit from the latter's absorption of the Corps.¹²⁵ With the stroke of a pen and Executive Order 969 of 12 November 1908, President Roosevelt defined the duties of the Marine Corps and excluded the shipboard duties, once the hallmark of the Marine Corps.¹²⁶

Initial reaction to the order within the rank and file of the Corps was acceptance; however, it was soon followed by suspicion and fear that this pen-stroke was only the first step in the total abolition of the Corps. The president's own words to his aide validated the fear the Corps felt.

I do not hesitate to stay that they [the Marines] should be absorbed into the army and no vestige of their organization should be allowed to remain. They cannot get along with the navy, and as a separate command with the army the conditions would be intolerable.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, *Commandants of the Marine Corps*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 158.

¹²⁶ Marine Corps History Division, 'Historic Speeches and Documents,' Executive Order 969, <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/historydivision/Pages/Speeches/DefiningDutiesoftheMC.aspx> (Accessed 30 September 2013).

¹²⁷ Capt A. W. Butt, US Army, to Mrs. L. F. Butt, November 19, 1908, in Lawrence F. Abbot, ed., *The Letters of Archie Butt* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1924), 184–185.

On 28 November 1908, President Roosevelt confided in his friend General Wood further echoing his thoughts on the Marine Corps' position,

I think the marines should be incorporated in the Army. It is an excellent corps and it would be of great benefit to both services that the incorporation should take place.¹²⁸

Throughout the end of 1908, a flurry of letters was exchanged between Fullam, Wood, Major General Commandant Elliott, and the president regarding the position of the Corps in the US military. In addition to the correspondence, a group of Marine officers with political and familial connections joined together in order to save the Corps. Well-known and well-decorated Marines such as Colonel Charles H. Lauchheimer (Adjutant and Inspector), Colonel Frank L. Denny (Quartermaster of the Marine Corps), Colonel George Richards (Assistant Paymaster) and Lieutenant Colonel Charles McCawley (son of former Colonel Commandant Charles L. McCawley) were brought together under the informal leadership of Colonel Littleton 'Tony' Waller Tazewell Waller, Major Wendell C. Neville (future Commandant) and most importantly Captain Smedley D. Butler.¹²⁹

The battle for the Corps came to a head on 7 January 1909 when the House of Representatives Naval Affairs Committee commenced hearings on the annual appropriations—more of an inquisition against the White House's actions against the Marines rather than simple budgetary discussions. Each of the Marines listed above testified before the committee, bringing to bear their connections, most especially Butler whose own father, Senator Thomas Butler, chaired the committee.¹³⁰ *The Washington Post* newspaper understood the attitudes of the military and Congress well. In the 18 January 1909 article 'Removal of the Marines,' the newspaper summarized the Navy's position efficiently, 'If the question were left entirely to the most competent and responsible officers of the navy, it is

¹²⁸ Millett and Shulimson, *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 158.

¹²⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 141–142.

¹³⁰ Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Naval Academy and Marine Corps, Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives on Status of the U.S. Marine Corps, 61st Congress, 1909.

likely that Congress would find the President well supported in his position.’¹³¹ Of all the high-profile names the Corps put in front of the committee, the most convincing was that of Colonel Richards who stated that it would cost an additional \$425,000 to replace the Marines with sailors on board ships. Three months of testimony by Marines and its detractors ensued. However, on 3 March 1909, Congress passed the Naval Appropriations Act of 1910—it included the provision for the Corps:

Provided that no part of the appropriations herein made for the Marine Corps shall be expended for the purposes for which said appropriations are made unless officers and enlisted men shall serve as heretofore on board all battleships and armored cruisers and also upon such other vessels of the Navy as the President may direct, in detachments of not less than eight per centum of the strength of the enlisted men of the Navy on said vessels.¹³²

The Marine Corps was at a crossroads in which a new mission must be found, or face the Fullamites again. The battle against the Navy and the Army left an indelible mark on the members of the Corps—an institutional paranoia that remains today. At every budget hearing, and during times of economic crisis, the Corps immediately begins an offensive campaign to defend the mission, the size, and the need for the US Marine Corps. As aviation had yet to become the integrated combat asset it is today, if the Marines were permanently removed from the ships, it was a very real possibility that the Corps’ aviation would have never existed and possibly the Corps would have eventually foundered. The removal of the Marines from the Navy’s ships was the first step in the process of eradicating the Corps from the US military. As the removal did not succeed, and aviation took root in the Marine Corps, the service was seemingly safe from its detractors. The 1908 attempt to disband the Marine Corps showed that paranoia was a necessary tool for the Marines; the very survival of the service depended upon members being vigilant and quick to react. Just three years later, the

¹³¹ Anonymous. “Removal of the Marines,” *The Washington Post*, 18 January 1909, 6.

¹³² Marine Corps History Division, ‘Historic Speeches and Documents,’ Rider to Appropriations Bill, <https://www.usmc.edu/historydivision/rider-appropriations-bill> (Accessed 10 August 2013).

Marine Corps sent its first Marine to learn to fly. This new technology added to the tenuous relations between the Navy and Marine Corps.

Brief Historical Overview: Aviation Comes to the Marine Corps

It is imperative to understand the background and history of the US Marine Corps, and its aviation to understand fully how the Marines found their air combat element in France and flying with the British less than a decade later. How and why did the United States establish a Marine Corps as well as how and why did this body of sea soldiers adopt aviation, and from whom did the idea that the Corps needed aviation originate? The US Marine Corps' beginnings, constituted on 11 July 1798, were much the same following the paths set by the British and Dutch Royal Marines that were founded more than a century before. The responsibilities of maintaining good order and discipline of the sailors, serving as snipers from the tops of the sails and boarding parties when going against enemy ships were added to the traditional ones, and with that the Marines found themselves an integral part of the Navy. As technology advanced, the cannon aboard ship became increasingly labour intensive and swelled in number and size; therefore, the Marines added operating secondary batteries of guns to their list of responsibilities.¹³³

A new mission sprung forth from the 10 June 1898 amphibious landing of the 1st Battalion of Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Huntington (dubbed Huntington's Battalion) at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during the Spanish-American War. The landing and taking of Guantanamo Bay foretold the future of the Corps. Rapid deployment of Marines whereupon the force would take an objective from the sea in an amphibious landing. Colonel Commandant Charles Heywood was quick to seize this potential mission for his Marines as it 'showed how important and useful it is to have a body of troops which can be quickly mobilized and sent on board transports, fully equipped for service ashore and afloat,

¹³³ For detailed history and founding of the US Marine Corps see Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* and Millett's *Semper Fidelis*.

to be used at the discretion of the commanding admiral.’¹³⁴ Witnessing the Guantanamo Bay landing, the General Board,* proposed the creation of a Marine battalion that could defend advance bases in support of naval forces and freeing the Sailors to remain on the ships instead of being added to the landings. The Advanced Base Force concept, as it was known, stated that the Marines were the most suited for immediate needs of establishing advanced bases, creating quick defenses, gun emplacements, and laying mines.¹³⁵ With the demonstrated skill of Huntington’s battalion and the increased territorial possessions of the United States in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean, it was never more imperative for the United States to have the ability to project its naval power from the sea and maintain it once acquired. The Marine Corps fit the need at a critical time.

In 1901, a detachment of Marines under Major Henry C. Haines stationed at Newport, Rhode Island, were directed to study advanced base operations thereby building on the experiences of Huntington’s Battalion and the desire of the General Board the year earlier. The next step was the creation of a school for Marines to learn the skills necessary for advanced base work. A site in New London, Connecticut, for the Advanced Base School was chosen as early as 1906; however, due to exigencies of the service, as well as troubles of inter-service rivalry, it was five years before ten Marine officers were assigned as students at the location.

In the spring of 1910, the General Board requested that the Secretary of the Navy George von Meyer direct the Marine Corps to assume responsibility for advanced base equipment located at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Subic Bay, Philippines. This was soon followed by the directive to the Commandant from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy

¹³⁴ Millett and Shulimson, *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 132.

* The General Board of the Navy was essentially a general staff; created in March 1900. It was comprised of Navy flag officers and at times the Commandant of the Marine Corps. It was disbanded in 1951.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 137. There is inconsistency in the correspondence of the General Board, Secretary of Navy, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps relative to the use of the term ‘Advanced’ or ‘Advance’ as it pertains to Bases, Forces, and the like. It is intended that ‘Advanced’ be used throughout this text.

Beekman Winthrop, which stated, ‘You will prepare for the care and custody of advanced base material and take necessary steps to instruct the officers and men under your command in the use of this material.’¹³⁶ In the following year, the Advanced Base School was relocated to Philadelphia Navy Yard where Marines were already garrisoned and equipped for expeditionary duty; thus could quickly board ships for exercises or real-world applications of the new concept.¹³⁷

No detailed history of the Advanced Base Concept has been researched or written. To date, the various general histories of the Corps, previously discussed, specifically those of Metcalf and Heinl, provide little details or background. However, Kenneth J. Clifford’s *Progress and Purpose* (1973), while short, does provide the key facts and personalities of the creation and mission.¹³⁸ Clifford’s history recounts the facts and events without commentary or analysis, and therefore does not connect aviation with the Advanced Base Force Concept directly, rather simply as events that took place during the same decade.

A keen witness and student of the Advanced Base Force concept was Second Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham, who was assigned to the Advanced Base School in November 1911, where he conceived a potential role for aviation. A self-taught pilot prior to entering the Marine Corps, there is no doubt Cunningham was an apt pupil in the methods of advance base work and the potentiality of integrating aviation into same. Six months later, in May 1912, upon his request Cunningham was reassigned to the Aviation Camp at Annapolis for Naval aviation training.¹³⁹ Cunningham knew that aviation could be a valuable asset in the Corps’ arsenal; despite the Marine Corps’ lack of aircraft and trained pilots, Cunningham could still see the potential. Writing to his peers in 1916’s *Marine Corps Gazette*,

¹³⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 276.

¹³⁷ Clyde H. Metcalf, ‘A History of the Education of Marine Officers,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* 20, no. 2 (May 1936): 47.

¹³⁸ Kenneth J. Clifford, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the United States Marine Corps 1900–1970*. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1973).

¹³⁹ Record of Service, Alfred A. Cunningham, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, Missouri.

Cunningham tied the Advanced Base Force concept together with aviation. ‘Arrangements are also being made to furnish them [newly recruited Marine student pilots] with land machines for carrying on practical work with the Advanced Based troops.’¹⁴⁰ Cunningham asserted that aviation was a natural addition to advanced base work; stating that the planes will cooperate well in the following ways:

Offshore patrols to prevent surprise raids by enemy light forces.
Anti-submarine patrols.
Spotting for shore batteries in attacks by enemy ships.
Photography, bombing, and torpedoing enemy craft and bases within reach.¹⁴¹

He further included mine detecting and charting enemy mines as part of his vision for aviation. Additionally, Cunningham knew that the fundamental mission of the Corps was to place individual Marines on the ground in combat, and that aviation was a supporting arm of the combat forces. ‘It is fully realized that the only excuse for aviation in any service is its usefulness in assisting the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their operations.’¹⁴² As Marine aviation is actually a part of Naval aviation, supporting the infantry on the ground in combat was not a forgone conclusion, and thus Cunningham’s comments demonstrate his innovative thinking on behalf of the Corps.

The new mission of the Advanced Base Force brought forth by the Navy gave Marine Corps aviation an added purpose and the ability to fill a niche, which gave the fledgling air service meaning at a time of uncertainty in its usefulness. It may seem that the sea soldiers were an unlikely source of aviators unless in support of the fleet; however, the Marine Corps’ aviation program grew out of the Navy’s need for troops to take and hold advanced bases in an era when ships of the line were incapable of unlimited sailing without refueling. Ships required coal for steam to power their advances across the oceans of the globe; without

¹⁴⁰ Alfred A. Cunningham, “Aviation in the Navy,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 1, no. 4 (December 1916): 336.

¹⁴¹ Alfred A. Cunningham, “Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 5, no. 3 (September 1920): 230.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 222.

friendly locations to refuel, the fleet was useless.¹⁴³ Landing Marines to take and hold these locations and other basing locations around the world extended the reach of the US Navy, and this was the heart of the Advanced Base Force concept. The Corps expanded its capabilities, allowing it the ability to protect the Marines on the ground from the air, as well as from the fleet at sea. Marine Corps aviation ensured the longevity of the Corps in a time when its mere survival was in doubt.¹⁴⁴

As the first Marine aviator the Marine Corps holds Cunningham in high esteem, and even though his articles were published a century ago, they remain a valued piece of the Corps' history and are still cited in various doctrinal articles found in *Marine Corps Gazette* and Naval Institute *Proceedings*. The official history of Marine Corps aviation by Johnson remains the easy reference for those simply requiring the basics.¹⁴⁵ Like many of the official histories published by the service, it lacks analysis but remains useful nonetheless. Between Cunningham's articles and Johnson's official history, Edwin McClellan's article 'The Birth and Infancy of Marine Corps Aviation' published in 1931 remained the most definitive history.¹⁴⁶ Within the McClellan personal papers collection are the letters between McClellan and Cunningham, in which the two discuss the earliest days of Marine aviation; the letters act as an informal oral history interview between the historian of the Corps and the first aviator of the Corps. Of the histories and articles published on aviation and the Advanced Base Force concept, only Cunningham tied the two together as an additional, viable method of aiding those Marines on the ground seizing and then defending newly acquired territory.

Creating Naval Aviation: The Integration of Marine and Navy Aviation Before the First World War

¹⁴³ Allan Westcott, ed., *Mahan on Naval Warfare. Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1918), 259.

¹⁴⁴ Kenneth J. Clifford, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the United States Marine Corps, 1900-1970*. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1973), 8.

¹⁴⁵ Edward C. Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years 1912-1940*. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1977).

¹⁴⁶ Edwin N. McClellan, 'The Birth and Infancy of Marine Aviation,' *Marine Corps Gazette* 15, no. 5 (May 1931).

In 1911, when then-1st Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham was stationed at Marine Barracks, Philadelphia, he was already a man of the air having become a balloon pilot eight years before under his own initiative and expense. His desire to fly airplanes drove him to strike a bargain with a cash-strapped inventor who had built his own aircraft. Cunningham 'leased the airplane for twenty-five dollars a month,' and dubbed the craft Noisy Nan due to the airplane's extreme noise.¹⁴⁷ Cunningham's experience with his homemade aircraft yielded only short straight flights; turns were impossible; just getting the craft into the air took much willpower and skill on the Marine's part.

I called her everything in God's name to go up. I pleaded with her. I caressed,
I prayed to her, and I cursed that flighty Old Maid to lift her skirts and hike,
but she never would.¹⁴⁸

He learned the fundamentals of flying from these early attempts.

After joining the Aero Club of Pennsylvania in 1911, Cunningham's new connections to Philadelphia high society proved useful; he gave talks and presentations to the members explaining how the Marine Corps could utilize the new technology. Soon state and federal politicians were contacting fellow Philadelphian Major General Commandant William P. Biddle directly; Cunningham eventually found himself called to Headquarters to explain to the senior Marine. 'What are you doing up there in Philadelphia? The politicians are trying to get a Marine Corps Flying Field established at Philadelphia and it looks as if you were at the bottom of it all.'¹⁴⁹ These early days of negotiating with Headquarters Marine Corps and learning the art of the soft sell with politicians and other politicians certainly proved useful to Cunningham in his future role as the head of Marine Aviation.

The Major General Commandant finally acquiesced to Cunningham, and on 16 May 1912 the amateur flyer was detached from the Advanced Base School at Philadelphia, and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 11–12.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

ordered to the aviation camp the Navy had set up at Annapolis, to become a seaplane student pilot.¹⁵⁰ Cunningham joined an already established cluster of naval aviation pioneers, which included Lieutenant John H. Towers, US Navy, his instructor.¹⁵¹ It was not long after that the initial group was joined by Second Lieutenant Bernard L. Smith, another Marine and gifted pilot. This founding cadre of pilots and their cooperation with one another proved instrumental to ensuring Marine Corps aviation was involved in the fight against the German U-boat menace. How these men worked and flew with one another was what naval aviation hinged upon in these earliest days; their failure could have meant the complete failure of Marine Corps aviation.

The history of these earliest days of naval aviation have been well documented by various historians, such as Turnbull and Lord in their *History of United States Naval Aviation* published in 1949.¹⁵² While the contribution of the Marine Corps is not completely omitted, Turnbull and Lord do not provide the level of detail one would expect for history of naval (vice navy) aviation. It is not a surprise as both men were senior officers within the United States Navy who credit their efforts to a significant number of prominent admirals for their assistance; despite the title, their main focus was the Navy's aviation.

In these early days of aviation, personalities caused conflict and those who felt as if they were being overlooked were quarrelsome, acted in prima-donna fashion and caused trouble for all those who would listen. Navy Captain Washington I. Chambers, de facto head of Naval Aviation in Washington under the Secretary of the Navy, warned Lieutenant Theodore G. Ellyson, senior naval officer in charge of training, regarding the Marines in correspondence—Cunningham in particular. ‘In regard to the Marines, we must be

¹⁵⁰ Record of Service, Alfred A. Cunningham, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, Missouri. (Hereafter cited as Cunningham Military Service Record).

¹⁵¹ Clark G. Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers, The Struggle for Naval Air Supremacy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 54.

¹⁵² Archibald D. Turnbull and Clifford L. Lord, *History of United States Naval Aviation*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949).

diplomatic, but the first serious indication that Cunningham exhibits of big head, or lack of willingness to cooperate and I will ask for his detachment.’¹⁵³ As Cunningham’s training officer, Towers was required to deal with the possibility of Cunningham’s potentially contentious attitude, but he found himself pleasantly surprised when the Marine turned out to be against type. ‘Towers was pleased that the marine Cunningham had not been uncooperative . . . he had not only worked with Towers and performed well but also helped him [Towers] court marines in the fleet.’¹⁵⁴ The years of negotiating his entry into aviation while in Philadelphia had been advantageous for Cunningham after all.

Early in 1913, the entire aviation component departed Annapolis for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with the mission of convincing the senior Naval officers in the fleet of the viability and potential uses of aircraft. Towers, as senior aviator in charge of the mission, kept his supervisor in Washington apprised of the situation and events. If Towers held any animosity toward the Marine contingent, he could have easily sabotaged it after any incidents such as crashes or lack of airmanship. A prime example of his support of the Marines came in his 23 January 1913 report to Chambers, head of Naval Aviation at Navy Headquarters:

This morning the wind came at 8.45 [sic], and caught Cunningham alone, and smith [sic] and me, each with a passenger. Cunningham was forced to the water, could not turn his machine, and had to cut off and be towed in. I made the hangers all right with Bellanger, but Smith landed too far out and could not make it, so finally made a beach around the Point, where this machine now is and will have to stay until late this evening. Smith and I on separate occasions got caught out the same way last week. This is just to illustrate how suddenly it comes.¹⁵⁵

Had Towers wished to discredit the Cunningham and Smith, his letter need not explain that he was also easily caught in such conditions and that in the end it was not the fault of the big head Cunningham or the novice Smith.

¹⁵³ Washington I. Chambers to Theodore G. Ellyson, 4 October 1912. John H. Towers Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Emphasis within original. (Hereafter cited as Towers Papers).

¹⁵⁴ Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers*, 59.

¹⁵⁵ John H. Towers to Washington I. Chambers, 23 Jan 1913, Towers Papers.

While at Guantanamo Bay, the pilots took many senior officers aloft in attempt to convince them of the safety of aviation and the potential uses by the fleet. During this period, Towers' attitude toward the Marines went beyond simply tolerating them. 'He made friends with two marine sergeants,' later recalling that during midday siesta breaks they 'would guide us up the Guantanamo River to large wooded areas where there was fine wild guinea shooting and also to a fresh water lake alive with ducks' to enhance the unit's already famous cuisine.¹⁵⁶

Despite Towers' own personal interactions and agreeable relations with the Marines, others in the Navy, including Ellyson, remained skeptical; it was almost as if Ellyson was trying to find any indication that the Marines were not performing and could therefore be transferred. While still at Guantanamo Bay, Ellyson questioned Towers by letter in late February 1913 inquiring, 'Why is it Herbster (Navy pilot) has so many people under instruction and Cunningham has none?'¹⁵⁷ Towers explanation was succinct and to the point in his response and certainly in defense of the Marine. 'Cunningham has two officers of the Fleet, and Smith and Chevalier, under instruction. He is getting along very well.'¹⁵⁸ Another opportunity to discredit Cunningham, and the Marines, was passed over by Towers.

In spring 1913, the aviators returned to Annapolis to continue their efforts of learning to detect submarines and training the increasing number of students. In August of that year, Cunningham announced his resignation from aviation duties 'because my fiancée will not consent to marry me unless I give up flying.'¹⁵⁹ With Cunningham's departure from Annapolis and flying, Bernard Smith became the senior Marine aviator and was soon joined by the Corps' third pilot—Second Lieutenant William N. McIlvain. With Cunningham transferred, the building and maintaining of the relationship between the Navy and Marine

¹⁵⁶ Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers*, 59.

¹⁵⁷ Theodore G. Ellyson to John H. Towers, 25 February 1913, Towers Papers.

¹⁵⁸ John H. Towers to Theodore G. Ellyson, 4 March 1913, Towers Papers.

¹⁵⁹ Cunningham Military Service Record.

Corps was left to Smith. Despite Smith's long service with the Corps, no personal correspondence or diary remains to provide his thoughts or personal recollections on his efforts to integrate the two aviation components.

On 1 October 1913, Cunningham was transferred from Annapolis to Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington where he was appointed acting assistant Quartermaster.¹⁶⁰ Despite Cunningham's transfer from active flying, he was still called upon by the Department of the Navy as the Corps' expert and his services were requested to assist in 'drawing up a comprehensive plan for the organization of a Naval Aeronautic Service' just the next month.¹⁶¹ Unfortunately, his record does not indicate the length of time Cunningham served on the committee, but in February 1914 he was once again called upon by the Department of the Navy to render assistance, this time to aid 'Naval Constructor Holden C. Richardson, U.S. Navy, in trying out Flying Boat D-2, which is now at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., undergoing alterations.'¹⁶² Cunningham quickly became the Marine Corps' expert and additional tasks continued to increase as war in Europe expanded. It is readily apparent that any reservations about Cunningham held by the Navy's aviation headquarters had been overcome by his admirable service at Annapolis and Guantanamo Bay, and by the supportive efforts of Towers.

In Cunningham's absence, Smith and McIlvain worked to introduce aviation to their fellow Marines. The earliest vestiges of what is known today as the Marine Air-Ground Task Force came into being when on 3 January 1914 the Marine Section of the Naval Flying School consisting of Lieutenants Smith and McIlvain with ten enlisted mechanics, embarked at Philadelphia on the transport USS *Hancock*.¹⁶³ Equipped with a flying boat and an

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Major General Commandant to Alfred A. Cunningham, 19 November 1913, Cunningham Military Service Record.

¹⁶² Major General Commandant to Alfred A. Cunningham, 10 February 1914, Cunningham Military Service Record.

¹⁶³ The MAGTF is the Marine Corps principal organizational construct for conducting missions across the range of military operations. They are balanced combined-arms force packages containing command, ground, aviation, and logistics elements.

amphibian drawn from the aircraft at Annapolis, the Marines sailed for Culebra, Puerto Rico, to join the newly created Advance Base Brigade in the annual Atlantic Fleet exercises. While their infantry counterparts established defensive works, repelled mock amphibious attacks, and withstood simulated bombardment, the mechanics established a seaplane base at Culebra as Smith and McIlvain flew reconnaissance and scouting missions.¹⁶⁴ This exercise was the first instance of the Corps utilizing combined arms power—today a staple of Marine Corps operational capabilities.

During the month long stay in Puerto Rico, nearly every day Smith and McIlvain took the opportunity to introduce aviation to the officers of the Advanced Base Brigade by taking the men aloft ‘over Culebra and its defenses to show the ease and speed of aerial reconnaissance and range of vision open to the eyes of the aerial scout.’¹⁶⁵ One of the officers given the first-hand opportunity was Lieutenant Colonel John A. Lejeune who flew for fourteen minutes; Lejeune was destined to lead the Marines in combat in France and later to take the helm of the Corps as Commandant.

The Marine pilots were not simply working with their own fellow Marines; they continued their efforts of integrating with their Navy counterparts as well. This was evident in August 1914 when Smith was reassigned to Paris as the Assistant Naval Attaché and his former tutor Towers was across the English Channel in London serving in the same capacity. While the United States had not yet entered the war, Smith toured the Western Front and witnessed aviation under combat conditions.¹⁶⁶ The American Naval Attaché at Paris, Commander William R. Sayles, in 1917, reported officially that he considered Lieutenant Smith, ‘under practically war conditions, had as much knowledge of the theory and practice of aviation as any officer in the world and that he would be invaluable to the country on

¹⁶⁴ Johnson, *Marine Aviation: The Early Years 1912–1940*, 6.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Edwin N. McClellan, ‘Marine Corps Aviation,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* 16, no. 2 (August 1931): 58.

aviation duty.’¹⁶⁷ Towers spent an increasing amount of his time with the RNAS and toured British air stations and manufacturers, when permitted.¹⁶⁸ Aviators Towers and Smith came together in November 1915 in Paris and spent the next five days comparing notes from the past year as well as visiting French aviation stations and manufacturers.¹⁶⁹ Towers’ and Smith’s collaborations while stationed as assistant naval attachés in London and Paris, respectively, produced excellent working relationships and partnerships that further integrated the two air services. The two pilots ‘compared notes on the events of the past year and visited French air stations and factories.’¹⁷⁰ This positive working relationship between the Navy and Marine Corps continued once they returned to the United States and were both assigned to the Navy Department. Cunningham’s own proposal for the Northern Bombing Group was given a positive endorsement and support from Towers in his billet at the Navy Department. This simply would not have been possible if Cunningham or Smith had exhibited a big head in the very early days; in the infancy of Marine aviation, good relationships were key with regard to obtaining appropriations and a steady stream of qualified officer candidates for flying as poor leadership or lacking abilities may have been an easy excuse for the Corps to end the experiment. Because the Marine Corps had yet to realise the benefits of aviation to the service, Cunningham’s deftness with office politics and desire to attain additional skills were instrumental to its survivability in the earliest days of its existence. This skill served Cunningham later upon the arrival of Marine aviation in France as will be discussed further in this chapter.

With Cunningham and Smith reassigned, McIlvain remained behind as the senior Marine aviator. McIlvain’s forward thinking lead him to the inescapable conclusion that Marines should fly more than seaplanes. In November 1914, McIlvain proposed land flying

¹⁶⁷ Anonymous, ‘Marine Corps Aviation, a Record of Achievement,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* 15, no. 3 (November 1930): 37.

¹⁶⁸ Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers*, 89–98.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁷⁰ Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers*, 99.

was a skill that every Marine aviator should possess; he requested that he be temporarily detailed to the Army Aviation School at San Diego for a course in land flying.

My reason for requesting this, is that I think Marine officers doing any flying, should be able to pilot either over land or over water machines, so that in case of an expedition, they would be of some use to the Marine Corps on land, as well as the Navy at sea.¹⁷¹

While his request was disapproved, it is readily apparent that, like Cunningham, McIlvain was thinking of the advantages to the Corps of pilots with both sea and land flying abilities.

Cunningham's self-imposed banishment from flying was short-lived; in February 1915, he requested orders reassigning him to aviation duty. 'My reason for making this request is my interest in and knowledge of this work and my good record while engaged in it as shown by my efficiency reports.'¹⁷² Cunningham's request was approved, and on 11 May 1915 he was reassigned to Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, Florida, for duty as a student aviator. Soon thereafter in spring 1916, Cunningham applied and was accepted to the Army's Signal Corps Aviation School in San Diego, California, where he was given instruction in land flying.¹⁷³ His assignment to the Army school made him the first officer of the Marine Corps and the Navy to be ordered to land flying. His assignment to the Army school was fortuitous for the Marine; he learned further skills that would be utilized once the United States finally entered the war the following year. It is possible that Cunningham's training in land flying, and his work with Advanced Base operations lead to the August 1916 correspondence sent by Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels to Secretary of War requesting permission to train naval aviators at the Army School. 'It is desired to train a limited number of naval aviators to fly land-machines, in order to provide for Advanced Base Operation of the Navy, and to have officers of the Marine Corps so trained that they will be

¹⁷¹ William M. McIlvain to Major General Commandant, 19 November 1914, Record of Service, William M. McIlvain, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁷² Alfred A. Cunningham to Major General Commandant, 25 February 1915, Cunningham Military Service Record.

¹⁷³ Alfred A. Cunningham to Major General Commandant via Commander of the Air Service, 28 April 1916, Cunningham Military Service Record.

available when the Marines are acting with the Army.’¹⁷⁴ Surprisingly, despite previous animosity towards the Corps, the Army approved.

The timing could not have been better for the Marine Corps or Cunningham while stationed in California, as he was selected by the Department of the Navy to be the aviation representative on the Commission on Navy Yards and Stations in the autumn of 1916.

The Commission requires the assistance of an expert aviator in the selection of aviation bases on the Pacific Coast. First Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham, U.S.M.C., now on duty at the Signal Corps’ Aviation School, San Diego, California, has been recommended to the Commission as being particularly well qualified to render this assistance.¹⁷⁵

It appears Cunningham’s charm and congenial methods had proven to beat back the ill feelings between the Navy and Marine Corps, for at the end of his tenure with the Commission in early 1917 he received a letter of commendation for his work. ‘He [Cunningham] was so agreeable personally that each and every member regrets his departure.’¹⁷⁶

It was entirely possible that both the US Navy and US Marine Corps could have created their own, and wholly separate branches of aviation in 1912. These sister services had moved further apart with the 1908 crisis, and much bad blood existed between the officers of each, which could have made it an easy decision not to create a single maritime aviation component. However, as demonstrated, through the efforts of a few forward-thinking men, the Corps and Navy were able to create a single, yet somewhat independent, aviation asset within the Department of the Navy. Cunningham’s early efforts to have the Marine Corps adopt aviation for potential use with the Advanced Base Force and his adept and personable skills with the Navy fliers allowed him to start the cautious process of integrating the two into Naval Aviation. While the 1908 crisis did leave a sour attitude among many Navy officers,

¹⁷⁴ Edwin N. McClellan, ‘Marine Corps Aviation,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* 16, no. 4 (February 1932): 45.

¹⁷⁵ J.M. Helm to Major General Commandant, 8 November 1916, Cunningham Military Service Record.

¹⁷⁶ J. M. Helm to Major General Commandant, 24 January 1917, Alfred A. Cunningham Personal Papers, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. (Hereafter cited as Cunningham Papers).

men like Towers were not predisposed and simply trained the Marines as he did any other naval officer.

Cunningham's positive attitude and willingness to serve on numerous Navy Department committees proved the Marines were agreeable partners and not the adversaries of the 1908 crisis. The relationship between Cunningham, Smith, and Towers was key to the establishment of Marine Corps aviation. If any of these men had been replaced by a weaker or disagreeable personality, the entire endeavor would have been scrapped, as aviation was still considered experimental by the Marine Corps and Navy. Aviation required the careful, methodical, and strong-handed administration that Cunningham possessed; coupled with his desire to use what the Navy had to offer in order to get Marine Corps aviation established, he was a powerful force with which to reckon.

McIlvain and Cunningham pressed ahead to learn land flying and thus added another skill to the arsenal of the aviators. The stage was set, and when America entered the First World War in April 1917, the Marines quickly fielded two combat aviation units to battle the submarine menace in the Atlantic. The 1st Aeronautic Company was deployed to Ponta Delgada, Azores, in January 1918—the first American aviation component in the fight against Germany—and the First Marine Aviation Force was deployed to France along the Channel Coast the following July.¹⁷⁷ At the conclusion of the war, the exploits of the Marine aviators in Europe had become ingrained within the Corps' history; two Medals of Honor were presented to Marine aviators, several combat resupply missions established the Corps' land-flying ability and the agreeable cooperation with the Navy solidified the integration of the two, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Getting Marine Corps Aviation into the First World War: Antisubmarine Warfare and the Creation of the Northern Bombing Group, 1917–1918

¹⁷⁷ Johnson, *Marine Aviation*, 25–26.

From the time he was transferred to Annapolis until his retirement sixteen years later, Cunningham was tireless in his pursuit of furthering the cause of Marine Corps aviation. Cunningham's crowning achievement up to the entry of the United States into the First World War was the creation of Marine Corps aviation and the integration of it with the Navy's aviation. Through sheer hard work, compromise, a congenial attitude, and at times the luck of being in the right place at the right time, Cunningham managed not only to have aviation accepted by Marines but demonstrated that aviation could be a valuable combat asset of the Marine Corps. With the assistance from his fellow Marines, Smith and McIlvain, the Corps' aviation contingent was set on firm footings in advance of the United States' entry into the war. Now that the Marine Corps had its own aviation component, how would these Marine aviators be utilized and would the experiment work in the favor of the Corps is to be discussed, in order to understand how the Marines became involved in the air war and what mission they were to accomplish.

Just months before America's entry into the war, Cunningham was ordered to Philadelphia Navy Yard in connection with the establishment of the Corps' Aeronautic Advance Base Unit.¹⁷⁸ Four months later, war was declared and that same day, he was issued orders directing him for special additional duty to assist the Department of the Navy in locating suitable sites for East Coast air stations; his experiences on the West Coast the previous year had proved fruitful.¹⁷⁹ Cunningham toured the coast as requested until October 1917 when Major General Commandant George Barnett issued orders directing him to proceed 'to Paris, France . . . for temporary duty in connection with obtaining information concerning aviation.'¹⁸⁰ His own diary, published by the Marine Corps' Historical Program decades after his death, does not cover the facts leading to his assignment overseas; however,

¹⁷⁸ Chief of Naval Operations to Major General Commandant, 30 January 1917, Cunningham Papers.

¹⁷⁹ Chief of Naval Operations to Major General Commandant, 7 April 1917, Cunningham Papers.

¹⁸⁰ Major General Commandant to Alfred A. Cunningham, 30 October 1917, Cunningham Military Service Record.

understanding Cunningham's firm belief in Marine aviation, it is likely he had spent considerable time and energy convincing the Commandant of the need for the assignment.

During his crossing of the Atlantic, Cunningham witnessed the scourge of the German U-boat; it was then he could fully understand the role naval aviation should play in the war:

This looking for submarines is the most nerve straining duty I ever did. You must see them first, and, as their periscope is very small, the odds are against you. You feel that the slightest negligence on your part might lose the ship and all on board. I freely strained my eyesight while on watch today. I am confident that I saw the periscope of a submarine today, but, as it did not reappear I might have been mistaken. The ten minutes after I saw it were anxious ones.¹⁸¹

While his diary is full of personal comments meant for his wife, there is little in the way of commentary on the locations Cunningham visited or specifics regarding observations that could potentially benefit Marine Corps aviation; however, Cunningham's forty-six-page report to the Major General Commandant contained his observations. It can be easily understood that over the course of six weeks, the site visits to French aviation schools, French aviation units at the front, as well as British aviation schools and squadrons on the Channel Coast left an impression on Cunningham. During the course of his special duty, Cunningham was afforded unfettered access to the French and English pilots, given opportunities to fly in operations over the trenches and to participate in aerial combat against the Germans. During the six weeks, Cunningham visited with officers of the RFC and the RNAS, the Société Pour L'Aviation et ses Dérivés (SPAD) Airplane Factory, the US Navy Air Station at Dunkirk, and various British and French aviation and gunnery schools to form his opinions and recommendations for his report.¹⁸²

Cunningham witnessed that French aviation, with the able skill of the pilots of the

¹⁸¹ Alfred A. Cunningham, *A Marine Flyer in France: The Diary of Captain Alfred A. Cunningham November 1917–January 1918*, Graham A. Cosmas, ed. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1974), 11.

¹⁸² Alfred A. Cunningham, "Report of an Aviation Observation Trip to France and England," 24 January 1918. Cunningham Papers. Hereafter 'Observation Report'.

Lafayette Escadrille, supported the ground forces in the trenches and combatted the German aviators in the skies, whereas Britain's RNAS split its efforts—supporting the ground forces but also combatting the U-boat menace over the English Channel. As stated previously, Cunningham knew the value of aviation supporting the ground forces; however, all attempts to place Marine pilots in direct support of Marine combat forces was wholly refused by the Army.

This officer made every possible effort, both with the War Department in Washington and the American Expeditionary Forces authorities in France, to secure authority for our Marine aviation squadron to serve with the Marine Brigade in France. No success whatever attended these events. Army aviation authorities stated candidly that if the squadron ever got to France, it would be used to furnish personnel to run one of their training fields, but that this was as near the front as it would ever get.¹⁸³

Cunningham knew that the only remaining opportunity for Marines to get into the war was to work with the Navy and carve a niche in the antisubmarine warfare arena. His trip to the war zone and conversations with the British destroyer patrol convinced him that there was room for Marine aviation in antisubmarine warfare.

These inquiries developed that the Germans realized the danger . . . and energetically suppressed any attempts of the British Navy to patrol these waters [the English Channel] with seaplanes, sending out their best land pursuit planes to shoot them down. An inquiry as to why the British did not patrol this area with bombing planes protected by fighting land planes developed the fact they were so hard pressed on the front in Flanders and northern France that they could not spare the planes for this work.¹⁸⁴

Cunningham returned to the United States with a plan to fill the void with Marines; outlined in his forty-six-page report in January 1918. While his report was consumed with technical reports on aircraft and weapons, Cunningham indicates a preference for being operating 'with and under the Royal Naval Air Service instead of the French.'¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Alfred A. Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,' *Marine Corps Gazette* 5, no. 3 (September 1920): 223–224.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁸⁵ Cunningham, "Observation Report," 45.

Cunningham was preparing to operate fully equipped squadrons, and therefore did not anticipate the need for integration in his report. Without an operational aviation unit ready for deployment to the warzone, he set to work recruiting pilots from across the Corps and the Navy in order to build up sufficient manpower and equipment. His expansion of Marine aviation was tested with the creation of the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company and its subsequent deployment at the crucial time Cunningham was trying to convince the higher authorities of need for Marine aviators in France.

With Bernard L. Smith assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations, and William M. McIlvain commanding a small aviation detachment in Philadelphia, aviator number four, Francis T. Evans, had already been deployed to command the Marine aviation company in the Azores, therefore leaving Cunningham to rely upon Aviator number five Roy S. Geiger at the Naval Air Station in Miami to ensure Marines were properly trained to fly. Cunningham knew that only a forceful presence at the Marine Corps and Navy headquarters could achieve all that he wanted, and therefore he remained in Washington through early 1918 to continue to recruit men into service and acquire machines to form squadrons for duty in France.

We have plans for organizing four squadrons, sixteen machines each, of land fighting machines at Curtiss Field, near Miami, Fla. While the details of the scheme have not been approved, I think it is fairly safe. These squadrons will be sent to France as soon as the equipment can be secured.¹⁸⁶

Once home in Washington, Cunningham promoted the plan he formulated while overseas—the Northern Bombing Group, in his mind, was the perfect avenue for Marine aviation in the war. As the British informed Cunningham during his visit that they did not patrol this area due to shortage of men and equipment, he realized the dangers of U-boats and the gap left behind was just the niche he had been looking for the Marines to fill.

Cunningham's idea stated that the 'flying boats can be used for offensive against

¹⁸⁶ Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 26 February 1918, Cunningham Papers.

submarines if properly protected by fighting machines.’¹⁸⁷ In his report, Cunningham offered a squadron of land flying Marines, which was initially intended for service with the US Army’s 4th Brigade, as the right men and machines to assume the role in combating the submarine menace. ‘It is believed that this squadron can be of much more value if used at Dunquerque [sic] to assist in securing the control of the air and protecting the machines operating against submarines than it could if used as part of the Army.’¹⁸⁸

Cunningham’s former instructor Towers returned to the United States from his duties in London and again was in a position to aid the Marine in his efforts as a member of the Chief of Naval Operations (Aviation) staff in Washington. In fact, Towers was well aware that Naval Aviation’s mission in the war was

the destruction of the enemy submarine, wherever it could be found, and second only to this was the protection of supply and troop ships. The primary mission was purely offensive. . . . No matter how many bombing machines we put out . . . if there are no fighting machines to protect them it is a useless sacrifice.¹⁸⁹

The two pioneers were thinking alike once again.

With the aid of Towers’ prestige at the Chief of Naval Operations, and Cunningham’s personable attitude, the two managed to put the entire plan before the Major General Commandant, the Navy’s General Board, and the Secretary of the Navy. It was not long before ‘orders were issued . . . to organize four Marine land squadrons as quickly as possible and secure from the Army the necessary planes to carry out the operation.’¹⁹⁰ Recruitment of student aviators began in earnest, and Cunningham split his time between Washington and Miami, closely managing the entire process through cables and letters on a daily basis. Even in an age without computers or the Internet, events moved fast and furious. Often his correspondence to Geiger or to Lieutenant Douglas B. Roben, who manned the office in

¹⁸⁷ Cunningham, ‘Observation Report,’ 44.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁸⁹ Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers*, 119.

¹⁹⁰ Cunningham, ‘Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,’ 224–225.

Washington in Cunningham's absences, was filled with changes to his initial plan to get Marines in the fight.

The latest is that the forces for the bombing expedition have been reduced to four day squadrons and four night squadrons. . . . In other words, it is expected to operate eight squadrons of land machines and they eventually all be manned by Marines.¹⁹¹

Despite the initial teamwork between the Marines and Navy, many of the old rivalries returned to the surface to hamper Cunningham. In June 1918, after rejecting seventeen Navy men for training and commission in the Marine Corps as aviators, Cunningham found that Captain Irwin, Head of Naval Aviation at Navy Headquarters was not as cooperative as hoped. Cunningham, in a letter to Geiger, vented his irritations with the Navy's lack of cooperation.

In regard to getting some squadrons abroad, I will tell you what I know about the matter. I worked on the idea of getting two squadrons abroad as soon as possible. I could not get anything definitive from Operations so wrote out a cablegram to Admiral Sims [Chief of Naval Forces in European Waters] stating that two squadrons would be sent as soon as transportation could be secured. Capt. Irwin would not send this. Recently I wrote out . . . saying that the four squadrons would leave soon as transportation could be secured. Capt. Irwin agreed to send this after adding "recommendations and suggestions requested."¹⁹²

Cunningham's frustration with headquarters continued to fester as his proposal seemed to change in front of his eyes. His ultimate goal of placing Marine aviators in the air in the war remained the same and Cunningham did everything he could to keep that effort moving forward. However, it seemed the old rivalries did not remain in the past and Cunningham used his interpersonal skills to keep this plans on the right track. Cunningham remained in constant contact with his subordinate officers, keeping them informed of the actions he took or was unable to take to ensure Marine aviation progressed.

Things have been alternately discouraging and encouraging. They [presumably Navy's aviation office] have been changing their minds so fast I could hardly keep up with them. I have put every obstacle I could in their way

¹⁹¹ Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 6 June 1918, Cunningham Papers.

¹⁹² Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 8 June 1918, Cunningham Papers.

when they were headed in the wrong direction and did my best to remove all obstacles when they were headed our way. It has averaged up that they have taken the line of least resistance, which has been the line we wanted to take.¹⁹³

The concept of working relationships between the services at the highest levels can lead to great successes or great failures is well synthesized by retired Air Commodore Peter W. Gray's 2009 dissertation 'The Strategic Leadership and Direction of the Royal Air Force Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany from Inception to 1945,' and reinforces the actions that Cunningham was required to take in order to create a successful air arm for the Marine Corps.¹⁹⁴ The higher headquarters of both the Navy and Marine Corps were forced to work together in order to establish Naval Aviation and conflict naturally occurred, and it was Cunningham's effective maneuvering that allowed for progress to be achieved instead of a stalemate or stagnation to take root. Gray states, 'in the ideal world, the more difficult, or complex an organisation has become, the greater the need for clear lines of authority and accountability.'¹⁹⁵ This was often the case for conflict between the Navy and Marine Corps as clear lines of authority were lacking and therefore it was imperative for Cunningham to remain in a micromanagement role on behalf of the Corps.

On 16 June, Cunningham reorganized his aviation assets into a headquarters detachment and four squadrons (A, B, C, and D). With Smith returned from Paris and stationed in Washington, Cunningham placed Geiger and McIlvain in command of Squadrons A and B, Douglas B. Roben and Russell A. Presley in command of Squadrons C and D, respectively. Once in command, the commanding officers of the first squadrons of the Marine Corps were shipped to France to establish the Corps' footprint and begin building Cunningham's Day Wing of the Northern Bombing Group.¹⁹⁶ On 12 July 1918, Cunningham

¹⁹³ Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 6 June 1918, Cunningham Papers.

¹⁹⁴ Peter William Gray, 'The Strategic Leadership and Direction of the Royal Air Force Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany from Inception to 1945.' (Doctoral Thesis, University of Birmingham, October 2009).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁹⁶ Graham Cosmas, 'The Formative Years of Marine Corps Aviation, 1912–1939,' *Aerospace Historian*, (Summer, June 1977), 19.

was detached from Miami, and was ordered to foreign shore expeditionary service in France in order to command the First Marine Aviation Force and the Day Wing of the Northern Bombing Group.

Cunningham's arrival in France was met with a cold reality; no one knew of the Marine's arrival.

We arrived in France safely after a very pleasant trip but found upon arrival that no one knew we were coming or where we were supposed to go. I presume Operations [Navy Department] had failed to cable Capt [Hutchinson 'Hutch' I.] Cone [commander of naval aviation in Europe] and no one knew what do with us. . . When we arrived, the Army immediately tried to take possession of us and dispose of us as they saw fit. I blocked this . . .¹⁹⁷

Whether the Navy Department, or the Marine Corps itself, failed to ensure the proper logistics were in place is unknown; however, it was once again Cunningham who simply had to take matters into his own hands and ensure that all was as it should be. Had he been a less capable administrator, the Marines would have found themselves without an aviation combat force in France. Marine Corps aviation was not adequately prepared for full-scale air war when the United States entered in April 1917; however, Cunningham had grown the air arm to such a size that a squadron was deployed to the Azores in January 1918. By the end of that same summer another two squadrons were in France with a cadre of trained pilots and mechanics.

Practical Application of Antisubmarine Warfare—Marines in the Azores

The American Navy was well aware, as it entered the war, that coaling stations were required for many ships of its fleet as they were simply unable to carry enough coal to make the crossing of the Atlantic; the vital nature of the Portuguese islands of the Azores became abundantly clear.¹⁹⁸ A small American naval base (Naval Base #13) was established in the city of Ponta Delgada on the island of São Miguel. The smaller American vessels could use

¹⁹⁷ Alfred A. Cunningham to Charles Long, 31 July 1918, Cunningham Papers.

¹⁹⁸ Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 134.

the port to refuel when making their crossings; however, the strategic value of the islands worried the Americans that Germany would occupy the islands and thus further wreak havoc on the transatlantic shipping of cargo and troops.¹⁹⁹ As the American Navy leadership contemplated the situation in the Azores, the Germans acted; on 4 July 1917, German U-boat 155 bombed the harbor of Ponta Delgada.²⁰⁰ Unbeknownst to the Germans, the USS *Orion* (AC-11), an American naval collier, was anchored nearby and as the Germans attacked, the *Orion* engaged the U-boat. While fire was exchanged between the Americans and Germans, no actual targets were hit; however, the U-boat was driven off.²⁰¹ The need for expansion of defensive capabilities of the harbor led the Americans to dispatch warships; however, Admiral Sims rerouted them to mainland Europe.²⁰²

As the Navy continued its internal struggle to place its warships in the most effective locations, Cunningham continued to recruit men for aviation—eventually enough to create two separate units, 12 October 1917 saw the 1st Aviation Squadron and 1st Aeronautic Company created.²⁰³ Just two days later, the 1st Aeronautic Company relocated from Philadelphia to Cape May, New Jersey, the Navy’s antisubmarine warfare training location.²⁰⁴ Any concerns regarding the relocation of any major warships of the Americans from the Azores was tempered by the Navy Department’s announcement that a squadron of Marines trained in antisubmarine warfare was to be dispatched to Ponta Delgada.²⁰⁵ Cunningham regrettably did not discuss the deployment of the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, the first operational deployment of Marine aviation into a combat zone in the First World War, in his personal correspondence. His attention was fully focused on getting

¹⁹⁹ Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels Testimony 20 May 1920, Naval Investigation: Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, US Senate, 66th Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921), 2717.

²⁰⁰ Norman Herz, *Operation Alacrity: The Azores and the War in the Atlantic*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014).

²⁰¹ Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 134.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 375.

²⁰³ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 13.

²⁰⁴ 1st Aeronautic Company Muster Roll, Oct 1917. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA, Microfilm.

²⁰⁵ Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 135.

Marine flyers into France; likely due to the fact that the aircraft sent to the Azores were already obsolete—lacking radios and a maximum flight time of two hours.²⁰⁶

On 9 January 1918, the USS *Hancock* (AP-3) with the 1st Aeronautic Company onboard sailed from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and three weeks later arrived at Ponta Delgada on 22 January. The harbour was too shallow for the large ship to disembark its passengers or unload its contents, thus leaving the unloading to many trips to and from by a small flotilla. Recorded in the diary of Marine 2d Lieutenant Walter S. Poague was the system devised for unloading the larger ship.

We've got a pretty decent system and the unloading proceeds faster than I'd thought. I have a title. I am "Admiral of the Mosquito Fleet" because I had the brilliant idea of using the ship's boats as lighters. The executive officer gave me four big boats and a steam launch and I am unloading two hundred tons a day, which helps a lot.²⁰⁷

Included in the cargo of the ship were the aircraft that the Marines were to fly; ten Curtiss R-6s and two Curtiss N-9s were shipped over with the Marines. The aircraft were both single-engine airplanes that were equipped with floats and carried a pilot and observer.²⁰⁸

Disassembled and crated for the crossing, the aircraft and camp for the Marines required many man-hours to reassemble before flight operations could begin.

On 16 February 1918 the Marines' first flights since arriving in the Azores drew large crowds. Three machines were launched and made ten flights of thirty minutes each.²⁰⁹ The Marines took the few machines into the air and practiced bombing targets on the island. 'At a certain predetermined point on the ground was a marker, and I flew the plane while he [1st Lieutenant Harvey B. Mims] dropped a dummy [bomb].'²¹⁰ The high aspirations of the Marine flyers in Ponta Delgada were soon tempered by the weather, which made flying difficult at best and nonexistent at worst. On 30 March, after two solid weeks of no flying,

²⁰⁶ Turnbull and Lord, *History of United States Naval Aviation*, 126.

²⁰⁷ Walter S. Poague, *Diary and Letters of a Marine Aviator* ([Chicago?]: Privately Published, 1919), 24.

²⁰⁸ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 13.

²⁰⁹ Poague, *Diary and Letters*, 28.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

Poague recorded in his diary the chief cause of the uncooperative weather stating; 'You see the wind hops over these mountains and swirls which makes air work suicidal.'²¹¹

The experiences of the Marine aviators and crew on the island were typically one of boredom interlaced with hops (patrols) over the water attempting to locate German submarines. Often the flights themselves were uneventful, but because of the winds swirling over the mountains, the takeoffs and landings in the harbor were wrought with complications and dangerous. Poague records one such landing that nearly cost him his life and that of Lieutenant Mims early in their time on the island.

Death came close today. . . . Mims and I had been up for half an hour and on returning, making a landing in a stiff breeze, were forced to keep on by a cutter getting in the way. A ten-foot buoy, a monitor and three subs loomed up before us, a hundred feet away, and we were going a hundred miles an hour. We rose and cleared the buoy by two feet, then facing the rock cliff had to turn so sharply that she side slipped on one wing to within eight feet of a heavy dock; after that we had to clear the mass of big shipping 700 feet away, which we cleared by perhaps five feet; and just a touch of any one of them would have finished us.²¹²

The patrols conducted by the Marines were done so in a radius of seventy miles around the island; during June and July the only sightings recorded were American convoys, British and Portuguese ships, and various local fishing and sailing boats. A review of June and July 1918 War Diaries (the only complete months), the 1st Aeronautic Company was often hampered by poor visibility, heavy winds, and rain; despite the lack of favorable flying weather, the unit was able to accumulate 124 patrol and practice flights in June, and another 107 patrol and practice flights in July.²¹³ The mechanics of the 1st Aeronautic Company remained continually busy repairing engines, propellers, and pontoons; the aircraft were obsolete upon arrival, and the flights and landings in rough weather did not help the airframes.²¹⁴ The lessons learned by the Marines in the Azores were reported back to the Marines that remained

²¹¹ Ibid., 55.

²¹² Ibid., 40.

²¹³ 1st Aeronautic Company War Diaries, June and July 1918, World War I Aviation Collection, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

in the US and thus the remaining aviators learned from their counterparts for their impending deployment to France.

While much of the time spent in the Azores was uneventful, one Marine did not return home due to a poor quality aircraft and difficult weather. On 5 November 1918, Poague and Gunnery Sergeant Walton B. Zeigler were assigned to conduct a sunrise scout patrol. Ziegler reported the events in a letter to Poague's family after the war:

After leaving the buoy I expected to feel it take off any moment, but the pontoons just seemed to be touching the top of the waves. We traveled for quite a distance when the plane rose several feet and then settled, and the pontoons struck the top of a wave and gave way. I saw one come through the right lower wing and I loosened my belt to jump, but we bounded and turned over too fast to jump. We turned over twice and stopped with us hanging head down under water. I fought my way out between the tangled wires and wreckage and was about exhausted when I reached the surface, but was not hurt badly, teeth knocked loose and stiff neck.²¹⁵

Poague never surfaced and Zeigler attempted to untangle the pilot from the wreckage under water, but was unsuccessful; he remained on the wreckage of the aircraft for thirty minutes waiting for aid to arrive, at which time Poague's body could be retrieved.²¹⁶

As the submarine menace passed, many of the senior Marines were shipped to France or returned to the United States to train new recruits.²¹⁷ The achievements of the Marines in the Azores were not for naught, although overshadowed by the success of the First Marine Aviation Force in France, which will be discussed later. While none of the oral history interviews, or surviving correspondence of the Marines who served in the 1st Aeronautic Company indicate such, it is clear that utilizing flying boats and seaplanes was not the way of the future for the Marine Corps. While the Marines in the Azores did not accumulate an enviable combat record, they did accumulate hundreds of practical flights and skills only actual patrols could achieve. As recorded by an enlisted Marine, 'We saw a few [submarines]

²¹⁵ Poague, *Diary and Letters*, 192–193.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

²¹⁷ 1st Aeronautic Company Muster Roll, July 1918, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

out there; in fact were dropped a few bombs, but as far as we know we didn't damage anything. . . . But we kept them submerged, I think.'²¹⁸ While antisubmarine warfare was the mission for Marine aviation in the First World War, as will be demonstrated, it was a mission that was not to remain after the First Marine Aviation Force arrived in France in 1918.

Conclusion

The interservice rivalry between the US Navy and Marine Corps took a toll on the efforts of those men trying to establish an aviation organization for the Department of the Navy. Also undoubtedly, the actions and efforts of the Fullamites and Army during the 1908 struggle damaged the relationship between the Navy and Marine Corps. While there were those, like Irwin who remained distrustful of the Marines, others took them without bias. Towers and Cunningham created an effective Navy-Marine Corps team. The interpersonal and management skills possessed by Cunningham, the placement of Smith with the Navy Department, and the skills of the earliest Marine aviators allowed the Corps to integrate and ingratiate its aviation with that of the Navy and produce a powerful combination.

While still a part of the Navy establishment, Marine Corps aviation, through Cunningham and McIlvain's foresight, not only adapted its pilots to seaplane but landplane flying, which at the time was solely an Army function. This added benefit allowed the Corps to field squadrons to combat the submarine menace in the English Channel from bases in Dunkirk and over the central Atlantic from the base in the Azores. While the aviators in the Azores were not as effective or well known as those in France, their deeds were valuable at what was not practical for the Marine Corps. As the antisubmarine mission eased, Marines shifted their focus to assisting the ground forces in the trenches of France and Belgium, which would have been impossible had Cunningham and McIlvain not insisted on learning landplane skills from the Army.

²¹⁸ Schilt, Christian F., Interview by Benis M. Frank, 17 and 21 Nov 1969. Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Transcript, 15.

If Cunningham had failed at any point leading to the arrival of the First Marine Aviation Force in Europe, Marine Corps aviation possibly could have failed. It is possible that Marine Corps aviation could have suffered irreparable damage or had been set back so far as to make it no longer worth the Corps' effort, expenses, or the allocation of manpower. Cunningham considered himself a Marine aviator first, and with McIlvain, realized the opportunities that opened with learning land-based flying and supporting the Marines on the ground and were eager to expand the abilities of Marine pilots. Without this commitment, and the efforts of Cunningham to ensure that all Marine aviators learned this skill, the Day Wing of the Northern Bombing Group would have not succeeded as a Marine endeavor. The necessary personnel would have been drawn from the Navy and Navy pilots would have taken over the role, therefore freezing out the Corps altogether. This is readily apparent as a possible outcome as Navy pilots were already unhappy with the Marines' involvement. The Navy's aviators were keenly aware of the situation with the Marines and were dismayed when their chances of commanding their own squadrons vanished upon the news of the Marines taking over the Day Wing. 'We saw our dreams of a crack naval squadron that we had striven so hard to obtain and perfect sort of vanishing in thin air.'²¹⁹ Another echoed aviator Freddy Beach's comments:

Unfortunately for the Navy fliers. . . . Washington had assigned the day bombing role in the Northern Bombing Group to the Marine Corps, leaving . . . newly qualified aviators [Naval] without hope of promotion to flight or squadron leader—and even without a mission.²²⁰

The rivalry between the Navy and Marine Corps remained just as alive and active in the First World War as it had in the decades proceeding. While the Marines aviators in the Azores and France were sent to conduct strictly antisubmarine warfare, as will

²¹⁹ Kenneth MacLeish, *The Price of Honor: The World War I Letters of Naval Aviator Kenneth MacLeish*, Geoffrey L. Rossano, ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 176.

²²⁰ David S. Ingalls, *Hero of the Angry Sky: The World War I Diary and Letters of David S. Ingalls, America's First Naval Ace*, Geoffrey L. Rossano, ed. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 185.

be seen in chapter three, the mission was short-lived and the support of ground forces became the primary responsibility.

Chapter Three

ROYAL AIR FORCE AND INTEGRATION OF MARINE AVIATION

The relationship between the British and US Marine Aviation is not well documented in published sources including those officially published by either service history office. This relationship was new, and would leave a lasting impact upon USMC aviation. This chapter will discuss why, and how the American Marines were integrated into the RAF, and the outcome of that integration. It is this relationship that sets the Marines on a path for success in the interwar period of the next two decades after the First World War. The integration provides the successful record of practical experience in wartime that was required to ensure aviation remained within the Corps' arsenal during the 1920s and 30s, a time wrought with manpower drawdowns, and financial difficulties for the services.

America's entry in to the First World War on the side of the Allies was not entirely the blessing many thought. As the first chapter demonstrated, the Allies were in desperate need of manpower and supplies, yet the entry of Americans into the war brought questions of their specific roles and how their own participation would affect the flow of goods and supplies across the Atlantic.²²¹ On the American side of the ocean, there were still hard feelings towards the British; in fact, Chief of Naval Operations William S. Benson warned Admiral Sims prior to the latter's departure for Europe in 1917. 'Don't let the British pull the wool over your eyes. It is none of our business pulling their chestnuts out of the fire. We would as soon fight the British as the Germans.'²²² Therefore, this chapter examines this complex relationship from the views of those who experienced it first-hand leading to the integration of their respective aviation components.

²²¹ John J. Abbatiello, *Anti-Submarine Warfare in World War I: British Naval Aviation and the Defeat of the U-Boats*. (London: Routledge, 2006): 78.

²²² Elting E Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), 338.

The British attitude was one of desire for Americans and materiel, and yet not enthusiastic on the American wish to fight the war on their own terms and under their own command. This internal conflict may have caused friction between the RAF and USMC aviation upon the Marines' arrival. This chapter will also investigate this aspect of the two services' interactions. Lastly, this chapter will examine the specific operations in which the Marines flew with the British in 217 and 218 Squadrons in order to demonstrate how the RAF provided the USMC with the critical flight training and experience needed in the future. The relationships between these men formed the day-to-day workings of how the Marines were or were not accepted and formed the base of skills that the Marines took with them into the interwar period.

Complex Relations: Admiral Sims and British Military Relations

Before one can fully understand how the USMC and the RAF were integrated, one must understand the complex nature of the relationship between the United States and Great Britain military establishments. It is the intention of this portion of the chapter to outline the complexities of personalities such as Admiral Sims, commander of all American naval forces in Europe, and admitted anglophile, and the higher-level political ramifications of the relations between the United States and Great Britain. As Sims was the senior American naval officer present in Europe, his example set the tone for the interactions of the lower levels of echelon under his command, thus they are key to understanding the relations between the Marines and the RAF.

On 6 April 1917, the long-awaited entry of the United States into the war took place. It is safe to say that no other country breathed a heavier sigh of relief than Great Britain. Historian Kathleen Burke summed up the feelings of the nation.

She [Great Britain] greeted the entry of the United States into the war with elation, and prepared to throw herself into the arms of the American government, bringing as her gifts hard-gained knowledge of how to fight on the Western Front and how to

control her free-spending Allies. She expected to be treated with deference or at least with the camaraderie of equal partnership.²²³

The expectations of the British were not matched by the actions of the Americans; disagreements over convoy operations and amalgamation of armies strained the relationship from the start. These strained relations within the militaries of the respective countries were mirrors of the political and financial complications met by the Balfour Mission upon its arrival in the United States in 1917. The relationship between the two nations had direct impacts upon the Marine and British aviators and as such it is imperative to understand the conflict points between the two and how they affected as presented herein.

Representing the United States Navy in Europe was Rear Admiral Sims, former president of the Naval War College and ‘rather boisterous Anglophile’ who had been described as the ‘most popular British Admiral in the American Navy.’²²⁴ Historian Michael Simpson’s article on the relationship between Sims and Bayly portrays the complex relationship between the two nations, through the relations of these two men.²²⁵ Sims, who first interacted with the Royal Navy in China in 1894, quickly learned, and adopted, the British methods and persuaded the US Navy to implement the British fleet gunnery standards in 1902.²²⁶ In 1917, underscoring Sims’ complex relations was the relationship with his counterpart at Queenstown, and under whom the American destroyers operated, Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, Royal Navy. Bayly, described as a ‘crusty old sea dog,’ was seemingly nearing the end of his naval career in 1915.²²⁷ The American Navy dispatched the Eighth Division of the Atlantic Fleet’s Destroyer Force to Queenstown in order to assist with antisubmarine

²²³ Kathleen Burke, ‘Great Britain in the United States, 1917–1918: The Turning Point,’ *International History Review*, (Vol I, No 2, April 1979): 242. For more information on the financial and political entanglements of the United States and Great Britain, see Kathleen Burke, *Britain, America and the Sinews of War 1914–1918* (Boston, London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1985).

²²⁴ Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 281; and Anonymous, ‘Sims Admits That He is Pro-British “Because They Are Good Sports,”’ *Sacramento Union* (Sacramento, CA), 15 November 1922.

²²⁵ Michael Simpson, ‘Admiral William S. Sims, U.S. Navy and Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, Royal Navy: An Unlikely Friendship and Anglo-American Cooperation, 1917–1919,’ *Naval War College Review* Vol 41 (Spring 1988): 66-80.

²²⁶ Michael Simpson, ‘Admiral William S. Sims, U.S. Navy and Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, Royal Navy: An Unlikely Friendship and Anglo-American Cooperation, 1917–1919,’ *Naval War College Review* Vol 41 (Spring 1988): 67.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

warfare and protection of merchant ships. In advance of the arrival of the American destroyers, Bayly was summoned to meet Sims in First Sea Lord Jellicoe's presence on 14 April 1917. Sims recorded that, 'he [Bayly] was as rude to me as one man could be to another.'²²⁸

Sims was well aware that his relationship with Bayly needed to be a productive one; therefore, prior to the arrival of the American destroyers, Sims drafted an operational order to his Captains, but first submitted it to Bayly for his review and noted, 'You will, I am sure, find our officers more than willing to carry out your orders and instructions and to cooperate with your forces as completely as their present inexperience in this peculiar warfare will permit.'²²⁹ The submissive approach worked, and Bayly informally welcomed Sims to Queenstown. 'Should you come here, please come to Admiralty House and bring your aide. I do not entertain, but can make you comfortable.'²³⁰ After the war, Sims was keenly aware of possible misinterpretations of his initial impressions of Bayly; in his autobiography, he attempted to set the record straight and ensure the good reputation and relationship between the United States and Great Britain remained intact, stating.

In what I have already said, I may have given a slightly false impression of the man; that he was taciturn, that he was generally regarded as a hard taskmaster, that he never made friends at the first meeting, that he was more interested in results than in persons—all this is true; yet these qualities merely concealed what was, at bottom, a generous, kindly, and even a warm-hearted character.²³¹

Sims continued his heaping praise for Bayly by stating, 'Americans have great reason to be proud of the achievements of their naval men and one of the most praiseworthy was the fact that they became such intimate friends with Admiral Bayly.'²³²

²²⁸ Ibid., 69.

²²⁹ William S. Sims to Lewis Bayly, 8 May 1917, William S. Sims Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. (Hereafter Sims Papers)

²³⁰ Lewis Bayly to William S. Sims, 11 May 1917, Sims Papers.

²³¹ Sims, Rear Admiral William Sowden and David F. Trask, *The Victory at Sea*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 64.

²³² Ibid., 65.

While Sims' point of view and impressions of the relations with the British were positive, they were not entirely accurate to the situation. One of Sims' own staff, Ensign John Langdon Leighton published his own autobiographical history of service in 1920. Somewhat skewed due to his limited knowledge and rank, Leighton contradicts his former superior officer regarding the relations between the British and Americans, particularly in Queenstown, and at the level of the average sailor. Leighton acknowledged the positive relations fostered by Sims and enforced within his officer corps, however, also admitted the difficulties between the men of lower ranks. 'But in spite of the efforts of the Officers, arguments, relieved by brawls, arose between the enlisted men.'²³³

Sims fully acknowledged his anglophilia and did not attempt to deny his affections for the things British.

In all this you must give me credit for being reasonably honest. You must not assume that because I am pro-British and pro-French and pro-all the rest of the Allies I am necessarily anti-American. I have lived a long time in the United States (forty-six years). I have shown some interest in the efficiency of our Navy. I am fifty-nine years old and have a modest reputation for reasonable independence of thought. So do not assume in the pride of intellect that I am owned by the British or any other Admiralty. If you do not think a pro-ally is the right kind of man for this job, they should have sent a pro-Prussian with a trunk full of bombs.²³⁴

The relationship between the Americans and British was complex, with no doubt.²³⁵ However, Sims' personal feelings toward the British were motivated in ensuring that the war was won, and he endeavored to foster good relations, even with the most disagreeable members of the British authorities such as Admiral Bayly. Sims' goal was simple; support the British Navy in its operations, secure safe Atlantic passage of transport and merchant ships, and defeat the German U-boat threat. In a June 1917 letter to Secretary of the Navy Daniels,

²³³ Leighton, John L. *SIMSADUS LONDON. The American Navy in Europe*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 34.

²³⁴ Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*, 394–95.

²³⁵ For further reading on the complex relationship between the navies of the United States and Great Britain see William N. Still, Jr. *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War I* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006) Chapter 11 entitled 'Innocents Abroad.'

Sims clearly explains his sense of urgency and need for cooperation. ‘. . . I consider that the military situation is very grave indeed. . . . My reasons for being so insistent in my cable despatches have been because of my conviction that measures of cooperation which we may take will be inefficient if they are not put into operations immediately, that is within a month.’²³⁶

The Royal Air Force and British Complex Desire for Americans

The Marine Corps’ first organization to command multiple squadrons, the First Marine Aviation Force (FMAF), arrived in France at the end of July 1919. By this time, the RAF, as a separate service, had already served for more than four months over the Channel Coast in efforts to combat the U-Boat danger. Four years of war had taken its toll—hundreds of British airmen had been killed on the Western Front and many more tragically in training on the home front.²³⁷ After four years of bloodshed, the arrival of fresh troops from the United States, at first glance appeared as a blessing. This portion of the chapter will explore the complex nature of the RAF’s desire for American support, manpower, and equipment in the months between the entry of the United States and the arrival of the FMAF in order to then investigate the integration of the two air organizations. In November 1917, Major General Salmond, Director-General of Military Aeronautics in the War Office, estimated that despite great strides, the actual numbers of mechanics and other personnel with technical skills was far from meeting demand. Despite efforts to locate suitable candidates within the British Army, staffing was still inadequate and help was sought from the Americans. An agreement was reached and fifteen thousand American mechanics were sent direct to Britain

²³⁶ William S. Sims to Josephus Daniels, 29 June 1917, Michael Simpson, ed. *Anglo-American Naval Relations 1917–1919*. (Aldershot: The Naval Records Society, 1991), 71.

²³⁷ For a detailed history of the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Air Force see Walter Raleigh and H. A. Jones, *The War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force* (Vol 1–6). (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1922–1937).

for service with the RFC units. The already trained British personnel were then free to be placed with the operating units along the Western Front.²³⁸

Further, the arrival of the American Naval air service also meant additional strain on the aircraft production in Great Britain. 'The planned expansion of American air services meant that the US was less willing to offer Britain her raw materials (such as spruce for aircraft construction) and finished aircraft and engines.'²³⁹ Furthermore, the supply of Liberty engines from the United States simply did not materialize in the numbers promised by it. 'Total deliveries of the Liberty were, according to the November 1917 schedule, to reach a figure of 9,420 by the end of May 1918.'²⁴⁰ However, actual numbers received were a fraction of those promised. Additional stress caused by the arrival of the Americans impacted the overall ability to man and equip squadrons. The Americans were a blessing and a curse. The desire for fresh troops and equipment from the United States conflicted with Britain's need to continue to supply its own aviation forces with equipment and made the arrival of the Americans bittersweet.

The British desired American pilots, mechanics, aircraft, and equipment the longer the war continued. However, this desire for American men and materiel placed a burden on the relationship between the Americans and the British. As it has been covered in Raleigh and Jones' *The War in the Air* and Abbatiello's *Anti-submarine Warfare in World War I*, the British were increasingly dependent upon the supply chain stretching across the Atlantic where Americans promised much-needed aircraft materials such as Washington and Oregon Spruce for frames, Liberty engines for bombers, mechanics to repair and build airframes, and the pilots to fill the ranks. In fact a prime example of the need for raw materials from the

²³⁸ Walter Raleigh and H. A. Jones, *The War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force. Volume VI*. (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1937), 77. (Hereafter, Raleigh and Jones, *The War in the Air*).

²³⁹ John J. Abbatiello, *Anti-Submarine Warfare in World War I: British Naval Aviation and the Defeat of the U-Boats*. (London: Routledge, 2006), 53.

²⁴⁰ Raleigh and Jones, *The War in the Air*, Vol VI, 52.

United States was the need for Spruce, which was a primary ingredient in aircraft airframes. The 21 September 1917 report, authored by Air Board member Sir William Weir, on the American air effort, stated that over all other allied countries, the British should receive fifty percent of the allocated Spruce.²⁴¹ However, with the entry of the Americans into the fight, the priority of supply was given to the American forces. 'So far as concerns supply, therefore, it may be said that America was on the side of the Allies from the beginning. When, however, she began to organize forces of her own, subsequent to her declaration of war, she could do so only at the expense of the Allies in the early stages.'²⁴²

The troubles with shortages within British aviation forces on the Channel Coast were also caused due to the March 1918 creation of the RAF and efforts to focus resources on the bombing and fighter squadrons operating in France over the Western Front. However, the reorganization and reallocation of men and materiel away from Flanders and the German submarine bases seemingly did not cause a great deal of anxiety within the Royal Air Force as it opened an opportunity for the US Navy and Marine Corps aviation service to fill any gaps. 'The United States naval authorities had agreed to form a bombing group which would have for particular object attacks on the German U-boat bases as Bruges, Zeebrugge and Ostend.'²⁴³ In addition to the creation of the Northern Bombing Group, used to aid the Royal Air Force's mission of hemming in the German U-boats, American aviators from the Navy and Marine Corps were integrated into the Royal Air Force squadrons—a much needed influx of new men to fly empty airplanes that provided combat training for the novice American pilots. Cunningham, commander of the Marine Corps First Marine Aviation Force (Day Wing) of the Northern Bombing Group, realized the shortage of aircraft for his squadron was causing a dulling of the skills of his pilots and observers, and that the British

²⁴¹ CAB 24/28/96 Air Effort of the United States of America dated 21 September 1917.

²⁴² Raleigh and Jones, *The War in the Air*: Vol VI, 79.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 383.

were in need of trained pilots. 'I have had the pilots going over the lines on raids with the British squadrons and so far, they have done excellent work.'²⁴⁴

Indeed the British required the additional manpower and supplies that the American entry into the war brought to bear, so too in return, the Americans needed the hard-earned skills and experience that the British had gained in the previous three years of war. The relationship was not perfect, nor were the solutions to the shortages in experienced pilots or fully functioning aircraft. However, the British agreement of training American naval aviators and allowing them to fly in the RAF squadrons until their own squadrons were fully capable proved a positive and productive experience. In the end, each country needed the other for a variety of reasons, and their cooperation with one another, despite any differences, yielded a strong force against Germany.

American Pilots in the Royal Air Force

Well known are those Americans who volunteered to fight in the skies over Europe for France before the United States entered the war—the Lafayette Escadrille was an organization within the French Air Service formed of volunteers from America.²⁴⁵ However, there were literally hundreds of Americans who served, in a variety of capacities, with the RFC, RNAS, and RAF during the Great War. This section will examine those Americans in service with the British as well as the Marines who temporarily joined the ranks of the RAF's 217 and 218 Squadrons in the closing months of the war, and how their British counterparts viewed them.

American men desiring to enter the war in Europe before the United States declared war were known to cross in to Canada and enlist in either the Canadian forces or join the

²⁴⁴ Alfred A. Cunningham to Charles G. Long, 4 September 1918, Alfred A. Cunningham Papers Collection #3034, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. (Hereafter Cunningham Papers).

²⁴⁵ Several works have been published on the history of the Lafayette Escadrille, including those by Georges Thenault, *The Story of the LaFayette Escadrille—Told By its Commander Captain Georges Thenault* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1921), as well as Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920).

British military outright. Those with aspirations of taking flight were no different.

‘Approximately three hundred Americans joined the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Naval Air Service, and the Royal Air Force. Most of these young men journeyed to Canada, where they enlisted and did part of their ground and air training.’²⁴⁶ The true number of Americans who took this route to war is closer to five hundred, but cannot truly be known owing to the fact that many feared losing their American citizenship and therefore simply claimed to be Canadian upon enlistment.²⁴⁷ In fact, one American, who later became a Marine aviator, had crossed the Canadian border with the intention of flying for the British before the American entry into the war. Marcus A. Jordan, a native of Washington, DC, enlisted in the Canadian Army in the hopes of joining the RFC in April 1916; however, by November of the same year he resigned from the service and returned to the United States stating he ‘was unable to be transferred to the Royal Flying Corps without becoming a naturalized British subject.’²⁴⁸ As historian S. F. Wise discussed in *Canadian Airmen and the First World War, Volume I* (1980), enlistments of Americans commenced in the earliest days of the war, both for the Canadian military as well as that of the British. While enlistments took place, they were done so with care as not to unbalance the relations with the then-neutral American government.²⁴⁹ Americans enlisted under their own initiative for a variety of reasons, including the desire to fly for the British and thereby aiding their war against Germany, some were eager to try flying, and then there were those who thought British aviation was superior than that of the United States.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ James J. Hudson, *In Clouds of Glory. American Airmen Who Flew with the British During the Great War*. (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1990), 6.

²⁴⁷ Bogart Rogers, *A Yankee Ace in the RAF: The World War I Letters of Captain Bogart Rogers*. ed. Rogers and Morrow. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 5.

²⁴⁸ Marcus Jordan, Passport Application dated 17 January 1917, ancestry.com, accessed 10 January 2015. For more about the pre-Marine Corps service of Marcus A. Jordan see Annette D. Amerman, ‘Devil Dogs with Army Wings. Marines with AEF Air Service in the First World War.’ *Army History*, No. 103 (Spring 2017): 30–42.

²⁴⁹ S. F. Wise, *Canadian Airmen and the First World War. The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force Volume 1*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 88.

²⁵⁰ Hudson, *In Clouds of Glory*, 6.

The multitude of published histories that cover the FMAF, including the official history written by the Marine Corps, all report that the Marine aviators arrived in Brest, France, in August 1918 and did so without functional aircraft; the personal narratives of the men themselves bolster this fact.²⁵¹ ‘We landed in France about the end of July or the 1st of August . . . of course we had this problem: the British were short of pilots, and we were short of airplanes, so we were allowed to send some pilots to the British to fly their airplanes.’²⁵² Johnson’s *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years, 1912–1940*, the official history of Marine aviation’s earliest years, states that FMAF commanding officer Major Cunningham struck a deal with the British to allow Marines to fly with 217 and 218 Squadrons as they were flying the same aircraft that the Marines were waiting to receive.²⁵³ However, without a corresponding footnote, verification of Cunningham’s deal is unsubstantiated. In September 1920, while attempting to convince the Marine Corps of the benefit of aviation, Cunningham gave a shortened history of the creation, deployment, and employment of Marine Corps aviation in ‘Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps’ published in *Marine Corps Gazette*.²⁵⁴ However, conspicuously missing from his article are any details explaining how he integrated the Marines with the RAF; further, and more noticeably missing is any mention of his hand in the creation of the deal. In fact, Cunningham’s own 1931 letter to a fellow Marine, identified simply as Miller, states that the ‘British were short of pilots and in order to keep mine in practice I farmed as many as possible out to their Squadrons where they did splendid

²⁵¹ For published accounts of how the FMAF was integrated into the RAF see Edward C. Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years 1912–1940* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1977), Geoffrey L. Rossano, *Stalking the U-Boat: US Naval Aviation in Europe During World War I* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), as well as Alfred A. Cunningham, ‘Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* Vol 5 No 3 (September 1920): 221–233, Roger M. Emmons, ‘The First Marine Aviation Force,’ *The Cross and Cockade Journal* (Summer 1965): 173–186, and Roger M. Emmons, ‘The First Marine Aviation Force,’ *The Cross and Cockade Journal* (Autumn 1965): 272–292.

²⁵² Day, Karl S, Interview with Benis M. Frank, 5 August 1968. Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Transcript, 16.

²⁵³ Edward C. Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years 1912–1940* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1977), 20–21.

²⁵⁴ Alfred A. Cunningham, ‘Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* Vol 5 No 3 (September 1920): 225.

work.’²⁵⁵ In light of the fact that Cunningham does not personally take credit for the arrangement in his personal correspondence, and that three Marines were assigned to the British before the arrival of the FMAF, it is doubtful Cunningham had anything to do with the arrangements, as Marines were already flying with the RAF before the arrival of the FMAF.

A review of the operational records submitted by 217 and 218 Squadrons demonstrates that at least three Marines were flying with the British before the arrival of Cunningham—William M. McIlvain, Roy S. Geiger, and Edmund Gillette Chamberlain.²⁵⁶ The FMAF arrived in the port of Brest on 30 July 1918 and did not disembark from the USS *DeKalb* until 1 August; Cunningham did not move his unit to Calais until 7 August.²⁵⁷ With just two days at their operational location, another five Marines are assigned to 218 Squadron, which reinforces the notion that Cunningham did not broker the deal at that time and was more likely enjoying the fruits of a previously negotiated agreement.²⁵⁸ In fact, on 22 July 1918, US Navy Captain David Hanrahan, commander of the Northern Bombing Group, wrote to the commander US Naval Aviation Forces Foreign Service, Captain Cone regarding the recent activities of several Marines already in France and flying with the British. Hanrahan’s letter not only details that four Marine pilots and three enlisted were in service with the British, but additionally that more training was planned. ‘An endeavor will be made to give as many of the flying personnel of the Marine Day Squadrons as possible, training over the lines before active operations of the squadrons.’²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Alfred A. Cunningham to ‘Miller,’ 22 January 1931. Cunningham Papers.

²⁵⁶ Air 1/1879/204/221/5, 217 Squadron Record Book, 4th April 1918 to 25 March 1919. The National Archives of the United Kingdom; 1st Squadron, First Marine Aviation Force Muster Roll dated 1-31 July 1918, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division; Air 1/2005/204/303/10 218 Squadron Flying Times and Records of Services (Pilots and Observers), April to October 1918, The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

²⁵⁷ Headquarters Detachment, First Marine Aviation Force Muster Rolls, July 1918 and August 1918. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

²⁵⁸ 218 Squadron Flying Times and Record of Service April to October 1918.

²⁵⁹ Commander, Northern Bombing Group to Commander US Naval Aviation Force, Foreign Service, 22 July 1918. Box 144 GN, Record Group 45, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

The similarity of aircraft between that of the Marine's and RAF 217 and 218 Squadrons, combined with the inability to receive completed American shipments of DH-4 aircraft from Pauillac made it desirable to bring the two forces together. In his 1 July 1918 letter to Captain Cone, Brigadier General Charles L. Lambe, 5th Group commander proposed that any surplus pilots awaiting assignment should be sent to the RAF's training facility at Audembert for additional training, to learn the lay of the land and additional gunnery training.²⁶⁰ While this appears to be the beginnings of bringing the American airmen to work with the RAF, the flight records for 218 Squadron show that Chamberlain himself was flying with the squadron on the same day as Lambe's letter to Cone.²⁶¹ Further to this, as early as 24 May 1918, apparently in response to correspondence from Cone regarding American service with the RAF, Lambe replied 'if it is your desire to co-operate with us in this [Dunkirk area] the time has come for you to inform our Admiralty and the Air Ministry.'²⁶² While Cone's initiating letter is not attached to the reply, it is implied that the American Naval Air Service wished to operate with the RAF 5th Group in antisubmarine patrols. Therefore this may possibly be the starting portion of the agreement that then brought Marine pilots into service with the RAF, and thus negates the long held belief that it was Cunningham who brokered the deal to have Marines fly with the British.

Despite the fact that Cunningham was not the bargain broker, it remains that the Marines participated in training flights and combat missions with 217 and 218 Squadrons. Initially, the Marine pilots were only to complete three flights over the lines; however, as time went on, the Marines found themselves with the British longer and participating in more flights than the minimum. 'I think probably about my third flight they had a big push on, and

²⁶⁰ Air 1/70/15/9/122, Commanding General, 5th Group, Royal Air Force to Commander, US Naval Aviation Force, Foreign Service, 1 July 1918.

²⁶¹ Air 1/1228, No 218 Squadron Flying Times and Records of Services (Officers and NCOs, Pilots and Observers), May-December 1918.

²⁶² Air 1/70/15/9/122, Commanding General, 5th Group, Royal Air Force to Commander, US Naval Aviation Force, Foreign Service, 24 May 1918.

so we just stayed with them [the RAF] until that thing simmered down.’²⁶³ First Lieutenant Francis P. Mulcahy flew with 218 Squadron and participated in a total of fourteen raids in September and October 1918, with nine raids during the first four days of October 1918 alone.²⁶⁴ Despite the extensive number of flights that Mulcahy participated in with the British, his oral history interview was bereft of any insight or descriptions of the relationship between the British and American Marines; the fifty-year departure from the events simply took its toll on his memories. Retired Marine Corps Lieutenant General Karl S. Day’s interview fifty years after the fact was also lacking in details, save for method employed by the British to deal with new pilots—a method confirmed by retired Marine Corps Major General Ford O. Rogers’ interview. ‘I think I made five raids with the British, and I was always tail-end Charlie, a Yank.’²⁶⁵ Rogers offered slightly more clarification of Day’s remark when he stated, ‘They [the British] put us—always the newcomers were the last on the right, in the ‘V’, because if you got shot you hadn’t lost anything.’²⁶⁶ Yank or not, it was for the lack of combat experience and their fresh arrival that the British put the Americans in the end position of their flight formations, and not their nationality.

Rogers’ only lasting memory of the British was more of an observation of an event and not based on any adverse actions taken against the Americans.

It was perfect. They [the British] were cold-blooded. They were just as fine as could be. . . . This is why I was so impressed with them. I saw an ambulance come up to one of the planes [having landed after a raid]. I didn’t pay any attention to it. I was cold and wanted to go in. I had tea at 3 o’clock in the morning and I was going in to get breakfast. At the table the doctor came in, and McLarren [pilot of the plane met by the ambulance] said, ‘How’s Potts?’”The doc says, ‘He’s dead.’ Potts was McLarren’s rear seat gunner. It was the third boy killed behind him. So McLarren said, ‘Potts dead. Poor Potts. Pass the tea, will you?’²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Mulcahy, Francis P., Interview with Benis M. Frank, 1967. Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Transcript, 29. (Hereafter Mulcahy Interview).

²⁶⁴ Air 1/2005/204/303/11, 218 Squadron Record Book, 1 October 1918 to 27 January 1919. The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

²⁶⁵ Day Interview.

²⁶⁶ Rogers, Ford O., Interview with Benis M. Frank, 1966. Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Transcript, 44. (Hereafter Rogers Interview).

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

The years of war and the losses of friends had clearly made an impression on the British. Rogers witnessed this first hand during his four raids with the British, and later as the influenza epidemic took hold of his Marine squadron as well as the inevitable combat losses. Regrettably, the British perspective on Americans assigned to the RAF is scant. One example is that of British Sergeant Edward Farley, an observer with 217 Squadron, recorded his activities in his flight log book during his service. On 20 August 1918, Farley recorded the deaths of two Americans assigned to his squadron. 'McKinnon and O'Gorman (USA) on patrol at same time crashed into sea off Dunkirk. O'Gorman picked up dead. Skull, arms, legs and back broken. Pilot not found.'²⁶⁸ Normally given to lengthier commentary in previous and subsequent diary entries, Farley reports the incident without emotion and demonstrates Rogers' observations of the British.

While personal observations of the Marines and RAF are not voluminous, there are other materials that aid in a better understanding of the relationship between the British and American airmen. Personal narratives of those Americans who joined the RAF outright; those who were in the US Army Air Service (USAS) and were trained by the British; those who left the USAS to join the RAF; and those of the US Naval Air Service who flew their first combat missions with the RAF alongside the Marines all prove a valuable source in investigating the relations between the British RAF personnel and their American counterparts. The personal diaries and compilations of correspondence left behind by these men offer a window into the relationship between the American and British pilots. Those with the closest relationship to the British were those Americans who crossed the border into Canada and joined the RFC. Two such men were Alvin A. Callender and Bogart Rogers. Callender's service in the military began with duty on the Mexican border in 1916 with the

²⁶⁸ Farley, Edward. Flight Log Book 13 April–10 December 1918, Farley Papers Collection #B2057, Archives, Royal Air Force Museum, London.

troubles with Poncho Villa. It appears his lust for the active service was powerful; with the entry of the United States into the war in April 1917, the mobilization of American military forces was too slow for Callender, therefore, he crossed into Canada and enlisted in the RFC in June 1917. In February 1918, Callender was stationed at the Central Flying School in Upavon, England, and reported to his mother on the composition of his class of students as well as the attitudes he witnessed.

They [his fellow students] are mostly Canadians, R.F.C. Americans like myself, and some few South Africans and Australian Colonials. The Englishmen are considerably in the minority, thank goodness. The latter ‘Cawn’t (sic) stand these beastly Colonials,’ and we in turn have no use whatever for them.²⁶⁹

Callender’s letters home to his mother, other family and friends provides descriptions of training and of course his service with 32 Squadron over the trenches. Regrettably, his only remaining commentary regarding interaction with British was a conversation with Major Russell in which Callender was informed that despite being a legitimate member of the RAF, he may eventually be transferred to the American squadrons as they became more operational.²⁷⁰ Whatever his future, it was cut short on 30 October 1918 when Callender was killed in action. His writings were limited and not detailed enough to provide any real insight into how Americans were received by the British.

In contrast to Callender, Bogart Rogers was a prolific a writer who survived the war. Rogers, a native of San Francisco and alum of Stanford University, learned of the RFC recruiting for its service in Canada and was intrigued. Within a month, he and four of his friends crossed the border and signed on to be aviators. Rogers appears to have been more gregarious than Callender, and while still in training, he appears eager to engage his fellow students light-heartedly, and they in return.

²⁶⁹ Alvin A. Callender to Sarah M. Callendar, 4 February 1918, Alvin Andrew Callender, *War in an Open Cockpit. The Wartime Letters of Captain Alvin Andrew Callender, R.A.F.* (West Roxbury, MA: World War I Aero Publishers, 1978), 28.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

So this is Washington's Birthday? Funny but they don't seem to make any fuss about it over here. We had an argument at lunch today with a couple English boys and one of them pipes up 'Who was this fellow Washington?' Whereupon young Mr. Shapard of Tennessee says 'Who was this guy Nelson? I hear a lot of talk about him over here.'²⁷¹

The opposing attitudes of the students in Callender's and Rogers' training squadrons may be simply the difference of their own personalities, but may also be very similar to the attitudes of the British as a whole toward the United States. Coincidentally, Rogers and Callender served together in 32 Squadron. Their experiences may have been similar, but Callender's lack of details makes a comparison difficult. However, in Rogers' letters one can obtain more insight. Rogers and his fellow Americans brought their heritage to the English, for example, with lessons in baseball, albeit with a cricket bat. 'It's surely a treat to watch some of these Englishmen struggling with the intricacies of baseball, but they get on very well.'²⁷² One interesting aspect of Rogers is that it seemed that while he tried indoctrinating the British into American culture, as his entries in his diaries and letters home show, the British life made an impact on him as well. A subtle change begins to emerge in his writings; his entries speak of Americans he encounters as if he was not an American himself. 'Last night was our regular guest night and I had a couple fellows from an American squadron over.'²⁷³ Rogers survived the war, returned to the United States in 1919, was married in his RAF uniform and lived into his late sixties; which demonstrates the lasting positive impact of his service with the RAF, certainly not an acrimonious one.²⁷⁴

Much like Naval Aviation, the USAS was still in its infancy when the United States entered the First World War. Shortage of combat ready aircraft and skilled pilots slowed the progress of the American Army to field aviation combat forces; therefore much like the US

²⁷¹ Bogart Rogers to Isabella Young, 22 February 1918, Bogart Rogers, *A Yankee Ace in the RAF: The World War I Letters of Captain Bogart Rogers*. Edited by John Howard Morrow, and Earl Rogers. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 66. (Hereafter Rogers, *A Yankee Ace*).

²⁷² Bogart Rogers to Isabella Young, 14 May 1918, Rogers, *A Yankee Ace*, 110–111.

²⁷³ Bogart Rogers to Isabella Young, 12 October 1918, Rogers, *A Yankee Ace*, 201.

²⁷⁴ Rogers, *A Yankee Ace*, 257.

Navy, the Army pilots were placed with the RAF for further training and combat flying until such time as they could be placed with American units.²⁷⁵ Two men who found themselves in this situation were Elliott White Springs and John McGavock Grider. Like Rogers and Callender, Springs and Grider were friends, trained with one another in England, and flew with RAF's 85 Squadron together until Springs was wounded in action and subsequently transferred to 148th Aero Squadron of the American Air Service.²⁷⁶ Springs and Grider had initially been bound for service in Italy; however, upon arriving in Liverpool, they were quickly informed that they were to report to Oxford University. Grider recorded the change in his diary:

We aren't going to Italy afterall [sic]. We've got to go to Ground School all over again. Our orders got all bawled up in Paris and MacDill, La Guardia, the doctors, the enlisted men and Spalding have gone to France. . . . Somebody had made a mistake. All our mail is in Italy, all our money is in lira and our letters of credit are drawn on banks in Rome and we've wasted two weeks studying Italian and two months going to Ground School learning nonsense for now we've got to go thru this British Ground School here.²⁷⁷

The Americans were sent by train to Oxford and amalgamated into the training regimen. They began to enjoy their British officers and vice versa, as noted by Springs in a letter to his mother in November 1917, 'I'm getting along fine with these English officers. Particularly so since we have 360 lbs of sugar which we brought over with us.'²⁷⁸ The sugar was welcome to the British after many years of rations; however, not all things American were wanted by the locals. In May 1918, Grider records in his diary an incident with British soldiers that reveals more about the delicate relationship between the two nations.

There were a couple of Guards officers in there and they all got to chewing the rag. The Guards officers began taking cracks at the American Army. One of them, a long tall bird, said, 'I've been reading in the papers until I'm bloody

²⁷⁵ For additional information on the US Army Air Service's development and operations in the First World War see Maurer Maurer's *Aviation in the U.S. Army, 1919–1939* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1987) and *The U.S. Air Service in World War I*. 4 Vols. (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1978–1979).

²⁷⁶ Elliott White Springs, *Letters from a War Bird. The World War I Correspondence of Elliott White Springs*. Ed. David K. Vaughn, (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 173.

²⁷⁷ John M. Grider Diary Entry, 3 October 1917, [John McGavock Grider?], *War Birds. Diary of an Unknown Aviator*. Ed. [Elliott White Springs?], (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1926), 25.

²⁷⁸ Elliott W. Springs to Lena Springs, 1 November 1917, Springs, *Letters from a War Bird*, 44.

well sick of it, about the number of American troops that have come over. But what I can't understand is why none of them will fight. Paris is full of them, London is full of them, but they all jolly well stay away from the front. None of them will fight.'²⁷⁹

There is no doubt, the slow moving nature of the American military, and the apparent late entry into the war, seemed to their Allies as unwillingness to fight. The experiences of American military servicemen in Britain during the First World War may have had an impact on the reasons the Americans created guide books for their servicemen in the Second World War. In fact, the American War Department issued several guide books for the various countries in which the US military had a significant presence such as Britain and China. It is logical to think that much of the experiences of Americans in Britain in 1917–1918 necessitated the creation of the guide books three decades later.²⁸⁰

Grider's and Springs' diary entries and letters often wax and wane between being hostile toward the British and being thoroughly impressed by them.

Yet you'd be surprised to see how well Americans are getting along over here, much better than I expected. We were about the first American troops in England and I foresaw numerous difficulties which seem to have been overcome very well.²⁸¹

Interestingly, just as it did with Callender and Rogers, the attitudes of Springs and Grider seem to become more British than American. In June 1917, Grider records his thoughts on the American way versus the British way of handling morale, stating, 'There's one thing about the British I like—they realize the importance of morale. The British try to build it up, the Americans try to tear it down.'²⁸²

An example of how close some Americans came to their British counterparts is in July 1918 when Springs was nearly confined to a mental hospital for refusing a promotion

²⁷⁹ Grider Diary, 13 May 1918, [Grider?], *War Birds*, 137.

²⁸⁰ For more about the various guide books created by the US War Department in the Second World War see Milton W. Meyer, *Understanding Allies: GI Wartime Handbooks—Britain, India, Burma and China* (Claremont, CA: Paige Press, 2008).

²⁸¹ Elliott W. Springs to Leroy Springs, 12 May 1918, Springs, *Letters from a War Bird*, 125.

²⁸² Grider Diary, 4 June 1918, [Grider?], *War Birds*, 171.

and transfer to 148th Aero Squadron of the American Air Service. His comfort with, and devotion to his comrades in 85 Squadron overrode his common sense. While Springs' letter of 18 July 1918 to his mother glosses over the topic, Grider's diary entry does not.

The reason the doc was so sure he [Springs] was crazy was that he overheard a telephone conversation. Major Fowler's adjutant called up to tell him that he'd been made a flight commander in the new American squadron up at Dunkirk. Springs said he didn't want to be flight commander and he didn't want to go to any American squadron. He told the adjutant to give the job to some one [sic] else quick. The doc overheard him refusing promotion and sure he was cuckoo.²⁸³

Springs was transferred to 148th Squadron and Grider remained behind; while Springs survived the war, Grider was one of the many pilots killed in action on 18 June 1918.

In comparison to those of the Army's pilots with the British, the American Naval Air Service aviators, mechanics, and observers also left lasting memoirs and personal observations. The American Naval Air Service was intended to serve as a countermeasure to the German U-boat menace by operating out of Calais and Dunkirk regions off the English Channel functioning in tandem with the RAF upon its arrival in Europe. However, a lack of fully trained pilots and completely operational aircraft stymied the hopes of the naval aviators. In the fall of 1917, as the short-comings became apparent, the American Naval authorities worked out an agreement with the Admiralty for advanced flight training of American naval aviators at RFC schools in Gosport, Turnberry, and Ayr.²⁸⁴ Two of the pilots who were sent for additional training were David S. Ingalls and Kenneth MacLeish, both members of the First Yale Unit.²⁸⁵

MacLeish was a first generation American born in Illinois on 19 September 1894; his father emigrated from Scotland in 1856 at the age of eighteen. MacLeish entered Yale

²⁸³ Elliott W. Springs to Lena Springs, 18 July 1918, Springs, *Letters of a War Bird*, 181.; and Grider Diary, 2 July 1918, [Grider?], *War Birds*, 224.

²⁸⁴ Rossano, *Stalking the U-Boat*, 150.

²⁸⁵ For more information on the First Yale Unit see Ralph D. Paine, *The First Yale Unit: A Story of Naval Aviation 1916-1919*, (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1925) and Marc Wortman, *The Millionaire's Unit: The Aristocratic Flyboys who Fought the Great War and Invented American Airpower*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2006).

University in the autumn of 1914 where he was an avid athlete who was less than stellar academically. MacLeish joined the First Yale Unit late in 1917 and by the end of the year he was in Gosport, England, for ground flight training.²⁸⁶ Albeit in England for a short period of time, in his 16 December 1917 letter to his family, he was keenly aware of the slow progress of American naval aviation. ‘I wonder if the Americans really will wake up and send over the promised ten thousand aviators and machines.’²⁸⁷ MacLeish served with the British in the RNAS and RAF while under instruction at Gosport, Turnberry, and Ayr, as well as in operations in the air with 213 and 218 Squadrons. However, his correspondence to his family and fiancée was often harsh in relation to those he deemed hard guys—Americans in the US Army, Marines, and especially enlisted US Sailors as well as those back in the United States whom he saw as slackers.²⁸⁸ Despite the comments toward his fellow Americans, MacLeish seemed to enjoy the British and their military. ‘The RNAS is a wonderful organization, and the men in it are perfectly wonderful too. There’s no crowd I’d rather fight with at the moment.’²⁸⁹ It is possible that his upper-class ivy-league education created a conceited attitude in MacLeish, and that combined with the British environment and military hierarchy fed his predispositions against those whom he deemed inferior—particularly the enlisted Sailors and Marines. Regrettably, the plethora of correspondence MacLeish left behind provides little insight into the relations between the United States and the British, and his death in combat in October 1918, ended the hopes of further commentary.

Very similar to MacLeish was the younger David S. Ingalls. Also of a well-to-do family, he was born 28 January 1899 and was just sixteen when he entered Yale University. In 1917, as the First Yale Unit expanded with men wishing to win the war, Ingalls joined the

²⁸⁶ Kenneth MacLeish, *The Price of Honor: The World War One Letters of Naval Aviator Kenneth MacLeish*. Ed. Geoffrey L. Rossano, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 4–5.

²⁸⁷ Kenneth MacLeish to Family, 16 December 1917, MacLeish, *Price of Honor*, 68.

²⁸⁸ MacLeish, *The Price of Honor*, 109.

²⁸⁹ MacLeish to Priscilla Murdock, 29 March 1918, MacLeish, *Price of Honor*, 128.

group, still just seventeen years of age.²⁹⁰ It is in Ingalls' correspondence that it is understood why little information regarding the relationship between the British and Americans is found within MacLeish's materials. While training at Gosport, there were very few, if any British students and instructors; the Americans nearly had free-reign at the schools.²⁹¹ However, as previously stated while at Ayr, the Americans were enrolled with virtually the entire cross-section of the British Empire—fellow students from South Africa, Canada, and the many other parts of the United Kingdom. Ingalls' first operational assignment was to the RAF's 213 Squadron, which was operating out of Dunkirk. He noted his interactions with fellow Americans to his father in March 1918 that the accommodations and fellow pilots were to his liking. 'The men here are a great bunch, and we have very comfortable quarters, perhaps not quite so palatial as our former mansion, but yet *tres bon*.'²⁹² Like many of the other Americans posted to the British units, baseball was a common game and Ingalls, just as Rogers, lightheartedly attempted to teach the British to play baseball.²⁹³

With the limited personal narratives available with regard to Americans who flew specifically with the British, the sample size is simply not enough to draw definitive conclusions about the nature of relations between the British and the Americans. However, what is apparent is that the men worked together against a common enemy, and their differences did not get in the way of ensuring the mission was accomplished. With such diverse personalities and nationalities in the units investigated in the personal narratives, it is apparent that the Americans melded well into the Commonwealth of Nations that made up the RAF squadrons during the First World War.

Integration in Action

²⁹⁰ David S. Ingalls, *Hero of the Angry Sky. The World War I Diary and Letters of David S. Ingalls, America's First Naval Ace*. Ed. Geoffrey L. Rossano, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 8–16.

²⁹¹ Ingalls, *Hero of the Angry Sky*, 89.

²⁹² David S. Ingalls to Albert Ingalls, 30 March 1918, Ingalls, *Hero of the Angry Sky*, 153. Emphasis in original.

²⁹³ Ingalls Diary Entry, 3 April 1918, Ingalls, *Hero of the Angry Sky*, 156.

The FMAF, the cumulative unit of Marine aviation in Europe in the First World War, arrived in Brest, France on 30 July 1918; the unit did not receive its first functional aircraft until 7 September 1918.²⁹⁴ The gap of nearly six weeks could have severely stunted the abilities of those already trained as pilots, and halted the ability to create new pilots within the Marine Corps while in France. This possible calamity was averted; on 9 August 1918, Marine officers 1st Lieutenants Robert S. Lytle, Arthur H. Wright, 2d Lieutenants Charles R. Needham, William A. McSorley, and Donald N. Whiting, joined by Navy pilot Lieutenant (junior grade) Herman A. Peterson, were assigned to the RAF's 218 Squadron, a DH-9 day bombing squadron from the FMAF's Squadron C.²⁹⁵ Each individual was already designated as a Naval Aviator or observer and were given the opportunity for actual combat flying. This initial group returned to the FMAF from 218 Squadron on 20 August and quickly replaced the next day by 1st Lieutenants Everett R. Brewer, John G. E. Kipp, and Francis P. Mulcahy and their observers Gunnery Sergeant Harry R. Wershiner, Sergeant Archie Paschal, and Corporal Thomas L. McCullough from 1st Squadron, FMAF.²⁹⁶ A second set of Marines was assigned to 217 Squadron, DH-4 day bombing squadron, the same day.²⁹⁷ In order to ensure a cumulative pool of trained pilots, the Marines assigned potential pilots to the British Pilots Pool in Audembert, France, starting on 4 September 1918.²⁹⁸ Over the remaining months of the war, at least forty Marines were trained by the British to be combat pilots.²⁹⁹ These Marines, and those who replaced them were the first combat trained aviators in the Corps, and many took their skills into the interwar period and in turn taught the next generation.

²⁹⁴ First Marine Aviation Force Daily Log Book, 17 July–27 November 1918. World War I Aviation Collection, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²⁹⁵ Squadron C, First Marine Aviation Force, Muster Roll, August 1918. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

²⁹⁶ 1st Squadron, First Marine Aviation Force, Muster Roll, August 1918. Historical Reference Branch, History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

²⁹⁷ First Marine Aviation Force Daily Log Book, 17 July–27 November 1918. World War I Aviation Collection, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Appendix C "Marines Assigned to the Royal Air Force in World War I."

The mission of 217 and 218 Squadrons was not aerial combat, but day bombing of German submarine pens and canals that provided the German U-boats access to the English Channel. And yet, as the U-boat threat waned, Marines were able to accomplish several missions, which their aviation force embraced in years subsequent to the war. While not the primary mission, aerial combat was the natural outcome when enemy aircraft were encountered; thus the first enemy shot down by US Marines took place while flying with 218 Squadron on 28 September 1918, by pilot 1st Lieutenant Brewer and his observer Gunnery Sergeant Wershiner. During a raid over Courtemarke, Belgium, Brewer and Wershiner were embroiled in aerial combat with fifteen German aircraft. Historic in itself, further to the aerial combat, in the ensuing aerial acrobatics, Wershiner was reportedly ejected from his gunnery cockpit but managed to hang on to the aircraft. He scrambled back to his position and resumed firing at the attacking aircraft.³⁰⁰ Both Brewer and Wershiner were wounded, but survived and returned to the air station.³⁰¹ Their actions were recognized by the award of the Navy Cross; Wershiner's citation does not include the near fatal fall, but does state that the Marines possibly shot down a second enemy aircraft in the same action.

For extraordinary heroism as an observer in the First Marine Aviation Force at the Front in France. On September 28th, 1918, while on an air raid into enemy territory, his plane attacked by fifteen enemy scouts. Despite the overwhelming odds he fought with great gallantry and intrepidity. He shot down two enemy scouts (one officially allowed) and although he himself was shot through the lungs, and his pilot shot through the hips, he continued the fight until he was able to shake off the enemy.³⁰²

The second possible downed enemy aircraft was disallowed as the authorities 'were unable to get particulars owing to his (Brewer's) precarious state.'³⁰³ Major Bert Wemp's, commanding officer of 218 Squadron, report was filed with the Marines to

³⁰⁰ Anonymous. 'Mural of Aerial Combat of Local Man,' *The Post-Standard* (Syracuse, NY), 1942.

³⁰¹ No 218 Squadron Record Book, 1 October 1918-27 January 1919. The National Archives, London, UK.

³⁰² Wershiner, Harry B., Navy Cross Citation. Harry Baldwin Wershiner Military Service Record, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰³ Officer Commanding, 218 Squadron to Officer Commanding, Northern Day Bombing Group, 6 October 1918. Harry Baldwin Wershiner Military Service Record, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, MO.

ensure that proper credit was received even though they were unable to provide their own statements having been sent away immediately to receive medical treatment for their wounds.

An additional skill learned by the Marines while with the British is an aspect of today's Marine Corps aviation—support of the ground forces. One such mission was the first aerial resupply mission in Corps history, which was accomplished on 2 October 1918.³⁰⁴ New promoted-Captain Mulcahy and Corporal McCullough, along with 1st Lieutenant Lytle and Sergeant Amil Wiman, and 2d Lieutenant Frank Nelms with Corporal Henry Tallman flew through vicious German rifle, machine gun, and artillery fire just one hundred feet above the ground and dropped forty-nine bags of food containing bread and canned goods as well as other supplies to a French regiment near Stadenburg in Belgium, which had been isolated for several days. The Marines accumulated just over nine hours of flight time in ten flights over the beleaguered French forces while with 218 Squadron.³⁰⁵ In his 1920 article 'The Value of Aviation to the Marine Corps,' Cunningham extolled the virtues of aviation to a skeptical Marine Corps based on the lessons of his experiences in the First World War, lessons such as aerial resupply. Cunningham asserted that the only reason for aviation was the assistance of 'the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their missions.'³⁰⁶ Therefore, the aerial resupply mission conducted by the Mulcahy/McCullough and Lytle/Wiman teams was not simply an isolated, singular event that took place while Marines were with the RAF; rather, it was a critical skill set learned and thus laid the foundation for the future operations of Marine aviation.

³⁰⁴ See also Paul Barnes, 'Complete Failure: The British and Dominion Aerial Re-supply 1915-1916,' *Air Power Review* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 26-43.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation,' 222.

Of the 2,462 men who served in Marine Aviation during the First World War, 1,060 served in France.³⁰⁷ Nearly ten percent of the total number of aviation Marines, 103 men, served or trained with the British in the few short months before the end of the war. These men served more than 1,375 man-days with the RAF averaging nine days per man. With the help of the skills learned while flying with the British, two Marines later earned the Medal of Honor, four were awarded the Navy's Distinguished Service Medal, and another sixteen earned the Navy Cross—the top three decorations given by the United States military of that time.³⁰⁸ With the training and combat experiences earned with the British, the FMAF accumulated a record of 126 flights and at least twelve independent raids; certainly an impressive number considering that the unit managed only eighteen aircraft of its own in commission by the time of the armistice.³⁰⁹

Conclusion

The first practical application of Marine aviation in combat was not a Marine-only event; the British deserve most of the credit for the successes of the FMAF in France during the First World War. As demonstrated, the Marines arrived in France without equipment but with a mission and a small pool of trained pilots, mechanics, observers, and gunners. This small pool of men were not equipped with the practical skills needed to participate in antisubmarine warfare and later, air-to-air combat, and air support of ground forces—all this was learned by their service with the well-equipped and skilled British. Despite the lack of records detailing the personal interactions of the Americans and the British, the few surviving

³⁰⁷ McClellan, Edwin N. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*. (Washington: Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1921), 127–130.

³⁰⁸ Appendix C 'Marines Assigned to the Royal Air Force in World War I,' Rossano and Wildenberg, *Striking the Hornets Nest: Naval Aviation and the Origins of Strategic Bombing in World War I*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015), 184. During World War I, the Distinguished Service Medal came before the Navy Cross in precedence; this was changed in 1942 so that the Navy Cross was the second highest military decoration in the Department of the Navy.

³⁰⁹ First Marine Aviation Force Logbook, 17 July–27 November 1918. World War I Aviation Collection, Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

pieces do indicate that the relations at the individual level were as complicated as they were at the national level. The British soldiers and airmen knew that the added manpower of the Americans was required but were skeptical that their new allies would or could fight after taking, what seemed to them, an inordinate amount of time to enter the war in the first place. American bravado and eagerness to demonstrate fighting prowess often clashed with the British.

The successes of the FMAF were a direct result of its service with the RAF. As demonstrated by the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company in the Azores, flying boats and floatplanes were no longer the aircraft of choice as the antisubmarine mission waned. The aircraft required to conduct air-to-air combat over land, and the ability to resupply ground forces from the air could not be achieved by the slow moving seaplanes. In fact, the De Havilland DH-4 had a maximum speed of 198 kilometers per hour, which was at least 60 kilometers per hour more than both the Curtiss R-6 and Curtiss HS-2L seaplanes.³¹⁰

The integration of the USMC and the RAF during the First World War, albeit brief, would prove to have a lasting impact on the Marine Corps as the Marines who remained in the Corps throughout the Interwar years of the 1920s and 1930s would pass on their skills to the younger generation of aviators and thus set the Corps up for success in the Second World War. The experiences of the FMAF with the RAF gave the Corps a foundation of skills and successes, which Cunningham could use to ensure aviation, remained within the arsenal.

³¹⁰ “DeHavilland DH-4,” Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Accessed 25 December 2017. <https://airandspace.si.edu/collection-objects/de-havilland-dh-4>.

Chapter Four:
INTEGRATION GONE TOO FAR? THE CURIOUS CASE OF
CAPTAIN EDMUND G. CHAMBERLAIN, USMC

A unique event in the history of the RAF and USMC integration is that of Captain Edmund Gillette Chamberlain, US Marine. It offers a distinctive window into the integration and interrelation of the two services during the war. The events surrounding the actions of Chamberlain offers a chance to view the integration of the two services on a non-operational, and more personal level as well as a means of possibly identifying any friction points between the RAF and USMC. The Chamberlain case will demonstrate that American Navy and Marine Corps aviation were engaged with the British and operating as a unified force against the Germans—nearly fully amalgamated, unlike their infantry counterparts.

On 21 September 1921, the headlines of *The Independent* proclaimed that Marine Captain Chamberlain was the latest hero in the First World War.³¹¹ The very short article, which included a photograph of the Marine, stated that while on holiday he flew with a British squadron and in that time downed five German aircraft, disabled two more, crash-landed behind enemy lines, took a German prisoner, and saved a French officer before making it back to allied lines. The article further states that for his actions, Chamberlain was recommended for the Victoria Cross and the Medal of Honor.³¹² However, by the time this article—and the dozens of others—was published, Chamberlain was already under investigation by the Navy for concocting the entire story.

Chamberlain's story began to unravel soon after it had been reported. The first person to challenge the reported events was RAF Brigadier General Salmond, commander of the RAF in the Field.³¹³ Were his objections based on facts, natural suspicions or were they the

³¹¹ Anonymous. 'Here's A Hero!', *The Independent*, 21 September 1918, 381.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Record of Court of Inquiry Case of Captain Edmund G. Chamberlain, U.S. Marine Corps*, 1 May 1919, statement of Major Alfred A. Cunningham, Commander, First Marine Aviation Force, 7.

biased opinions of a British officer against the American? As the story spread, Chamberlain was investigated and eventually court-martialed for forgery and scandalous conduct. A key member of the events leading to the court-martial was none other than Admiral Sims, the commander of all American naval forces in Europe and one of the ringleaders of the 1908 affair to dissolve the Marine Corps; therefore Sims' actions are investigated to understand if they were simply out of hatred for the Corps and desire to blacken the reputation of the unseasoned air service or a natural reaction to the events as they occurred.

Had Chamberlain achieved the feats of flying as he claimed, he would have been the first Marine to be recommended for not only the Medal of Honor but the British Victoria Cross as well. The publicity spotlight would have shone brightly on the Corps, only a few months after it had done for those Marines who fought at Belleau Wood. The battle of Belleau Wood in June 1918 garnered a great deal of American media attention, and contrary to the military orders of the day, identified Marines as the main participants, thereby angering the Army leadership.³¹⁴ The ramifications of the media attention gained by Marines for their actions at Belleau Wood later were revisited when Army generals such as Dwight Eisenhower lead the efforts in 1947 to eliminate the Marine Corps from the Department of Defense.

Chamberlain, the Man and the Aviator

Chamberlain was born to Edwin and Adelaide Chamberlain in San Antonio, Texas, on 14 June 1891.³¹⁵ His deceptions began at an early age. He claimed that after attending the local San Antonio Academy, he attended Princeton, but transferred back to the University of Texas at San Antonio where he completed his degree in engineering.³¹⁶ Checking the

³¹⁴ For more on the rivalry between the Marine Corps and Army in the wake of the battle of Belleau Wood see Dennis Showalter, "Evolution of the US Marine Corps as a Military Elite," *Marine Corps Gazette* 63, no. 11 (November 1979): 44-58, also Heather Pace Marshall, "It Means Something These Days to be a Marine: Image, Identity, and Mission in the Marine Corps, 1861-1918" (doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 2010), Chapter 5.

³¹⁵ Edmund Gillette Chamberlain, Sr., Certificate of Death. Virginia Department of Health, Richmond, VA.

³¹⁶ Chamberlain Officer's Fitness Report for the Period 2 May-1 September 1917, Robert Benoit Papers, Frazier Memorial Library Archives, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA.

Princeton Alumni database for Chamberlain confirms the 1920 report—only his brother Fidelio is recorded.³¹⁷ The truth was that Chamberlain did not enter Princeton, but entered the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey in September 1909 and over the course of two and a half years attended sporadically. In June 1911, he wrote the headmaster of the school seeking advice.

Doctor I wish to [ask] your advice, as I know you will be perfectly candid with me! [I think] I might got up to [the University of] Texas, and see if I could enter there in September . . . and go there this next year, then enter the Freshman class at Princeton.³¹⁸

Chamberlain spent a considerable amount of time away from the Lawrenceville School due to sports injuries and his mother's poor health. After requesting advice from the headmaster, he returned to the school the next academic year, yet once again injured himself and returned to Texas to heal. By June 1912, Chamberlain withdrew from Lawrenceville for the last time, and by October of that year, he was enrolled in the University of Texas at Austin.³¹⁹ The University confirmed Chamberlain's first semester was in fall 1912 and his last was fall 1913, but that no degree had ever been conferred upon him.³²⁰

As previously discussed, during the period of 1909 to 1912, Chamberlain was often in Lawrenceville attending school in preparation for entering college, and when not in New Jersey, he was in Texas recuperating from a variety of physical injuries. However, he stated that, 'When war broke out I immediately asked to be placed in aviation, as I had been flying ever since 1911. In different ways I had learned to fly, just personally at my home, which is quite a flying center—San Antonio, Tex.'³²¹ With these considerations, and the fact that

³¹⁷ Princeton University Undergraduate Alumni Index, 1748–1920, Accessed 15 May.

<http://www.princeton.edu/~mudd/databases/alumni.html>.

³¹⁸ Edmund G. Chamberlain to Dr. S. J. McPherson, 21 June 1911. Edmund G. Chamberlain Student Record, Stephan Archives, Bunn Library, The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ.

³¹⁹ Edmund G. Chamberlain Student Record, Stephan Archives, Bunn Library, The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ.

³²⁰ Office of the Registrar, The University of Texas at Austin to Annette D. Amerman, 24 July 2015. Author's files.

³²¹ Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, *Capt Edmund G. Chamberlain, United States Marines Corps: Hearings on Senate Resolution 70, 67th Congress, 1921, 21.*

flying in the earliest days required complete concentration and physical strength, it is highly unlikely Chamberlain spent enough time learning to fly to be qualified as an actual pilot—more likely no time at all. His Marine Corps superiors further emphasized this fact; Cunningham reported that Chamberlain was not a qualified flier upon his entry into the Marine Corps. ‘He [Chamberlain] had told me he had flown before, but I got Major Geiger to take him out and give him a check hop. Major Geiger reported back that he could not fly at all. So after that he [Chamberlain] was given instruction by one of the officers, probably Captain McIlvain.’³²² Geiger himself stated that during the check hop Chamberlain was given the controls of the aircraft twice and practically went into a spin.³²³ Chamberlain’s exaggerations did not simply end with the ability to fly, during testimony in 1921, Cunningham stated:

He [Chamberlain] told me that he had been flying a great deal in Texas and Mexico, or rather, on the border; that he had flown a great deal with Colonel Carberry,* of the Army, and other Army officers around there, and that he had a great deal of experience in Mexican revolutions. I think he said he was a spy at one time of either Villa [General Francisco ‘Pancho’ Villa] or some other person.³²⁴

Chamberlain entered active service in the Marine Corps on 2 May 1917 and was assigned to the Aeronautic Company, which was stationed at Marine Barracks Philadelphia as part of the Advanced Base Force.³²⁵ The Aeronautic Company, training in seaplane aviation, was enhanced by Cunningham’s arrangement with Army Signal Corps commander Colonel Henry H. “Hap” Arnold in October 1917. The squadron, Chamberlain included, was relocated to Army Aviation School in Mineola, New York, for basic flight training—landplane flight training.³²⁶

³²² Ibid., 1607.

³²³ Ibid., 1755.

* Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Carberry, US Army, was one of a group of 25 Army men who were selected in 1913 to serve as the Army’s first military aviators. Carberry flew while serving with John J. Pershing on the Mexican border and in 1915.

³²⁴ Ibid., 1611.

³²⁵ Aeronautic Company, Muster Roll, 1-30 May 1917, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³²⁶ Johnson, *Marine Aviation. The Early Years*, 15.

As the winter weather made flying increasingly difficult for the Marines, and advanced training was required, the squadron was relocated once again to Gerstner Field in Lake Charles, Louisiana; Chamberlain again made the move with the unit.³²⁷ However, he did not remain in Louisiana. Chamberlain traveled to Buffalo and Ithaca, New York, to the factories of the Glenn Curtiss and Thomas Morse Companies respectively to conduct liaison and inspect the factories.³²⁸ As his temporary duty was completed, Chamberlain was sent back to Miami in mid-April 1918.³²⁹

On 7 May 1918, in one of his lengthy letters to Geiger, Cunningham informed his subordinate that his office had received a telegram. 'I received a wire from Chamberlain stating that you were flying an average of only eight machines. I hope you will be able to get considerably more than this at work.'³³⁰ From the tone of the response elicited by Chamberlain's telegram, Cunningham was unhappy with Geiger's performance. If this was Chamberlain's intent, it appears as if he was attempting to cause his commanding officer to fall out of favor with the head of Marine aviation, for possible personal gain.

Chamberlain's efforts, malicious or not, were cut short when he received orders to deploy to France ahead of the main body of Marine Aviation on 9 May 1918. The reasoning is unclear, based on his own testimony his method of receiving orders is clouded. Initially in Chamberlain's testimony before the Subcommittee, he stated:

I had made requests from the first day I got in. I had made so many I don't know how many I did make, but I know I made several official requests. I was sent as the first [Marine] active flier ahead of my squadron to keep the Marine Corps aviation in this country in touch with the plans that the Navy had to use our planes in France. . . . I was sent to follow up his [Cunningham's] work and to keep the plans that he had made in touch with this country and to advise this

³²⁷ Major General Commandant to Commanding Officer First Marine Aviation Squadron, 31 December 1917. Roger Emmons Personal Papers, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³²⁸ Orders of 14 March 1918, 23 March 1918 and 27 March 1918 to Edmund G. Chamberlain. Edmund Gillette Chamberlain Military Service Record.

³²⁹ Douglas B. Roben to Alfred A. Cunningham, 15 April 1918, Alfred A. Cunningham Papers.

³³⁰ Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 7 May 1918, Alfred A. Cunningham Papers.

country as to the different methods and through whom they could advise the Navy in France of the proper methods.³³¹

Later, in additional testimony, Chamberlain states that it was his performance that garnered the attention of now-Major Bernard L. Smith, a Marine aviator stationed with the Chief of Naval Operations who was bound for France for temporary additional duty. 'Maj. Smith was attaché in the American embassy in Paris from 1914 until 1917. He was then sent home for a few months and it was through his help and his knowledge of my work that I was sent to France, and I went over with him.'³³² Regardless of his skills, it seems that Chamberlain's assignment to be the advanced party of the Marine aviation contingent to arrive in France was not Smith's doing, but that of Cunningham. 'Chamberlain is to go abroad to collect our material on the other side [France]. I send him as being the only officer we could spare who is familiar with the work.'³³³ Cunningham clarified these events while testifying during the Senate Subcommittee hearings, and contesting the statement made by Smith at the same hearings.

Major Smith was not connected in any way whatever with the northern bombing group [sic] or with Captain Chamberlain. . . . No one got Mr. Chamberlain's orders to go to France except myself. . . . I sent Mr. Chamberlain because, in the first place, I thought he was a good officer, and he had asked me time after time, almost begged, to go over there [France] a number of times; and after I decided we needed an officer over there, I decided that I would let Chamberlain go.³³⁴

A considerable shadow has been cast over Chamberlain's service up to the point at which he arrived in France. This negative light, along with the previous inconsistencies established, taints every utterance that the Marine made and causes enough doubt as to his ability to fly and perform the acts he claimed. However, the testimony of those with whom he

³³¹ Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, *Capt Edmund G. Chamberlain, United States Marines Corps: Hearings on Senate Resolution 70, 67th Congress, 1921, 24.*

³³² *Ibid.*, 175.

³³³ Alfred A. Cunningham to Roy S. Geiger, 11 May 1918, Alfred A. Cunningham Papers.

³³⁴ Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, *Capt Edmund G. Chamberlain, United States Marines Corps: Hearings on Senate Resolution 70, 67th Congress, 1921, 1610.*

served in active flights provides another point of view contradicting the negative comments. From 20 June to 13 July 1918, Chamberlain served with RAF's 218 Squadron.³³⁵ A Canadian, Milton G. Baskerville, serving with the squadron testified during the court-martial in support of Chamberlain's bravery. During a bombing run, the flight was attacked and spent considerable time fighting with German forces, during which Chamberlain did not drop his bombs. 'Chamberlain hung on to his bombs all through this, and consequently he lost about three thousand feet scrapping . . . after that scrap was over and we had left Ostend, he remembered that he had his bombs and turned back . . . he went back to Ostend and dropped his bombs all alone.'³³⁶ In all the 140 questions asked of Baskerville, none were in reference to his actual flying ability being better than most or better than average, let alone if he was capable of climbing into an unfamiliar airframe and flying it without instruction.

The only verifiable report of Chamberlain's capabilities flying with a British squadron is that of Major Wemp, the commanding officer of 218 Squadron. Wemp reported that Chamberlain had proven 'himself an experienced pilot at all altitudes over enemy territory, and his capabilities as a war pilot are excellent.'³³⁷ In his short time with 218 Squadron, Chamberlain accumulated eleven hours and fifteen minutes in combat flights and another twenty minutes in test flights.³³⁸ Chamberlain's experience with the British was unique in comparison to the other Marines; his interactions were far more involved as they were more than just operational in nature and not as short-lived as most. Thus, his experience provides an opportunity to more closely examine the relationship between the British and American Marines.

³³⁵ Bert S. Wemp to Major General Commandant, undated. Edmund Gillette Chamberlain Military Service Record.

³³⁶ Milton G. Baskerville Testimony, 24 April 1919, Edmund G. Chamberlain Court Martial. Robert Benoit Personal Papers Collection, Box 1, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections, Frazar Memorial Library, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA.

³³⁷ Bert S. Wemp to Major General Commandant, undated. Edmund Gillette Chamberlain Military Service Record.

³³⁸ No 218 Squadron RAF Flying Times and Records of Services (Officers, NCOs, Pilots, Observers), May–December 1918 Log Book, Air Ministry: Air Historical Branch: Papers, The National Archives, London. 218 Squadron Flying Times and Records of Services (Pilots and Observers), April–October 1918 Log Book, Air Ministry: Air Historical Branch: Papers, The National Archives, London.

British Views of Chamberlain

Aspects of the court-martial offer inside views to the larger relations with the RAF and the USN with respect to the Marine Corps; therefore the British views relative to the court-martial are discussed herein. Chamberlain's exploit remained unchallenged by the Americans through the remainder of August and nearly through September 1918. However, it was the British who seemed to have targeted the Marine as unbelievable. With Marine aviation dependent upon the desires of the RAF in allowing Marines to fly and train with their squadrons, their views regarding Chamberlain's alleged exploits are necessary to understand.

The Marine's own commanding officer was unaware of the alleged events, as he had yet to reach France; however, by autumn Cunningham was well versed in the details. Cunningham's involvement with the Chamberlain events began when he accompanied Chamberlain to the office of Major General Salmond on 22 September 1918 when he was summoned.³³⁹ Regrettably, Salmond retained no personal correspondence or made any diary entries that give his personal thoughts on the Marine's exploits; however, Salmond was not swayed by the Marine and clearly decided further action was required to ensure the exploit was discredited. The general's report to the Air Ministry remains within the court documents and subsequent legal filings; the court of inquiry and succeeding court martial can be traced back to the actions of Salmond. After meeting with and questioning Chamberlain, Salmond filed a report with the Air Ministry.³⁴⁰ Salmond further forwarded a copy of the report to the American Mission with an enclosure 'stating that he considered the alleged exploits of Lieut. E. G. Chamberlain a fabrication . . . forwarding this information for whatever action you may

³³⁹ Statement of Major Alfred A. Cunningham, 7, *Court of Inquiry*.

³⁴⁰ *Gregory Report*, 65.

think necessary.’³⁴¹ Salmond’s report sparked the court of inquiry by the US Navy, which in turn prompted the court-martial.

It is a fair assertion on the behalf of the defense; Salmond’s report is quite damning when read without the ability to question the creator.

I have interviewed Lieut. Chamberlain and his account of the affair was confused and far from satisfactory. I have come to the conclusion that the whole affair is a concoction of lies and forgeries.³⁴²

Salmond’s are not the only thoughts available from the British perspective.

Throughout the court of inquiry and the court martial, thirteen members of the RAF were brought to testify against Chamberlain. None indicated they knew the Marine during July 1918, and none indicated he flew with their squadrons in July 1918. However, the testimony of Major R. S. Maxwell, former commanding officer of 54 Squadron, was most telling as he had interacted with Chamberlain in January 1919 and his comments seemed to corroborate the Marine’s claims. The two met in a restaurant in Lille, France, while Chamberlain attempted to scour the countryside for corroborating evidence of his exploits. Accompanying Chamberlain was US Navy Lieutenant Commander Frederick Allen, who later also testified in the court-martial. Upon entering the restaurant, Chamberlain and Allen noticed a group of RAF officers whom Chamberlain recognized from the night of his exploit; the Marine joined their table and began a ten-minute conversation. While Chamberlain claimed the conversation vindicated his account, Major Maxwell recalled it differently.

We questioned him a good bit about it [the exploit] because we thought the thing had been a good bit exaggerated in the newspapers, and we had been rather treating the whole matter as a joke, and we talked to him rather with that in mind and not seriously at all . . . it seemed to us that the thing if not actually impossible, was very highly improbable as reported in the papers, and we were also quite certain that we would all have heard about it officially or seen it in communiqué and that sort of thing if it had actually happened, and we considered that it had not happened at the time.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Ibid, 86.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Statement of Maxwell, 97, *Court Martial*.

Maxwell's testimony was advantageous for the defense and came during lengthy questioning on the stand. Maxwell was asked about permitting unofficial flights, his fear for admitting to allowing such flights and his perceived repercussions, which cast doubts on his veracity. Maxwell was queried: 'If you had permitted, contrary to regulations, a person to make a flight, would you have any fear now in admitting it, at this time?'³⁴⁴ Maxwell replied that he was not sure as it was simply a hypothetical instance, and the counsel asked him why. His response was quite telling; it left open the idea that the British had simply closed ranks on Chamberlain and left him to the fates of the court-martial. 'If I was capable of disobeying such regulations and deliberately falsifying records in order to shield myself at the time it is quite conceivable that I would be capable of still concealing that information.'³⁴⁵ His statement about falsifying records seems in line with the statement Maxwell made to Lieutenant Commander Allen in January, 'Major Maxwell assured me that in such a case as Captain Chamberlain's no commander would admit that the Captain had ever secured a machine . . . and that if he admitted that he had allowed Captain Chamberlain to fly he would probably be court-martialed and lose his majority, and even be reduced to the ranks.'³⁴⁶ The statements made by Maxwell give plenty of cause to believe that the British had motive and means to suppress the actions of Chamberlain and ensure that his entire story be discredited by the Navy's court-martial.

Of the thirteen RAF officers called to testify in the court-martial, only Maxwell indicated any interaction with the Marine above a mere passing introduction. Major C. C. Miles, former commanding officer of 43 Squadron testified as his squadron was stationed at Touquin Aerodrome. Miles was questioned with regard to any knowledge of the alleged

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 147.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Lieutenant Commander F. H. Allen, USNRF to Staff Representative, 20 January 1919, House Papers.

exploit; his answer is indicative of all officers who appeared. When asked if Chamberlain had used one of his airplanes to make the flight, Miles responded, ‘Certainly not from my squadron, and probably not from the aerodrome. . . . Because I would have heard an exciting thing like that, certainly.’³⁴⁷ Had the exploit taken place, it is quite true the aerodrome would have been filled with a considerable amount of discussion amongst the fliers; it would not have been easy to suppress, let alone conceal indefinitely. The events would have swept through the facility and anyone questioned about the event would surely have been privy to it.

The testimony of the British officers leaves little room for Chamberlain’s actions to be true and accurate. It is more likely the Marine visited the aerodrome with a companion and departed the same day. In fact, Major Miles’ own testimony alludes to this fact, while not specifically identifying Chamberlain by name. Miles remembers an American visiting his squadron.

I had an American, U.S. Air Service pilot, who was at that time on leave in Paris, and he came over one day bringing with him another American officer whom I think was a marine. They arrived early in the afternoon and they went away after tea.³⁴⁸

The USAS pilot was identified as First Lieutenant George C. Whiting, who in fact was assigned to 43 Squadron and later transferred to the 148th Aero Squadron, a Sopwith Camel squadron.³⁴⁹ It is entirely possible that Whiting and Chamberlain were acquaintances, as the Army pilot attended military flight schools both in Miami, Florida, and Austin, Texas, between April and August 1917.³⁵⁰ Curiously, Chamberlain’s defense attorney did not call Lieutenant Whiting to refute the claims by Miles and it appears that no attempt was made to distance the Marine and the Soldier from one another. The possible answer to why not may

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 185.

³⁴⁸ Statement of Miles, *Court Martial*, 187.

³⁴⁹ Gorrell’s History of the American Expeditionary Forces Air Service, Series E: Squadron Histories, 148th Aero Squadron, 25.

³⁵⁰ Lawrence Lowell. *New England Aviators 1914–1918; their portraits and their records*. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1920), 102.

be the fact that the Marine did visit 43 Squadron at the Touquin Aerodrome with Whiting and did not want to bring this fact forward. However, just as curious, the prosecution did not call Whiting either to close the case easily. With the US military demobilizing as rapidly as it was mobilized, it is entirely possible that attempts were made by both sides to secure Whiting, but he was already returned to the United States. No documentation remains to provide the definitive answer.

Conclusion

It appears from the research that Captain Chamberlain was the only American Marine aviator court martialled for actions dealing with service with the RAF in the First World War. As such, the court martial offers a unique perspective, albeit limited, on the thoughts of the British toward the American Marines and is a unique case study of the larger tale of integration and relations between the US and Great Britain. The court-martial of this Marine could have been a catalyst for driving a wedge between the two militaries; however, it remained a localized affair despite a vigorous defense. While the Chamberlain court martial was a significant event for the First World War Marine Corps, the Day Wing of the Northern Bombing Group and Chamberlain himself, it did not make an impact on the RAF or the relations between the American and British air services, as demonstrated by the lack of documentation within the archives of the Royal Air Force and The National Archives at Kew, personal and official.

The curious case of Captain Chamberlain is a view into the individual level relations of the Marines and British, demonstrating that the Americans were nearly fully amalgamated with the British. The Americans did not balk or refuse to investigate the events when notified by Salmond of his suspicions, the American's produced Chamberlain in Salmond's office when called and the British allowed many of its officers to testify in the case. These actions demonstrate that the RAF and USMC were cooperating fully as allies and were not at odds

with one another as the previous points of conflict discussed in previous chapters may have forecasted. The Chamberlain case remains a curious affair in the history of the integration of USMC and RAF, mostly curiosity of the man and his preposterous claims.

Conclusion:
**IMPACT AND LEGACY OF US MARINES INTEGRATION WITH
THE ROYAL AIR FORCE**

The lack of detailed information related to the integration of the Marines into the RAF in the official and secondary literature would indicate the impact was less than impressive. However, quite in contrast, based on the flight records of 217 and 218 Squadrons, the records of the FMAF and the muster rolls of the Marine Corps, it can be reasoned that the Marine Corps benefited greatly from the few months of experiences gained while serving with the British. As the First Marine Aviation Force returned to the United States in late 1918, demobilization began in earnest. Cunningham remained the titular head of the Corps' aviation; he realized that aviation was not necessarily a permanent fixture. In the September 1920 issue of "Marine Corps Gazette" Cunningham published his case for the value of aviation in the Marine Corps, and it is this article that demonstrates how the experiences of the FMAF in France and outlined his ideas for the expansion of size and skills of Marine aviation.³⁵¹ In the article, Cunningham gave a brief history of the creation of Marine Corps aviation, but also detailed the record of achievement of the FMAF in France. Cunningham understood that the positive achievements and experiences gained while serving with the RAF were the crux of demonstrating the usefulness of aviation to the Corps. Additionally, while the majority of the FMAF was discharged as soon as it returned to the United State in early 1919, there were others who continued to serve the Corps during the Interwar period in Haiti, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and across the country. There is no doubt the skills they learned while serving with the British served them well in the ensuing years, and were passed along to the next generation. The program of Marine Corps and British pilots serving with each other was utilized again in the Second World War during combined operations. The lessons learned in France with the British were put to good use in the

³⁵¹ Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation,' 221-233.

Interwar period, which is when the skills of the pilots and abilities of the aircraft were honed and demonstrated the usefulness of aviation to the Corps. Indeed most Marines of FMAF were discharged upon returning from France, however, five of the Marines went on to serve as general officers fighting the Japanese in the Pacific.³⁵² Regrettably, personal papers of these five do not provide additional information regarding lessons imparted upon the incoming recruits.

Upon his return to the United States, Cunningham understood that while the achievements of the Marine fliers in France and the Azores were notable in most cases, the Corps was not necessarily sold on the usefulness of aviation. In his September 1920 article, Cunningham plead his case in print. While he told of the successes of the fliers in France, Cunningham also laid out how aviation could benefit the infantry-focused service. The senior aviator knew that he had to ingratiate the ground Marines to his cause and demonstrate the despite the Naval aviator wings, pilots were Marines through and through.

Conditions arising from the necessity of organizing and training in a short time an aviation section, with practically nothing to start with and the nature of the duty, which does not allow the older officers to keep their juniors continually under their observation and guidance as is allowed in ground work, may have prevented the instillation in the younger pilots of all the qualities necessary in a Marine officer to the same degree as is done in infantry work. We have realized this difficulty and have made an earnest effort to overcome it and believe, with some few exceptions, that we have been successful.³⁵³

Some of the problems that plagued the FMAF, plagued the squadrons deployed in 1919. In February of that year, six land planes were sent to the 2d Brigade in the Dominican Republic and the following month, six land and six flying boat were deployed to the 1st Brigade in Haiti.³⁵⁴ Each organization experienced the same shortage of skilled men and

³⁵² Karl S. Day, Francis P. Mulcahy, Ford O. Rogers, Fred S. Robillard and Roy S. Geiger.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 222.

³⁵⁴ 1st Brigade, February 1919 and 2d Brigade, March 1919 Muster Rolls. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

suitable aircraft as their FMAF counterparts had in France the previous year.³⁵⁵

Cunningham's ambassadors were the few First World War veterans of FMAF that remained in the Corps after the mass demobilization. As previously stated, 103 Marines flew with, or were trained by the RAF during the First World War; of the 103, just thirteen Marines remained in aviation as pilots, and saw service in the Caribbean and Latin American locations, including Cunningham.³⁵⁶ While an admittedly a small number, these thirteen men were senior to the new pilots of the Corps and served as instructors by example and provided sound leadership, some of which was learned from the British. Of the thirteen, seven served in multiple locations or repetitive tours in a single location.³⁵⁷ It is true that Marine Corps aviation remained relatively small during the Interwar period; however, the small size allowed for greater transfer of skills from the first generation of Marine aviators to the next.³⁵⁸ The best examples of transmission of experience and skills come from Marine Corps deployments to the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in the 1920s.

In December 1920, Cunningham was sent to the Dominican Republic to take charge of the 1st Air Squadron, which had arrived the year prior; at the same time the squadron's Curtiss JN-6 'Jenny' aircraft were replaced by the recognizable DeHavilland DH-4B.³⁵⁹ While the FMAF was in France, the antisubmarine warfare mission waned and the Marines adapted to bombing key positions, conducting reconnaissance flights, supporting ground forces and even air-to-air combat. While the Marines did not meet the enemy in the air over the Dominican Republic, other familiar missions were conducted.

In 1922, they helped ground commanders to control the operations of widespread patrols by dropping messages to them from the air and keeping the regimental headquarters informed of their whereabouts. The squadron conducted an aerial survey of the Dominican coastline and the important rivers and made photographic maps, of

³⁵⁵ Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation,' 226.

³⁵⁶ Appendix B

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ The Marine Corps total combined end strength in 1919 was 48,834 and by 1939 it had dropped to 19,432. Marine Corps History Division "End Strengths." <https://www.usmcu.edu/historydivision/end-strengths> (Accessed 14 February 2018).

³⁵⁹ Stephen M. Fuller and Graham Cosmas, *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924*. (History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1974), 38-40.

obvious help in planning ground operations.³⁶⁰

This was reminiscent of the survey and reconnaissance missions conducted in France during the First World War.

While Marine aviation participated in the operations in the Dominican Republic, the greater impact of aviation was in Nicaragua. While the majority of the WWI FMAF veterans who remained in the service were deployed to the Dominican Republic, and even Haiti, those who were sent to Nicaragua made their abilities known quite well.³⁶¹ In the Annual Report that covered the period of 1 July 1927 through 20 June 1928, submitted by the senior aviator, Major Ross E. Rowell, Marine Observation Squadrons 6 and 7 (VO-6M and VO-7M) performed 'infantry liaison' duty. Like their counterparts in the Dominican Republic, the Marines in Nicaragua were equipped with the DH-4.³⁶² Rowell reported the following:

...troop commanders have depended almost entirely upon air liaison not only to control, to maintain contact with and to receive daily reports from these patrols [ground patrols by infantry], but to furnish them with medical and other emergency supplies and to provide them with the only combat support possible...³⁶³

This action, support of ground forces from the air, repeats that mission of October 1918, and those conducted in 1922 in the Dominican Republic. Gunnery Sergeant Thomas L.

McCullough, a veteran of the 2 October 1918 Belgian food drop, departed Nicaragua on 16 June 1927 after a period of service.³⁶⁴ Another veteran of service with the RAF in Nicaragua at the time was then-Technical Sergeant Archie Paschal, who served with 218 Squadron during the First World War.³⁶⁵ It is very likely many of the tactics needed to support the infantry in Nicaragua had been learned in France and passed along by McCullough and

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 41.

³⁶¹ See Appendix B for names and deployment statistics.

³⁶² John M. Elliott, "Second Nicaraguan Campaign Aviation." (Unpublished Manuscript, 1994), Authors Collection.

³⁶³ Ross E. Rowell, "Annual Report of Aircraft Squadrons, Second Brigade, U.S. Marine Corps, 1 July 1927 to 20 June 1928." Nicaragua Subject File, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³⁶⁴ Division One, Marine Observation Squadron 1, Aircraft Squadrons, 2d Brigade, June 1927 Muster Roll. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

³⁶⁵ Marine Observation Squadron 4, Aircraft Squadrons, 2d Brigade, June 1927 Muster Roll. Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Microfilm.

Paschal to those new Marine aviators. Paschal served twice in Nicaragua alone and was awarded the Navy Cross for actions.

While the nature of warfare from the air in the interwar period did not include bombing submarine pens, it did include bombing enemy strongholds when infantry were unable to take the position or insufficient in number to accomplish the mission. In Nicaragua, the Marines were forced to use aircraft alone to engage a well-entrenched enemy position. 'Four airplanes unsupported by any other force, attacked the outlaw position using fragmentation bombs, demolition bombs, machine guns and W. P. [white phosphorous] hand grenades. The planes encountered heavy rifle and machine gun fire and a barrage of sky rockets...'³⁶⁶ These types of missions are reminiscent of the raids performed in 1918 by the Marines with the RAF, which were also often conducted while under heavy machine gun fire from the ground.

The coalition of British and Americans, including that between the Marines and their RAF counterparts, was tenuous at times, strained by competing national interests and competing personal interests at all levels of warfare—from the governments at the strategic level, to the generals and admirals at the operational level, and down to the individual warfighter at the tactical level. With such conflicting interests, the entire coalition could have failed the instant it started. It did not and set the Corps up for future success, particularly in Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Through a review of the relations at the different levels, and through the discussion of the actual operations of the Marines with the RAF, one can see successful integration was not a forgone conclusion. However, the actions of men like Sims and Cunningham, both devoted to the success of their respective missions, conflicts were overcome and effective in setting

³⁶⁶ Rowell, "Annual Report," 11.

the Marine Corps' aviation component up for future success. The experience of integrating the American Marines with the RAF proved invaluable to the Marine Corps. The skills learned by the Americans, such as aerial resupply, remain today as a standard part of Marine Corps aviation doctrine; further, the act of providing pilots to serve with their allied country also remains today as part of normal operations of both the RAF and the USMC.

Cunningham, in his September 1920 article, offered potential missions that aviation could provide to the Marine on the ground and commander of the forces, some of which were a direct result of operations in France. In describing the effect of aviation upon the infantryman in trenches, Cunningham reminded his readers 'who served at the front in the World War was given a rather impressive demonstration of the damage and demoralizing effect of bombs dropped from the air...' and that trenches provided cover and concealment from aircraft bombs, but that in guerrilla warfare, bombs dropped from aircraft would be far more effective.³⁶⁷ Cunningham used the experiences of the FMAF in France to teach not only the senior leaders of the Corps but the new pilots via his article.

Cunningham conjured an aviation force out of nothing in the earliest days leading to the First World War, and then, with the British, helped create a viable aviation force that remains an integrated and integral part of the United States Marine Corps warfare capabilities today. Prior to the First World War and the integration of the FMAF into the RAF, the Marine Corps' aviation forces were miniscule and inexperienced. Upon the arrival of the FMAF in France, the Marines were incapable of flight without their aircraft. Had Cunningham accepted the offer to simply conduct logistic flights on behalf of the US Army, ferrying aircraft from supply depots to operating air bases, no practical combat experience would have been accomplished by the Marines. Without practical combat experience, the Corps' aviation asset would have suffered stunted growth in skill and doctrine through the

³⁶⁷ Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation,' 228.

interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. The initial combat experience gained under the British tutelage led to practical experiences in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Nicaragua for the Corps; these experiences were the basis for the doctrinal (air support of ground forces) advances made during this period, further, the pilots learned to adapt to the needs of the service while in active operations. These skills and lessons were initially learned while in active service with the British in 1918. Cunningham's 1920 article attempts to demonstrate that the experiences of the FMAF in 1918 were valuable and useful to the Corps; he explained the similarities but also expanded the list of possible missions that aviation could achieve. The senior Marine aviator knew that the experiences of the First World War were just the beginning of what aviation could do, and he expounded the virtues of radio communication, photographic reconnaissance, aerial intelligence gathering and providing assistance to field artillery in target acquisition.³⁶⁸ Had the FMAF not served with the British, rather simply provided a shuttle service to the Army, it is possible that Marine aviation may not have expanded, let alone survived the interwar period, and thereby not become the success it was in the Second World War. The Corps may have continued to be relegated to constabulary and ship detachment duty, and in places such as Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic the Navy could have as easily taken the role of providing aviation to support the ground forces. However, Cunningham forged a path for aviation in the Marine Corps, supporting the infantry on the ground and expanded its abilities, in part due to the experiences gained while integrated with the Royal Air Force in the First World War.

³⁶⁸ Cunningham, 'Value of Aviation,' 229-230.

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Appendix A: Abbreviations and Definitions

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1stLt	First Lieutenant, US Marine Corps
2dLt	Second Lieutenant, US Marine Corps
BrigGen	Brigadier General, US Marine Corps
Capt	Captain, US Marine Corps
CAPT	Captain, US Navy
Col	Colonel, US Marine Corps
DH-4	DeHavilland designed two-seat day-bomber aircraft
DH-9	DeHavilland designed two-seat day-bomber aircraft
FMAF	First Marine Aviation Force. The US Marine Corps aviation unit deployed to France in First World War under command of the Northern Bombing Group.
LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel, US Marine Corps
Maj	Major, US Marine Corps
MajGen	Major General, US Marine Corps
MajGenCmdt	Major General Commandant, senior officer of US Marine Corps
NBG	Northern Bombing Group. Combined US Navy and Marine Corps land plane bombing operation in northern France.
RAF	Royal Air Force
RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service. Royal Naval Air Service; predecessor organization to Royal Air Force when combined with Royal Flying Corps in 1918.
USAS	US Air Service. US Army's aviation component serving with the American Expeditionary Forces.
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy