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The Army-Navy Contest for Control of Land-Based Antisubmarine Aviation and the
Military Unification Debate, 1942-1948

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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In most studies of the issues underlying the 1947 National Security Act, the focus tends to be on those which gave rise to lingering questions touching upon politics and military policy into the Cold War era. These include: the scope and limitations of authority of the Central Intelligence Agency; the control and use of nuclear weapons; the

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This study in no way seeks to detract from these issues as the overriding concerns which shaped the debate leading to the National Security Act's passage. While acknowledging the primacy of these issues, however, it is the contention of this present study that the question concerning which military service should rightly control land-based antisubmarine aviation during World War II has largely been overlooked as a significant issue in shaping the military unification debate. This work intends to take what most other studies relegate to a footnote and explore, in significantly greater depth, how this inter-service rivalry affected the wartime management of the Battle of the Atlantic and how, in turn, the wartime interservice rivalry helped shape the post-war military unification debate culminating in the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.

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Introduction

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I. Overview of this Study

Between the world wars, leaders in both the U.S. Army and Navy began to formulate new roles for aviation in modern warfare. The doctrines which emerged, however, reflected very different military philosophies. Naval air power advocates sought to develop aviation as a support to the fleet in surface warfare. In both a scouting and offensive capacity, naval aviation was primarily tactical in nature and was used as an adjunct to surface fleet operations. Army aviation, however, was less enthusiastically embraced by the older generation of generals rooted in cavalry and infantry traditions. As a result, disaffected Army air power advocates embraced the philosophy of strategic air power and proposed to build a separate Army Air Force composed chiefly of long-range, land-based bomber aircraft, whose mission was to cripple the enemy's war-making capability by destroying vital targets in the enemy heartland. Army air power advocates also believed that an Air Force of long-range, land-based bombers could neutralize an enemy fleet by aerial bombardment while it was still far from the American coast, and would thus replace the Navy as the nation's first line of maritime defense.

A conflict erupted during the 1920's between the advocates of Army and Navy air power over the divergent air power doctrines of the respective services. Underlying this doctrinal conflict were concerns over which service would receive the lion's share of appropriations to expand its aviation component. Army air power advocates advanced the claim that expensive surface fleets were rapidly becoming obsolete on account of their vulnerability to significantly less expensive long-range, land-based bomber aircraft. Army air power advocates further argued that, as a cost saving measure, Congress should drastically cut spending on naval construction and concentrate its efforts on expanding Army aviation. To demonstrate the soundness of this proposal, an outspoken advocate of Army air power, General Billy Mitchell, directed the aviation brigade under his command to participate in an experiment conducted by the Navy to survey the effect of aerial bombardment on the obsolete German battleship, *Ostfriesland*. During the 1921 tests, Army bombers sank the *Ostfriesland*, but the claim that aircraft had rendered surface fleets obsolete was far from conclusive. Nevertheless, public perceptions about the capability of land-based, strategic bombers did much to strengthen support for the advocates of Army air power. The *Ostfriesland* incident also served to heighten tensions between the Army air power advocates and the Navy, since the Navy believed the Army air power advocates were seeking to reallocate all military aircraft into an independent "Air Force." This fear was not without justification, for following the *Ostfriesland* test, Army air power advocates publically advanced the claim that the Navy was obsolete and the time was at hand when bomber aircraft could wipe out surface fleets.

These inter-service disputes over the future of military aviation continued until 1925, when two landmark events resulted in favorable outcomes for the Navy. In the

first case, a presidential board of inquiry under the chairmanship of prominent American businessman Dwight Morrow ruled that naval aviation should be developed to play a major role in fleet operations, and that the consolidation of all military aviation in a single “Air Force” was unwarranted. Of equal significance that same year was the court marshal and conviction of General Mitchell on charges of insubordination related to his public lobbying for an independent Air Force. The general’s tarnished reputation after his subsequent resignation from the Army did much to squelch his influence in matters affecting military aviation. These two events ensured that naval aviation would continue to expand and develop in the decade and a half before the outbreak of World War II.

Nevertheless, both services continued to compete for congressional appropriations to develop their respective aviation components. Furthermore, both the Army and the Navy attempted to establish proprietary jurisdiction over specific air operations, going so far as to officially demarcate the boundaries of where one or the other service could conduct air operations. This inter-service jockeying ultimately resulted in the issuance of the 1935 *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy*. The restrictions in this joint action plan were the result of inter-service compromise and reveal the parochial attitudes of both services in the years immediately before the Second World War. Lest the Army try to prove the capabilities of its land-based bombers against an approaching battle fleet, the Navy insisted that the Army restrict flights over the ocean beyond the one hundred mile limit. Conversely, the Army, out of fear that the Navy might try to develop its own strategic bombing capabilities, imposed restrictions on all development of naval land-based aviation, excluding that necessary for training. The net result was that during the first year of U.S. participation in World War II, the Navy was severely handicapped with

regard to its long-range antisubmarine and reconnaissance air capabilities, while the Army, which was jealously excluded from operating over the ocean, actually possessed the most suitable aircraft for antisubmarine operations. This was where matters stood when the U.S. entered the Second World War.

In the spring of 1942 Germany launched a devastating U-boat offensive against allied shipping in the western Atlantic. At the time, the Navy possessed very few aircraft suitable for long-range antisubmarine patrols because since the late 1930's, it had concentrated its aviation budget almost entirely on the development of tactical, carrier-based aviation. As a result, while the Navy scrambled to deploy antisubmarine surface craft and organize shipping convoys, stop-gap measures were instituted which included sending land-based Army Air Forces bomber units on antisubmarine patrols over the western Atlantic.

In spite of the best efforts of the Army air crews, disagreements soon arose among the Army and Navy leadership about which military service could best utilize these land-based bombers in antisubmarine operations. The Navy contended that the Army land-based bombers were best suited for a task within its operational jurisdiction and should therefore be transferred to the Navy. Commensurate with this line of reasoning, in the summer of 1942, Navy leaders sought to reallocate to the Navy hundreds of these aircraft already on order for the Army Air Forces, with the justification that naval aviators were better trained in ship identification and in offensive tactics against naval targets. In an effort to prove these claims false, the Army established the Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command, patterned after the RAF Coastal Command,¹ with the purpose

¹ In 1918 the Royal Naval Air Service was merged with the Army's Royal Flying Corps to form the independent Royal Air Force. In 1936 the Royal Air Force was reorganized to include the subordinate

of developing antisubmarine tactics and carrying out operations against Axis submarines in the Atlantic. The Army leadership argued that Army airmen could attack submarines just as well as naval aviators, and therefore, the long-range, land-based bomber aircraft coveted by the Navy should remain the possession of the Army Air Forces. Underlying the reluctance of the Army to cede aircraft to the Navy was the fact that the Army Air Forces intended to deploy most of its long-range, land-based bombers overseas for use in strategic bombing campaigns against enemy land targets. These campaigns, it was hoped, would demonstrate the efficacy of the Army Air Forces' strategic air power doctrine in actual wartime conditions. The Army Air Forces feared, however, that once the aircraft in question were ceded to the Navy, the strategic bombing campaigns would be weakened and the Army Air Forces hindered in proving the efficacy of its strategic air power doctrine. Moreover, the Army also feared that the Navy might ultimately employ these aircraft in strategic bombing missions of its own, thus intruding on the Army Air Forces' bailiwick. A bitter inter-service contest ensued as the Army Air Forces vehemently opposed the Navy's efforts to appropriate these aircraft.

This inter-service conflict involved not only the control of these land-based aircraft, but also of what tactics the Army air crews must employ to combat enemy submarines at sea. Following the American military principle of unity of command, all operations in the Atlantic were under the Navy, and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ernest J. King, favored defensive antisubmarine tactics that involved close air patrols in the vicinity of ship convoys. The Navy tactic assumed that enemy submarines in the vicinity of convoys, for fear of detection by aircraft, would be forced to stay

units of Fighter Command, Bomber Command and Coastal Command. The primary mission of the land-based Coastal Command was to conduct aerial anti-submarine warfare in the waters surrounding Great Britain.

submerged where their slow maneuvering speed would prevent them from coming within range of their intended targets. Alternatively, the Army leadership under the close supervision and support of Secretary of War Henry Stimson favored an offensive tactic where aircraft would seek out and attack enemy submarines as they transited “bottleneck” areas of the ocean. This disagreement over which air tactics to employ, as well as the Navy’s insistence that Army land-based antisubmarine aircraft be reallocated to the Navy, brought Secretary of War Stimson and Admiral King into bitter conflict with one another.

Stimson’s interest in antisubmarine warfare stemmed from fact that the Army’s massive buildup of material and manpower in Great Britain for the invasion of Europe could only be accomplished by sea transportation. In Stimson’s mind, every merchant ship sunk forestalled decisive Allied action toward ending the war. Frustrated by the Navy’s perceived inefficacy at stopping submarine attacks on Allied merchant shipping, the Secretary of War took matters into his own hands and sponsored the creation of the Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command, the purpose of which was to develop more effective antisubmarine tactics than those employed by the Navy. However, the Army Air Forces’ plan to put its offensive tactics into practice was stymied by Admiral King who insisted that the AAFAC be placed under Navy command and only employ the defensive tactics favored by the Navy. Believing that the AAFAC’s offensive tactics would prove superior if tried, Stimson attempted to force King into permitting an Army-led antisubmarine offensive in the Navy’s oceanic domain. Lacking the authority to directly order King’s compliance, Stimson asked Navy Secretary Frank Knox to act on his behalf and order King to cooperate. Knox, however, refused to do so, remarking that

he thought it inadvisable to interfere in purely military matters which were best left to the uniformed leadership. Stimson went so far as to request that President Roosevelt intervene, however, to Stimson's disappointment, the President refused to take a side on the matter. Although a limited AAFAC offensive was eventually launched in the Bay of Biscay in 1943, an inter-service agreement providing for the transfer of the Army's land-based antisubmarine aircraft to the Navy meant the ultimate divestiture of the Army Air Forces from antisubmarine operations. In spite of the Allies' success in turning the tide against the U-boats in 1943, Stimson continued to harbor a sense of frustration and bitterness over the whole affair which endured for years after the war had ended.

Disagreement over how to best prosecute the antisubmarine war revealed a deep divide between the way civilian authority operated vis-à-vis the uniformed leadership in the War and Navy Departments. During the height of the inter-service conflict, Stimson wrote in his diary that he believed the Navy Department was operating under an antiquated and flawed organizational model which was desperately in need of reform. He criticized what he described as a clique of secretive admirals who controlled a byzantine bureaucracy where the Secretary of the Navy functioned more as a book-keeper than as the delegated voice of the President as Commander in Chief. By contrast, Stimson considered his own position as Secretary of War to be a vital link in the chain of command stretching between the President and the highest-ranking uniformed Army officer, the Army Chief of Staff. In the War Department, Stimson was used to exercising a significant, if limited, degree of direct authority over military affairs. He had a close working relationship based on mutual respect with Army Chief of Staff George Marshall. No such relationship existed, however, between Navy Secretary Frank Knox and Admiral

King, the Chief of Naval Operations, where the latter would rarely inform the former of operational details, and only begrudgingly if pressed to do so. Stimson believed that the Navy Department's command model was attributable to the fact that the Navy had not been reformed as had the War Department under Elihu Root, who, as Secretary of War in 1903, directed that the Army adopt a General Staff command model. Root's reforms had the effect of fostering strong civilian control over the War Department, where the uniformed leadership was under the clear direction of the Secretary of War. By contrast, during World War II the Navy was still functioning under a department structure virtually unchanged since the Spanish-American War. The Navy had no general staff comparable to that of the Army, the civilian secretary exercised virtually no command authority over the Chief of Naval Operations, and the uniformed bureau chiefs controlled their own administrative areas like private fiefdoms.

During World War II, dissatisfaction grew among the uniformed and civilian military leadership, as well as with Congress, over wasteful spending on duplicative efforts in the prosecution of the war, and with the perceived inefficiency of the extemporized wartime command structure known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As a result, Congress launched investigations in 1944 with an eye towards a post-war reorganization of the nation's military apparatus. One of the central goals of this reform movement was the creation of a single Department of Defense, under a single Secretary of Defense, which would assume overarching control of the Army and Navy as sub-departments. It would be hyperbole to claim that this movement towards military reform was brought about solely, or even primarily, because of the inter-departmental conflict over control of land-based antisubmarine aircraft and tactics. Nevertheless, lingering

questions about wartime land-based antisubmarine aircraft allocations, as well as the future of land-based naval aviation, stand out as major concerns behind the urgency of the post-war military reform movement.

The House of Representatives Select Committee on Post-War Military Organization convened in 1944 to explore the merits of enacting changes to the national defense bureaucracy. These included proposals for Air Force independence from the Army and its reorganization as a separate military branch, as well as the merging of the Army, Navy and Air Force as sub-departments within a single Department of Defense. As an avowed admirer of Elihu Root, Henry Stimson stood out as one of the leading advocates for these reforms and firmly believed that they would bring to fruition the work Root had begun in the War Department decades earlier. The Navy leadership, however, met the reform efforts of the House Select Committee on Post-War Military Organization with immediate suspicion. Navy leaders opposed the creation of an independent Air Force, as well as the creation of a single Department of Defense with an overarching Defense Secretary, for the same reasons it opposed the Army Air Forces meddling with antisubmarine tactics. The admirals feared that such reforms might lead to the empowerment of an anti-Navy, pro-Air Force Defense Secretary who would denude the Navy of its aviation component and convince Congress to reallocate the lion's share of funding from the Navy to the Air Force. They saw the military unification movement as just another ploy by the air power advocates to strip the Navy of its traditional role as the nation's first line of defense. Ultimately, the Woodrum Committee adjourned without reporting a military reorganization bill to Congress. Nevertheless, the movement towards military unification did not end here.

After the war had ended, a series of bills were proposed in Congress to enact the reforms considered earlier by the Woodrum Committee. As they had before, witnesses from the War and Navy Departments testified before Congress on the unification bills, with some favoring and some opposing the creation of an overarching Defense Secretary and an independent Air Force. The Navy's retention of its aviation component, including its land-based aviation, was one of the most contentious issues debated during the post-war unification hearings. During these debates, it became evident that the animosity harbored by the Army Air Forces over the Navy's wartime reallocation of its land-based antisubmarine aircraft was a lingering sore point that did not heal with the end of the war. Instead, the air power advocates charged that the Navy had reallocated these aircraft so as to build up the Navy's strategic air capability at the expense of the Army Air Forces. For this reason, during the post-war unification debates, those in favor of an independent Air Force adamantly opposed the Navy's retention of any land-based aviation, claiming that all land-based air operations, including antisubmarine warfare, sea reconnaissance, and protection of shipping, should be assigned to the independent Air Force. The Navy stood firm on its need to retain its land-based aviation, claiming that antisubmarine warfare, reconnaissance, and protection of shipping was intrinsic to the Navy's mission and required specialized naval training. Thus, between 1945 and early 1947, efforts to bring about military unification were frustrated, largely due to this disagreement over the future of land-based naval aviation.

The Army Air Forces' earlier objection to the Navy's development and use of land-based airplanes was based on its fear that the Navy would use such aircraft to carry out strategic bombardment against land targets and thus encroach on the Air Force's self

appointed mission. Navy assurance that it would forswear any attempt to develop its land-based aviation into a strategic air force was not wholly satisfactory to the Air Force, since the Navy had in fact used some of its land-based airplanes appropriated for antisubmarine purposes to attack Japanese land targets in the Pacific during the war. However, in 1947, with the long-cherished goal of an independent Air Force in sight, the air power advocates were willing to compromise on this issue and drop their opposition to the development of naval land-based aviation. This turnabout, however, was contingent on the Navy's agreeing to formally limit its land-based aviation to the purposes of antisubmarine warfare, reconnaissance, and protection of shipping.

Thus, in 1947, a compromise between the War and Navy Departments was hammered out which allowed military unification to go forward. Representatives from both services drafted a unification bill which provided for a single Secretary of Defense and an independent Air Force, with an attending Executive order that explicitly provided for the Navy's retention of both carrier aviation and land-based aviation tasked with antisubmarine warfare, reconnaissance, and protection of shipping. Committees in both the House and Senate conducted investigations on the compromise bill and the proposed Executive order, and as in earlier investigations, took testimony from witnesses both for and against the proposed legislation.

In spite of efforts to guarantee the Navy's retention of its aviation, voices of opposition to the legislation were still raised from within the Navy. The opponents of unification claimed that the compromise bill was really just a "Trojan Horse" meant to ultimately allow a pro-Air Force Defense Secretary to convince Congress to slash funding for naval aviation, with the effect of eliminating it through neglect. However, by

this late date, a migration of issues becomes noticeable in the debate. This shift of focus had largely to do with the emerging debate over what roles the Air Force and the Navy might play in any future wartime delivery of atomic weapons.

Conventional strategic bombardment during World War II failed to live up to the pre-war claims made by the air power advocates of its ability to hasten a war's end by destroying the enemy's war making capability. The reasons for this were hotly debated during the war. Although these reasons are beyond the scope of this present study, it is worthwhile to note that one argument pointed to the inadequacy of World War II era precision bombing techniques to ensure the delivery of conventional bombs on target more than a small percentage of the time. Air power advocates believed that such questions had become moot, however, with the successful deployment of atomic bombs at the end of the war. The air power advocates now claimed that pinpoint accuracy was no longer necessary given the enormous destructive capability of atomic bombs. The swift surrender of Japan following the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seemed to prove that effective strategic bombardment had indeed broken the enemy's will to resist. Here, finally, in the minds of the air power advocates was the unimpeachable justification of the development of an independent strategic Air Force whose mission was to carry out decisive atomic bombardment of strategic targets in the enemy's heartland. Given the size of atomic bombs in the late 1940's, the only delivery system capable of carrying these weapon to their target were large, land-based airplanes such as the B-29 and the B-36, the latter of which was in development at the end of the war. As long as the Air Force had a monopoly of these types of airplanes, it would face no competition from the Navy in the delivery of strategic atomic bombs. This was all but guaranteed in the

codified agreement by the Navy to limit its land-based aviation to antisubmarine and reconnaissance purposes as part of the unification bill. Furthermore, in a manner redolent of the *Ostfriesland* tests in 1921, the air power advocates' optimism regarding the future of an independent Air Force as the nation's preeminent military branch were heightened by the results of the atomic bomb tests on a small fleet of obsolete warships anchored at Bikini Atoll in 1947. Thus, the guarantee of the Air Force's continued monopoly over atomic bomb delivery made concessions to the Navy regarding its land-based antisubmarine and reconnaissance aviation an insignificant sacrifice. However, technological developments in carrier-based aircraft and ship construction by 1947 indicated that the Air Force's enjoyment of this atomic monopoly might be short-lived.

The Navy was moving forward with a program to build the next generation of large aircraft carriers capable of supporting new, larger carrier-based aircraft designed to carry an atomic payload. Moreover, some Navy officers were quick to point out that the Air Force's new long-range bomber, the much-touted B-36, was not only extremely expensive, but was based on a technology that was already approaching obsolescence. Speculation was also raised about the possible role "push button" technology involving unmanned guided missiles might play in future wars. Thus, by the final stage of the unification debate, the issue had migrated away from the question of whether or not the Navy should retain control of its land-based aviation.

The emerging question was now whether the nation's defense interests was best served by creating an independent Air Force, and by the very act, institutionalize strategic bombing on the World War II model at a time when this mode of warfare might be passing into obsolescence. In many ways, the final stage of the unification debate

presaged the interservice conflict that would emerge in 1949, when Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson cancelled construction of the super-carrier *United States* resulting in the imbroglio known as the “revolt of the admirals.” Nevertheless, passage of the National Security Act in July, 1947 generally signaled the end of the debate over the future of naval land-based antisubmarine aviation.

In April, 1946 when an earlier version of the unification bill was stalled in Congress, Secretary of War Robert Patterson approached his predecessor, Henry Stimson, about publishing an article on the merits of unification in an effort to win popular support for the flagging bill. Although Stimson strongly supported the legislation, he declined to act, noting his poor health due to a recent heart attack. He did not rule out, however, writing a supportive article when his health improved. Not long afterward, Stimson began collaborating with McGeorge Bundy in the writing of his memoir. At the same time, a newer compromise unification bill was slowly making its way through Congress, and Stimson perceived this as an opportune time to publically support the bill. He directed Bundy to prepare a chapter of his memoir as a stand-alone article for publication in the popular magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*, with the intended purpose of rallying public support for the legislation. In spite of these efforts, however, the National Security Act of 1947 was passed before the *Ladies' Home Journal* article was published. Nevertheless, it must be understood that the article was conceived at a time when the bill's passage was uncertain. Stimson could have chosen any number of subjects around which to craft his argument as to why military unification was necessary. However, the story he chose to relate in the article was that of the missed opportunity to launch a decisive Army-led antisubmarine air offensive in the Atlantic. He placed the

blame for this failure squarely with the Navy, recalling how Admiral King mismanaged the antisubmarine war and how King's refusal to allow the Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command a free hand at employing its superior antisubmarine tactics forestalled Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. Stimson's purpose was to argue that, had there been a Secretary of Defense with authority over both the War and Navy Departments, Admiral King could have been ordered to comply with the superior Army plan to launch an antisubmarine offensive. He concluded that the new Secretary of Defense, as provided for by the recently passed National Security Act, would improve the nation's military command structure and prevent recalcitrant admirals like Ernest King from defiantly protecting the parochial interests of the Navy at the expense of the greater national security.

Leaving aside the merits of Stimson's argument, it is important to note that with the publication of this article, Stimson was unmistakably presenting the wartime controversy over control of land-based antisubmarine aviation as justification for the need of military unification. In his mind, the two issues were inextricably linked, and references in his diary to the 1903 military reforms of Elihu Root indicates that this impression was formed as early as 1943. As stated above, however, the main point of inter-service contention was shifting toward issues involving which service should be tasked with the carriage of atomic weapons, and the matter of whether or not the Navy should retain control of land-based antisubmarine aviation became a *passé* historical curiosity.

II. Historiography of the Battle of the Atlantic, Civil-Military Relations, Military Unification and Aircraft Appropriations

There are numerous secondary works devoted to the Battle of the Atlantic as well as to the National Security Act of 1947, however, very few tie the two issues together. Of those works that do, the story of the Navy's efforts to retain control of its land-based antisubmarine aviation is considered as a far less significant factor in shaping the debate over the merits of the legislation than other, more weighty issues such as the role and authority of the Secretary of Defense, the potential Prussianization of the military, and the potential dangers to individual liberty posed by the creation of a Central Intelligence Agency. A brief survey of this literature is warranted.

Most secondary works devoted to the Battle of the Atlantic overwhelmingly concentrate on the role that surface craft played in antisubmarine operations. Most, however, give some attention to the role aviation played in combating the U-boats. Samuel Eliot Morison's *Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943* and *The Atlantic Battle Won, May 1943-May 1945* published respectively in 1947 and 1956, remain the standard American account of the battle. Morison devotes part of chapter 10 of the first volume to the role of antisubmarine aviation, yet he pays very brief attention to the inter-service conflict over control of long-range, land-based aircraft. The official British history is presented in Stephen Roskill's three volume work, *The War at Sea, 1939-1945*, published between 1954 and 1961. Roskill discusses the role that the land-based RAF Coastal Command played in combating the U-boats while dealing with American land-based antisubmarine aviation in only a cursory manner. Many works on the Battle of the Atlantic have been published subsequent to Morison's and Roskill's classics, however,

no significant new ground is broken regarding the role that aviation played in antisubmarine operations. The most recent of these include Andrew Williams' 2002 work, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, Bernard Ireland's *The Battle of the Atlantic*, published in 2003, and *Bitter Ocean: The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945* published in 2006 by David Fairbank White.

The short lived contribution of the U.S. Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command in the Battle of the Atlantic is discussed in chapter 15 of Wesley Craven and James Cate's *Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. I: Plans & Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, published in 1948. This work briefly mentions the inter-service conflict but focuses more on the operational history of Army air units in combating the U-boats. The role played by the RAF Coastal Command in antisubmarine warfare is examined at length in a number of secondary monographs, the most recent of which is Andrew Hendrie's 2006 work, *The Cinderella Service: RAF Coastal Command, 1939-1945*.

A broad examination of civil-military relations is taken up in *Arms and the State: Civil-Military Elements in National Policy*, published in 1958 by Walter Millis, et al. Millis and his collaborators discuss how, in the period between 1930 and 1955, American military leaders increasingly formulated war plans with the expert advice of civilian technocrats and scientists, but always under the oversight of democratically elected politicians. The authors show that military planning has never been divorced from the political process, and this all the more so in the post-World War II era when a reliance on strategic nuclear weapons had all but erased the lines of demarcation between combatant and non-combatant.

A number of important works examine the phenomenon of political rivalry within the defense bureaucracy. In *The Admirals Lobby*, published in 1967, Vincent Davis discusses the reluctance of pre-World War II naval leaders to participate in lobbying or public relations campaigning. Davis explains that this reluctance was due largely to an ingrained code of professionalism which caused many career officers to avoid any participation in political activity. Davis discusses at length how the pre-war naval leadership instead preferred working through open, official procedural channels to address concerns within their service rather than through subtle, unofficial appeals to Congress and the President. Davis presents a contrast during the post-war period in *Postwar Defense Policy and the U. S. Navy, 1943-1946*, published in 1966. This work explains the wartime rise to prominence of aviation-minded, carrier-oriented career officers who sought to form U.S. naval strategy in the post-war era. Davis discusses the acrimonious post-war clash between this new cadre and their counterparts in the Army Air Forces who sought service unification in an effort to monopolize the delivery systems of nuclear weapons. He demonstrates that the Navy leadership was able to retain its aviation component through a combination of bureaucratic protests, a good public relations campaign, and by effectively lobbying key congressmen who had oversight of the defense budget.

The topic of Army organization and management is taken up in James E. Hewes' *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1965*, published in 1975. This work depicts the Army's organizational evolution during the first half of the twentieth century as a continuous struggle over whether executive control should reside in the technical bureaus and services, or rather with the chief of staff and the

civilian Secretary of War, (later Secretary of the Army and after 1947, Secretary of Defense). Hewes discusses how the chiefs of staff and the civilian secretaries came increasingly to dominate the Army bureaucracy and employed management techniques modeled after corporate business practices in an effort to cut operational costs and eliminate overspending and waste.

The issue of civil-military relations during the unification process is explored in Demetrios Caraley's 1966 work, *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of the Conflict and the Policy Process*. Caraley asserts that the arguments made for and against service unification by the Army and Navy leadership were formed less by a rational assessment of defense needs and more by the desire of career military officers to promote professional security within their respective service branches. Thus, according to Caraley, professional officers helped shape post-war defense policies through a lobbying campaign in which congressmen were presented with self-serving, career-preserving arguments regarding defense needs, as well as through a propaganda campaign targeted at the public which sought to influence popular opinion for- or against- service unification. In the end, Caraley shows that the Navy accepted service unification in 1947, but only on terms that its leadership believed would safeguard the service's role in shaping future defense policy. Caraley mentions the inter-service disagreement over the future of land-based naval aviation as a significant issue impeding unification, however this issue is presented alongside the other major issues raised during the debates. Thus, a full exploration of the land-based aviation issue is not attempted, given the scope of Caraley's work.

Laurence J. Legere's 1988 doctoral dissertation, *Unification of the Armed Forces*, offers a broad synopsis of the history of American military unification from the Revolution to 1950. Chapter 7 focuses on efforts at unification between 1944 and 1947, and touches on a broad range of issues informing the unification debate, including the proposed role and powers of the Secretary of National Defense, the arguments underpinning Air Force independence, the creation of a single military general staff, and the proposed powers of the Central Intelligence Agency, *et al.* By attempting to cover every significant issue, however, Legere gives each only cursory attention. This includes his treatment of the importance of the inter-service conflict over the Navy's retention of land-based aviation. Furthermore, Legere's work is handicapped by his limited use of sources. He quotes extensively from official War Department documents, the Joint Chiefs of Staff records, as well as the transcripts of testimony given before various congressional committees, but he almost entirely neglects any mention of material from the diaries, correspondence, and personal papers of the principal actors involved in the military unification process.

Jeffrey Barlow deals largely with the consequences of unification shortly after the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 in *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950*, published in 1994. In the first chapter of this work, Barlow examines how the competing airpower doctrines of the Army Air Force and Navy affected the post-war service unification debate as well as the inter-service agreement leading up the passage of the 1947 National Security Act which allowed the Navy to retain its land-based aviation. This story, however, is presented as a terse preface to the events surrounding the cancellation of the super-carrier *United States* and the subsequent

inter-service recriminations over the perceived shortcomings of the B-36 bomber.

Barlow demonstrates that the lobbying efforts and public relations campaign of the Navy leadership thwarted Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson's desire to abolish naval aviation in favor of an Air Force monopoly on the delivery of strategic nuclear weapons. His chief evidence of the Navy's victory in this debate is that Congress restored the program to build carriers capable of supporting nuclear armed jet aircraft.

Douglas T. Stuart's 2008 work, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America*, offers perhaps the best in-depth account of the events leading to the passage of the National Security Act in 1947 and of the subsequent development of the national security bureaucracy up to 1960. Stuart contends that until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, very few in the United States appreciated the need to develop an integrated military-intelligence-diplomatic apparatus for the purposes of monitoring, assessing and defending against foreign threats. Stewart explains how the shock of Pearl Harbor and the lessons learned through the management of an ad-hoc wartime defense bureaucracy shaped the debates that resulted in the passage of the National Security Act. Moreover, Stuart discusses how the post-1947 national security bureaucracy was in turn shaped by inter-agency rivalries over funding and the definition of roles and missions. Although Stuart mentions the wartime dispute over the control of land-based antisubmarine aviation, he does not develop an argument about this issue's significance in the post-war arguments for and against military unification.

The interplay of politics and bureaucratic partisanship within the military is explored in *The Unsinkable Fleet: the Politics of U.S. Navy Expansion in World War II* by Joel R. Davidson, published in 1996. Davidson examines the Navy's wartime

building program which was based on a “worst-case” scenario, where the U.S was pitted alone against a combined axis naval effort in both the Atlantic and Pacific. Although the strategic position improved in 1943, Davidson contends that the ship building program continued unaltered, and that the Navy enjoyed the lion’s share of congressional appropriations late into the war. He attributes this largely to the adroit leadership of Admiral Ernest King who forcefully sought to ensure a dominant role for the Navy in U.S. defense planning in the post-war period. The politicization of military aircraft procurement is examined in William F. Trimble’s 1990 work, *Wings for the Navy: A History of the Naval Aircraft Factory, 1917-1956*. This work examines the interplay between Congress, private enterprise, and the Navy over funding for naval aircraft procurement. Trimble discusses how the Navy, in spite of the lobbying efforts of private aircraft manufactures, maintained its own aircraft production facility by claiming that its highly specialized research and development program could only operate efficiently under direct Navy management. A related theme is examined in Jacob A. Vander Meulen’s *The Politics of Aircraft: Building an American Military Industry*, published in 1991. Vander Meulen discusses how the American aviation industry suffered during the interwar years due to the insistence of Congress on competitive procurement policies regarding military aircraft. In spite of this, Vander Meulen discusses how the industry was able to keep pace with technological developments and prepare for production demands brought about by World War II.

III. Archival Research

The sources for this dissertation were obtained from a number of different archive collections. At the Library of Congress I examined the personal papers Dr. Vannevar Bush, Admiral Ernest J. King, Samuel Eliot Morison, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, General Carl Spaatz, Admiral John H. Towers and Congressman James W. Wadsworth. At the Library of Congress I was also able to examine the microfilm copies of Henry L. Stimson's diary and personal papers, the originals of which repose at Yale University. At the National Archives and Records Administration annex in College Park, Maryland, I examined a number of different files. Among these were the Secretary of War files, specifically the correspondence between Stimson and Navy Secretary Frank Knox, Stimson's letters pertaining to antisubmarine warfare, his correspondence with Dr. Edward Bowles, as well as Bowles' own office files, and the Secretary of War's files on post-war military policy. At College Park, I also examined the office files of Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, the papers of James Forrestal in his capacity as both Undersecretary and later Secretary of the Navy, as well as the records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thanks to generosity of Edward S. Miller, I was awarded a research fellowship in his honor which allowed me to make repeated visits to the Naval War College Library in Newport, Rhode Island, where I extensively examined the microfilm copies of the official papers of Admiral Ernest J. King. At Princeton University I spent weeks combing through the personal papers of James V. Forrestal. The papers of President Roosevelt at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York proved of limited value, since I had already located much of what is there in other archives. The archive of McGeorge Bundy's collaboration with Henry Stimson in the

drafting and editing *On Active Service in Peace and War*, and the excerpted chapter published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* repose at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, Massachusetts. These papers offered an invaluable insight into Stimson's thoughts regarding the antisubmarine war and military unification. While in Boston, I made a brief visit to the Harvard University Library to examine the microfilm copy of Lord Halifax's War Diary. Finally, my examination of the transcripts of the Senate and House committee hearings regarding unification was conducted in the Federal documents collection, Government Information Section, at the Frank Melville Jr. Memorial Library at Stony Brook University.

Many primary sources and memoirs have been published and are available in bound volumes. These include *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower* (edited by Louis Galambos); *The Forrestal Diaries* (edited by Walter Millis); *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall* (ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens); and *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: the Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford* (edited by Stephen Jurika, Jr.). Henry Stimson's memoir, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, coauthored with McGeorge Bundy is not only a source, but substantially, also a subject of this present work.

Chapter 1

Army and Navy Aviation between the Wars: Inter-service Rivalry over Jurisdiction in Coastal Defense

I. The Divergent Development of Army and Navy Aviation

The theoretical concept of strategic air power developed as a consequence of the First World War. The destructive power of industrialized warfare as evidenced during the war coupled with recent advancements in aeronautics caused a number of military thinkers in the post-war period to postulate new theories about the potential of aviation in future wars. These air power theorists envisioned a time in the near future when airplanes would be able to fly great distances and bomb an enemy's heartland with such destructive force that the enemy would be forced to sue for peace before the opposing land armies ever took the field. In such a war, the power of aircraft would be truly strategic in nature, and the mere existence of a country's 'air force in being' might serve to deter one's adversaries from initiating hostilities for fear of aerial bombardment in reprisal. These theories, advanced by men such as Hugh Trenchard in Great Britain and Giulio Douhet in Italy, impressed many U.S. Army airmen who came to believe that adoption of strategic air power as a military doctrine would lead not only to improved national security, but also serve as a path of career advancement.

Although industrialized warfare and wartime technological improvements hinted at aviation's potential, the development of real strategic air power would require the adoption of a war doctrine based on the use of long-range bomber aircraft which were still just in the developmental stage. Although the Army airmen were eager to develop

these aircraft, the tax-paying American public was not. Following the First World War, many Americans believed that a pre-war arms race was responsible for enflaming the passions which led to war, and for this reason favored disarmament in the post-war era as a way to avert future wars. The post-war budgets of both the Army and Navy were slashed, and the likelihood that the Army would win funding from Congress to build armadas of heavy bombers was next to nil. Furthermore, the American public had turned decidedly isolationist after the First World War and rejected any notion that America should plan for offensive overseas wars. With docile neighbors to the north and south, the American people would not see the logic in developing the long-range bomber as a defensive weapon, nor would they condone the development of a military doctrine supporting its use as an offensive weapon meant to destroy the heartland of an adversary. Thus, in spite of the grand claims of the Army airmen regarding the potential of strategic air power, both the War Department and the land-based Army leadership were reluctant to devote the Army's meager resources toward its development. For the foreseeable future, the Army leadership believed that Army aviation should remain defensive in nature and relegated to a tactical role supporting of ground forces. Many Army airmen chafed under these restrictions and continued to seek greater autonomy within their service so as to develop the long-range bomber and a strategic air power doctrine based on its use. Some even went so far as to advocate the creation of a strategic air force entirely independent of the Army.

Naval aviation evolved under very different circumstances than did aviation in the Army. In the beginning, the Navy employed airplanes for reconnaissance and gunnery spotting. These tactical missions required that airplanes go to sea with the fleet, and for

this reason, the size and range of naval aircraft were limited since they needed to be small enough to fit aboard ships. However, in the post-World War I period, improvements in aircraft design allowed the Navy to expand the mission of its aviation component. Navy attack aircraft were developed which could operate both from aircraft carriers as well as from land-based coastal stations. Additionally, the Navy began developing large, land-based aircraft for the purpose of conducting long-range over-water reconnaissance. Yet, in spite of the expanding mission of naval aviation, naval aviators never embraced the idea that their task could be better accomplished if they were to secede from the Navy and form a separate military service. Naval aviators understood that aviation served the fleet in the same manner as gunnery and engineering, all of which formed an integrated whole. In short, naval aviators saw themselves first and foremost as Navy officers in service of the fleet and were dedicated to carrying out the Navy's maritime mission.

During the developmental stage of naval aviation, the American public considered the Navy a defensive force, which served to guard the homeland against attack. During the post-war disarmament movement, while the Army was being paired back, the fleet—conceived of as the nation's first line of defense—was never completely dissolved. For this reason, as long as naval aviation was seen as strengthening the fleet, it managed to enjoy a degree of funding by Congress not matched by Army aviation. This seemingly preferential treatment for the Navy sparked jealousy among Army officers, in particular the Army airmen, and in no small way served to fan the flames of rivalry between the air arms of the two services. Furthermore, Army airmen became particularly angry over the Navy's ongoing development of land-based aircraft types since the Army airmen

believed that this might lead to the Navy's development of a strategic air power doctrine which was something the Army airmen considered their special province.

II. Aviation and the Interservice Dispute Concerning Roles and Missions in Coastal Defense

An in-depth account of the conflict between the Army and the Navy for control of aviation in coastal defense during the 1920's and 1930's is offered in chapter 3 of James P. Tate's 1998 work, *The Army and its Air Corps: Army Policy toward Aviation, 1919-1941*. A full retelling of this story is not presently warranted, nevertheless certain points are worthy of review.

Until the advent of the airplane, the shared responsibility for national defense was divided at the coastline. Traditionally, the Navy had the responsibility of intercepting an invasion fleet before it reached the shore. At the shoreline, defense became an Army task, where coastal artillery batteries would disrupt any attempted landing and where the infantry would engage whatever enemy forces were able gain a foothold on shore. The airplane, however, blurred these lines of jurisdiction since both the Navy and the Army came to possess airplanes capable of attacking both land and sea targets. After World War I, technological improvements gave airplanes greater range and versatility, rendering the coastline an artificial line of jurisdictional demarcation. The question soon emerged as to whether coastal defense was principally an Army or Navy responsibility.

The conflict over overlapping missions and equipment allocations intensified as Army air power theorists became more strident in their efforts to develop a strategic air power doctrine. As stated, the Army air power theorists understood that most Americans

opposed the development of long-range bomber aircraft because of their offensive purpose. While maintaining their desire to develop the long-range bomber as a strategic weapon, the trick for the Army airmen became how to convince Congress and the public of the need to develop the long-range bomber as a *defensive* weapon. This would prove challenging, however, since in the eyes of the public, the Navy already stood as the nation's first line of defense. In the early 1920's, some Army airmen began to advance the claim that land-based bomber aircraft could destroy an attacking enemy fleet while it was still hundreds of miles from the shore, thus rendering the Navy obsolete.¹ If Army air power advocates could demonstrate the defensive capability of the strategic bomber in this regard, and in doing so convince the public that Army air power would provide better protection at a cheaper cost than a naval fleet, the Army air power advocates felt sure that they would capture the lion's share of future military appropriations. Posturing as the nation's new first line of *defense*, Army airmen would then possess the tools with which to develop a truly strategic air force. However, the successful realization of such a program was not guaranteed. Any attempt by the Army airmen to assert primacy in the national defense would be perceived by the Navy as a threat to its very survival and was sure to engender strong opposition by Navy leaders and their supporters in Congress.

While the Army airmen sought to expand their service's role in coastal defense, they believed their efforts were threatened by the Navy's program of post-war expansion of its shore establishments. To the Army airmen, the Navy seemed intent on taking over total responsibility for coastal defense. They pointed to the fact that the Navy was building coastal air stations from which it planned to operate its large, long-range reconnaissance aircraft. The Army airmen feared that these land-based Navy aircraft

¹ H. H. Arnold, *Global Mission*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 157.

could also be employed as bombers and used to attack an approaching enemy fleet as well as enemy landing forces on shore. Once in possession of extensive air bases on shore—and of the aviation assets to protect them—the Army airmen feared that the Navy might persuade Congress for an even greater share of military appropriations so as to strengthen its existing force. After the Navy seized total jurisdiction over coastal defense, the Army airmen feared that they would no longer be able to convince Congress of the Army's need to build long-range bombers. The concern of the Army airmen over the Navy's expansion of its shore establishments was shared to a great extent by the land-based Army leadership, who believed that the Navy might soon claim that its land-based aviation would be more effective against an approaching enemy fleet than the Army's coastal artillery, resulting in even greater preferential funding for the Navy by Congress at the expense of the Army.² The Army continued to press its claim for shared responsibility over the coastal defense and the rivalry of the two services' air arms continued to intensify.

After the end of World War I, Army and the Navy leaders were attuned to calls by the public for reductions in military spending. So as to foster good will with an economy-minded Congress, both branches of the military sought to reduce wasteful spending by eliminating duplication of missions and material. In an effort to end wasteful duplication in coastal defense, the Joint Army-Navy Aeronautical Board, a subcommittee of the Joint Board of the Army and Navy, sought to assign specific areas of jurisdiction to the air arms of the two services. In August, 1919, that body issued a policy paper which stated that the functions of Army aircraft in coastal defense were "(a) for

² James P. Tate, *The Army and its Air Corps: Army Policy toward Aviation, 1919-1941*, (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 1998), 63.

offensive and defensive work in the field in conjunction with the various arms of the Service,” and “(b) for the general purpose of fire control information in connection with the coastal defense.”³ The policy paper stated the Navy’s need for carrier and tender based aircraft, but also acknowledged the Navy’s need for land-based aircraft “for use from coastal stations for convoy, reconnaissance and patrol.”⁴ The following year, The Joint Board of the Army and Navy issued the *Joint Army and Navy Action in Coast Defense*, a fifty-six page booklet of guidelines for interservice cooperation which embodied the principles laid out in the Aeronautical Board’s 1919 policy paper.⁵ For the time being, the Navy’s right to use land-based aircraft in the conduct of its mission seemed unassailable. Nevertheless, some Army airmen and their supporters in Congress would soon try to limit the Navy’s prerogatives in this regard.

Congress considered the overlapping jurisdiction of the Army and Navy in coastal defense as wasteful. In an effort to eliminate redundant equipment and operations, Congress included a provision in the June 5, 1920 Army Appropriations Act which stated that “hereafter the Army Air Service shall control all aerial operations from land bases,” and that “Naval Aviation shall have control of all aerial operations attached to a fleet.”⁶ The Navy leadership objected to this provision, arguing that it was inappropriate for an appropriations bill for one service to regulate the policies of the other.⁷ The Navy successfully lobbied Congress to have the provision amended by including a clause which allowed the Navy to retain control of shore-based air stations “whose maintenance

³ Archibald D. Turnbull and Clifford L. Lord, *History of United States Naval Aviation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 180.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* See also: *Joint Army and Navy Action in Coast Defense*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920).

⁶ Tate, *Op. cit.*, 64.

⁷ Turnbull and Lord, *Op. cit.*, 184.

is necessary for operations connected with the fleet, construction, experimentation, and training of personnel.”⁸ This clause angered the Army since the Navy considered it as permission to continue to build shore-based naval air stations as well as to develop and operate land-based reconnaissance airplanes.⁹ Rather than settle the issue, the legislation only served to stoke the growing interservice rivalry over the overlapping air jurisdiction in coastal defense.

This inter-service conflict was also intensified during the 1920’s as a consequence of General Billy Mitchell’s outspoken advocacy of strategic air power and his calls for the creation of an independent Air Force. One of Mitchell’s most compelling arguments was the proposition that a national defense built upon strategic air power was actually cheaper than relying on the Navy, since, he argued, a thousand bombers could be built for the cost of a single battleship.¹⁰ Moreover, Mitchell asserted that bombers had rendered battleships obsolete since they could sink an attacking fleet before it reached the American shoreline.¹¹ To prove this, Mitchell conducted a number of tests with air units under his command with the intention of demonstrating that ships were no match for bomber aircraft.

The best known of these tests involved the sinking of the former German battleship *Ostfriesland* off the Virginia Capes on July 21, 1921. That year, the Navy agreed to conduct joint tests with the Army Air Service in an effort to evaluate the modern bomber’s capabilities in a naval battle. The targets chosen were a number of

⁸ *Federal Statutes Annotated, Supplement, 1920*, (Northport, NY: Edward Thompson Company, 1921), 359. See also: John F. Shiner, “The Air Corps, the Navy, and Coast Defense, 1919-1941,” *Military Affairs* (Vol. 45, No. 3, 1981), 114; Edwin L. Williams, “Legislative History of the Air Arm,” *Military Affairs* (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1956), 84.

⁹ Shiner, *Op. cit.*, 114.

¹⁰ Alfred F. Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power*, (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1964), 60.

¹¹ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 136.

obsolete American warships as well as the *Ostfriesland*, a German battleship acquired by the U.S. Navy after Germany's surrender in 1918. By prearrangement, the tests required that the anchored ships be bombed by aircraft, and after each bombing run, naval engineers were to board the target ships to inspect and document the damage. Tests on the *Ostfriesland* were begun on July 20 but were called off early that day due to bad weather. They were resumed on July 21, initially with the Army Air Service using 1100 lb. bombs in accordance with the agreed upon terms. However, that afternoon, Mitchell had his bomber units drop 2000 lb. bombs on the ship until it sank, leaving no time for the naval engineers to board and assess the damage. This breach of agreement outraged naval officials who claimed that the sinking proved nothing since the *Ostfriesland* was not bombed under realistic battle conditions, but was riding at anchor and not able to mount an anti-aircraft defense. Nevertheless, the press had a field day with the story, with some journalists claiming, to the chagrin of the Navy, that the era of the battleship was over. Under similar conditions, Mitchell's bombers sank the pre-dreadnaught battleships *Alabama* on September 27, 1921, and the *Virginia* and *New Jersey* on September 5, 1923. Regardless of the Navy's arguments that the tests were severely flawed, public opinion was captivated by the idea that strategic air power would soon outclass the Navy as America's first line of defense. The Navy leadership understood the political consequences of shifting public opinion and feared that, as a result, Congress might soon divert funding away from the Navy for the purpose of building a strategic air force.

Billy Mitchell continued to antagonize both the Navy and the ground-based traditionalists in the Army by his assertions in numerous public speeches and magazine

articles. He crossed the line, however, in 1925 when making public comments on the tragic crash of the Navy airship *Shenandoah*. Mitchell claimed that the Army and the Navy were both incompetent in matters relating to aviation and were “almost treasonable” in their administration of the national defense.¹² His statements served to fan the fire of public outrage over this perceived malfeasance. However, his comments also raised the ire of the Navy leadership who considered the comments a despicable attempt to use a naval tragedy to win public support for an independent air force.¹³ On the orders of an outraged President Coolidge, Mitchell was court-martialed on charges of insubordination in November, 1925.

Mitchell hoped to turn his trial into a platform from which to convince Congress and the public of the need for an independent strategic Air Force. To counter Mitchell’s publicity machinations, President Coolidge simultaneously convened a special board of inquiry under the chairmanship of investment banker Dwight Morrow to investigate whether or not Army and Navy aviation should be subsumed by an independent air force as Mitchell was suggesting. During the Morrow Board hearings, Mitchell galled the Navy further by testifying that an independent Air Force should have jurisdiction over coastal defense and against enemy fleets out to a 200 mile limit.¹⁴ However, other Army and Navy witnesses were called who refuted Mitchell’s call for air force independence. The findings of the Morrow Board were released on November 30, 1925, before the verdict of Mitchell’s court marshal, and were disappointing to the strategic air power advocates in that they largely recommended the maintenance of the status quo. The

¹² “Mitchell Reopens Controversy,” *New York Times*, (September 6, 1925), 6.

¹³ William F. Trimble, *Admiral William A. Moffett: Architect of Naval Aviation*, (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 160-162.

¹⁴ Clark G. Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers: the Struggle for Naval Air Supremacy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 187.

Board recommended that the Navy retain control of its own aviation and that a separate air force outside of Army control was unwarranted.¹⁵ However, a partial victory was won by the Army airmen in that the Morrow Board suggested the Army Air Service be elevated to the Army Air Corps and that an Assistant Secretary of War for Air be appointed.¹⁶ Congress acted on these recommendations by passing the Air Corps Act on July 2, 1926. Yet for all its symbolism, the change in name brought no real innovation regarding the role of strategic air power in the Army's mission.¹⁷

The public announcement of the Morrow Board's findings helped in part to discredit Mitchell with the public. Nevertheless, his trial was something of a sensation and attracted great public attention. Although he and his like-minded Army air colleagues tried to use the trial to push for an independent strategic air force, he was convicted on charges of insubordination and chose to resign from the Army on February 1, 1926. In spite of his tarnished reputation, Mitchell remained a popular figure with his former Army air colleagues until his death in 1936, and continued to be regarded by them as the real father of the modern air force. Although he left the Army under a cloud, his ideas were embraced by the younger generation of Army airmen who would rise to positions of leadership during the Second World War. However, for as much as Mitchell was loved by his Army air colleagues, he was intensely disliked by the Navy. The fact that Mitchell's justification for an independent air force was linked to his argument that bomber aircraft should take over the role of maritime defense caused the Navy to see any Army air activity over the ocean as a usurpation of its mission and a threat to the Navy's

¹⁵ Dwight W. Morrow, *Aircraft in National Defense*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925), 13-14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II: Volume I, Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 29.

survival. Henceforth, the Navy would jealously regard air missions over the ocean as its own property and vehemently oppose any attempt by the Army airmen to trespass within what the Navy considered its rightful domain.

In spite of ongoing efforts by the Joint Board of the Army and Navy to precisely define the role and limitations of Navy and Army air with respect to land-based aircraft and over-water missions, no agreement was reached. However in 1931, at the insistence of an economy-minded President Hoover, Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur and Chief of Naval Operations William Pratt were forced to take action. After negotiations, both service chiefs hammered out an inter-service agreement on January 7, 1931 which stated that Army and Navy air were “free to develop within well defined limits and each with a separate and distinct mission.” The joint War and Navy Department statement further declared that,

The Naval Air Force will be based on the fleet and move with it as an element in solving the primary missions confronting the fleet. The Army Air Forces will be land based and employed as an essential element to the Army in the performance of its mission to defend the coasts both at home and in our overseas possessions, thus assuring the fleet absolute freedom of action without any responsibility for coast defense.¹⁸

At first glance, the MacArthur-Pratt agreement seemed to codify in clear terms the areas of operational jurisdiction of Army and Navy aviation. However, the agreement actually did very little to settle the jurisdictional overlap that continued to exist after the agreement was reached.¹⁹ To be precise, the agreement was strictly concerned with *coastal* defense. Nothing was mentioned concerning which service should have jurisdiction over off-shore aerial patrols. Both the Army and the Navy refused to yield on

¹⁸ “Air Coast Defense Assigned To Army,” *New York Times*, (January 10, 1931), 10.

¹⁹ Irving Brinton Holley, Jr., *Buying Aircraft: Matériel Procurement for the Army Air Forces*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), 212.

their prerogatives to operate over land and sea and each exploited lacunae in the agreement to trespass within the domain of the other service. For the Army Air Corps, this meant a continuation of off-shore reconnaissance and bombing exercises, while the Navy continued the practice of operating reconnaissance and attack aircraft from shore stations.

The decade before the American entry into the Second World War was punctuated by events which highlight the failure of the MacArthur-Pratt agreement to settle the inter-service rivalry over air power at sea. In January, 1933, in an effort to further clarify the agreement, Army Chief of Staff MacArthur issued a policy letter which asserted the necessity of the Air Corps to conduct long-range reconnaissance over the ocean in pursuance of its coastal defense mission.²⁰ The following month, MacArthur sought to have the 1931 agreement formalized by the Joint Board, however the Navy members of the board refused to sign on. After Admiral Pratt's retirement in June, 1933, the shuffle in the naval hierarchy placed men in key positions that were much less willing to compromise on the issue than Pratt had been. In November of that year, Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, stated that neither Secretary of the Navy Claude Swanson, nor Admiral William H. Standley, the new Chief of Naval Operations, recognized the MacArthur-Pratt agreement as valid.²¹ Admiral Standley further asserted in 1934 that over-water reconnaissance patrols were within the sole jurisdiction of the Navy and that unless Army Air Corps units were acting under the control of the Navy, "they had no business doing bombing at sea."²²

²⁰ Shiner, *Op. cit.*, 116.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

²² *Ibid.*

War Department officials understood that MacArthur's January, 1933 assertion of the prerogative of the Army Air Corps to conduct reconnaissance patrols over the ocean was the main obstacle preventing the Navy from signing on to the 1931 agreement, and indicated that they were willing to renegotiate the matter to the Navy's liking. In November, 1935, a new policy was formalized in the Joint Board's directive, *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy*. In outlining jurisdictional areas, the document states that, "the Navy is responsible for the patrol of the coastal zone and for the control and protection of shipping therein," while "the Army is responsible for the direct defense of the coast."²³

The document further directs that,

- b. In operations against enemy forces approaching the coast, but still outside of defensive coastal areas, paramount interest will be vested initially in the Navy, but will pass to the Army when it is apparent that the enemy forces intend to attack a shore objective.
- c. In operations within a defensive coastal area, paramount interest will be vested in the Army, except when it is apparent that the objective of the enemy force is shipping within the coastal zone.
- d. When the Fleet, as distinguished from naval local defense forces, is strategically present and free to act, paramount interest in operations at sea rests with the Navy. If any Army air force joins in such operations, it will be in conjunction with and under the temporary command of the naval commander...
- e. When enemy forces approach close enough to threaten or to launch a direct attack against our territory, and the Fleet, as distinguished from naval local defense forces, is not strategically present, or is not free to act, paramount interest shifts to the Army and the function of the Navy is to support the Army. In this case, except in joint air operations connected therewith, coordination will be under limited unity of command...²⁴

This document, while seemingly precise in its assignment of responsibility for aerial operations over water, still left room for interpretation. According to the above mentioned paragraph "d," the Navy was clearly assigned control over all operations at sea, including those where Army air units were called in to assist. In such a situation,

²³ The Joint Board, *Joint Action of the Army and The Navy*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936), 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

Army air units would operate under Navy command. Nevertheless, paragraph “e” states that if the Navy were unable to mount the defense in a seaborne attack, command should shift to the Army, thus implying that the Army Air Corps should prepare for such a contingency. Although minor amendments were made to this document over the next five years, it remained in force until the United States entered World War II.

Other events were transpiring in the early 1930’s which had an effect on the festering rivalry between the Army Air Corps and the Navy over jurisdiction in coastal defense and over-water missions. In 1933 Congress launched investigations into alleged malfeasance and fraud perpetrated against the government by private airlines contracted to carry the air mail. As a result, during the first half of 1934 the Air Corps was called upon by the U.S. Postal Service to take over carriage of the air mail. Instead of serving as positive public relations fodder as to the capabilities and professionalism of the Air Corps, the project turned out to be a scandalous disaster. After a series of air accidents in which twelve Army pilots died, the mission was called off in June and Secretary of War George H. Dern appointed a special board of inquiry under former Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to investigate problems within the Air Corps. The outcome of this investigation proved a mixed blessing for the Army air power advocates. In its report, the Baker Board concluded that the Navy remained the only dependable force for operating at sea, stating, “the idea that aviation, acting alone, can control the sea lanes, or defend the coast, or produce decisive results in any other general mission contemplated under our policy are all visionary...”²⁵ Furthermore, the report rejected calls for air force independence stating that the recent problems experienced by the Air Corps resulted from

²⁵ *Final Report of War Department Special Committee on Army Air Corps*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934), 14.

lack of oversight by the General Staff. “The time has arrived,” the report stated, “for the Air Corps to become in all respects a homogenous part of the Army, under General Staff control, and be subject to military coordination, study, influence and operation.”²⁶ Most importantly, the Baker Board recommended the creation of a General Headquarters Air Force which brought all Army Air Corps tactical units under the command of a single general, who was in turn under the command of the Army Chief of Staff. This reorganization went into effect on March 1, 1935 and would last, with some modification, until the command structure of the Air Corps was restructured on the eve of World War II.²⁷

Although the Baker Board endorsed the Navy as the nation’s first line of maritime defense, its call for the creation of a GHQ Air Force did much to spur the Army Air Corps to develop a strategic air power doctrine. Although the Air Corps was not granted independence, the GHQ still served as an “organizational structure that facilitated the performance of strategic bombing operations.”²⁸ Therefore, after 1935,

much of the energy of the Air Corps was devoted to linking the mission of the GHQ Air Force to an ambitious program of bomber development. The Army airman was, thereafter, more than anything else, a champion of the long-range bomber and centered his aspirations around the potentialities of that type of aircraft.²⁹

During the 1930’s as bomber designs improved, the Army Air Corps proved unwilling to accede to that part of the Baker Board report which designated maritime defense a Navy function. As it had begun to do in the early 1920’s, the Army Air Corps continued its campaign to prove that bomber aircraft were a less expensive and more effective weapon

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁷ Craven and Cate, *Op. cit.*, 31.

²⁸ Robert W. Krauskopf, “The Army and the Strategic Bomber 1930-1939,” *Military Affairs*, (Vol. 22, No. 2, 1958), 90.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

in the national defense against hostile naval forces than fleets of warships. As before, the airmen had their sights set on a greater share of the budgetary pie, and this, they believed, could only come at the expense of the Navy.

III. Aircraft Development and the Interservice Jurisdictional Dispute

Craven and Cate's history of the U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II recognizes that the impetus behind the Army development and adoption of a thoroughly advanced long-range bomber came as a direct result of the 1931 MacArthur-Pratt agreement and was initially intended to meet the Army's needs in carrying out its coastal defense mission.³⁰ The MacArthur-Pratt agreement recognized the Air Corps' mission to defend the continental coastline and Alaska, as well as American overseas territory in the Philippines, Hawaii and Panama, and in 1932 the War Plans Division of the Army General Staff made an intensive study of how this mission should be conducted.³¹ This study led to the issuance of General MacArthur's abovementioned 1933 policy letter which affirmed the Air Corps' need to conduct long-range reconnaissance over the ocean. Although Chief of Staff MacArthur gave official sanction to this mission, Chief of the Air Corps, Major General Benjamin D. Foulois alerted the War Plans Division that the Air Corps lacked the equipment to carry it out.³²

The Air Corps began to experiment with new models of bomber aircraft. Most of these designs, however, were considered either under-powered or not capable of delivering an adequate bomb load. In 1935, however, Boeing introduced a modern long-range four engine bomber which the Air Corps designated the B-17, the prototype of

³⁰ Craven and Cate, *Op. cit.*, 61.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

which was flown 2100 miles non-stop from the Boeing factory in Seattle to Wright Field in Dayton, at an average speed of 232 miles per hour.³³ Although the prototype crashed during trials due to pilot error, the Air Corps was sufficiently impressed with the airplane's performance that it convinced the War Department to purchase thirteen aircraft (one squadron) for continued evaluation. These airplanes were delivered to the Air Corps in March 1937.³⁴ A small number of additional B-17's were acquired the following year raising the Air Corps' arsenal to fifty two on the eve of the Munich Crisis.³⁵

While the Army air power advocates were seeking to acquire the tools for carrying out coastal defense, at the same time the Navy was moving away from this mission. As early as 1930, the Navy's interest in developing land-based aircraft began to wane. Under the leadership of Admiral William Pratt, the Navy's stated preference was to acquire highly mobile aircraft capable of operating from aircraft carriers and tenders, the primary purpose of which was to serve as the offensive power of the fleet and guard advanced base expeditionary forces. Coastal defense was considered a secondary mission in which, during peacetime, the Navy could not afford to invest its efforts.³⁶ As a consequence, while the strategic air power advocates in the Army were developing the long-range B-17, the Navy channeled its efforts into the development of long-range flying boats for the purpose of carrying out over-water patrol missions. These types included the PBY *Catalina* and the PBM *Mariner* which were capable of operating at sea from aircraft tenders.³⁷ Moreover, in light of ongoing Japanese aggression in Asia during

³³ Krauskopf, *Op. cit.*, 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁵ Krauskopf, *Op. cit.*, 211.

³⁶ Tate, *Op. cit.*, 77.

³⁷ Clark G. Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers: The struggle for Naval Air Supremacy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 290.

the late 1930's and early 1940's, the Navy concentrated most of its efforts in building up its carrier-based aviation in preparation for a transoceanic war. As a consequence, in the years leading up to World War II, the Navy "was not preparing for war along the American coastlines."³⁸

Although the Navy was concerning itself less with the business of coastal defense during the later 1930's, it was still very much alarmed by the perceived efforts of the Army airmen to usurp the Navy's role as the nation's first line of defense against maritime attack. The Army Air Corps' acquisition of the B-17 riled the Navy, for now the Air Corps possessed a truly long-range bomber capable of conducting reconnaissance and bombing missions from land bases far out to sea. This was demonstrated in Joint Air Exercise Number 4 in August, 1937. During this exercise, a flight of B-17's in one twenty-four hour period attempted to locate and drop water bombs on the battleship *Utah* in an area within 300 miles off the California coast between the latitudes of San Francisco and Los Angeles. However, as per the rules, the Air Corps was not allowed to conduct over-water reconnaissance and was forced to rely on position reports supplied by the Navy.³⁹ In spite of two faulty positions reports, which the Army air crews believed were intentional, the flight of B-17's located and successfully bombed the *Utah* within the last minutes of the exercise window.⁴⁰ Although information about this exercise was suppressed, the Air Corps accomplished another navigational feat to great public fanfare in 1938 when a flight of three B-17's operating from Mitchell Field, Long Island

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

³⁹ Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle: the Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986), 235-236.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

intercepted the Italian passenger liner *Rex* approximately 600 miles from Sandy Hook.⁴¹ This achievement was hailed at the time as evidence that Army air power had evolved to the point where it could rapidly and successfully repel a seaborne threat while it was still hundreds of miles from the shore. As a consequence of the Air Corps success, according to the *New York Times*, angry Navy officials pressured the Secretary of War to restrict Army air operations to within 100 miles of the coastline in order to quell “the long smoldering army-navy dispute about their respective responsibilities for over-water flying operations.”⁴² Air Corps officers protested the absurdity of the rule which, General Arnold claimed in his memoirs, had never been rescinded, and thus made every strategic air mission of World War II a technical violation of a War Department standing order.⁴³

IV. Deficiencies in Coastal Defense at the Outset of War

Although the B-17 was recognized at its introduction in 1935 as an outstanding long-range bomber, its large-scale acquisition by the Army was not assured. From 1935 until the Munich Crisis in 1938, the Army General Staff and the Air Corps leadership wrangled over whether medium-range twin engine bombers or long-range four engine bombers were best suited to the needs of national defense. At the insistence of the Army General Staff, which still sought to confine the Air Corps’ mission primarily to that of closely supporting ground operations and coastal defense, the Air Corps was forced to

⁴¹ Arnold, *Op. cit.*, 176; Hanson W. Baldwin, “Flying Fortresses Meet Liner at Sea,” *New York Times*, (May 13, 1938), 3.

⁴² Shiner, *Op. cit.*, 119; “Curbs Army Sea Flights,” *New York Times*, (October 12, 1938), 17.

⁴³ Arnold, *Op. cit.*, 176-177.

accept more medium bombers than the long-range B-17 which it preferred.⁴⁴ After the Munich Agreement, however, President Roosevelt proposed a massive buildup of combat aircraft and the General Staff reversed its earlier position and authorized the Air Corps to acquire thousands of long-range heavy bombers so as to protect the western hemisphere and its approaches against a possible Nazi invasion. Thus, with the buildup of B-17's as the mainstay of the bomber arsenal, the stage was set for the Army Air Corps to transition into a truly strategic air force and to refine its strategic air power doctrine rather than simply concentrate on the tactical mission to which the General Staff had long sought to confine it.

When the United States entered the Second World War, the Army Air Forces⁴⁵ was eager to demonstrate the efficacy of strategic air power and therefore concentrated its efforts on the buildup of theater air forces for the purpose of bombing targets in enemy territory. As the fears of an Axis invasion of the American homeland dissipated within the first few months of war, the Army Air Forces relegated coastal defense to a much lower priority, and sought to deploy as many bombers to England and the Pacific as quickly as the trans-oceanic air ferry system would allow. Thus, when the German U-boat offensive was launched in the western Atlantic in early 1942, the Army Air Forces had very few aircraft assigned to coastal defense and no air crews trained specifically in antisubmarine warfare.

The Navy also found itself at a disadvantage when the U-boats struck for want of suitable ships and planes in the Atlantic theater with which to carry out antisubmarine patrols. To counter the Japanese advance towards the Solomon Islands and Australia, the

⁴⁴ Krauskopf (1959), *Op. cit.*, 209.

⁴⁵ The Army Air Corps was redesignated the Army Air Forces on June 20, 1941 by order of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. Craven and Cate, *Op. cit.*, 115.

Navy transferred most surface vessels, including those few which were suitable for antisubmarine work, to the Pacific, thus denuding the Atlantic theater of vitally needed assets. The Navy was also at a disadvantage in its air capabilities. Although the Navy began to increase the number of aircraft in its arsenal in the late 1930's and early 1940's, as stated, it targeted spending mostly on fleet aviation at the expense of long-range land-based reconnaissance aircraft which were more suitable for antisubmarine operations.⁴⁶ At the outset of the war, the Navy relied on a hand-full of obsolescent land-based trainers and flying boats to conduct antisubmarine patrols along the Atlantic coast. Although the latter type would be used extensively for this purpose during the war, deploying and retrieving flying boats in the ice-strewn waters of the North Atlantic proved difficult and consequently limited their use during wintertime.⁴⁷

Thus, when the U-boats struck with devastating effect in the western Atlantic in January 1942, both the Army and the Navy found themselves poorly prepared to offer effective countermeasures. The Army Air Forces possessed a growing arsenal of aircraft suitable for antisubmarine operations, but at the time looked to strategic bombardment as the Army Air Forces' primary mission and hoped to leave antisubmarine warfare to the Navy. The Navy lacked both surface vessels and aircraft in the Atlantic theater suitable for the task of antisubmarine warfare, leaving a huge gap in American defenses through which the U-boats poured. When the Army Air Forces and the Navy attempted to come together to seal the gap, their efforts were hampered by the reemergence of old inter-service rivalries and competition over which service should have jurisdiction over coastal defense.

⁴⁶ Turnbull and Lord, *Op. cit.*, 313-314.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

Chapter 2

Conflict between the Army Air Forces and the Navy in the Management of the Air War Against the U-boats

Shortly after America's entry into the Second World War, the commander of the German U-boat force Admiral Karl Doenitz planned an offensive against allied merchant shipping operating in the previously neutral waters of the United States. Before America officially became a belligerent, it was the strict policy of Germany to leave American shipping unmolested. This was done out of fear that even a legally justified act under maritime law against American ships carrying or guarding contraband might bring the United States into the war as a British ally. American neutrality was respected by Germany in spite of the fact that President Roosevelt had arguably broken neutrality laws in early 1941 by directing the U.S. Navy to aid in the escort of trans-Atlantic convoys carrying war material to Britain. Although these escort operations led to a few instances where U.S. warships and German U-boats exchanged fire, the Germans still attempted to preserve American neutrality at almost all costs.¹ For this reason, the U-boats especially refrained from operations along the Atlantic coast of the United States even though the area was heavily trafficked by ships carrying cargos of war material ultimately bound for Great Britain. However, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had the effect of drawing the United States officially into the war, Admiral Doenitz received permission to

¹ The Destroyer USS *Kearny* was severely damaged by a torpedo fired from *U-586* while defending Convoy SC-48 on October 17, 1941, killing eleven American sailors. Fleet tanker USS *Salinas* was hit with two torpedoes by *U-106* with no loss of life while running with Convoy ON-28 on October 30, 1941. The Destroyer USS *Reuben James* was torpedoed and sank by *U-552* while escorting convoy HX 156 on October 31, 1941, leaving only 45 survivors out of a crew of 160. The subject of America's undeclared naval war with Germany before its official entry into the Second World War is covered at length in Patrick Abbazia's excellent study, *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975).

launch a U-boat offensive in this poorly protected area.² This offensive was to be code named Operation *Paukensschlag*, or “Drum Roll.”

The logic underlying Operation *Paukensschlag* was clear. Doenitz reasoned that although the British had probably shared their most effective anti-submarine tactics with the Americans, the latter really had little practical experience in such warfare and whatever measures it took to guard against the U-boats would be inefficient. “All in all,” he stated, “we believed that we should find conditions at least as favourable for the conduct of U-boat operations as those which had obtained a year or two earlier in British waters.”³ Doenitz further stated that,

Sooner or later, of course, these favorable conditions would disappear. When our U-boats appeared in the western Atlantic, the Americans would strengthen their defenses, and these, with practical experience, would become progressively more effective. Ships would cease to sail independently, and the convoy system would be introduced. It was, therefore, of primary importance ‘to take full advantage of the favourable situation as quickly as possible and with all available force, before the anticipated changes occurred.’⁴

Although Doenitz requested at least twelve U-boats for the operation, he was frustrated by the unwillingness of the German Naval High Command to release no more than six. Even so, on account of mechanical problems, only five submarines were able to put to sea for America within the departure window of December 16 through 25. These U-boats were to operate along the busy sea lanes between the mouth of the St. Lawrence River and Cape Hatteras.⁵ Later, an additional four boats were released for duty in the western Atlantic and in January 1942 they were dispatched to operate in the vicinity of

² Karl Doenitz, *Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days*, Trans. by R. H. Stevens, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 195-196.

³ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

the oil rich Caribbean islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Trinidad.⁶ Offensive operations were set to commence on January 13, 1942.⁷ As Doenitz had hoped, the U.S. Navy was woefully unprepared for the attack. By the end of May 1942, 215 Allied merchant ships totaling 1,174,200 gross tons had been sunk in the Eastern, Caribbean and Gulf Sea Frontiers.⁸ German attacks against shipping in American waters were so successful during the first half of 1942 that the submariners of the *Kriegsmarine* referred to it as the “Second Happy Time,” reminiscent of the happy times in 1939-1940 when the U-boats ravaged inadequately protected Allied merchant shipping off the coasts of Great Britain.

I. Jurisdictional Disputes and the Concept of an American Coastal Command

When the first wave of German submarines struck off the American east coast in January, 1942, the U.S. Navy lacked sufficient numbers of both ships and airplanes for antisubmarine operations. Admiral Adolphus Andrews, the commander of the Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier,⁹ had only a few dozen surface craft under his command with which to conduct antisubmarine patrols along the entire east coast.¹⁰ In addition, Andrews had only 103 aircraft, of which fifty-one were trainers. The rest were an odd assortment of utility and transport planes, including six patrol aircraft, three fighters and one bomber, nearly all of which were unsuitable for antisubmarine patrols.¹¹ Since the Navy had been concentrating its efforts at strengthening fleet aviation in the years leading up to the war, it had no allocation of four-engine land-based aircraft scheduled for

⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁸ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943*, (Edison, N.J.: Castle Books, 1947), 413.

⁹ This naval administrative unit was renamed the Eastern Sea Frontier on February 6, 1942.

¹⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Op. cit.*, 131.

¹¹ *War Diary, North Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier*, December, 1941, Chapter 2, page 10-11.

delivery in 1942.¹² To rectify this deficiency, on January 14, 1942 the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics requested that the Army Air Forces reallocate to the Navy twin and four-engine bombers for use in antisubmarine patrols and convoy escort. This request, however, remained unanswered by the Army Air Forces for over a month.¹³ In the meantime, Army Air Forces commanding General Henry Arnold expressed his willingness to cooperate with the Navy in its antisubmarine efforts, but only through the establishment of an Army air striking force which would conduct antisubmarine patrols, unless the aircraft were needed for more "urgent requirements" elsewhere.¹⁴ The motley naval air patrols operating under Admiral Andrews were thus augmented by patrols of the Army Air Forces' First Bomber Command, which sent two flights a day, six hundred miles out to sea from air bases at Westover, Massachusetts, Garden City, New York and Langley Field, Virginia.¹⁵ This situation was considered less than optimal by the Navy since it believed that Army Air Forces personnel, "had not been thoroughly trained, inevitably, in recognition of naval vessels and types" and "had no familiarity with naval weapons." Admiral Ernest J. King, the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet, was particularly displeased with the need to rely on Army Air Forces flight crews for naval reconnaissance and antisubmarine missions, noting that they had not been properly instructed in naval munitions and tactics.¹⁶

The weakness of the Navy's air defenses against the U-boats forced Admiral King to accept the Army Air Forces' assistance in antisubmarine warfare, at least until the

¹² D. B. Duncan, Memorandum for Admiral King, January 17, 1942, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C. (Hereafter, *King, Official Papers*)

¹³ C. E. Weakley, Memorandum for Secretary of War, January 30, 1948, enclosure A, page 2, *Ibid.*

¹⁴ R. K. Turner, Memorandum to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, January 15, 1942, *Ibid.*

¹⁵ War Diary, North Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier, January, 1942, Chapter 3, pages 1-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, page 6.

Navy could acquire adequate aircraft of its own. However, during this time of cooperation, King, along with other Navy leaders, feared that the Army Air Forces was planning to seize upon antisubmarine warfare as a *cause célèbre* to prove that the Army Air Forces was more capable than the Navy at defending against seaborne threats, thereby vindicating calls for Air Force independence from the Army. To be sure, there were those officers in the Army Air Forces who hoped to use the Navy's weakness to their advantage. Nevertheless, the arrival of the U-boats in American waters in mid-February 1942 demanded that both services cooperate in antisubmarine operations in spite of whatever misgivings or ambitions the officers of both services harbored.

During these early days of cooperation, a clear difference emerged in the antisubmarine tactics preferred by the Army Air Forces and the Navy. Navy doctrine stressed that the role of antisubmarine aviation was to protect shipping by patrolling shipping lanes in the vicinity of convoys for the purpose of keeping U-boats submerged and to discourage attack. The Army considered such routine patrols and convoy cover as "useless drudgery," preferring instead to organize "killer groups" that would aggressively hunt down submarines in areas where they were suspected to transit during their outbound and return voyages.¹⁷ From the outset, King determined that the Army Air Forces' contribution to the U-boat war would be tightly controlled and conducted according to Navy defensive tactical doctrine. There was, however, a significant factor working to undermine King's argument that the Navy must necessarily control all antisubmarine aviation, and that was the example set by the RAF Coastal Command in managing Great Britain's antisubmarine air war. The RAF Coastal Command, which employed more than half of its aircraft in offensive "seek and strike" missions, provided

¹⁷ Morison, *Op. cit.*, 243.

a model that the Army Air Forces could emulate as it sought to develop an American offensive antisubmarine force.¹⁸ The example of the RAF Coastal Command proved so attractive that even the Navy's assistant Air Attaché in London, Lieutenant Commander Ralph Ofstie, offered to help organize the Navy's antisubmarine air efforts according to the British model.¹⁹ However, the history of the RAF Coastal Command made it anathema to the Navy in spite of whatever recent success it enjoyed in the U-boat war.

The history of the Royal Air Force in general, and the Coastal Command in particular, served as an example of everything the United States Navy feared lest the Army Air Forces succeed in gaining independence from the Army. The RAF came into being in 1918 when the British merged the Army's Royal Flying Corps with the Royal Naval Air Service. During the early interwar years, the new RAF served primarily as a colonial policing force, yet in the 1930's it increasingly focused its efforts on strategic bombardment, and by 1936, strategic bombardment had become its preeminent mission. Navy critics of the RAF pointed to the deterioration of British fleet aviation as a consequence of the merger and subsequent neglect of the Royal Navy's air needs. Although the British government created the Fleet Air Arm in 1924, the state of British naval aviation continued to decline. RAF pilots assigned to the Royal Navy were outside the fraternity of naval officers and were also cut off from the path of career advancement enjoyed by their RAF colleagues in Bomber Command. As a result, the better air officers shied away from fleet service. Although the Royal Navy would reacquire possession of its own aviation in 1939, when World War II began, the Royal Navy lacked flying

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ R. A. Ofstie, Letter to Admiral King, January 31, 1942, *King, Official Papers*.

officers with both air and sea experience, and as a consequence, the service suffered from an underdeveloped naval air power doctrine in the face of an immediate threat.

The history of the Coastal Command within the RAF particularly raised the hackles of U.S. Navy officers. Created during the RAF reorganization of 1936, Coastal Command was assigned responsibility for aerial operations at sea. Under this arrangement, Coastal Command functioned under the dual command of the Air Ministry and the Admiralty. This dual command set-up proved unsatisfactory shortly after German attacks on shipping began in 1939 when the Air Ministry and the Admiralty failed to coordinate aerial and surface operations, and vital intelligence concerning enemy ship movements was either lost or delayed by the Air Ministry before it could be passed through the Admiralty to the operational forces of the Royal Navy. Furthermore, the RAF and the Royal Navy recognized that Coastal Command required a greater number of improved, long-range aircraft in order to cope with shipping losses due to U-boat and Luftwaffe attacks.²⁰ By 1940, the dual command arrangement was scrapped, and operational command of Coastal Command was placed with the Admiralty. However, deficiencies in pilot training for aerial operations at sea persisted, and the Royal Navy found it necessary to send the pilots of Coastal Command to sea in naval vessels in order to familiarize them with ships' activities.²¹ In the eyes of the U.S. Navy, the deficiencies of Coastal Command served as an argument against the creation of an air force independent of the Army or Navy with any jurisdiction over aerial operations at sea. American Navy officers considered the RAF Coastal Command a cobbled-together stop-gap force which had been deprived of adequate resources and training due to its

²⁰ Forrest Sherman, "The Case Against the United Air Force," 8-9. Unpublished paper appended to D. B. Duncan, Memorandum for Admiral King, March 16, 1942, *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

separation from the Royal Navy, and which had only lately been rescued from disaster by the wartime contingency of returning operational command to the Admiralty. Yet, what the U.S. Navy found most obnoxious about the RAF Coastal Command was not its operational shortcomings, but rather, that it set an example which the Army Air Forces might follow in its own bid to win independence from the U.S. Army. By 1942, the deficiencies of RAF Coastal Command had largely been rectified, and while under the unified command of the Admiralty, it had become a more effective and efficient fighting force. The U.S. Navy feared that the Army Air Forces would seize upon this recent success as proof of the merits of air force autonomy in matters of coastal defense while conveniently forgetting that Coastal Command's autonomy fostered the near disastrous conditions that existed in Britain before 1940.

By February 20, 1942, the Bureau of Aeronautics had not received a response from the Army concerning its January request for the reallocation of land-based planes to the Navy. Admiral King took the matter up with General Arnold directly. With the understanding that aircraft currently on the assembly lines had already been earmarked for delivery to the Army Air Forces and to the British, King asked for two hundred B-24's and four hundred B-25's to be delivered to the Navy by July 1, 1943. An additional two hundred B-24's and five hundred B-25's were requested for 1944. According to the memorandum, King intended the long-range, four-engine B-24's for service in the Pacific while the twin-engine B-25's would be assigned to antisubmarine duty in the Atlantic.²² In a lengthy reply, on February 25 Arnold rejected King's request. Arnold's stance early in the war was such that he considered the commitment of long-range land-based bombers to antisubmarine patrol duty as a diversion of scarce air assets from the more

²² E. J. King, Memorandum for General H. H. Arnold, February 20, 1942, *Ibid.*

worthwhile task of strategic bombardment. He informed King that as matters then stood, even the current delivery schedule left the Army Air Forces “critically short of 1190 planes.”²³ Arnold went on at length over the merits of Air Force independence and of the impropriety of the Navy to duplicate the Army Air Forces’ strategic bombing mission by operating long-range land-based planes. He concluded by stressing the need for cooperation between the services when combined operations were called for.

King’s reply on March 5 claimed that Arnold had misunderstood the Navy’s intent regarding the requested airplanes. The Navy had no intention of building a strategic air force, but rather, it needed the airplanes for antisubmarine patrols. Drawing upon the “purely naval operations of the Coastal Command” as justification, he reminded Arnold that long-range land-based planes had certain advantages over sea-planes in that they could operate from bases free of pack ice in wintertime. Furthermore, King drew Arnold’s attention to the fact that such operations were assigned as a Navy function under the provisions of the 1935 *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* and stressed that no arbitrary limitations should be placed on the type of aircraft either the Army or the Navy found necessary for the performance of their assigned missions.²⁴ Arnold’s reply was not immediate, and in the meantime, the loss of merchant shipping continued to mount.

By this time, the inability of the Navy to stem the tide of German attacks on shipping in American waters had become a public relations nightmare. In order to convince a restive public that its antisubmarine efforts were effective, the Navy Department resorted to disinformation and censorship. At the end of January, the Navy floated a highly embellished story that a Navy PBY *Catalina* bombed a U-boat operating

²³ H. H. Arnold, Letter to Admiral King, February 25, 1942, *Ibid.*

²⁴ E. J. King, Letter to General Arnold, March 5, 1942, *Ibid.*

off the East Coast. Comparing the naval aviator to a modern-day Oliver Hazard Perry, the press reported the aviator's laconic radio message as "sighted sub; sank same."²⁵ However, the story conveniently omitted the fact that the possible sinking occurred off Newfoundland, not the American east coast. Nevertheless, the Navy hoped that the American public would uncritically accept the story as evidence of its effectiveness in antisubmarine warfare. Meanwhile, the press continued to report shipping losses to U-boat attacks almost daily. Navy Secretary Frank Knox tried to convince the public that the Navy was actually sinking U-boats with great success, but that it was withholding detailed information in order to damage German morale.²⁶ In spite of this disinformation, the stories told by survivors of the horrors associated with the U-boat attacks began to circulate widely, causing many to attribute German success to Navy apathy.²⁷

Ever sensitive to public opinion, President Roosevelt urged the Navy to protect shipping by initiating coastal convoys. However, at the outset of the war, the North Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier had only twenty assorted small surface craft with which to patrol the entire East Coast, let alone establish a convoy system.²⁸ According to Admiral Andrews, Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier, none of these vessels could outdistance a U-boat on the surface, nor could they outrange the U-boat's deck guns.²⁹ Many in the Navy believed that this deficiency was caused by the Destroyers-for-Bases deal that Roosevelt struck with the British in 1940, which left the Navy deprived of escort

²⁵ "'Sighted Sub; Sank Same,' Radios a Modern Perry in Naval Plane," *New York Times*, January 30, 1942.

²⁶ "Knox Defends Policy of Withholding News," *New York Times*, February 18, 1942.

²⁷ Michael Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 275.

²⁸ *War Diary, North Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier*, December, 1941, Chapter 2, page 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Appendix II, December 22, 1941 letter of Admiral Andrews to CNO, page 2.

vessels on the eve of America's entry into the war.³⁰ Furthermore, King sarcastically noted that until 1941, the President had refused his predecessor's admonitions to ask Congress for more money to build escort craft, but noted that the President seemed to think that upon entering the war the Navy could just say "presto" and then "overnight," there would be "hundreds of escort ships ready to go to sea."³¹

In February, as the merchant ship losses continued to mount, King authorized Andrews to appropriate all Coast Guard cutters in the Eastern Sea Frontier and equip them for antisubmarine patrols. He also informed Andrews that twenty-four British trawlers equipped for antisubmarine service would soon be detached to the United States and placed under his command. Periodic help in antisubmarine patrols would also be provided by eleven destroyers temporarily detached from service with the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.³² However, this addition of force proved to be illusory due to the fact that the destroyers were never detached long enough to do any good.³³ By March, the situation had become so desperate that Admiral Andrews directed his district commanders to purchase fishing vessels and yachts for anti-submarine service. Through such means, by the end of the month, Andrews was able to boast of ninety-four patrol craft in the Eastern Sea Frontier, not including the temporarily detached fleet destroyers.³⁴ Nevertheless, the Navy still lacked adequate surface craft to undertake coastal convoys, and for many, the perception lingered that the Navy was negligent by not doing enough to protect shipping.

³⁰ E. J. King, Letter to Colonel Donnelly, May 16, 1949, attachment page 1, *The Personal Papers of Ernest J. King*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter *King, Personal Papers*)

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *War Diary, North Atlantic Naval Coastal Frontier*, January, 1942, Chapter 3, pages 4-6.

³³ *Ibid.*, February, 1942, Chapter 3, pages 7-8.

³⁴ *War Diary, Eastern Sea Frontier*, March, 1942, Chapter 6, pages 1-2.

The War Department began to raise concerns with the Navy early in March about the critical shortages of oil on the east coast due to the loss of several tankers to U-boat attacks. In reply, Under-secretary of the Navy James Forrestal assured the War Department that a plan for coastal convoys was under consideration, but that it was inadvisable to initiate convoy operations until effective escort protection could be furnished. Echoing Admiral King, Forrestal warned that poorly protected convoys “would give enemy submarines the opportunity to attack large formations instead of single ships with consequent increase rather than decrease in losses.”³⁵ Forrestal further remarked that the Navy and the Army Air Forces were already cooperating in organizing patrols of shipping lanes. Forrestal’s explanation, which became the standard answer every time the question was raised, proved insufficient to officials in the War Department who, as we shall see, continued to inject themselves into the management of the antisubmarine war.

Another issue briefly emerged at this time which would have greater significance later in the war. On March 16, Admiral D. B. Duncan, King’s Air Operations Officer, sent a memo to King advising that a bill was under consideration in the Senate which provided for a single department of National Defense which would consolidate all Army and Navy aviation into a separate military branch.³⁶ This bill was reminiscent of the many past failed efforts to consolidate the armed forces under a single defense secretary and of the effort to strip the Navy of its air component. Like the others, the 1942 bill went nowhere. Nevertheless, the fact that such a bill was introduced in 1942 gave hope to the air power advocates that Air Force independence, albeit within a consolidated

³⁵ J. V. Forrestal, Memorandum for the Under Secretary of War, March 5, 1942, *King, Official Papers*.

³⁶ D. B. Duncan, Memorandum for Admiral King, March 16, 1942, *Ibid*.

Department of Defense, was a real possibility in the near future. The Army airmen knew that public opinion would support such a reorganization of the nation's defenses only if the Army Air Forces could prove its worth in the present war, not just in strategic bombing overseas, but also in the defense against the U-boats in the Atlantic.

On March 16, General Arnold answered King's letter of March 5 by reassuring the Admiral that there was, in fact, no misunderstanding between them, as King had suggested. He simply would not authorize the Navy's request for the medium and long-range bombers. Arnold justified his rejection by reminding King of Senator James Wadsworth's remarks in 1920 regarding the Army Appropriations Act which affirmed Army jurisdiction over coastal patrols. Furthermore, as a parting shot, Arnold proposed the establishment of an American Coastal Command within Army Air Forces, on the model of the RAF Coastal Command. "This organization," he wrote, "operating when necessary under the control of proper Naval authorities, can readily meet the requirements of convoy escort, patrolling, and protection of shipping in coastal zones."³⁷ Arnold claimed that this American Coastal Command would be highly mobile and able to deploy to different areas as threats to shipping emerged. Furthermore, given the insufficient number of planes available for the Allied war effort, the advantage of an American Coastal Command under Army Air Forces control would be that its aircraft could be redeployed for strategic bombardment once the threat to shipping had been neutralized.³⁸

Arnold's letter caused a stir among Admiral King's staff. Admiral Duncan wrote to King the next day ridiculing Arnold's reference to Senator Wadsworth's remarks in

³⁷ H. H. Arnold, Letter to Admiral King, March 16, 1942, *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

1920, stating that Arnold “should know that this is 1942 and a great many things have happened in the meantime.”³⁹ Duncan asserted what had become a common Navy rebuttal to the Army’s refusal to allow the Navy a greater share of land-based planes, stating that the 1935 *Joint Action* assigned each service its role in the national defense, and that material should be allocated according to the task for which it is intended, not according to its type. Duncan also reminded King that the Army Air Forces, for all its desire to retain control of its land-based aircraft, was experiencing a manpower shortage and was running out of qualified air crews. The Navy, on the other hand, although short of planes, had trained aviators who were ready to take up antisubmarine patrols. He concluded by suggesting that King ask the President to intercede on behalf of the Navy and order the reallocation of long-range planes as the Navy had requested.⁴⁰ King echoed these sentiments in his March 18 response to Arnold, but added, “I think it is high time that the trend toward a separate air force be given up – and that we face the realities of the situation with which we are confronted...”⁴¹ King stated that it was necessary for the services to cooperate at striking the enemy by whatever means could be brought to bear, “no matter what uniform is worn by the “strikers”.”⁴² Furthermore, King remarked that he found Arnold’s proposal to establish an American Coastal Command surprising “in light of common knowledge as to what the experience of the British Navy has been in its association with the R.A.F., for the past twenty-five years and, particularly during the

³⁹ D. B. Duncan, Memorandum for Admiral King, March 17, 1942, *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ E. J. King, Letter to General Arnold, March 18, 1942, *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

past three years.”⁴³ King’s remark needed no further elaboration, for the sorry state of British naval aviation was sufficiently known to Arnold.

By late March, the loss of shipping to the U-boats, particularly of oil tankers, had become so alarming that Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote to President Roosevelt on March 23 to complain of the ineffectiveness of the armed forces at mounting the defense. Ickes acknowledged the Navy’s limited number of planes and suggested that the Army Air Forces be pressed into assisting the Navy by conducting off-shore submarine patrols. Ickes knew he was outside his bailiwick, nevertheless he remarked, “I do not want to be classified as a swivel-chair strategist, but in view of this critical situation, I do venture to suggest that you consider whether our defense efforts against the submarines would be more effective if all of the Navy and Army planes guarding the East Coast against submarines were under one command.”⁴⁴ In spite of the fact that the Army Air Forces was already assisting the Navy in antisubmarine patrols, sufficient pressure was brought to bear on both Army Chief of Staff George Marshall and Admiral King to iron out which service would have command of the air war against the U-boats. On March 25 both chiefs issued a joint dispatch to all sea frontiers and defense commands announcing that, until any new commands were established, unity of command in the U-boat war was vested in the sea frontier commanders as per the terms of the 1935 *Joint Action*.⁴⁵ Such an announcement, hinting at the creation of a new command, reveals that General Arnold was not alone in his desire to create an American Coastal Command. In fact, such a unit was presently under consideration by top officials in the War Department.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Harold L. Ickes, Letter to President Roosevelt, March 23, 1942, *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ E. J. King and G. C. Marshall, Joint Dispatch, March 25, 1942, *King, Personal Papers.*

At General Arnold's request, Air Marshal Douglas Evill, head of the RAF delegation in Washington, wrote to Robert Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air on March 20 to explain the operation of torpedo carrying land planes in the RAF. In addition to discussing the technical details of torpedoes, Evill briefly explained how the chain of command between the Admiralty and the RAF Coastal Command worked.⁴⁶ This letter was passed to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who in turn, reiterated its main points in a March 30 letter to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, stating that the information was "apropos of our recent discussion about the use of torpedo planes and the sensible conclusion to pool Army and Navy resources in a common effort..."⁴⁷ Stimson's desire to set up an American Coastal Command is not surprising, since the U-boat war on Allied shipping posed a direct obstacle to his wartime mission. As Secretary of War, Stimson had administrative charge over BOLERO, the American buildup of forces in Great Britain for the cross-channel invasion of France. Since most of the men and material for the invasion of France had to cross the Atlantic by ship, developing a more effective means of combating the U-boat menace was a concern he pondered deeply. In sum, Secretary Stimson became convinced early in the war that the best way to combat U-boats was to bring all antisubmarine resources into single antisubmarine command functioning under the War Department, albeit under the nominal command of the Navy. Looking to the RAF Coastal Command as an example of how to organize an offensive antisubmarine force, Stimson became the champion of establishing an American version of Coastal Command.

⁴⁶ D. C. S. Evill, Letter to Mr. Lovett, March 20, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Navy File.*

⁴⁷ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to Frank Knox, March 30, 1942, *Ibid.*

On April 4, Navy Secretary Frank Knox replied to Stimson's letter of March 30, acknowledging Air Marshal Evill's comments. However, he downplayed the propriety of establishing an American Coastal Command on the British model, calling its present form a "makeshift" that only came into existence after the RAF had bungled the job of managing naval aviation.⁴⁸ Knox asserted that direct command rather than close liaison cooperation as practiced by the Royal Navy and the RAF Coastal Command was necessary to manage the U-boat war, and that "this is obviously the Navy's job and we have recognized this only recently in the arrangements made by General Marshal [*sic*] and Admiral King for the unified control of our sea frontiers,"⁴⁹ referring to the joint dispatch of March 25. Knox concluded by offering Stimson the opportunity to "talk at any time to one of our competent naval observers who has closely studied the Coastal Command in Britain." Their insight, Knox remarked, "will thoroughly refute the R.A.F. point of view expressed by Evill on this subject."⁵⁰

In the meantime, the Navy Department had not yet convinced the Army Air Forces to reallocate the land-based planes it had requested.⁵¹ Having reached an impasse with General Arnold, King wrote to Army Chief of Staff Marshall on May 6, reiterating his request for the reallocation of land-based planes to the Navy. King expressed his desire to come to a satisfactory agreement with the Army without taking the subject to higher authorities. Marshall, who was out of Washington at the time, replied in an

⁴⁸ Frank Knox, Letter to Henry Stimson, April 4, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Navy File.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ C. E. Weakley, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, January 30, 1948, enclosure A, page 2, *Op. cit.*

unsigned letter that he would take the matter up upon his return.⁵² General Arnold, however, was going ahead anyway with plans for establishing an American Coastal Command. In an unsent draft memorandum to General Marshall dated May 9, Arnold stated that, since the airplane has proven to be the most effective weapon against submarines to date, it was incumbent upon the Army Air Forces to direct its efforts towards defeating the U-boats in the western Atlantic. "I believe," he wrote, "that some organization must be charged solely with this responsibility and provided with the necessary aircraft and equipment to develop and test the methods as well as the special devices necessary."⁵³ Arnold proposed starting off small, with a squadron sized unit assigned to one of the Army Defense Commands to be operated directly under the War Department which would prescribe where the unit should function and what tactics should be employed.⁵⁴ Although Arnold never sent this memorandum, it is indicative of his mindset.

Secretary of War Stimson began to take an even greater interest in antisubmarine operations in the spring of 1942. His diary makes frequent reference to discussions between himself and his subordinates on matters pertaining to the distribution of airborne radar equipment, the organization of Army air units involved in antisubmarine patrols, and the development of new antisubmarine weapons.⁵⁵ However, as U-boat sinkings continued, Stimson became increasingly critical of the Navy's efforts. "We are disgusted

⁵² *Ibid.* Copies of this exchange of correspondence have not been located in the archives. They are mentioned by Whitehill, but the narrative seems to draw entirely from the Weakley Memorandum of January 30, 1948.

⁵³ H. H. Arnold, Memorandum to the Chief of Staff, May 9, 1942, *Reel 203, Henry Harley Arnold Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.* A handwritten note at the end of this memorandum states, "Not accepted by Gen. Arnold in this form. Not used as a basis for his letter to C. of S. recommending the return of complete control to C.G. A.A.F."

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, March 28, 1942. See also: March 14, April 21, and June 6, 1942.

at the handling of the matter by the Navy,” he wrote after a discussion with his staff on June 7. “They have not risen to it as a great occasion. They are too slow.”⁵⁶ Stimson went so far as to contact the President to complain about specific naval officers. “I told him frankly,” Stimson wrote, “that I thought he ought to get rid of Admiral Adolphus Andrews who is in charge of the thing for the Navy and who seems to be a terrible old fusspocket of a society man, and put a real two-fisted man on the subject.”⁵⁷ In spite of Stimson’s meddling, Andrews remained commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier until his retirement from the Navy on November 1, 1943. However, the episode is illustrative of Stimson’s willingness to reach across cabinet departments to get what he wanted. This would certainly not be the last time Stimson and the War Department attempted to force the Navy to comply with its wishes in the management of the antisubmarine war.

II. Divergent Army and Navy Doctrines in the Antisubmarine War

As mentioned earlier, the Navy was reluctant to start coastal convoys with insufficient numbers of escort craft for fear that a concentration of poorly protected ships would only attract the U-boats and result in increased losses. As a stop-gap measure, beginning in February 1942, Admiral Andrews organized a partial convoy system known as the “bucket brigade,” where the few trawlers and patrol craft the Navy could muster would escort merchant ships by day between protected anchorages where they would put in at night. The first coastal convoys between Hampton Roads and Key West began on May 14, and coverage expanded as more escort vessels were commissioned.⁵⁸ Losses to U-boats decreased significantly in the Eastern Sea Frontier as a result, from twenty three

⁵⁶ June 7, 1942, *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943*, (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1947), 254-257.

ships lost in April to only five in May. Although sinkings increased to thirteen in June, the number fell to three in July and then to zero for the rest of 1942.⁵⁹ However, the picture was far from rosy. By the summer, the U-boats had moved into the less protected waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, where convoys were still intermittent. As losses in these areas continued to mount, the dispute between the Army and the Navy over which service should command the air war against the U-boats took on new proportions. The War Department still pressed for the creation of an American Coastal Command and became strident in its call to launch an antisubmarine air offensive by employing “killer groups” to actively seek out and destroy U-boats in areas where they were expected to transit. When the Navy stood firm in its opposition to this plan, Stimson and his War Department subordinates bent their efforts with renewed vigor to create a dedicated antisubmarine command under the War Department and launch an Army-led antisubmarine air offensive.

The Navy justified its opposition to an antisubmarine air offensive on the grounds that the dispersal of meager air and surface assets in such an offensive would be like “hunting the hornets all over the farm.”⁶⁰ Instead, Admiral King asserted, the best use of air and surface craft was to escort merchant ships in convoy. By sticking close to the convoy, aircraft and surface escort vessels would force submarines to stay submerged long enough to deprive them of the opportunity to maneuver into attack position. Only if a U-boat was detected would it be actively pursued and destroyed. Whereas the War Department favored an antisubmarine doctrine based on offensive tactics, requiring air units to aggressively seek out and destroy submarines, the Navy was content with a

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁶⁰ War Diary, Eastern Sea Frontier, April, 1942, Chapter 2, pages 2-3. The author of the war diary attributes the metaphor to Woodrow Wilson.

doctrine based on defensive tactics, where the mere presence of aircraft in the vicinity of convoys would deter attack by forcing the U-boats to stay submerged well out of torpedo range.

In spite of the Navy's lack of interest in an antisubmarine air offensive, the War Department went ahead with plans to create a highly mobile antisubmarine air unit patterned after the RAF Coastal Command. In May, with Henry Stimson's approval, Assistant Army Chief of Staff Joseph McNarney began the reorganization of the First Bomber Command into a dedicated antisubmarine force.⁶¹ McNarney collaborated closely in the project with Stimson's scientific consultant, Dr. Edward L. Bowles, an expert on radar and other recent technological developments in antisubmarine warfare. If the War Department had its way, this unit would serve as the foundation upon which to develop an American Coastal Command to carry out an aerial antisubmarine offensive. As such, it would need to be highly mobile and ready to redeploy from one area to the next as U-boat activities demanded. However, the Navy had very different plans for First Bomber Command.

On June 10, Admiral King wrote to Chief of Staff Marshall to apprise him of discussions that had recently taken place between his staff and that of the First Air Force, the parent organization of the First Bomber Command. Whatever these discussions entailed, King made it clear to Marshall that he intended for all aircraft participating in antisubmarine operations to be under the command of the local Sea Frontier Commanders. King acknowledged that the Army intended to deploy aircraft to the Gulf of Mexico where U-boats had recently been detected, however he affirmed that "the

⁶¹ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, May 21, 1942; King, E. J., Letter to General McNarney, May 28, 1942, *King, Official Papers*.

division of aircraft as between the Eastern and Gulf Sea Frontiers will be as ordered by my Headquarters in Washington, in consultation with Army authorities, as the situation demands.”⁶² By asserting his prerogative, King attempted to cut off at the root any idea that the First Bomber Command would be a highly mobile, offensive force patterned on the RAF Coastal Command. He would accept the Army’s help, but he intended for the First Bomber Command to protect convoys rather than aggressively hunt U-boats all over the ocean. “In the matter of air coverage for convoys,” King wrote, “it will be necessary for the Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier, who is charged with the protection of convoys in both the Eastern and Gulf Sea Frontiers, to request air coverage of convoys operating outside of the Eastern Sea Frontier from the Commander of the Gulf Sea Frontier.” King added, “By utilizing this method it will not be necessary for aircraft attached to one sea frontier to operate in another sea frontier, unless exceptional conditions make it necessary.”⁶³ King’s attitude towards employing Army air units in convoy protection was in total opposition to Secretary of War Stimson’s ideas regarding a highly mobile antisubmarine striking force. The Army could try to organize a Coastal Command, but as long as it was placed under Navy control, King would use it in the manner he saw fit.

No record exists as to what verbally transpired next between King and Marshall, however Marshall’s subsequent memorandum of June 19 betrays an anger underlying his measured tone. “The losses by submarines off our Atlantic seaboard and in the Caribbean now threaten our entire war effort,” he began. Marshall noted the loss of

⁶² E. J. King, Letter to General Marshall, June 10, 1942, *King, Official Papers*. See also: *George C. Marshall Papers, Pentagon Office Collection, Selected Materials*, George C. Marshall Library, Lexington, Virginia.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

seventeen of the seventy four ships allotted to the Army by the War Shipping Administration, along with 22% of the Bauxite fleet and 20% of the Puerto Rican merchant fleet.⁶⁴ “We are all aware of the limited number of escort craft available,” he remarked, “but has every conceivable improvised means been brought to bear on this situation?”⁶⁵ Marshall concluded by warning that should such losses continue for another month or two, the Army would be unable to move enough men and airplanes to overseas theaters in time to have an influence on the war.

King responded two days later with a lengthy memorandum in which he reviewed the Navy’s efforts over the past six months to acquire more escort craft for the protection of shipping. King noted that regular coastal convoys had begun in mid-May, around the same time that First Bomber Command became active. “We made it pretty hot for the Germans and they spread out to areas where the going was easier,” King observed, “but our east coast convoy system is still far from invulnerable and we may expect the Germans to return to this area whenever they feel inclined to accept a not-too-heavy risk.”⁶⁶ King suggested that in addition to air coverage of convoys, the Army Air Forces should concentrate its efforts at wiping out the German shipyards and submarine bases, something which he had been urging the British to do for some time. However, returning to the issue of convoys, King asserted that “escort is not just one way of handling the submarine menace; it is the only way that gives any real promise of success.” Referring to the War Department’s preferred offensive doctrine, he claimed that “the so-called

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Bauxite is an aluminum ore mined primarily in South America and the Caribbean. During World War II its importation was essential for aircraft production.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* The copy in Marshall’s files is less confrontational and is phrased, “...but as every conceivable improvised means been brought to bear on this situation, I am fearful that another month or two...”

⁶⁶ E. J. King, Memorandum for General Marshall, June 21, 1942, *King, Official Papers*.

patrol and hunting operations have time and again proven futile.”⁶⁷ King then laid out the Navy’s plan to increase its numbers of land-based aircraft for the coverage of coastal convoys as well as its plan to build more escort carriers so as to provide air cover for convoys in mid-ocean. Yet, in spite of the Navy’s plans to increase its antisubmarine air component, King assured Marshall that the Army’s contribution to the U-boat war must not be considered a temporary measure, but a permanent cooperative arrangement for the protection of shipping.⁶⁸ Army assistance was both welcome and vital, but it had to be on the Navy’s terms.

Admiral King’s memorandum of June 21 had the effect of finally getting the Army Air Forces to acquiesce to the Navy’s request for the reallocation of land-based aircraft. In a July 1 memorandum, General Arnold notified King of a tentative plan for the Navy’s procurement of “specified numbers of B-24’s, B-34’s and B-25’s for coastal patrol purposes,” however King’s most recent request for radar equipped B-18’s would be limited to one hundred aircraft, far short of five hundred requested in his June 21 memorandum.⁶⁹ In conclusion, Arnold reiterated the Army’s contention that these aircraft were for the express purpose of antisubmarine patrols and should not be used for other purposes.⁷⁰

In the meantime, the War Department was going ahead with plans to develop the First Bomber Command into an offensive antisubmarine striking force. Dr. Bowles had been actively studying the tactics of RAF Coastal Command and was keeping Stimson

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ H. H. Arnold, Memorandum for Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, July 1, 1942, *Reel 203, Henry Harley Arnold Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

apprised of his work regarding new weapons development and improvements in radar.⁷¹ However, Stimson and his staff kept running into the obstacle of an obdurate Admiral King who refused to give ground and sanction an antisubmarine offensive. For this reason, Stimson decided to go over his head. On July 7, Stimson sent a memorandum to Navy Secretary Frank Knox which argued for the reorganization of the existing sea frontier commands. "I am advised," Stimson claimed, "that one of the basic reasons for the apparent lack of success by aircraft in anti-submarine work is the present system of command and control."⁷² In a direct criticism of the Navy command structure, Stimson remarked that command of the antisubmarine war was divided between too many commands and echelons of command, and that "the flow of communication through so many channels inevitably consumes time and effort and interferes with the most effective employment of the forces available." What was needed in order to take full advantage of the mobility of the Army's antisubmarine striking force was the establishment of a "single Sea Frontier Command, extending from Maine to Mexico and covering Atlantic and Gulf areas, with a Naval Officer in charge of it."⁷³

It did not take much to see that what the War Department wanted was for the First Bomber Command to enjoy the same degree of operational autonomy under the U.S. Navy as that exercised by the RAF Coastal Command in its relationship with the British Admiralty. By making such a suggestion, Stimson was not only challenging Admiral King's authority to command the Navy, but he was also attempting to force his will on a

⁷¹ Edward L. Bowles, Memorandum, June 20, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Security Classified Records of Edward L. Bowles Concerning Antisubmarine Warfare in the Atlantic, Box 7, ASW*. See also: *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 1, 1942.

⁷² Henry L. Stimson, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, July 7, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Navy File*. According to Stimson's diary entry for July 7, this memorandum was written by Robert Lovett.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

fellow cabinet secretary. Although Stimson and Frank Knox were friends of long standing, the Secretary of War was beginning to exhibit a growing frustration with, and disrespect for, his cabinet colleague.

Knox responded on July 10, succinctly rebutting Stimson's claims that a reorganization of the Sea Frontiers was the best way to remedy the problem. The Army and the Navy must cooperate, he stated, "however, I believe the answer lies in augmenting our forces rather than in further changes in the system of command which now seems to be working effectively."⁷⁴ Moreover, Knox wrote, "the coastal command is concerned with many matters in addition to anti-submarine warfare and I think the system of administration is a military question which I feel considerable hesitation in invading."⁷⁵ In this response, Knox drew the line. He considered the command of combat operations the province of the admirals and an area into which would not intrude. Knox's managerial style was very different than that of Henry Stimson. Stimson was the protégé of the great War Department reformer Elihu Root, whose reorganization of the Army during the McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt administrations allowed him to take a strong hand in bending career generals to his will. Stimson idolized Root and would himself become Secretary of War for the first time in 1911 during the Taft administration. Following his term as War Secretary, he served briefly as an artillery office in World War I, after which he was appointed to a variety of government posts, including Secretary of State under Herbert Hoover. Franklin Roosevelt appointed him Secretary of War again in 1940 to replace the isolationist Harry Woodring. Given his personal history, Stimson had a certain proprietary interest in the War Department and

⁷⁴ Frank Knox, Memorandum for the Secretary of War, July 10, 1942, *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

believed it was his agency to command. Knox, on the other hand, had no such historical connection to the Navy. An Army veteran of the Spanish-American War, Knox spent most of his career as a journalist and newspaper owner. Like Stimson, President Roosevelt appointed Knox for political reasons, since both he and Stimson were Republicans who favored engagement in world politics while most other members of the GOP were isolationists. Knox's political value also lay in that fact that he had stood for election against Roosevelt in 1936, as the running mate of Republican presidential candidate Alf Landon. This served Roosevelt politically, as it made Knox's cabinet appointment symbolic of the President's bipartisanship. In addition to his political value, Knox was also an able administrator who skillfully handled the Navy's business with both private industry and with Congress. However, unlike Stimson, he preferred to leave military decisions to the military men. This was something Stimson found as frustrating as King's obstinacy in opposing the War Department's plan for an Army Air Forces antisubmarine offensive.

War Department discontent with the Navy became increasingly more acute. On July 15, Stimson wrote in his diary of a conference with Robert Lovett and Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, during which Lovett described the success Army aircraft had had the day before in attacking seven U-boats along the Atlantic coast. "Lovett's account showed me two things," Stimson wrote, "first, a very encouraging number of contacts with the submarines; second, the fact that the Navy's recent statement that the submarines had been cleared out of the Atlantic shoreline of the United States was a gross exaggeration."⁷⁶ On July 21, Stimson matter-of-factly wrote in his diary of

⁷⁶ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, July 15, 1942. See also: E. J. King, Letter to General Arnold, July 10, 1942 and H. H. Arnold, Letter to Admiral King, July 16, 1942, *King, Official Papers*.

Knox's claim in a cabinet meeting that he was currently in negotiations with the British to create a mobile, inter-allied surface and air unit which would launch an offensive against the U-boats, but nothing more seems to have come of this proposal.⁷⁷ However, real frustration burst forth in Stimson's diary entry for July 23. In it, Stimson related his dinner conversation with Dr. Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, on the subject of new developments in antisubmarine weapons and tactics. During the conversation, Bush confided that "the main defect now is faulty organization in the anti-submarine campaign on the part of the Navy," whereupon Bush provided to Stimson, "a detailed and confidential account of the difficulties he had with the Navy where it is impossible to find any one man who has charge of this matter..."⁷⁸ Furthermore, Bush said, "Knox has no control of the Navy organization whatever." Bush contrasted the Navy's lackluster antisubmarine efforts with the advances made by the Army Air Forces. "This leaves me," Stimson concluded, "with a rather stiff problem of how to get another Department pushed along into the right channels on what is probably the most critical problem that now threatens our war effort."⁷⁹ He reiterated the sentiments of this discussion four day later with Harvey Bundy, his longtime friend and War Department assistant.⁸⁰

It is difficult to judge the awkward position in which Frank Knox found himself, when, on August 27 he received a letter from Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, to which was appended a letter from Air Marshal Joubert, Chief of the RAF Coastal Command, regarding the operations of his unit. Halifax suggested that Knox

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1942.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1942.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1942.

pass the Joubert letter on to Henry Stimson, since it was a matter which concerned him as well.⁸¹ It is probable that Joubert was prompted to write this letter as a result of Knox's discussions with the British regarding the establishment of an inter-allied antisubmarine unit. It is unclear why Halifax did not forward the letter to Stimson directly, but it is probable that by passing the letter through Knox, the British hoped to indicate to the Navy Secretary their eagerness to follow through with the creation of an inter-allied antisubmarine unit. Whatever the case, Knox passed the letter on as asked.⁸² Stimson no doubt read Joubert's letter which contained a clear description of the command structure and antisubmarine activities of Coastal Command. According to Joubert, "the Admiralty lays down the general conduct of the A/S campaign and Coastal Command directs the detailed activities of its own aircraft."⁸³ Joubert also noted that in Britain, the main method of defeating the U-boats was to use the majority of Coastal Command's aircraft to actively hunt submarines, keeping the smallest possible number in the direct protection of shipping. "Our experience," he remarks, "is that a purely defensive policy only leads to heavy loss in merchant shipping."⁸⁴ Joubert discussed the new weapons and tactics that RAF Coastal Command had developed, all of which, he believed, should be known to the Americans since many American military observers had spent time in Britain and because of the British advisors who had been sent over to assist the Americans in their antisubmarine efforts. He wrote of the willingness of Americans to cooperate in

⁸¹ Lord Halifax, Letter to Frank Knox, August 27, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Navy File.*

⁸² Something passed between Knox and Halifax, perhaps involving Stimson, which must have prompted this letter. Lord Halifax began his letter, "My dear Frank, I am, as you see, taking you at your word, and I hope you will do the same by me." Perhaps this cryptic passage is in reference to Knox's negotiations with the British to create an inter-allied antisubmarine command.

⁸³ P. B. Joubert, Letter to Lord Halifax, August 16, 1942, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Navy File.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

antisubmarine warfare, but noted that they did not seem to find many of the lessons the British had learned very important, such as the need to establish a combined air and sea antisubmarine headquarters. “It is also my experience,” Joubert wrote, “that in Iceland the U.S. Naval aircraft tend to concentrate more on convoy escort than on submarine hunting.”⁸⁵ This must have confirmed for Stimson every criticism he and his War Department subordinates had been leveling against the Navy’s defensive antisubmarine doctrine. The time had come for the War Department to seize the initiative.

Stimson responded to Knox on September 8, thanking him for forwarding the Joubert letter. “The Joubert paper,” Stimson wrote, “coming to me at this time, is particularly interesting since, as you may know, we are in the process of establishing in the Army an air anti-submarine force with unity of command and a mobility that will enable us to concentrate on attacking submarines wherever the effort is most needed.”⁸⁶ Moreover, he said, “the salient features of the British anti-submarine activities, as outlined by Joubert, coincide with our conclusions here as to the method of approach to the problem.” Stimson closed by informing Knox that Edward Bowles, his scientific consultant, was the chief architect of the Army’s developing antisubmarine plan and would continue to consult with the Navy as the project progressed.⁸⁷

Edward Bowles spent months studying the RAF Coastal Command and was convinced that a similar organization, operating with a similar command structure, should be activated in the United States. On September 15, Bowles completed a detailed organizational plan for the establishment of what he tentatively called the United States

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to Frank Knox, September 8, 1842, *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Anti Submarine Air Command.⁸⁸ Like the RAF Coastal Command, its American counterpart would be primarily a striking force, whose main mission was to actively hunt and destroy U-boats any place they might be lurking. In this paper, Bowles examined some of the defects in current American antisubmarine efforts, noting chiefly that there was no single commander in charge of the entire operation. He matter-of-factly disparaged the preferred Navy command structure where antisubmarine operations, including the command of Army air units, were vested in the local Sea Frontier Commanders, with the negative effect of restricting the mobility of air assets to hot-spots of U-boat activity. The solution, Bowles opined, was to set up a single antisubmarine headquarters for air, under the overall command of the Navy, but with a great degree of operational and administrative autonomy, much like that of the RAF Coastal Command under the Admiralty. According to Bowles' plan, the United States Anti Submarine Air Command was to be entirely an Army Air Forces organization since, he conceded, there would be difficulty integrating Navy air units into the Army Air Forces system. To avoid unwanted delays in making the Anti Submarine Air Command operational, Bowles suggested that the Navy not be forced to integrate its air units into the Army command, since "such a course might prejudice the chances of obtaining immediate approval to set up the A/S Command." He preferred to leave the question of integrating Navy aircraft "to a later date by which time the A/S Command will be a going concern."⁸⁹

The plan laid out in Bowles' paper was one which the Navy had already considered and soundly rejected. One must wonder, then, what Bowles and his boss,

⁸⁸ Edward L. Bowles, "United States Anti Submarine Air Command," September 15, 1942 *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Security Classified Records of Edward L. Bowles Concerning Antisubmarine Warfare in the Atlantic, Box 5, ASW.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Henry Stimson, hoped to accomplish by proposing a plan for the Army Air Forces that the Navy was certain to oppose. The answer can only be that the War Department hoped to force Admiral King and the Navy to accept the Army Air Forces unit as a *fait accompli*. If the War Department could activate an offensive air unit on its own initiative and prove its worth in antisubmarine operations, the Navy would have no choice but to accept it and graft its own antisubmarine efforts onto it. Bowles makes this clear when he writes, “we are, however, convinced that as soon as the New Command is established its merits will be so obvious that the Navy will in all probability be anxious for their aircraft to take full advantage of all that it has to offer.” “After all,” he opined, “the U.S. Navy has nothing to lose and everything to gain by allowing their A/S Air Effort to be looked after by the A/S Command.”⁹⁰ Bowles’ optimism betrayed his naïveté. Just as in the *Ostfriesland* test, the USS *Utah* exercise and the B-17 interception of the *Rex*, this new Army Air Forces unit was looked upon by the Navy as an intruder into its domain. The Navy could not stop the War Department from activating such a unit, but it could place obstacles in the way of its success by not cooperating with any offensive mission it hoped to carry out.

A major step towards the creation of an American Coastal Command took place on October 13 when the War Department activated the Army Air Forces Anti-Submarine Command. The unit was placed under the Army Air Forces Commanding General, H. H. Arnold, with operational control vested in Admiral King as Commander in Chief of the Navy.⁹¹ Nineteen squadrons of the First Bomber Command which had been operating under the Eastern and Gulf Sea Frontier Commanders were transferred to the AAFAC.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ H. H. Arnold, Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 19, 1942, *Reel 203, Henry Harley Arnold Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

According to Arnold, the number of airplanes assigned to the unit would be increased “in consonance with our commitments to other theaters and as permitted by the availability of the special equipment required for anti-submarine work.”⁹² To make use of new technology, a research and development department for new antisubmarine weapons and tactics was established at Langley Field, Virginia. Moreover, according to Arnold, the AAFAC was to have “freedom of action in that it may be moved to where it is most needed, and operate in conjunction with but not under the command of the local sector commander.”⁹³ Thus, with the activation of this unit, a nascent American version of Coastal Command came into existence. The question remained as to whether or not the Navy would employ it as the War Department had hoped.

To the frustration of the War Department, the Navy would use the AAFAC as it had the First Bomber Command: as an adjunct to its own aviation in the protection of convoys. The majority of AAFAC units were assigned to the Eastern Sea Frontier, although a few squadrons were deployed in the Caribbean and Newfoundland. By the late autumn and winter of 1942, U-boat activity along the East Coast of the United States fell off sharply. This can largely be credited to the effectiveness of cooperative efforts of the AAFAC and the Navy in providing air cover for the coastal convoys along the eastern seaboard. Although a few nuisance raiders were still operating in coastal waters, the majority of the U-boat fleet withdrew to the mid-Atlantic, in the area along the transoceanic convoy route where shipping was vulnerable to U-boat attack because it was out of range of land-based planes.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

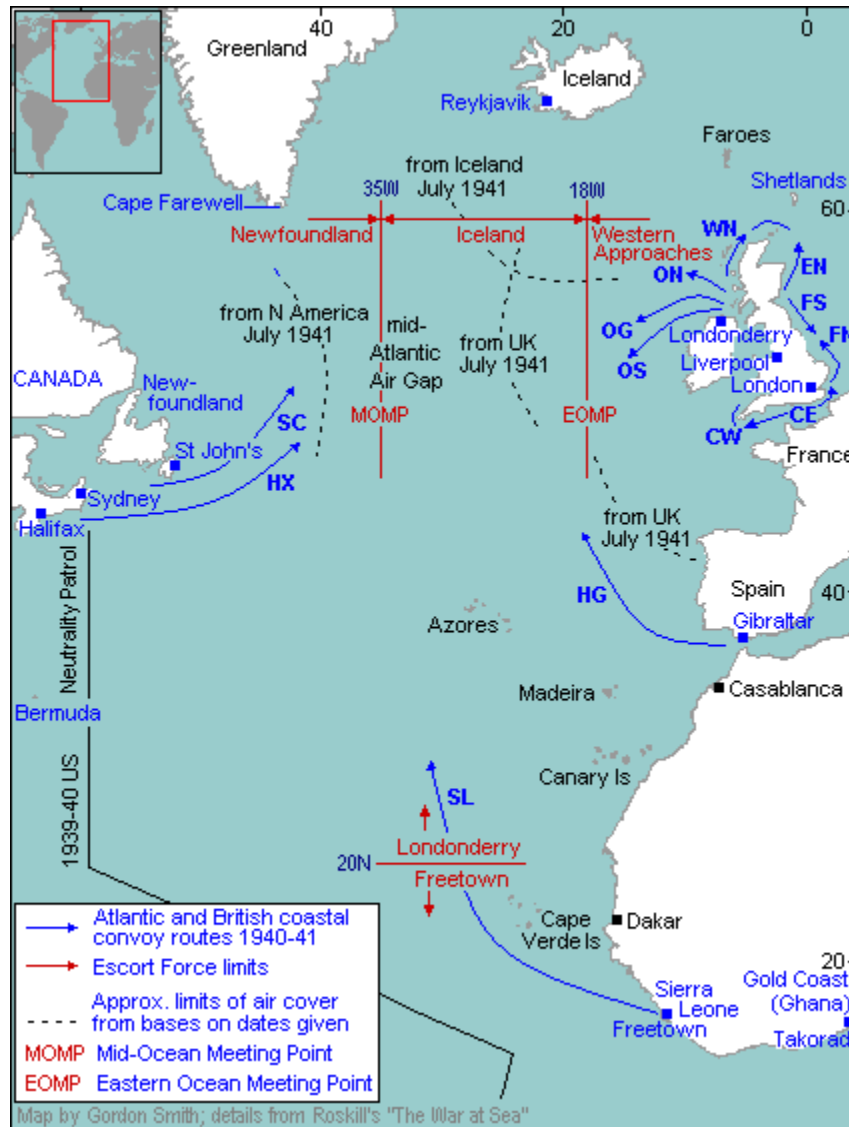


Figure 1 The Mid-Atlantic Air Gap

The existence of this so-called “mid-Atlantic air gap” posed a serious threat to Allied trans-oceanic convoy operations in 1942. By the end of 1941, RAF Coastal Command had improved air coverage for shipping in the waters surrounding the British Isles and along the western convoy approaches, forcing the U-boats further out in the ocean, beyond the range of aircraft operating from Great Britain, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland. After their initial success in American waters, the U-boats were forced

back into the mid-Atlantic, where, as Admiral Karl Doenitz explained, “they were beyond the range of land-based aircraft.”⁹⁴ In this area, an estimated seventy to eighty U-boats were on patrol at any given time and were successful in racking up considerable losses to Allied shipping in late 1942 and the first third of 1943.⁹⁵

The existence of the mid-Atlantic air gap cannot be accounted for simply because of the limited range on the Allies’ land-based aircraft. Partial responsibility for failure to close the air gap must be placed with the British high command, whose opinion was divided as to whether or not a greater number of land-based aircraft should be employed in mid-ocean convoy protection. Since the outset of the war, RAF Coastal Command relied on the same very-long-range, land-based bomber-type aircraft to patrol the convoy routes that RAF Bomber Command was using to prosecute its strategic bombing campaign against Germany. This resulted in the so-called “Battle of the Air,” which pitted Coastal Command against Bomber Command in a contest for priority in long-range aircraft allocations.⁹⁶ In spite of the dire situation in the Atlantic during 1942, the RAF continued to favor its strategic bombing campaign over the defensive operations of Coastal Command. This was in no small part due to the influence of Air Marshal Arthur “Bomber” Harris, who, as chief of Bomber Command believed that strategic bombing would prove decisive in winning the war and that the defensive use of air power was “grossly wasteful.”⁹⁷ Because of its defensive nature, Harris considered Coastal Command an obstacle to victory. Churchill, who was acutely aware of the U-boat

⁹⁴ Doenitz, *Op. cit.*, 242.

⁹⁵ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, *The AAF in World War II: Volume II, Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 392.

⁹⁶ Richard Goette, “Britain and the Delay in Closing the Mid-Atlantic ‘Air Gap’ During the Battle of the Atlantic,” *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*, Vol. 15, No. 4, (October, 2005), 21.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

menace, was nonetheless compelled to support Harris' strategic bombing campaign largely out of a need to placate Stalin and prove to the Soviets that Great Britain was doing all it could in the West just short of a cross-channel invasion.⁹⁸ As a consequence, most land-based bomber-type aircraft coming into RAF service in 1942, whether of British or American manufacture, were delivered to Bomber Command, leaving Coastal Command the bare minimum of aircraft with which to perform its task, and even fewer still with which to protect convoys in the mid-Atlantic.

The best land-based aircraft for mid-Atlantic convoy protection was the American-built Consolidated B-24. With modification, this airplane could operate as far out as 1000 miles from its base and still spend one third of its flying time in the vicinity of a convoy, thus significantly narrowing the mid-Atlantic air gap.⁹⁹ In September, 1941 Coastal Command received nine B-24's, with an additional airplane delivered in February, 1942.¹⁰⁰ Although their value in convoy protection was unmatched, the RAF did not immediately allocate additional B-24's to the Coastal Command. On Churchill's orders, all additional deliveries of this type in early 1942 were placed into service with Bomber Command for use in the strategic bombing campaign. Coastal Command eventually took delivery of more B-24's later in 1942, receiving eight new aircraft in April, five in July, twelve in August and fifteen in September.¹⁰¹ However, most of these aircraft were not used to provide convoy protection in the mid-Atlantic air gap.

Why Coastal Command chose to employ these aircraft in a task other than mid-Atlantic convoy protection must be understood in the light of the British high command's

⁹⁸ Goette, *Op. cit.*, 22.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

preference for offensive rather than defensive operations. In order to have Coastal Command perceived of as an offensive force (and thereby ensure its greater allocation of aircraft), in early 1942 Air Marshal Joubert struck upon the idea of launching an antisubmarine offensive in an area where U-boats were known to pass within closer range of land-based aircraft. Since most U-boats were based in French ports on the Bay of Biscay, it was necessary for the U-boats to transit the Bay on their way to and from patrol. The Bay of Biscay was a small enough area in which to concentrate antisubmarine aircraft, while at the same time it was too large an area to allow U-boats to transit submerged, since a submarine of this era needed to surface to replenish breathable air for the crew and run its diesel engines to recharge its batteries. Thus, relying on operational intelligence provided by the Admiralty as to when U-boats might be in transit, Coastal Command began an intermittent antisubmarine air offensive in the Bay of Biscay in 1942 which continued into the spring of 1943. Regardless of the effectiveness of the Biscay offensive, a consequence of Joubert's choice to devote most of his B-24's to this purpose was that the mid-Atlantic air gap remained wide and that convoys were deprived of air cover for longer stretches of their voyage than necessary.

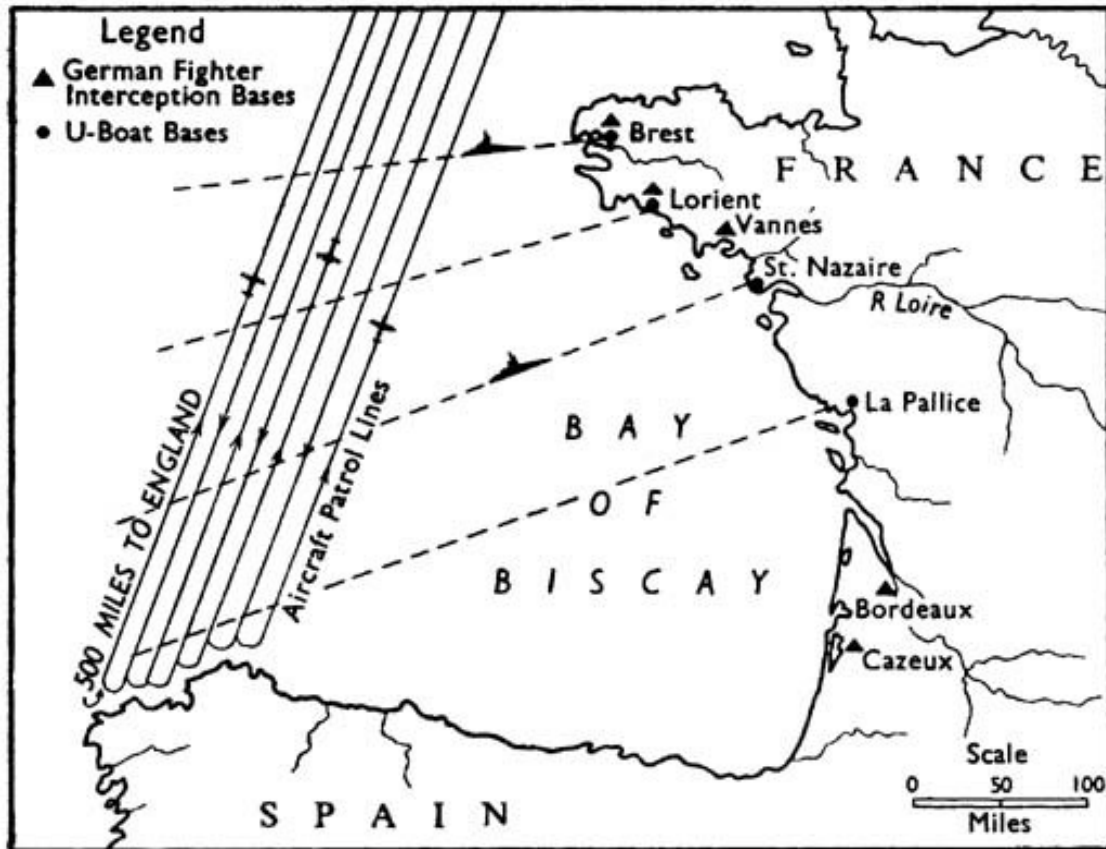


Figure 2 British Biscay Air Patrols

Coastal Command relied on airborne radar to detect surfaced U-boats. This gave the aircraft the advantage of surprise, since it could search for U-boats undetected above the cloud base and break out practically on top of an unsuspecting target. Unfortunately, by the spring of 1942, the Germans had developed the Metox radar detection device which warned of the approach of planes using British radar. In November, however, the Biscay offensive turned back to the Allies favor when two squadrons of American AAFAC B-24's were deployed to Great Britain and placed under the operational control of Coastal Command.¹⁰² Not only were these airplanes modified to have greater range

¹⁰² Craven and Cate, *Op. cit.*, 378. See also: Morison, *Op. cit.*, 244.

than the British B-24's, they also carried advanced, American-built 10 centimetric radar which the Germans had not yet learned how to detect. In February 1943, these squadrons participated in a nine day antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay and were responsible for fourteen sightings and nine attacks on transiting U-boats.¹⁰³ The successful participation of these AAFAC squadrons with the RAF Coastal Command in the Bay offensive proved an inspiration to the War Department as it tried to convince the Navy of the need to launch a concerted antisubmarine offensive of its own.

In the meantime, however, the ongoing destruction of Allied shipping in the mid-Atlantic caused the British high command to reconsider its preference for offensive operations in the antisubmarine war. This was revealed during discussions with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Casablanca Conference in January, 1943. During the Combined Chiefs of Staff meeting on January 14, General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, observed that the shortage of Allied shipping was “a stranglehold on all offensive operations,” and that unless the Allies “effectively combat the U-boat menace, we might not be able to win the war.”¹⁰⁴ Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, commander of the Royal Navy, discussed the U-boat situation at length, noting that the Germans had 110 U-boats in the Atlantic as of January 1943 with more submarines in production. He noted however, that recent experience had shown that convoys under attack by “a considerable number of German submarines” lost very few merchant vessels if they were protected by long-range, land-based B-24 Liberators. Pound asserted the need for an increase in long-range aircraft devoted to convoy protection as well as the

¹⁰³ Craven and Cate, *Op. cit.*, 382.

¹⁰⁴ Combined Chiefs of Staff 55th Meeting, *Minutes of Meeting held at Anfa Camp, January 14, 1943, Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 537.

need for more surface escorts.¹⁰⁵ Air Marshal Sir Charles Portal, Royal Air Force Chief of Staff, asserted on behalf of the British Chiefs of Staff that “the defeat of the submarine menace must be given first priority in the use of air power, particularly in the protection of our lines of communication.” He further noted that the three possible methods of attacking submarines were first, along the sea lanes; second, against the Biscay submarine bases; and third, against the submarine construction yards.¹⁰⁶ The response of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff was somewhat mixed. General Marshall agreed that the defeat of the U-boat was the paramount issue at present and agreed that airpower should be used to attack the U-boat building yards in addition to providing cover for convoys.¹⁰⁷ Admiral King, perhaps as a way of deflecting blame for the U.S. Navy’s lackluster response when the U-boats had first struck in American waters, asserted his belief that the most favorable means to defeat the U-boat menace was to bomb submarine factories, construction yards and bases, and that such efforts heretofore had been sporadic and inconsistent.¹⁰⁸ General Arnold, ever an advocate for strategic bombing, suggested that the Allies should attempt to determine the vital component parts of submarines that “constitute a bottleneck” and bomb the factories where they are made.¹⁰⁹ No definite plan emerged from this meeting, but resolving the U-boat problem remained the primary focus of the Casablanca Conference.

On January 15, the Combined Chiefs of Staff met again and took up antisubmarine warfare as the first topic of discussion. Regarding Coastal Command’s recent antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay, Admiral Pound stated that attacks

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 543.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 545-546.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 545.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 546.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

against U-boats had been successful to a point, but that the U-boats had developed a means of detecting the airborne radar used by the British. As a result, attacks against surfaced U-boats had fallen off. Pound remarked that the Biscay offensive would benefit by the introduction of aircraft equipped with American 10 centimetric radar, but that at present, more air cover and more surface escorts were needed to protect convoys in the mid-Atlantic.¹¹⁰ Air Marshal Portal, while affirming that air power proved the most effective weapon against the U-boats, downplayed the effectiveness of the recent antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay, noting that the loss of aircraft through excessive use was not justified since few submarines were attacked compared to the hours flown.¹¹¹ In response to General Arnold and Admiral King's query whether or not flying boats were being fully utilized in British antisubmarine operations, Portal replied that aircraft such as the PBV *Catalina* were being utilized to the maximum, but that such aircraft lacked the range, bomb capacity and the 10 centimetric radar to make them optimal for the Biscay offensive and for long-range convoy protection.¹¹² Admiral Pound stated that in addition to the need for more land-based air cover, escort carriers were needed to accompany convoys and provide air cover when beyond the range of land-based aircraft.¹¹³ In summation, Air Marshal Portal suggested that the Combined Staff Planners examine the minimum requirements of land-based aircraft, surface escorts and escort carriers needed to protect convoys so that the Combined Chiefs of Staff "should

¹¹⁰ Combined Chiefs of Staff 57th Meeting, *Minutes of Meeting held at Anfa Camp*, January 15, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 564.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 565.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 565-566.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 566.

have a picture of what would be left over for offensive operations during the coming year.”¹¹⁴

The Combined Staff Planners report on minimum escort and aircraft requirements was completed on January 19. The Combined Staff Planners report found that a combination of surface escort and air cover for convoys was more efficient in warding off U-boat attacks than just relying on surface escorts alone. For this reason, the planners highlighted the need for increased long-range, land-based aviation devoted to convoy protection as well as the necessity of introducing more escort carriers as soon as practicable so as to close the mid-Atlantic air gap.¹¹⁵ The planners anticipated more escort carriers coming into service in the spring and summer of 1943, however, the pressing present need was for more land-based aircraft to be used in convoy protection.¹¹⁶ The planners also endorsed the idea of continuing the antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay.¹¹⁷

The Combined Chiefs of Staff met again on January 21 to discuss the Combined Staff Planners’ report. It was generally agreed that the best course of action to defeat the U-boats would be to intensify the bombing of U-boat bases and construction yards, to provide more escort carriers at the earliest practicable date, and that long-range, land-based aircraft cover should be provided for all convoys.¹¹⁸ Admiral Pound asserted the need to step up efforts at bombing the Biscay submarine bases, with which Admiral King

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 566.

¹¹⁵ Report by the Combined Staff Planners, *Minimum Escort Requirements to Maintain the Sea Communications of the United Nations*, January 19, 1943, NARA, Record Group 165, *Papers and Minutes of Meetings of Principal World War II Allied Military Conferences, 1941-1945*, Casablanca, 47.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹⁸ Combined Chiefs of Staff 65th Meeting, *Minutes of Meeting held at Anfa Camp*, January 21, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 669.

agreed, while reiterating his earlier criticism that past efforts at bombing the U-boat bases had been sporadic.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, it was agreed that convoy coverage by long-range, land-based aircraft was essential in order to defeat the U-boat menace. As per the suggestion of the Combined Staff Planners, this would entail a marked increase in land-based aircraft operating out of coastal North America to cover the North Atlantic convoy routes. Air Marshal Portal asked if this commitment of land-based aircraft operating from the eastern United States and Canada involved any commitment of British aircraft, to which Admiral King replied that “this commitment would be fulfilled by the U.S. and Canada entirely.”¹²⁰ As a consequence of these decisions, Admiral King agreed to host a conference where American, British and Canadian naval and air officers would discuss how best to organize the protection of convoy operations in the Atlantic.¹²¹ This conference was set to meet in Washington in March, 1943. For the present, the Combined Chiefs of Staff went forward with the plan that protection for trans-oceanic convoys was to take precedence over the antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay when it came to apportioning long-range land-based aircraft. Until a greater number of escort carriers could be brought into service to close the mid-Atlantic air gap, the priority was to narrow the gap as much as possible by using all available long-range, land-based aircraft to protect shipping.

The small, auxiliary flattops which came to be known as escort carriers were first conceived in 1940. In October of that year, President Roosevelt suggested that merchant

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 670-671.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 668.

¹²¹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Atlantic Battle Won, May 1943- May 1945*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), 19; See also: B. B. Schofield, “The Defeat of the U-boats during World War II,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, (Vol. 16, No. 1, 1981), 125.

hulls be fitted with flight decks and used to support convoy operations in the Atlantic.¹²² The President had in mind the creation of something akin to the British catapult assisted merchant (C.A.M.) ships, which went into service in May 1941, with considerable success in suppressing U-boat attacks in the vicinity of convoys.¹²³ However, in spite of the President's suggestion, the true Atlantic escort carrier evolved out of the Navy's need to support tactical air operations in the Pacific. The great carrier commander Admiral William Halsey believed that, upon the outbreak of war, the large carriers would put to sea in support of fleet operations, leaving no means of transporting tactical Navy and Marine aircraft to island bases across the wide Pacific. For this purpose, in December, 1940 Halsey proposed the construction of small, long-range auxiliary aircraft carriers.¹²⁴ After considering both President Roosevelt and Admiral Halsey's suggestions, the Navy struck upon the idea of converting C-3 cargo vessel hulls into small, auxiliary aircraft carriers capable of both supporting convoy escort operations as well as trans-pacific aircraft delivery. The first such vessel, commissioned the USS *Long Island* (CVE-1), went into service in June, 1941 and was used primarily as a training ship.¹²⁵ On December 26, 1941, Navy Secretary Frank Knox approved the conversion of additional C-3 merchant hulls into escort carriers, ten of which were allotted for service in the Royal Navy while ten were retained by the U.S. Navy. Approval for construction of these ships, known as the *Bogue* class CVE's, was followed in April, 1942 by approval for an additional conversion of fifteen C-3 hulls into escort carriers.¹²⁶ Having proved their

¹²² Henry M. Dater, "Development of the Escort Carrier," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (Summer, 1948), 80.

¹²³ Bernard Ireland, *Battle of the Atlantic*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 61-62.

¹²⁴ Dater, *Op. cit.*, 80. See also: Morison, *The Atlantic Battle Won*, 37.

¹²⁵ Dater, *Op. cit.*, 81.

¹²⁶ Morison, *The Atlantic Battle Won*, 40.

usefulness at deterring U-boat attacks against Allied shipping during the invasion of North Africa in November, 1942, the Combined Chiefs of Staff looked forward to the near future when additional escort carriers would come into service and provide air cover for convoys transiting the mid-Atlantic.

III. The Army Air Forces Anti Submarine Command and the American Bay of Biscay Antisubmarine Offensive

In spite of the cooling attitude of the British toward the Coastal Command's antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay, the War Department still hoped to go ahead with an AAFAC antisubmarine offensive based on that very operation as an exemplar. As before, Henry Stimson's efforts at launching an antisubmarine offensive continued to be blocked by Navy obstructionists. In addition to supporting an Army antisubmarine air offensive that was within the range of land-based aircraft, Stimson also began to press the Navy to form a task force of antisubmarine surface craft to hunt submarines in the mid-Atlantic air gap. Although the President indicated his support for such an operation in principle, Frank Knox told Henry Stimson that it was not possible to launch an offensive due to the lack of surface craft which could be used as "killers."¹²⁷ A similar rebuff occurred on January 25, 1943 when Stimson met with Assistant Navy Secretary James Forrestal to discuss new developments in antisubmarine warfare. The meeting was also attended by John J. McCloy, Vice President Henry Wallace, Admiral Richard S. Edwards, Deputy Chief of Staff to Admiral King, and Vice Chief of Naval Operations Frederick J. Horne. During the meeting, the group discussed a variety of topics pertinent to antisubmarine operations. However, when talk of launching an experimental antisubmarine task force was raised, Stimson remarked that the Navy, as

¹²⁷ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, December 29, 1942

usual, opposed any appropriation of naval assets for this purpose. “We rather pressed [the Navy representatives] on the formation of a special killer pack to experiment in operation against the wolf packs of the submarines,” Stimson wrote. “But we didn’t get far. They always fall back on the scarcity of their escort vessels and the dangers which would occur if we took away any of those vessels for experimental purposes.”¹²⁸ Of the 169 new escorts expected to be commissioned in 1943, Stimson suggested with some sarcasm that the Navy might spare six for an experimental antisubmarine killer pack.¹²⁹

Henry Stimson’s frustration over the Navy’s lack of cooperation continued to mount. On January 27, he discussed the U-boat situation with Admiral Harold Stark, Commander of the U.S. Naval Forces in Europe. According to Stimson, Stark brought up the problem of the mid-Atlantic air gap. Stimson acknowledged that planes operating out of Greenland would help close the gap, but spoke of the difficulty in stationing Army bombers there because of the blowing snow. Later that day, Stark sent a letter to Stimson telling of his meeting with Admirals Edwards and Horne on the same subject. Stimson does not hint at the contents of Stark’s letter, however he wrote that “the net result was not satisfactory to me and I think I shall try to unravel the impasse of statics [*sic*] which the situation seems to have gotten into between the two Departments.”¹³⁰ The next day, after a meeting with Robert Lovett and General McNarney about the U-boat situation, Stimson wrote to James Forrestal to express his frustration over the Navy’s ongoing lack of cooperation. “I did not come away from your pleasant lunch last Monday in a hopeful

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, January 25, 1943.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, January 27, 1943.

frame of mind in respect to the realization of future submarine killing operations.”¹³¹

Stimson reiterated the problem of the mid-Atlantic air gap and the fact that numerous intelligence reports indicated that a U-boat pack was operating in the area. He wrote of his desire to place more aircraft in Greenland once weather permitted. “But it seems to me that none of these efforts will be fully effective,” he wrote, “unless there is a determined man with adequate authority operating against the submarines in that general area. The War Department would favor placing all available air and surface craft under his direct control.”¹³² Stimson’s frustration would grow deeper. The Navy, in Stimson’s opinion, seemed to be showing a more active interest in the antisubmarine war, but in doing so, it seemed to counteract all of the War Department’s efforts at promoting the AAFAC as the preeminent American antisubmarine unit. The fact was that Admiral King perceived the AAFAC as evidence of the War Department’s determination to force upon the Navy an American version of the RAF Coastal Command. Moreover, it is probable that King considered this not only as a immediate challenge to the Navy’s command prerogatives, but also as part of the longstanding effort of the Army Air Forces to rob the Navy of its role as the first line of defense against maritime threats. It was the Navy’s turn to push back.

On February 3, King issued a confidential memorandum to Admiral Royal Ingersoll, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, ordering him to establish the Aircraft Anti-Submarine Warfare Development Detachment. “The purpose of this detachment,” King wrote, was “to develop measures to increase the effectiveness of

¹³¹ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to James Forrestal, January 28, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File*. See also: *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, January 28, 1943.

¹³² *Ibid.*

aircraft in anti-submarine warfare.”¹³³ King listed a number of tasks that the detachment would perform, including the conduct of experiments with airborne radar and the development of new aerial antisubmarine weapons and tactics with a special emphasis on integrating aerial operations with surface craft.¹³⁴ This unit was soon operational and based at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. Through this effort, King was trying to recapture the initiative by launching a scientific research and development program, however in doing so, he was duplicating the Army’s program at Langley Field, Virginia. Stimson and his War Department staff were not immediately made aware of this unit’s existence.

As proposed at Casablanca in January, King hosted a combined American, British and Canadian conference on convoy operations in Washington on March 1 through 12. The Atlantic Convoy Conference was attended by representatives of the Royal Navy, the RAF Coastal Command, the Royal Canadian Air Force and Navy, and the U.S. Navy and Army Air Forces. The chief purpose of this conference was to sort out a new command arrangement for the transoceanic convoy routes. Ultimately, the conferees decided that the northern-most transatlantic convoys should be under the complete charge of the British and Canadian navies, except for the short leg between Halifax and New York, which would remain under American control.¹³⁵ As a result, the Royal Canadian Navy established the Northwest Atlantic Command, having full control over all northern transatlantic convoys west of 47 degrees west longitude.¹³⁶ The British were to retain control of the northern route east of this line while the Americans were responsible for

¹³³ E. J. King, Confidential Memorandum to Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, February 3, 1943, Enclosure E in F. S. Low, *Resume of Anti-Submarine Operations Against the German U-Boat WW II*, October 1944, King, *Official Papers*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Morison, *Atlantic Battle Won*, 20.

¹³⁶ Gilbert Norman Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada: Volume II, Activities on Shore During the Second World War*, (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1952), 414-415.

the convoys along the American East and Gulf coasts, in the Caribbean, and along the central Atlantic route to Gibraltar and Casablanca.¹³⁷

King established the focus of the conference in his opening remarks, which he had been preparing for a number of days beforehand.¹³⁸ From the outset, he made it clear that the purpose of the conference was to discuss ways to improve convoy operations. Matters such as routing, command jurisdiction, intelligence, communications and the proper use of air cover were all open for discussion, but only in so far as they related to convoy operations. King also opposed any measure that would place American forces under British or Canadian command, and for this reason, warned against placing undue confidence in the idea that unity of command was some sort of “panacea.” “Unity of command, in appropriate circumstances, does unify the effort,” King stated. “But inappropriate centralization of command produces only the form—not the substance—of unified effort.”¹³⁹ King returned to his main theme of convoy operations in his summation.

I have heard something about “killer groups” which may be of great use- when we can get enough means- provided they are used directly in connection with the convoy routes- for that is where the “bait” is. I see no profit in searching the ocean on any but a limited area such as a focal area- all else puts to shame the proverbial “search for a needle in a haystack.” Let me say again, by way of emphasis, that anti-submarine warfare- for the remainder of 1943 at least- must concern itself primarily with escort of convoys.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Morison, *Atlantic Battle Won*, 20.

¹³⁸ For King’s working draft with marginalia and hand-made corrections see: E. J. King, *ASW Conference 1 March 1943 Remarks by Admiral King*, February 28, 1943, King, *Official Papers*. See also: *The Atlantic Convoy Conference Minutes of Meetings Held At Washington, D.C.*, NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Security Classified Records of Edward L. Bowles Concerning Antisubmarine Warfare in the Atlantic, Box 5, ASW.

¹³⁹ E. J. King, *ASW Conference 1 March 1943 Remarks by Admiral King*, February 28, 1943, King, *Official Papers*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

No doubt, these remarks were directed towards the Army Air Forces representatives at the conference, and chiefly towards Stimson's civilian scientific consultant, Dr. Edward Bowles.¹⁴¹ Bowles himself delivered a brief address at the fourth meeting of the conference, on the subject of training and indoctrination in new the technology of aerial antisubmarine operations.¹⁴² The Navy, however, wanted nothing to do with his ideas on launching an offensive to hunt down U-boats. There is no evidence to determine for certain what Bowles thought of the conference, but given its predetermined narrowness of scope, he probably considered it a waste of time.

On March 1, the same day that the Atlantic Convoy Conference began, Bowles wrote a memorandum to Generals Marshall and McNarney in which he remarked that the antisubmarine war could be won only if significant organizational changes were made and unity of command were vested in a single, competent individual.

All means, whether they involve surface-craft or aircraft, Army or Navy, should be consolidated under one head. Past lack of anticipatory planning, failure to effect coordination of effort and consolidation of strength and a proclivity towards defensive measures only- to say nothing of the enemy's evident comprehension of our confusion and perilous predicament- demonstrates the need for a drastic and decisive change.¹⁴³

Bowles was adamant. "The conclusion that an Army man should be entrusted with the primary responsibility for the safety of the supply of our overseas troops is inescapable," he wrote. "The U-boat is primarily a weapon against supply, not against naval fleets."¹⁴⁴

Bowles sent a more lengthy memorandum to Generals Marshall and McNarney on March

¹⁴¹ Bowles' copy of the conference minutes contains a number of margin notes. He highlighted the abovementioned remarks by Admiral King, as well as later remarks by Navy representatives that considerations of antisubmarine air operations would be confined to convoy protection and not submarine hunting.

¹⁴² *The Atlantic Convoy Conference Minutes of Meetings Held At Washington, D.C.*, (March 8, 1943), p. 22-23.

¹⁴³ Edward L. Bowles, Memorandum for Generals Marshall and McNarney, March 1, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

3, reiterating these points while treating of certain technical matters in greater depth. A recurring theme throughout was that the Navy's defensive doctrine was an inefficient waste of resources.

The unqualified use of aircraft for convoy escort must be carefully scrutinized. At best convoying is a most inefficient procedure and there is every indication that aircraft can be used much more effectively in carrying the attack to the enemy wherever he may be found. Such a policy of dynamic attack is much better suited to the inherent mobility of aircraft than is the convoy escort role.¹⁴⁵

When discussing aircraft allocations, Bowles remarked that he believed serious reconsideration should be given to the allocation of B-24's to the Navy.

It would now appear that these airplanes will in many instances become part of their own antisubmarine force on the Atlantic Coast. Could we not make more efficient use of them in our own Command? Moreover, should not a duplication of effort be discouraged?¹⁴⁶

Bowles then remarked at length of the need to pattern the AAFAC on the model of the RAF Coastal Command, with full freedom to carry out its offensive mission to hunt and destroy U-boats. This would entail placing the AAFAC under the operational control of the Navy, just as the RAF Coastal Command was under the control of the Admiralty.

However, Bowles took pains to clarify his point.

When it is stated that the Command shall function under the operational control of the Navy it must be understood that such control should not be of a nature to restrict the Command in the pattern or extent of its operations. It must not be such as to detract from the freedom of the Command to attack its problem in its own way...¹⁴⁷

In a March 9 memorandum for Henry Stimson, Bowles succinctly reiterated his case. Definite missions, he argued, needed to be assigned to Army and Navy aircraft. He conceded that the Navy should devote its air effort to the protection of convoys, but

¹⁴⁵ Edward L. Bowles, Memorandum for Generals Marshall and McNarney, March 3, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

asserted that the Army's primary mission should be to hunt and destroy submarines. To ensure Army freedom to carry out its offensive mission, the AAFAC must be under a command "which is not guarding slow moving convoys nor shackled by traditions of surface vessel maneuvers."¹⁴⁸ In summation, Bowles reconsidered his earlier position and now thought that it might be necessary for the Army to transfer to the Navy "a sufficient number of its long range aircraft to release the present convoy guarding duties of the Army planes."¹⁴⁹ Stimson was in entire agreement with his scientific advisor and acted upon his recommendations almost immediately.

At the same time the Atlantic Convoy Conference was in session, the loss of Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic due to U-boats attacks was reaching its deadliest proportions. During 1942, the Allies lost over 1600 merchant vessels, decreasing the merchant shipping pool by approximately 1.3 million tons. Of these losses, 70 percent had been sunk by submarine.¹⁵⁰ Stormy conditions in the North Atlantic during January 1943 had the effect of reducing U-boat activity, and the frequency of merchant vessel sinkings briefly subsided.¹⁵¹ However, this respite was short lived. In February, the U-boat "wolf-packs" were again on the prowl. In the Atlantic during February, 36 vessels totaling 227,109 tons were sunk, and in March, this was topped by the loss of 49 vessels amounting to 295,970 tons. In February, and then again in March, more merchant shipping was destroyed in the Atlantic than during any earlier period of the war.¹⁵² Given

¹⁴⁸ Edward L. Bowles, Memorandum of Operational Changes Which are Necessary to Put into Effect Dr. Bowles' Study of Anti-Submarine Warfare, March 9, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File*. See also: *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, March 10, 1943.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Ireland, *Op. cit.*, 117.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵² Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943*, (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1947), 326.

the statistics, it is understandable that calls by the War Department to reorganize the management of the antisubmarine war became increasingly urgent.

Stimson wrote to Army Chief of Staff Marshall on March 14 to endorse Bowles' plan for the reorganization of the air war against the submarines. The memorandum summarized points with which Marshall was no doubt familiar, however, Stimson intended this to be more than merely an informative note. The memorandum contained clear instructions to the General from the Secretary of War.

I write to you because I assume the matter will come up before the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I do not think you should make a compromise which does not allow full operational freedom to the Army in the command of the killer planes. Such a compromise might stultify the vigor and initiative available through the faith and initiative of our air command.¹⁵³

Stimson drew Marshall's attention to the "very good precedent for such freedom in the British relation between the Coastal Command and the British Admiralty," claiming, "we ought to strike for no less than that."¹⁵⁴ Stimson's closing remark is most telling, for it indicates his depth of commitment to reforming the antisubmarine command. "I have been occupied with many other things," he wrote, "but this is in my opinion the present outstanding issue of the war."¹⁵⁵

President Roosevelt was so alarmed over the sinkings in February and March that he wrote to Marshall and King on March 18 demanding that every available weapon be brought to bear against the U-boats.¹⁵⁶ Stimson and his War Department subordinates believed that the time was now right to ask President Roosevelt to rule on how the command structure of the American antisubmarine effort should be organized. On March

¹⁵³ Henry L. Stimson, Memorandum for General Marshall, March 14, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 387.

24, Stimson called a conference of his key advisors for the purpose of unifying the War Department's position before taking the matter up further with the Navy or the President. During the meeting, General Arnold and Robert Lovett pointed out the unfairness of the Navy "getting from us a large allotment of our big bombers expressly for anti-submarine duty, then assigning them to ordinary bombing duty at Guadalcanal, and then coming back and asking for a new large assignment for submarines again."¹⁵⁷ Stimson must have recalled the pre-war controversies regarding the *Ostfriesland* and USS *Utah* bombing tests as he penned this in his diary, writing that his subordinates' opinion "indicated very clearly they thought the desire of the Navy to get away from us the function of land-based bombing at sea targets—something which the Navy has been jealous of us on."¹⁵⁸ Stimson also mentioned that Arnold and a few others began crafting a draft letter to the President on the subject of reorganizing the antisubmarine war.

Work on the draft letter continued into the next day. Vannevar Bush was in attendance at that day's War Department meeting and related the details of his recent conference with President Roosevelt, during which the President expressed his dissatisfaction with the Navy's defensive antisubmarine doctrine and how he wished that U.S. forces could launch an offensive. Stimson opined that although Roosevelt might be in an open frame of mind regarding the Army's desired antisubmarine offensive, "the difficulty is that he never dares buck the Navy when the Navy is obstinate."¹⁵⁹ Stimson also remarked that the key to launching an aerial antisubmarine offensive was to start off small. He would seek authorization for a single unit "which would have a clear field to hunt submarines and a chance therefore to make a record which will show the need of a

¹⁵⁷ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, March 24, 1943.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, March 25, 1943.

bigger and better and more powerful similar unit.”¹⁶⁰ Stimson’s sense of urgency is evident in his diary entry:

This whole matter is of course of the gravest import. The Navy has thrown up its hands so far as offensive work is concerned until 1944. I fear the war may be lost by that time—at least brought to a stalemate unless we can really bring air to bear on submarine hunting. This month’s sinkings bid fair to be worse than ever.¹⁶¹

Stimson planned to make his pitch to the President privately, after the cabinet meeting scheduled for the next day.

Stimson decided to scrap the redraft of the letter his subordinates were preparing for fear that the technical details it contained would not “get across the President’s crowded and volatile mind,” but instead wrote a simple letter of his own which focused “on the proposition that the Army already had an offensive anti-submarine air unit which could be dressed up with the modern improvements and put into action at least six months before the Navy could even get ready their defensive convoy program.”¹⁶²

Stimson was able to spend some time alone with Roosevelt at the end of the meeting, at which time he showed the President the diagrams and charts prepared by Bowles that showed that Army B-18’s were effective in driving U-boats away from the coast. After some discussion, Stimson remarked that “finally the President’s mind focused on exactly the point which I thought it would, namely that he thought we might start an experimental autonomous air force as a task force on some particular part of this Atlantic problem.”¹⁶³

Stimson presented additional material prepared by Bowles and the British Admiralty which suggested that, since the U-boats must traverse the Bay of Biscay on their way to

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, March 26, 1943. See also: Henry L. Stimson, Letter for President Roosevelt, March 26, 1943, NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File. This letter forcefully argues for the need to establish an American Coastal Command on the model of the RAF Coastal Command.

¹⁶³ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, March 26, 1943.

and from port, this would be the proper place to concentrate American antisubmarine air efforts. According to Stimson, the President was impressed.

Finally he said, thinking aloud, "I don't want to go over Knox's head. Cannot you and Lovett get Knox and Gates together and talk this over with them? I should like to constitute such a task force (meaning the task force suggested in my letter)". The way he spoke and his suggestion of Knox indicated very clearly that he recognized the futility of discussing the matter with the admirals.¹⁶⁴

Stimson said that he would try to do as the President suggested and had his subordinates in the War Department draft a directive ordering a Biscay offensive to follow up the success of the earlier British effort.

Stimson and his War Department subordinates spent the next few days planning the Biscay air offensive as well as planning how they would break the news regarding it to the Navy. On March 27, Stimson and Marshall agreed that it would be wise to time the disclosure of the operation to King and Knox so they would learn of it separately, but at the same time, so that they could not collude in formulating a preemptory opposing argument.¹⁶⁵ Discussions in the War Department on March 29 concentrated on determining the appropriate size of the AAFAC units for the Biscay offensive. Stimson remarked that in this regard, Marshall was urging caution. "He feared," Stimson wrote, "that the Navy would resist any further intrusion of the Army into anti-submarine action at all and that the President, in spite of his protestations to me, would not force them to come along."¹⁶⁶ Stimson and Marshall discussed the danger of having a force so small that it would have no value in proving the efficacy of offensive operations. Another idea they discussed was the possibility of withholding the B-24's the Army had agreed to reallocate to the Navy and use them to augment the size of the AAFAC in the Biscay

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1943.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, March 29, 1943.

campaign. Robert Lovett and General McNarney joined the discussion and after some debate, a third possibility emerged. This entailed the launching of an even broader, inter-allied air offensive under the command of Air Marshal John Slessor, who had succeeded Joubert as head of RAF Coastal Command in February 1943. This offensive would include combined units of the RAF Coastal Command, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the U.S. Army and Navy. "Of these three suggestions," Stimson wrote, "the new one, the third one, forged to the front I think of the minds of everyone."¹⁶⁷ They decided that they would work out the details of a large inter-allied antisubmarine air offensive.¹⁶⁸

On March 30, Stimson and his subordinates spent the day discussing the Biscay offensive as well as the idea of placing the commander of the AAFAC directly under the Army Chief of Staff, "thereby preventing it from being blocked and kicked around by stupidity in our own Department."¹⁶⁹

Then we can turn over to this expanded Anti-Submarine Command all of the new B-24's which we have pledged ourselves to devote to the Anti-Submarine Service. This would give us a good sized fleet. Then we can create a task force inside the expanded Anti-Submarine Command which can take up purely offensive work.¹⁷⁰

The finishing touches were put upon the letter to be sent to Knox informing him of the Biscay offensive on March 30 and a meeting was planned with the Navy Secretary for the next day.¹⁷¹

General Arnold was alarmed when he learned of the War Department's plan to withhold the seventy-five B-24's from the Navy which, he believed, was in violation of

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Robert A. Lovett, *Steps to be Taken Re Anti-Submarine Warfare*, March 30, 1943, NARA, *Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, March 30, 1943.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See also: Robert A. Lovett, *Untitled memorandum*, March 30, 1943, NARA, *Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁷¹ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, March 31, 1943.

the agreement he had reached with Admiral King on July 1, 1942. On April 1, Arnold voiced his concerns to Stimson, who replied that, in his review of the Joint Chiefs of Staff records, he saw no binding agreement or “implied promise” to turn the aircraft over to the “complete management of the Navy.”¹⁷² Arnold cautioned, though, that there were “some conferences and talks after the [Joint Chiefs of Staff] meeting which didn’t go into the record,” implying that a bargain had been struck with the Navy over the planes. Stimson indicated his anger over this, and in lawyerly fashion, ordered Marshall and Arnold to review the documents which proved there was no binding obligation, “no matter what was said,” to turn the planes over to the Navy.¹⁷³ Arnold, willingly or not, acquiesced in the War Department plan to reshuffle existing and future allocations of B-24’s, whereupon Stimson remarked, “that left us free of all moral commitment to put the 27 planes which the paper provided for into the new task force which we are proposing to create...”¹⁷⁴

Stimson met with Frank Knox later that morning to present him with the paper outlining the Biscay offensive. After a long discussion about his interest in radar and of Edward Bowles’ research in antisubmarine warfare, Stimson explained the details of the proposed task force and of the need to reassign certain Army squadrons for the operation. According to Stimson, Knox was in a “good congenial and cooperative spirit,” but was cautious, “pointing out that the question would be whether the Navy wouldn’t think that we were setting up an independent command right in the middle of their submarine work

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, April 1, 1943.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* When Stimson learned of Arnold’s verbal agreement with the Navy, he remarked, “The devil of a way to do business!”

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

in the Atlantic.”¹⁷⁵ Stimson replied that the War Department was planning to do something “substantially similar to the British,” and that Generals Marshall and Arnold were in full accord with the need press forward. Knox left with a copy of the paper outlining the Biscay offensive, as well as with a copy of the letter Stimson would send that day to the President notifying him of the activation of the antisubmarine task force.¹⁷⁶ After Knox left, Stimson sent off a letter to the President informing him that he had carried out his instructions of March 26 and had talked the matter over with the Navy Secretary. “I wanted to keep the President in touch,” he wrote, “for I am sure the Navy will be running over to him and he is going up to Hyde Park this week and I wanted him to have time to read and think over this letter.”¹⁷⁷

King and Knox conferred over the War Department’s plan. After what must have been a tumultuous weekend, the Navy leaders presented the War Department with a response that Monday. On April 5, Knox wrote to Stimson of his discussions with Admiral King about the proposed Army antisubmarine offensive and of the need for the War Department to take note of certain recent developments. In his letter, Knox reminded Stimson of the “very extensive study” made at the Atlantic Convoy Conference in March in which Navy and Army air planners had given “exhaustive consideration to the practical application and coordination of our efforts.”¹⁷⁸ Knox stated that, as a result of this conference, the Navy, the Army Air Forces and the RAF “have agreed to withdraw very long range aircraft from other important military employment for use in

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* See also: Henry L. Stimson, Letter to the Secretary of the Navy, April 1, 1943; Letter to the President, April 1, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁷⁷ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, April 1, 1943.

¹⁷⁸ Frank Knox, Letter to the Secretary of War, April 5, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

the campaign against the U-boat,” which, as agreed upon, “should be completed by early July.” Furthermore, Knox asserted, the reallocation of these aircraft for antisubmarine duty had been agreed to by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In a lawyerly move of his own, Knox rejoined, “I assume that the additional aircraft to be used as striking groups in your letter would have to be referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or Combined Chiefs of Staff, for consideration as to changes in present scheduled allocations in order to permit such redeployment.”¹⁷⁹ By asserting this point, Knox was arguing that the War Department could not unilaterally reassign aircraft and that Admiral King must have a say in any plan involving their reallocation. Knox also forwarded a memorandum from Admiral King regarding antisubmarine warfare, with which, he remarked, he was in full agreement.¹⁸⁰

Admiral King was determined not to give the Army a chance to prove the efficacy of its offensive antisubmarine doctrine. His memorandum of April 5 reiterated his longstanding reasons for opposing an air offensive against the U-boats, noting that hunting for submarines was an inefficient dispersal of forces. He conceded that the Bay of Biscay was a relatively small area when compared to the Atlantic Ocean, but that it was still too big to make submarine hunting a worthwhile endeavor. King suggested yet again that if the Army Air Forces wished to combat the U-boat menace, a better use of Army aircraft would be to bomb submarine bases and building yards. At sea, however, air efforts should be concentrated around convoys since they were the bait which attracted the U-boats. King summed up his objections by examining the command structure of the Allied antisubmarine effort, noting that just as the RAF Coastal

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Command was under the Admiralty, so too was the AAFAC “under the operational control of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, which also supervises the subordinate operating agencies.”¹⁸¹ King referred to the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreement for the reallocation of aircraft by July 1 for antisubmarine operations, bringing the number of aircraft devoted to this task up to two hundred and sixty. King closed with a firm admonition:

If and when additional very-long-range aircraft are available for allocation to anti-submarine warfare, every consideration of unity of effort and efficiency requires that they should be under the operational control of the Headquarters, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, in those areas under the strategical control of the UNITED STATES.¹⁸²

Knox and King made their point clear. Not only would the Navy not cooperate with the War Department’s Biscay antisubmarine offensive, but it would oppose any attempt to reallocate aircraft without the approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this assembly, King would assert his prerogatives and hold the War Department in check. His reiteration of the suggestion that the Army concentrate its efforts on bombing submarine bases betrays his parochialism. Army initiative in the antisubmarine war should rightly be confined to land-based targets. Command of all operations over water belonged to the Navy.

Later that day, Stimson received Knox’s letter along with the King memorandum and found that they made no concessions to the War Department. Since King would try to hold all planes for convoy protection, it was up to Marshall now to unravel the problem in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “I have at least stirred up King to take a very much more advanced position than what he did last summer...” Stimson wrote. “And unless I

¹⁸¹ E. J. King, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, April 5, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

miss my guess and unless I am thoroughly spanked which I don't expect to be, we shall get our little task force going somehow.”¹⁸³ To head off the Navy's attempt to dissuade Roosevelt from supporting the Biscay offensive, Stimson thought to enlist the aid of Harry Hopkins. If he could convince Hopkins of the merits of an offensive antisubmarine air task force, he would have an ally who wielded considerable influence in the Oval Office. On April 8, Stimson and Hopkins conferred, along with Generals Marshall and McNarney, as well as with McCloy, Lovett, Bundy, Bush and Bowles. Bowles lectured on the need for an antisubmarine offensive, which made a strong impression on Hopkins.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, Stimson and his subordinates met with representatives of the RAF Coastal Command.¹⁸⁵ They were optimistically proceeding with plans to organize the AAFAC on the British model when Bowles relayed news which caused an uproar. Bowles had obtained a copy of a confidential Fleet Letter dated April 1 in which Admiral Royal Ingersoll had announced the existence of the Aircraft Anti-Submarine Warfare Development Detachment at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, which, Bowles noted, was “parallel to our antisubmarine warfare experimental unit at Langley Field.”¹⁸⁶ In addition to the research facility at Quonset, Bowles wrote that he learned that the Navy was, “also in the process of setting up an Anti-Submarine Command of its own.”¹⁸⁷ This new Navy command would soon become known as the Tenth Fleet. “These things again indicate,” Bowles opined, “the need for the establishment by the White House of a consolidated

¹⁸³ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, April 5, 1943.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1943.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, April 7, 1943. See also: *The Working Control Between Admiralty and Coastal Command in Respect to Offensive Submarine Hunting, Quite Apart From Convoys*, April 7, 1943, NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.

¹⁸⁶ Edward Bowles, Memorandum to Secretary of War with attached Fleet Letter, April 12, 1943, NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

plan lest we find ourselves in an even more confusing and ineffectual situation as between the Army and the Navy.”¹⁸⁸

By April 14, General Arnold had come to agree completely with Henry Stimson that the airplanes slated for reallocation to the Navy should be retained by the Army for use by the AAFAC. However, as matters stood, it was up to Marshall to argue the War Department’s case in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁸⁹ Marshall joined battle on April 17 in a memorandum to Admiral King in which he criticized the Navy’s aerial antisubmarine efforts. Marshall stated that he supported King’s decision to turn command of aerial operations in the Newfoundland area over to the Canadians, but as far as American efforts were concerned, “I feel that air operations against submarines are not being conducted efficiently and that a complete reorganization of method, particularly as applies to very long range aircraft, is plainly indicated.”¹⁹⁰ Marshall spoke for Generals Arnold and McNarney as well, claiming that “we are all firmly of the opinion that the present procedure is largely ineffective and makes poor use of a valuable instrument.”¹⁹¹ He reiterated this criticism again in a memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff on April 19, however, in it Marshall added a new wrinkle. Marshall repeated the War Department line that all aerial antisubmarine operations should be unified under one commander, however he asserted now that the command “operate directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to policy, in a manner analogous to a theater commander.” He further opined that both the Army and Navy should each allocate to this commander B-24’s “at the rate

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, April 14, 1943.

¹⁹⁰ George C. Marshall, Memorandum for Admiral King, April 17, 1943, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 3 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 648-649. See also: George C Marshall, Memorandum for Admiral King, April 17, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

of 12 per month during May, June, and July, these planes to be in addition to the 75 (Army) and 60 (Navy) VLR aircraft presently allocated to anti-submarine operations.”¹⁹²

It is not clear whether Marshall really wanted this or if he proposed it as a bluff to see if he could get King to acquiesce and support the War Department’s planned Biscay antisubmarine offensive.

According to Stimson, the arguments Marshall raised in the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting about the mishandling of Army Air Forces units under Navy command in the Pacific left King “in confusion.”

Following up his advantage, Marshall has brought up the same situation in the Atlantic and seems in a fair way to win there. King has retreated from the position that the admiral of the fleet should command the whole anti-submarine warfare and is now placing it in the hands of a young admiral named Lowe [*sic*]. So I think that matter seems to be in a fairly good situation.¹⁹³

At first glance, this appeared very promising to the War Department. With King not micromanaging the antisubmarine effort, perhaps the AAFAC could operate under the Navy in the same manner as that of the RAF Coastal Command under the Admiralty as Stimson and his subordinates desired. However, the War Department’s hopes would again be frustrated. Bowles reported to Stimson that Admiral Francis Low was “not quite such a helpful selection for the head of the Air Force as Marshall gave me to understand the other day.” Although Low was young and vigorous, Bowles indicated that “he is a submarine officer and not an air officer.” Furthermore, Bowles did not think “that he would show much vision or independence of authority and tradition.”¹⁹⁴ If Bowles observations were correct and Admiral Low was nothing more than King’s “yes-man,” the AAFAC stood little chance of evolving into a vital, offensive antisubmarine force

¹⁹² George C. Marshall, Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 19, 1943, *Op. cit.*, 651-652.

¹⁹³ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, April 28, 1943.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, April 30, 1943.

patterned on the RAF Coastal Command as the War Department hoped. Stimson and his subordinates were running out of moves in their contest with the Navy.

IV. Conclusion

The late spring of 1943 marked the turning of the tide in the war against the U-boats. This was due in no small part to the closing of the mid-Atlantic air gap once the escort carriers came into full service in convoy escort operations. Despite the tremendous losses of merchant shipping to U-boat attacks in March, by April, the trend had reversed. In that month alone, forty U-boats were sunk in the vicinity of convoys due to attacks by a combination of Allied surface escort vessels, aircraft launched from CVE's, and by long-range land-based aircraft—mostly B-24's—operating from coastal stations. For their efforts, during the same period, the U-boats were able to sink only six ships operating in mid-Atlantic convoys.¹⁹⁵ Following this initial victory, the initiative remained with the Allies, and the loss of merchant ships in convoy fell precipitously in the summer of 1943 as the number and frequency of U-boat sinkings increased. Pending the introduction of improved radar detectors and better anti-aircraft weapons, Admiral Doenitz ordered operations against the North Atlantic convoys abandoned and directed his U-boats to concentrate on less protected areas of the ocean.¹⁹⁶ Such areas, however, were rapidly closing as more CVE's and surface escorts were introduced into Allied service.

The Navy had argued all along that air cover for convoys was the best means of combating the U-boats. This contention seemed to be vindicated once the mid-Atlantic

¹⁹⁵ Ireland, *Op. cit.*, 138.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

air gap was closed as the CVE's came into service and when long-range, land-based aircraft coverage for mid-ocean convoys was increased. As stated, management of the Navy's newly invigorated antisubmarine war would soon be taken up by the Tenth Fleet. Nevertheless, there were those in the War Department, most notably Henry Stimson, who still hoped that an Army-led antisubmarine air offensive in the Bay of Biscay would prove the merits of the Army's offensive antisubmarine tactics and demonstrate the need to turn over management of the air war against the U-boats to an American version of Coastal Command. These hopes, however, would not be realized, and Stimson and his War Department subordinates would be forced to surrender all control of the aerial antisubmarine war to the Navy. The anger harbored by Stimson and his War Department subordinates, as well as by many Army airmen, over their frustrated efforts in the antisubmarine war would have long term consequences in shaping the post-war military organization of the United States.

Chapter 3

The Navy's Pyrrhic Victory in the Antisubmarine War

When the War Department leadership first learned of Admiral King's creation of the Tenth Fleet, they were optimistic. This organization, so it first seemed, was to be the dedicated naval command that the War Department had been pressing for to coordinate a unified interservice antisubmarine offensive in the Atlantic. These hopes were soon dashed, however, when it became apparent that Admiral King had no intention of allowing the AAFAC to flourish as a semi-independent organization under the umbrella of the Tenth Fleet in a manner similar to that of the RAF Coastal Command under the British Admiralty. Once the War Department leadership realized that the AAFAC under the Tenth Fleet would be relegated to convoy defense, Stimson and his subordinates knew it was time to cut their losses and abandon any hope of developing the unit into an American version of Coastal Command.

Once the true nature of the Tenth Fleet became apparent, the Army Air Forces leadership wished to close down the AAFAC and redeploy its long-range land-based aircraft for use in the strategic bombing campaign against the Axis. However, as the American buildup in Great Britain for the cross-channel invasion of France continued, the need to maintain air cover for the convoys persisted, and any immediate removal of long-range land-based Army aircraft from convoy protection would only serve to reopen the mid-Atlantic air gap and expose Allied shipping to U-boat attacks. The conundrum faced by the Army Air Forces was how to redeploy its long-range land-based bombers currently in antisubmarine service without leaving vital Allied shipping vulnerable in the

mid-Atlantic. After careful consideration, the solution decided upon by the Army Air Forces and the Navy was an aircraft swap, whereby the Navy would take possession of the Army's long-range land-based bombers currently outfitted for antisubmarine work in exchange for an equal number of the same type of aircraft still in production but allocated for delivery to the Navy. This compromise, named for the principal negotiators, became known as the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement and has traditionally been viewed as the culmination of the interservice contest for control of antisubmarine aviation in the battle of the Atlantic.

Although the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement served to end the wartime bickering between the services over who would control the aerial antisubmarine war, it did not end the rancor, especially on the part of the War Department leadership, regarding how the U-boat menace was addressed by the Navy. This lingering bitterness helped influence the thinking of many War Department leaders of the need for a complete reorganization of the military command structure so that what they perceived to be Navy parochialism and recalcitrance could not obstruct future military operations. Moreover, the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement was looked upon by many in the War Department as demonstrating, by its very nature, the flaws of the current American military establishment. Many in the War Department and the Army, especially those advocating the further development of strategic air power, believed that the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement was just the most recent in a line of *ad hoc* and extemporized measures meant to deprive the Army Air Forces of an opportunity to prove its superiority over the Navy when defending against seaborne enemies. In no small measure, the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement helped influence these strategic air

power advocates in their call for the creation of an independent Air Force which would be tasked not only with strategic bombardment, but also with naval reconnaissance and antisubmarine work, as part of any military restructuring in the post-war period.

I. Unity of Command and the Tenth Fleet: The War Department Outmaneuvered

On May 1, 1943, Admiral King circulated a memorandum in a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announcing the transfer of command of all existing Navy antisubmarine activity to the commander of a new unit called the Tenth Fleet.¹ Under this new organization, the Tenth Fleet commander was to exercise direct control over all Sea Frontiers in the Atlantic and employ the frontier commanders as task force commanders, while also having the authority to reallocate forces as the situation might require. Furthermore, according to the memorandum,

In order to ensure quick and effective action to meet the needs of the changing anti-submarine situation, the Commander, Tenth Fleet, is to be given control of all LR and VLR aircraft, and certain groups of units of auxiliary carriers, escort ships, and submarines which he will allocate to reinforce task forces which need help, or to employ as “killer groups” under his operational direction in appropriate circumstances.²

Although this new organization seemed at first glance to satisfy the stated desire of the War Department both by having all antisubmarine operations under a unified command and by condoning the “killer group” concept, it soon became clear that Admiral King planned to use the Tenth Fleet as a “force in being” to foil the War Department’s plans to develop the AAFAC into an American Coastal Command by making the Army air unit

¹ Memorandum from the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 1, 1943, *Submarine, C.C.S., J.C.S., and J.P.S. papers, Record Group 107, Formerly Security Classified Records of Edward L. Bowles Concerning Antisubmarine Warfare in the Atlantic, Box 5, ASW.*

² *Ibid.*

appear as a wasteful duplication of the Navy's efforts. Moreover, King's memorandum made it clear that the commander of the Tenth Fleet was to operate under the direction of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and not the Joint Chiefs of Staff as Secretary Stimson and Generals Marshall and Arnold had hoped. This development did not bode well for the War Department's plans to conduct an Army antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay. The final measure to save the AAFAC Biscay offensive would involve a last ditch effort on the part of the War Department to force the Navy to place the commander of the Tenth Fleet under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff rather than under the sole command of Admiral King.

On May 5, Bowles reported to Stimson the views of Colonel Walter Sweeney, an air officer attached to the Army General Staff's Operations Division, regarding the proposed command structure of the Tenth Fleet. According to Bowles, Sweeney opined that the new commander should be under the Joint Chiefs rather than solely under Admiral King since such an arrangement would "more effectively represent the true overall nature of this anti-submarine effort which is an effort in which the Army is directly interested by virtue of its great overseas transportation..." and which "confronts every strategic plan of the U.S. Army as well as the Navy."³ Sweeney also reiterated the desire of many in the War Department to have all Army and Navy antisubmarine air units consolidated under an Army commander, who would, under the new organization, be subordinate to the commander of the Tenth Fleet. Such an arrangement was considered only right, since "the great mass, if not all, of the VLR, LR and other land-based planes are Army planes designed by the Army, planned by the Army, and built for the Army,

³ Henry L. Stimson, Comments on Admiral King's Reply, May 5, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

and whose production is now under Army control.”⁴ This line of reasoning was heartily embraced by Army Chief of Staff Marshall, who, as Stimson wrote in his May 6 diary entry, had “gotten Admiral King back to his last breastwork” and expected him to appoint an Army air officer over the combined aerial antisubmarine effort.⁵

The War Department line was taken up by General Arnold in a May 8 memorandum to King in which he both praises the admiral for taking the steps necessary to create a dedicated antisubmarine command and advises of the need to place it under the overall command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “The elimination of the U-boat menace,” Arnold wrote, “is a task which requires the full effort of a joint force, operating under the guidance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”⁶ Moreover, Arnold remarked,

Efficient use of air forces cannot be expected as long as Naval air and Army air units operate separately on the same mission. Accordingly, the VLR and LR shore-based air units assigned to antisubmarine tasks in the Atlantic must be unified in one air command. It should operate under an Army Air Commander.⁷

Arnold closed by suggesting that an Army air officer familiar with antisubmarine operations collaborate with a Navy officer designated by Admiral King for the purpose of drafting a directive to this effect.⁸

Admiral King’s response offered only qualified acceptance of the points expressed in Arnold’s May 8 memorandum. He agreed that unity of command had been a problem hampering the antisubmarine war, but stopped short of accepting that the commander of the Tenth Fleet should be under the immediate supervision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noting that “I have always considered myself the agent of the Joint Chiefs

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, May 6, 1943.

⁶ H. H. Arnold, Memorandum for Admiral King, May 8, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

of Staff for all operations within our strategic area in the Atlantic Ocean.”⁹ King went so far as to parse Arnold’s memorandum in an effort to turn the tables on the War

Department.

As to the statement in paragraph 1 (b) of your memorandum that “efficient use of air forces cannot be expected as long as Naval Air and Army Air Units operate separately on the same mission,” I call your attention to the fact that this applies equally to operations of surface and air units and, hence, is one of the main reasons why, in the accomplishment of this inherently Naval task, there must be unity of command under the Navy.¹⁰

Moreover, regarding antisubmarine aviation, King asserted,

I see no more reason why this force should operate under an Army Air Commander than under a Navy Air Commander other than the fact that at the moment the Army happens to have more VLR wheeled planes engaged in anti-submarine operations than does the Navy.¹¹

King next made a most guarded concession. “I am not opposed to this commander being an Army Air Officer,” he writes, “providing it is clearly understood that no precedent is established by such an appointment and that as conditions change it may well become desirable that this officer be a Naval Air man.”¹² In no uncertain terms, King made clear that he reserved the right to act on his prerogatives.

By May 18, Stimson and his War Department subordinates perceived that Admiral King had “yielded to the Army’s views in regard to the vital matters” of placing of an Army air officer over the air units of the Tenth Fleet.¹³ However, in a May 23 memorandum from King to General Marshall, the admiral expressed expectations that

⁹ Ernest J. King, Memorandum for General Arnold, May 11, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson, May 18, 1943.*

were at variance with the wishes of the War Department. “With respect to Army air assigned to the Tenth Fleet,” King remarked,

My concept is that the functions of the Commanding General will be administration, material readiness, and training of Army A/S aviation. For operations, wings, groups or squadrons under their proper commanders would be allocated, temporarily and to best advantage, to Sea Frontiers, the Atlantic Fleet, or to special task forces...¹⁴

Thus, King had no intention of allowing the AAFAC to develop into an independent, offensive antisubmarine unit patterned on the RAF Coastal Command with an autonomous commanding general as the War Department wished. Although he gave token acknowledgement to “special measures” such as the planned Biscay offensive, such operations were a low priority for the forces assigned to the Tenth Fleet. In sum, King indicated that under the Tenth Fleet, the AAFAC would be employed primarily to provide air cover for convoy operations according to Navy tactical doctrine. The Army commanding general would be relegated mainly to housekeeping duties and have no control over actual antisubmarine operations as the Army Air Forces had desired. This command arrangement would not afford the AAFAC latitude to develop into the offensive antisubmarine striking force that the War Department had envisioned.

As late as May 26 Stimson was laboring under the false hope that the AAFAC might function with autonomy under the Tenth Fleet just as the RAF Coastal Command did under the British Admiralty. The Secretary expressed relief that Admiral King had finally agreed to appoint an Army air officer over aerial antisubmarine operations, noting that “the only thing that needs to be ironed out is the exact interpretation of his jurisdiction as compared with the Admiral who will have overcharge over all

¹⁴ E. J. King, Memorandum for General Marshall, May 23, 1943, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C.

operations—air, sea, and undersea.”¹⁵ Stimson pondered the reasons why the Navy leadership tended to micromanage subordinate officers, opining that perhaps the phenomenon resulted from admirals and junior officers being all “on the same ship with the people that they boss and, being within easy reach of them, they are inclined to give them too much detail.” Whatever the reason, Stimson hoped that “in this case we shall by careful precautions beforehand secure sufficient autonomy for our air officers and enable them to do a good job.”¹⁶ Stimson’s hope would soon be dashed.

Nevertheless, plans continued among War Department officials and Army air officers to develop the AAFAC into an autonomous antisubmarine unit on the model of the RAF Coastal Command. One major change that seemed necessary was a freer flow of intelligence between the Navy and Army Air Forces leadership about enemy submarine movements. On May 27, Major William H. Jackson, Assistant U.S. Military Air Attaché in London dispatched a packet of memoranda to Robert Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air, in which he suggesting changes to the way intelligence was shared between the Navy and the Army Air Forces so that the AAFAC could perform its mission autonomously in the manner of the RAF Coastal Command. In his memoranda, Jackson bemoaned the failure of the U.S. Navy to fully share intelligence with the Army Air Forces leadership while only providing limited intelligence of a tactical nature to the wing commanders assigned to the various Sea Frontiers, and only through the Frontier Commanders. This, Jackson stated, prevented the Army Air Forces from grasping a larger overall vision of the strategic U-boat situation in the Atlantic and thus deprived the Army Air Forces of the opportunity to shift aircraft from one area to another so as to

¹⁵ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, May 26, 1943.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

attack moving concentrations of enemy submarines. “Although the A.A.F. doubtless had some responsibilities in anti-submarine warfare and the A.A.F Antisubmarine Command under its directive was responsible to some extent for the disposition of its forces,” Jackson wrote, “the lack of necessary information made the formulation of plans by either the A.A.F. or A.A.F.A.C. most difficult.”¹⁷ Jackson’s observations were provided to Lovett for the purpose of suggesting remedies which would help the AAFAC evolve into an American version of Coastal Command. However, the tone of his memoranda strongly hint of his suspicion that the inadequacies he highlighted were actually maintained by design, as part of a Navy plan to hold the War Department’s aspirations for an American Coastal Command in check.

Stimson was upbeat over recent developments in the antisubmarine situation. On June 2 he wrote in his diary that Vannevar Bush seemed buoyed by the recent progress and had remarked over lunch that he believed the U-boat problem would be “thoroughly in hand” before the end of the year.¹⁸ “He told me,” Stimson wrote, “that he thought that he and I could take a large share of the credit for this revolutionary change in prospect.”¹⁹ However, in spite of this optimism, differences with the Navy were about to come to a head.

King’s final, decisive rebuff to the War Department over its plan to create an American version of the RAF Coastal Command came on June 5. That day, Admiral King sent a memorandum to General Marshall marked “confidential and personal” in which he complained that Assistant Army Chief of Staff McNarney wanted not only an

¹⁷ William H. Jackson, Memorandum for the Honorable Robert A. Lovett, May 19, 1943, *Record Group 107, Formerly Security Classified Records of Edward L. Bowles Concerning Antisubmarine Warfare in the Atlantic, Box 7, ASW.*

¹⁸ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 2, 1943.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Army officer to command “all VLR and LR aviation,” but also, “a system of command which would require that I reorganize all naval commands in the Atlantic in accordance with the Army scheme of separating the command of aviation from the command of other arms.”²⁰ King remarked that he would not accept such a scheme since it would be disruptive to the Navy air units engaged in antisubmarine operations which were already employing tried and proven tactics. The admiral also concluded that, before they could go forward, it had become necessary to decide whether unified command over antisubmarine aviation would follow the Army or the Navy model. “In view of the fact that I am responsible for anti-submarine operations, and that Army aviation, if it comes into the picture, is to be added to a naval force already in being,” King remarked, “it seems to me [not] unreasonable that naval principles of command organization be followed.”²¹ In conclusion, King wrote,

I understand that you are not willing to entrust Army A/S aviation to naval command without reservation. It therefore appears necessary to come to some agreement which will unify the A/S effort without infringing on the prerogatives of the Army Air Force to have responsibility for the training, technique and tactical use of Army A/S aircraft. It seems to me that this could be accomplished by having Army A/S aviation coordinated by the principals of unity of command (under Commander, Tenth Fleet), as defined by J.A.A.N.”²²

Although he conceded the right of the Army Air Forces to employ its own tactics, King fell back on the 1935 *Joint Action* of the Army and the Navy to assert the Navy’s right to determine how the antisubmarine war would be fought. It was now clear that King would allow no opportunity for the AAFAC to develop into an American version of Coastal Command under the umbrella of the Tenth Fleet. The Army Air Forces could participate in the antisubmarine war, but it must do so according to Navy rules. Admiral King’s

²⁰ E. J. King, Memorandum for General Marshall, June 5, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

creation of the Tenth Fleet and his assertion of responsibility according to the terms of the 1935 *Joint Action* left no room for independent Army Air Forces initiative. Marshall responded on June 8, saying that he had just returned from Africa and was under the impression that the matter had been settled before he had departed on May 26. Marshall sought to assure King that, after his discussions with General McNarney, he believed the Admiral was laboring under a misunderstanding and that the Army neither believed nor implied that reorganization of the Navy command structure was required.²³ This notwithstanding, the impasse over control of antisubmarine aviation proved insurmountable. On June 10, a deal was struck between the Army Air Forces (represented by Generals Arnold and McNarney) and the Navy (represented by Admiral McCain) which would ultimately spell the end of the Army Air Forces' involvement in antisubmarine warfare.

It took a few days, however, for the War Department to realize that the game was up. In the meantime, Stimson still held hopes of salvaging the situation, but his optimism was flagging. On June 14, he met with the legendary explorer, Admiral Richard Byrd, who had returned to active service during the war and was engaged primarily in surveying remote Pacific islands for naval airfields. Stimson related that Byrd "had been worried about the friction between the Army Air Corps and the Navy," and was of the opinion that "I had done a very good job if I was responsible for the sudden recrudescence of activity on the part of the Navy."²⁴ Afterwards, Stimson met with General Marshall and discussed the "time honored row over the anti-submarine campaign which we have tried so hard to work out." Stimson commented that,

²³ George C. Marshall, Notes for Conference with Admiral King, June 8, 1943, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7-9.

²⁴ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 14, 1943.

This has been a chapter of disappointments and I am afraid we are in for more. Marshall's absence in Africa has played havoc with it although McNarney and Arnold have successively tried to do their best. It looks as if the Navy were going to win out on it and probably lose a lot of time in getting the campaign thoroughly under way. But nevertheless Marshall is going to try more.²⁵

According to Stimson, Marshall attempted to pressure the Navy by scaring them "all out of their wits with the prognostication of what would happen if the two services went in fighting the way they are, and if the Navy should institute duplications of our Air Force."²⁶ In a passage presaging things to come, speaking of Marshall's dealings with the Navy leadership during a recent meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Stimson continues,

He said that he got them scared to death. I told him I had been thinking along the same line. It will result in a unified Air Corps independent of both the services. Marshall has been talking about getting a Chief of Staff put into the statute law which can be either an Army or Navy man. This scared the wits out of the Navy.²⁷

Although it would be hyperbole to claim that the interservice disagreement over the control of antisubmarine aviation in 1943 was the sole catalyst that led to the creation of an independent Air Force in 1947, it is evident that dissatisfaction with how this issue was handled by the Navy led Marshall at this point to raise the specter of Air Force independence as a consequence of Navy recalcitrance. To be sure, calls for Air Force independence predated the problems associated with the command of antisubmarine aviation during the Second World War. Nevertheless, Stimson clearly relates with certain relish that General Marshall, at a critical moment of interservice disagreement, tied the two issues together in his discussions with Admiral King and the Navy leadership. It is not difficult to understand why Marshall touched this raw nerve. It is

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

certain that he knew just how obnoxious the idea of Air Force independence was to the Navy and he hoped to use it as leverage to force King to acquiesce regarding the War Department's vision for managing the antisubmarine air war. However, for Marshall and Stimson, this admonition was no mere bluff. Both men in time would lend their weight to securing armed forces unification with a single military chief of staff, under a single Secretary of Defense with concomitant Air Force independence from the Army. In the near future, Stimson would cite the interservice disagreement over the control of antisubmarine aviation 1943 in his testimony before Congress and in his appeal to the American public as justification for this post-war military reorganization. This precise point will form the central theme of the following chapter.

II. Checkmate and Dénouement: The Arnold-McNarney-McCain Agreement

On June 14, Admiral King dispatched a memorandum to General Marshall announcing that a few days earlier, on June 10, Admiral McCain and Generals Arnold and McNarney had reached an agreement whereby the Army Air Forces would withdraw entirely from antisubmarine operations. This agreement provided that the Army Air Forces incrementally scale back its antisubmarine activity over the summer of 1943 so that by September 1, all antisubmarine aviation would be a Navy responsibility. The Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement also stipulated that the Army Air Forces retain all B-17, B-25 and B-18 airplanes currently on antisubmarine duty for reassignment to other theaters, but that it would turn over to the Navy 77 antisubmarine equipped B-24's at a rate of 30 in July, 15 in August and 32 in September. In return, the Navy agreed that the Army should retain the B-24's that had been slated for delivery to the Navy as per the

agreement struck by Arnold and King the previous July.²⁸ King assured Marshall that “this is a solution that I was preparing to propose” and requested that he “recommend approval to the Secretary of War.”²⁹

Stimson and his War Department subordinates seem to have met the news of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement with mixed emotions. On June 15 the Secretary wrote that “General McNarney came in and presented to me what is probably the terminal decision of my long fight for active and aggressive anti-submarine warfare.”³⁰ He recounted how King rejected the War Department plan to place all antisubmarine aviation under the direct command of an Army general who would prosecute an active and offensive antisubmarine campaign. Stimson remarked,

What Admiral King has done, however has been to reject this offer and to hurry hell-bent to raise his own force as quickly as he can, to duplicate our efforts. He has completely reversed his own position. Three months ago he scorned the idea of fighting the submarines by air. He said that convoys was the only way to do it. We have at least accomplished that.³¹

Stimson doubted that the Navy would be ready to assume full responsibility for aerial antisubmarine operations by September 1, but affirmed that the Army Air Forces would stay on the job until the Navy actually was ready. Stimson further stated that, “as a quid pro quo for this action on our part, the Navy agrees not to use long range bombers for any other work except anti-submarine work and will turn over to us all of the B-24’s they have received from us and have been using illegitimacy in the South Pacific.”³² The Navy also agreed to avoid other duplications, which Stimson considered, “on the whole

²⁸ E. J. King, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, June 14, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 15, 1943.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

not an altogether bad arrangement although it is a very disappointing one to me.” He continued,

We have at least put a new spirit into them in regard to fighting of the submarines and that is recognized and this compromise was made subject to my assent, which I am going to give. The very fact recognizes my efforts in the whole matter and gives virtually to me the credit for having accomplished this revolution in submarine warfare.³³

Stimson also noted that Edward Bowles was, “not too much disappointed over this anti-submarine compromise,” and accepted it “as probably the best that can be done.”³⁴

Matters seemed settled between the Navy and the Army Air Forces. Although the men of the War Department seemed to face this compromise with equanimity, it remained to be seen whether the Navy would actually live up to its end of the bargain by agreeing to employ its long-range land-based aircraft only for antisubmarine operations.

Before Marshall would sign off on the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement, he wanted to make sure that the Navy was not planning to duplicate the Army Air Forces’ strategic mission. That same day, he replied to Admiral King that the War Department agreed to accept the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement but that three points needed qualification and clarity. The first point Marshall asked King to affirm was that the Navy Fleet Air Wings stationed along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts would contain “no striking forces but will be restricted to airplanes capable of undertaking such offshore patrol as is necessary, in addition to pure anti-submarine operations.”³⁵ Second, Marshall wanted the Navy to agree that all long range bomber aircraft for the defense of the Western Hemisphere properly belonged to the Army, and third, that “long-range patrol

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ G. C. Marshall, Memorandum for the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, June 15, 1943, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 14-15. See also: King, *Official Papers*.

planes assigned to the Fleet Air Wings of any type are for the primary purpose of conducting offshore patrol and relieving the Army strategic striking forces from this duty.”³⁶ Marshall sought these assurances because the War Department feared that the Navy might attempt to develop a strategic bombing force of its own. This fear was not unfounded, since in the Pacific, the Navy was freely making use of its land-based aircraft to bomb Japanese island bases. While Marshall was hashing out these details with King, Stimson related the particulars of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement to the President who seemed pleased with the deal.³⁷

Admiral King responded to Marshall’s memorandum on June 19. He praised the Army Air Forces for its past assistance in the antisubmarine effort. King balked, however, at fully accepting the qualifications laid out in Marshall’s June 15 memorandum. “With respect to the points raised...” he wrote, “it seems to me that the specific question (of anti-submarine air operations), on which early agreement and effective action is urgently needed, is one which need not and should not involve full consideration of major (Overall) matters of Army and Navy operating functions.”³⁸ King did not want to commit to any of Marshall’s points for fear that by doing so he would limit the Navy’s freedom to carry out its mission. Instead, he requested an immediate and unqualified acceptance of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement while leaving the matters Marshall raised to be ironed out by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, a working subcommittee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.³⁹

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 16, 1943.

³⁸ E. J. King, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, June 19, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Secretary of War Stimson was very displeased with Admiral King's recalcitrance regarding General Marshall's points of qualification regarding the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement and as a result determined to back out of the deal.⁴⁰ On June 25, he wrote a letter to General McNarney explaining why he was withdrawing his support of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement. In it, Stimson expressed his dissatisfaction with the Navy's defensive antisubmarine doctrine and stated that he preferred the offensive methods developed by the RAF Coastal Command.

I felt and still feel that the Army was in a far better position than the Navy to solve this emergent air problem, namely the conduct of such an offensive during the coming summer and autumn for the purpose of clearing the Atlantic Ocean of submarines in advance of the enormous stream of our troops which will be required to cross that Ocean for the 1944 invasion.⁴¹

Stimson was also displeased with the Navy's continued use of land-based aircraft in the Pacific to carry out bombing missions against Japanese island bases.

It now appears by his letter of June 19th that Admiral King, while proposing to accept our relinquishment of the anti-submarine work, is quite unwilling for the Navy to turn over to us the quid pro quo by which that concession was to be obtained. In this letter he proposes to leave quite unsettled the Army's right to conduct all other long range striking operations by land-based planes. Under such conditions I see nothing in the future but further trouble between the Army and the Navy over these vital problems of jurisdiction.⁴²

For these reasons, Stimson flatly refused to endorse the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement. In closing, he warned that "if this matter goes to the President, I shall desire to be heard by him on that subject."⁴³ General Marshall relayed Stimson's sentiments to Admiral King in a June 28 memorandum in which he warned that the War Department

⁴⁰ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 23, 1943.

⁴¹ H. L. Stimson, Letter for General McNarney, June 25, 1943, NARA, *Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File*. See also: *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 25, 1943.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

would withdraw support for the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement unless King explicitly agreed to the terms spelled out by Marshall on June 15.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, criticism of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement began to come in from other quarters. On June 29, Stimson wrote in his diary that the commander of the RAF Coastal Command, Vice Air Marshal John Slessor, had contacted Assistant Secretary of War Robert Lovett to express his dissatisfaction with the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement. According to Stimson, Slessor “thought it would be a calamity for the anti-submarine warfare cause if we delivered our planes to the Navy whose crews were imperfectly trained and took our own trained men off for something else,” and that Slessor “took the view of the issue between us and the Navy more strongly than we have taken it ourselves.”⁴⁵ Additionally, on June 30, Stimson noted that anti-Navy sentiments were being stoked in Congress by a *Washington Post* editorial which criticized the Navy for its reactionary attitude concerning an independent Air Force. He learned from Robert Lovett that the “temperature on the Hill and in Washington... is sizzling and only requires a spark to set off a very powerful movement for an independent air corps.”⁴⁶ He believed that, “the action of the Navy is precipitating that because they are reduplicating our land-based force and I do not myself think that Congress would stand for such reduplication.” Stimson further wrote,

In my talk with Marshall he told me that he was arguing the matter again with King and this time he seemed to be hopeful that he could force King from going back on the arrangement to divide jurisdictions, the Navy taking the submarine and we taking all the rest of the long distance air force work. He told me that King was very much frightened by the pressure for an independent [air] force.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ G. C. Marshall, Memorandum for Admiral King, June 28, 1943, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 14-15. See also: *King, Official Papers*.

⁴⁵ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, June 29, 1943.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1943.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Stimson's diary entry hints at the consequences which he thought might befall the Navy should Admiral King continue in his recalcitrance. In this he proved remarkably prescient.

Admiral King responded to Marshall on July 3, stating that he agreed to accept the reassurances that the War Department had requested of him earlier. However, King cautioned that the phraseology of the qualifying points stipulated in Marshall's June 15 memorandum were "susceptible to too wide a variation in interpretations," and therefore he suggested that they be slightly reworded. This entailed changing the passage that read "the Fleet Air Wings... *will contain no striking forces but will be restricted to airplanes capable of undertaking such offshore patrol as is necessary, in addition to pure anti-submarine operations,*" and replacing it with, "the Fleet Air Wings... *will comprise only those types of aircraft whose primary functions are those of offshore patrol and reconnaissance and the protection of shipping.*"⁴⁸ Wording was also changed in the passage which read "long-range patrol planes assigned to the Fleet Air Wings *of any type are for the primary purpose of conducting offshore patrol and relieving the Army strategic striking forces from this duty,*" to "long-range patrol planes assigned to the Fleet Air Wings *are for the primary purpose of conducting offshore patrol and reconnaissance and the protection of shipping, relieving Army long-range bombing forces from these duties.*"⁴⁹ These, and a few other minor editorial changes, indicate that Admiral King was seeking to safeguard the Navy's freedom of action in its traditional province by shifting the focus away from the type of airplanes each service employed to a statement

⁴⁸ E. J. King, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, July 3, 1943, *King, Official Paper*. See also: footnote 35.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

reinforcing the mission to be performed by each service. Furthermore, King sought to safeguard the Navy's freedom to use whatever assets it had on hand to defeat the enemy. This idea was hammered home by King's inclusion of an additional point which read: "nothing in the foregoing sub-paragraphs is to be so interpreted as to limit or restrict a commander in the field, Army or Navy, in his use of all available aircraft as weapons of opportunity or necessity."⁵⁰ By agreeing to Marshall's qualifying points in order to cement the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement, King was not about to tie his own hands in the Pacific where Navy land-based airplanes were currently striking Japanese targets of opportunity.

King's reply was favorably received in the War Department. On July 5, Stimson remarked that he reviewed its content with Marshall and McNarney and concluded that it was acceptable. "There was a little ambiguity about some of the language," he remarked, "but on the whole I think it is a satisfactory settlement. It divides up the two functions, giving to the Navy the anti-submarine warfare and giving to the Army all other long distance warfare with the VLR planes."⁵¹ General Marshall wrote to King on July 9 informing him that both he and the Secretary of War had accepted King's rewording of the qualifying points and that the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement could now be put into effect. "Accordingly," Marshall wrote, "instructions have been given the Army Staff to prepare a schedule for the transfer of Army anti-submarine airplanes to the Navy as proposed in your memorandum of 14 June 1943."⁵² King replied on July 12 that he had directed the Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics to effect the exchange of B-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, July 5, 1943.

⁵² G. C. Marshall, Memorandum for the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, July 9, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

24 airplanes as proposed. King also informed Marshall that plans were underway for the progressive relief of Army antisubmarine squadrons by Navy air units.⁵³ Thus, after over a year and a half of interdepartmental wrangling and tumult, the question of which service would control antisubmarine aviation was all but settled. All that remained was for the Army Air Forces units engaged in antisubmarine operations to be relieved by the Navy.

Whatever the sentiments were in Washington concerning the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement, news of it was received with considerable distress in London. On July 22, Winston Churchill wrote to Henry Stimson to urge that the two Army Air Forces squadrons attached to RAF Coastal Command in England be allowed to continue participating in the British Bay of Biscay offensive.⁵⁴ Churchill was also dismayed over the planned Army Air Forces withdrawal from antisubmarine operations since this would mean that the plans to reinforce the existing American units attached to RAF Coastal Command by the addition of four more squadrons would be scrapped. The Prime Minister requested of Stimson that the plan to implement the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement be altered in such a way as to allow those Army Air Forces squadrons operating out of England to be relieved by the Navy last, and that, in the meantime, the additional four Army squadrons would be sent to England as planned to participate in the British Biscay offensive.⁵⁵ “There would otherwise be a setback in the anti-U-boat war just as remarkably favourable results were being achieved,” Churchill wrote. The Prime Minister also requested that the six U.S. squadrons lent to RAF Coastal Command be

⁵³ E. J. King, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, July 12, 1943, *Ibid.* See also: Marshall, G. C., Memorandum for the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, July 15, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Winston S. Churchill, Letter to Henry Stimson, July 22, 1943, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, ASW File.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

from the Eight Air Force under General Ira Eaker command.⁵⁶ In a July 27 letter, Marshall passed Churchill's request to Admiral King for changes in the timetable whereby the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement would be implemented.⁵⁷ King reply was not immediately forthcoming and he waited until the following week to respond.

In the meantime, Stimson had grown disgusted with Admiral King's obstinacy. On August 2 he wrote in his diary that,

I had a conference with Bob Lovett in regard to the anti-submarine warfare problem in which I had brought back a letter of protest from the Prime Minister against King's retirement of the Army Anti-submarine Squadron. Lovett had been taking up the matter in my absence and it seems that perhaps with the threat of my appeal to the President and the Prime Minister's letter we can hammer that narrow-minded pighead of the Navy Department into another spasm of sense such as I accomplished a little while ago.⁵⁸

Whether or not King's acquiescence was on account of the pressure brought upon him by Stimson and Churchill is difficult to prove. Whatever the case may be, King agreed to extend the redeployment date of the two Army Air Forces squadrons attached to RAF Coastal Command until September 30. He also suggested that an Army Air Forces squadron relieve a British B-24 squadron in Iceland so that the British unit could be redeployed to England for the British Biscay offensive.⁵⁹ A few days later, Stimson showed Churchill's letter to President Roosevelt and discussed with him the settlement that had been reached. According to Stimson, President Roosevelt, "was amused and chagrined over the technical attitude taken by Admiral King but said that he was glad it had been settled and that the planes were kept at work."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ G. C. Marshall, Memorandum for Admiral King, July 27, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

⁵⁸ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, August 2, 1943.

⁵⁹ E. J. King, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, August 2, 1943, *King, Official Papers*.

⁶⁰ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, August 10, 1943.

Relief of the Army Air Forces antisubmarine units by the Navy proceeded according to the modified schedule of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement, however not without continued inter-service competition and a hint of acrimony. The Army Air Forces was looking forward to using its former antisubmarine squadrons in England to develop precision radar bombing of German targets after their replacement by Navy in the autumn of 1943.⁶¹ The Army Air Forces also sought to redeploy the ground crews and maintenance personnel that had been servicing the American B-24 squadrons attached to RAF Coastal Command back into service with the Eight Air Force. The Navy was expected to relieve the two Army squadrons between September 20-25, and the Army Air Forces was expected to cease all antisubmarine operations by October 15.⁶² However, the turnover of responsibility from the Army Air Forces to the Navy hit a snag. On September 7, Admiral Harold Stark, Commander of the U.S. Naval Forces in Europe wrote to Jacob Devers, the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, requesting that when the antisubmarine Air Force stations were turned over to the Navy, “the Service Squadron and equipment remain, including all shop equipment, motor transport, mobile machine shops, etcetera.”⁶³ The disposition of ground crews and maintenance facilities had not been explicitly addressed in the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement and the issue was now forced on the Army and Navy leadership in Europe.

⁶¹ Ira Eaker, Message for General Arnold, August 23, 1943, *Box I 70, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁶² H. H. Arnold, Message to General Devers for General Eaker, September 4, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁶³ H. R. Stark, Letter to Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, September 7, 1943, *Ibid.*

General Eaker wrote to General Devers on September 15 and stated that he wished to support the Navy as it took over American antisubmarine operations in England. Eaker continued,

It is believed, however, that it is distinctively prejudicial to the work with which the Eight Air Force is charged with performing under the directive of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to require it indefinitely to provide maintenance to a Naval establishment. It is urged, therefore, that the Navy be asked to supply their own maintenance and maintenance equipment at the earliest practicable moment.⁶⁴

Eaker further remarked that he wished to confer with a Navy representative at the earliest possible date to work out the details.⁶⁵ However, a meeting with Admiral Stark failed to resolve the matter. Eaker wrote to General Devers again on October 4 urging that a cable be sent to Generals Marshall and Arnold so that they could straighten the matter out in Washington. He expressed fear that the War Department might have mistakenly thought that the Army ground crews operating with the RAF Coastal Command were “surplus,” and “now available to the Navy.” Eaker further remarked that the War Department should, “be made acquainted with the fact that these are units borrowed from the VIIIth Bomber Command and if they are not returned immediately the bomber effort will necessarily be short of this personnel.”⁶⁶ Devers echoed Eaker’s concerns in a message to General Marshall on October 6, a copy of which was also sent to Admiral Stark.⁶⁷

Admiral Stark wrote to Admiral King that same day and affirmed that the Army Air Forces maintenance units properly belonged to the Eight Air Force and would be redeployed in spite of the Navy’s need for them. He suggested that the Navy adopt one of two alternatives, the first being that the Navy send to England its own ground crews.

⁶⁴ Ira Eaker, Memorandum to Commanding General, ETOUSA, September 15, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Ira Eaker, Memorandum to Commanding General, ETOUSA, October 4, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Jacob Devers, Message to General Marshall, October 6, 1943, *Ibid.*

The second alternative required that the Navy outsource the maintenance of its antisubmarine B-24's in England to the RAF Coastal Command, which, Stark warned, was already overtaxed due to inadequate personnel and equipment.⁶⁸ Admiral King replied to Stark on October 9, stating,

Based on studies circulated to demonstrate that an offensive in the Bay of Biscay would cripple the U-boat threat seriously, we promised our assistance. It is now clear that as a result of German counter-action in the Bay it is no more unsafe for U-boats than other areas, there having been no sinkings by aircraft for over two months. There are now, and in prospect, areas where VLR planes may be expected to increase effectiveness of convoy escorts by driving away U-boats that must come to convoys to be effective.⁶⁹

In view of this, King notified Stark that the Navy B-24 squadrons operating out of England would be transferred to Morocco and Bermuda on November 1 and employed in convoy protection.⁷⁰ However, plans for the redeployment of the Navy squadrons would change again. On October 21, Stark wrote to General Devers to advise that the Navy would move two squadrons of B-24's to Morocco but keep three in England for operations in the Bay until January 1, 1944. The Navy would try to provide its own ground support by November 1, according to Stark, "but if not, we may ask you to help us out a little longer."⁷¹ Ultimately, in November, 1943 the Navy assumed full responsibility for antisubmarine operations and the Army Air Forces units were rotated back into service with the Eight Air Force.

⁶⁸ Harold R. Stark, Message to COMINCH, October 6, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Message: Cominch and CNO to ComNavEu, October 9, 1943, *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ H. R. Stark, Memorandum for General Devers, October 21, 1943, *Ibid.*

III. Conclusion

The debate over whether the offensive antisubmarine tactics favored by the RAF Coastal Command and the USAAF were more effective in the defeat of the U-boats than the defensive tactic of convoy protection as favored by the U.S. Navy is still an unresolved question. Numerous studies containing detailed statistical analysis of aerial U-boat sightings and sinkings abound. Some historians partial to the Army position believe that the number of U-boats sunk during British and American Biscay offensives offer proof of the efficacy of offensive antisubmarine operations. Likewise, many Navy proponents have argued that true victory in the Battle of the Atlantic was only assured once the CVE's became active in the spring of 1943, thereby closing the mid-Atlantic air gap, which made the defense of shipping more effective. A tedious recapitulation of the statistical data is not presently warranted since this study is not intended to endorse either position. Instead, the purpose of this work is to illustrate the depths of parochialism and chauvinism exhibited in the behavior of the principal characters involved in the wartime contest over which service would control land-based antisubmarine aviation. In order to truly understand the nature and gravity of this contest, and of its subsequent impact on American military organization, one must recognize that the wartime rivalry concerning the employment of land-based antisubmarine aviation had its origin in the pre-war dispute over which service would serve as the first line of defense against a seaborne enemy.

Career Navy officers such as Admiral King feared that the leaders of the Army Air Forces planned to tout the AAFAC's antisubmarine offensive before Congress and

argue that Billy Mitchell had been correct all those years ago when he claimed that airplanes had rendered the Navy obsolete. King's obstinate refusal to allow the AAFAC evolve into an American version of RAF Coastal Command must be understood as his way of depriving the Army airpower advocates of an actual, real-world case that might prove that Army airpower was a more effective and economical means of combating enemy warships than was the Navy. The dispute over which service would control land-based antisubmarine aviation must therefore be considered as part of an on going rivalry, the origins of which date to the early interwar period and include such other controversies as those surrounding the *Ostfriesland* tests, the MacArthur-Pratt agreement, the USS *Utah* water-bombing exercise and *Rex* interception. By obstinately guarding his prerogatives in the air effort against the U-boats, Admiral King won the latest round in the ongoing inter-service rivalry. However, this turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory for the Navy.

Admiral King's uncompromising stance was perceived by some as the actions of a selfish and small-minded man who put his tribal interests ahead of those of the nation. Furthermore, King's critics were galvanized by the inability of the Navy Department's civilian leadership to bring the Admiral into line and force him to cooperate with the War Department's antisubmarine program. For this reason, men like General Marshall and Henry Stimson would use their considerable political clout to bring about the very thing that the Navy wished to avoid, namely the creation of an independent Air Force. As we shall see in the next chapter, War Department sponsorship of Air Force independence and the creation of an overarching Department of Defense can be directly linked with the anger Henry Stimson harbored against the Navy, and against King in particular, for his

opposition to the War Department's desired offensive against the U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Chapter 4

Henry L. Stimson and the Argument for Unifying the Armed Forces

Since the end of the Second World War, military historians have engaged in a wide range of analysis regarding the Battle of the Atlantic. Most agree that one of the chief reasons for Allied victory was the increasing efficacy of antisubmarine aviation, especially after the escort carriers came into service and closed the mid-Atlantic air gap in 1943. Whatever the case may be, this present study is less concerned with the military outcome of the antisubmarine war. Rather, this work seeks to explain the political consequences which ensued after the U.S. Navy refused to endorse an Army led antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay and cooperate with the War Department to develop the AAFAC into an American version of RAF Coastal Command.

In spite of the ultimate Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic, for many years after World War II Henry Stimson continued to harbor anger towards the Navy because of his belief that Admiral King mishandled the antisubmarine war. Insight into Stimson's thinking during and after the war can be found in his 1947 biography, *On Active Service in Peace and War*. The bulk of this narrative is based on Stimson's extensive diaries and was written under Stimson's close supervision by McGeorge Bundy, the son of his War Department aid, Harvey Bundy. In this work, Bundy devoted an entire chapter to the problems associated with the failure of the Army and Navy to establish unity of command in the antisubmarine war and how King's obstructionism needlessly forestalled Allied victory over the U-boat menace. From a reading of this chapter, it is clear that Stimson believed the impediment to effecting unity of command could not be explained

as simply due to a clash of personalities. Instead, he believed the root of the problem was a flawed organizational structure that allowed the two armed services to function at cross purposes under a divided civilian leadership. The remedy, Stimson believed, was to have both the Army and the Navy under a single, powerful civilian Secretary who could force the two military services to put away parochial differences and cooperate in a unified war effort.

Stimson was not the only advocate of service unification. Many career military officers and members of Congress held similar views born largely out of a desire to streamline administration and eliminate duplication and waste. Stimson's own views on the merits of service unification were formed before his wrangling with the Navy over the antisubmarine war. Nevertheless, as a result the Navy's obstructionism towards War Department's plans for an antisubmarine offensive, the two issues became inextricably linked in Stimson's mind and explains why he lent his weight to the legislative efforts between 1944 and 1947 to create a single Department of Defense.

McGeorge Bundy began chapter 20 of *On Active Service* (titled "The Army and the Navy") with token acknowledgment of the cooperative efforts of the two services in amphibious operations, and further noted how Stimson admired the Navy for its courage and skill in battles such as Midway and Leyte Gulf. "This much said," Bundy wrote, "we must proceed in this chapter to a discussion of Army-Navy relationships in which the less pleasant side of the story will be emphasized."¹ He noted that differences during the war between the services were frequent. Many, he conceded, were the inevitable clashes of "two agencies of strong will." However, Stimson believed that some clashes

¹ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 503.

Grew mainly from the peculiar psychology of the Navy Department, which frequently seemed to retire from the realm of logic into a dim religious world in which Neptune was God, Mahan his prophet, and the United States Navy the only true Church. The high priests of this Church were a group of men to whom Stimson always referred as “the Admirals.” These gentlemen were to him both anonymous and continuous...²

In spite of the strange aloofness he perceived among career Navy officers, Stimson was able to forge an “intimate and friendly contact” with the civilian leadership of the Navy Department. He found in Navy Secretary Frank Knox a man “without any trace of pettiness,” and was gratified that their friendship “was not shaken by their occasional disagreement.”³ Nevertheless, Stimson was frustrated by what he perceived as Knox’s inability to bring the uniformed naval leadership in line. He voiced this concern more than once in his diary. With reference to the antisubmarine war, on July 23, 1942, Stimson wrote that Knox “had no control over the Navy organization whatever,” which had thus left him “with a rather stiff problem of how to get another Department pushed along into the right channels...”⁴ In another entry he wrote that “the Bureau admirals are holding Knox up and he is as helpless as a child in their hands.”⁵ Yet, Stimson did not fault Knox for this, for he recognizing that even the President could not control the admirals. According to Stimson, “it was simply that the Navy Department had never had an Elihu Root. “The Admirals” had never been given their comeuppance.”⁶ This statement summarized what in Stimson’s mind was the fundamental shortcoming of the Navy. “The Navy in World War II had in Knox, Forrestal and King three strong men at its head; they accomplished much in moving their department forward,” Bundy wrote.

² *Ibid.*, 506.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Diary of Henry L. Stimson*, July 23, 1942.

⁵ *Ibid.*, November 19, 1942. See also: Stimson, Henry L. and McGeorge Bundy, *Op. cit.*, 507.

⁶ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *Op. cit.*, 506.

“But in Stimson’s mind it was no discourtesy to remark of them that not one was another Elihu Root.”⁷ To understand the significance of Stimson’s remarks, it is necessary to examine the importance of Elihu Root’s reorganization of the Army in the early twentieth century and the different manner by which the Navy was reorganized during the First and Second World Wars.

I. The Creation of Separate General Staffs in the Army and the Navy

A successful corporate lawyer and former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Elihu Root was appointed Secretary of War by President McKinley in 1899. Poor administration and planning in the recent Spanish-American War led McKinley to appoint a commission led by Civil War general Grenville Dodge to study the problems plaguing the military and suggest appropriate reforms. The Dodge Commission reported that the main problem was that the Secretary of War lacked real executive control over the Army, which was in theory led by the Commanding General subordinate to the Secretary, but was in reality dominated by the various military Bureau Chiefs who held tenure for life. The parochialism of the Bureaus often led to an uncooperative competition within the military hierarchy, thus leaving the fighting men with inadequate supplies and laboring under a vague chain of command during wartime. The proposed remedy was to abolish the antiquated Bureau system and replace it with a General Staff which would be subordinated to an overall Chief of Staff. The pattern for this new organization was the Great General Staff of the Germany Army.⁸ As a corporate lawyer, Root understood the value of efficiency studies for improving business

⁷ *Ibid.*, 507.

⁸ James E. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1975), 8.

administration and therefore endorsed the commission's report in both word and action. He began by abolishing the office of Commanding General which he replaced with a Chief of Staff. In 1901 he appointed an *ad hoc* Army War College Board which started to function as the General Staff.⁹ This *de facto* organization received legislative sanction in 1903 when Congress authorized the creation of an official General Staff under the Chief of Staff, who was answerable directly to the Secretary of War, and through him, to the President as Commander in Chief.¹⁰ Under Root's new command system, the General Staff would replace the function of the Bureau Chiefs, thus eliminating the parochialism and red tape associated with the antiquated system.¹¹

Root's introduction of a General Staff was a major improvement over the former military organization which had basically remained unchanged since the Civil War. Nevertheless, high ranking traditionalists in the Army opposed any tinkering with the Bureaus and bent their efforts to undoing Root's reforms. Chief among these was Major General Fred C. Ainsworth, Adjutant General of the Army. Root resigned as War Secretary in 1904 and was replaced by William Howard Taft, who was persuaded by Ainsworth to side with the Bureau Chiefs when disputes arose between them and the Chief of Staff.¹² Taft's preference was not born of any deep philosophical conviction that the old system was superior, but rather out of Taft's desire to keep peace among the various factions of careerists in the military. Taft resigned his post in June 1908 to run for President, and was elected that November. In 1911 President Taft appointed none

⁹ Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 215.

¹⁰ Hewes, *Op cit.*, 11.

¹¹ Skowronek, *Op. cit.*, 220.

¹² *Ibid.*, 222; see also: Hewes, *Op cit.*, 13.

other than Henry L. Stimson as Secretary of War.¹³ Unlike Taft, Stimson was entirely dedicated to furthering Root's reforms.

Stimson's admiration for Root could almost be described as hero-worship. His association with Root began when he joined the Wall Street law firm of Root and Clark in 1891. Stimson benefited politically from Root's patronage. In 1906, Root persuaded President Theodore Roosevelt to appoint Stimson U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, a post Root himself once held. Root later secured Stimson's appointment by Taft as Secretary of War. While in this post, Stimson allied himself with Army Chief of Staff Leonard Wood who hoped to see Root's military reforms carried further. General Ainsworth continued to firmly oppose the General Staff command model, and on grounds of insubordination, Stimson ordered Ainsworth Court Marshaled.¹⁴ Opting to resign his commission rather than face the disgrace of a trial, Ainsworth became an advisor to Representative James Hay, a Virginia Jeffersonian who feared that a powerful General Staff would lead to the Prussianization of the United States military. Between 1912 and 1916, Hay succeeded in passing legislation that restricted the number of officers assigned to the General Staff so that by the time the U. S. entered the First World War, only nineteen officers were on staff duty in Washington, D.C.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in spite of Hay and Ainsworth's machinations, Stimson collaborated with Leonard Wood for the remainder of his tenure to further the reforms Root began in 1903. Stimson left office on March 4, 1913 when Woodrow Wilson was sworn in as President.

The movement towards institutionalizing the General Staff was set back for a time under Wilson's second Secretary of War, Newton C. Baker, who preferred the pre-Root

¹³ Skowronek, *Op. cit.*, 223.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁵ Hewes, *Op cit.*, 19.

policy of allowing the Bureaus to run themselves with little War Department oversight. Another setback occurred under Baker when, during the First World War, the Secretary delegated almost unlimited command authority to Major General John J. Pershing, technically the subordinate to Army Chief of Staff Peyton C. March, thus undermining the senior position of the Chief of Staff.¹⁶ Movement towards the model favored by Root resumed after the war, when Pershing became Chief of Staff and established in Washington a General Staff modeled on his wartime staff in France.¹⁷ Successive Chiefs of Staff retained this model so that by the time General George C. Marshall became Army Chief of Staff in 1939, a working command structure had developed. However, the Bureau Chiefs still retained significant power throughout the interwar years. Nevertheless, additional reform of the War Department and Army administration lay ahead. The mantle of Elihu Root still lay upon Henry Stimson who was appointed by President Roosevelt in 1940 to a second term as Secretary of War.

Franklin Roosevelt chose Stimson as Secretary of War to replace the isolationist Harry Woodring, who had become a political and administrative liability at a time when the United States was in the process of rearmament. In 1940, Roosevelt was also hoping to expand military aid to Great Britain, which was acting as a buffer against German expansion into the western hemisphere. To the President's frustration, movement away from America's declared neutrality was opposed by a vocal faction of isolationist Republicans. Although Stimson was a Republican, he was a member of the internationalist faction favoring aid to the Allies, and Roosevelt knew that Stimson

¹⁶ Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1950), 60.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

shared his belief that aid to Britain was actually a valuable defensive measure for the United States.¹⁸

Stimson found the War Department in disarray upon his return to office. The strange balance of power that developed during peacetime between the Staff officers, Bureau Chiefs and civilians of the War Department was thrown into chaos as the nation started to rearm and expand the size of the Army. Furthermore, the feuding between Woodring and his civilian subordinates crippled the Department at a time when firm leadership was needed. Stimson's task of damage control and reorganization was to a great extent made easier by the excellent working relationship that developed between himself and General George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff. Unlike his immediate predecessors, to Marshall's delight, Stimson brought the bureaus, divisions and sections of the Army under his control as much as was possible and forced their cooperation with the General Staff in the rearmament and expansion effort.¹⁹ For his part, Marshall kept Stimson informed on all military matters, and both the civilian and military sides of the War Department came to function with a greater harmony than before. To be certain, there were issues of waste and inefficiency within the Department that continued to anger Stimson which he hoped to eliminate during his tenure. However, in terms of the principle of civilian oversight, the War Department during Stimson's second tenure functioned largely in the manner envisioned by Elihu Root when he introduced his reforms nearly four decades earlier.

¹⁸ Elting E. Morison, *Turmoil and Tradition: A Study of the Life and Times of Henry L. Stimson*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 483

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 505. One such example of Stimson's direct intervention into military affairs involved the acquisition of radar. Dissatisfied with the Signal Corp's delays in evaluating radar's usefulness, in 1941 Stimson bypassed the military experts and consulted with his scientific advisors on the subject. Convinced of radar's usefulness, the Secretary did not wait for the Signal Corp's report, but ordered the device into immediate production.

In a manner somewhat similar to the pre-Root Army, the Navy since 1842 was under the management of Bureau Chiefs who in theory were directly accountable to a civilian Secretary. However, for over seventy years, the Navy did not have a single over-all commander charged with planning and military operations. Although most sea-going line officers clamored for the introduction of something akin to a General Staff, for the most part, the civilian secretaries, Bureau Chiefs and members of Congress blocked any move in this direction fearing, as some did with the Army, the rise of a military clique which would be beyond civilian control.²⁰ For most of this period, the civilian secretaries had no naval experience and were appointed for political reasons rather than for their nautical expertise. Thus, the secretaries were often held captive to the parochial and competitive interests of the Bureau Chiefs, without whom, they realized, the Navy could not function. Throughout the nineteenth century, the most influential Bureau Chief was that of the Bureau of Navigation, who was empowered to assign officers and order ship movements as he saw fit. Until Congress enacted reforms in the mid-twentieth century, this was the closest the Navy came to having a Chief of Staff.²¹

Although the performance of the Navy during the Spanish-American War was better than that of the Army, as with the Army, certain shortcomings revealed the need for the introduction of a General Staff. This was blocked by Congress as it had been earlier, however by way of a compromise, the General Board of the Navy was created in 1900 which was to serve as an advisory council to the Navy Secretary and offer advice on war plans and on matters pertaining to naval technology. However, the General Board

²⁰ This subject is covered at length by Paul Pedisich in *Congress Provides a Navy: The Emergence of a Modern Navy as a Force in Congressional Politics, 1882-1916* (Doctorial Dissertation in History: State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1998). See also: Robert G. Albion, "The Administration of the Navy, 1789-1945," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (Autumn, 1945), 294.

²¹ Albion, *Op. cit.*, 300.

had no authority over the various Bureaus, and its findings were advisory in nature only.²² Another meager attempt to introduce something of a General Staff was attempted by Navy Secretary George von Lengerke Meyer in 1909 when four line “Aids” for fleet operations, personnel, material, and inspection were created to assist the Secretary in coordinate activity among the Bureaus. This extemporized expediency had no congressional sanction and Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, let the “aid” system expire in 1913.²³

Significant change occurred in 1915 when Congress authorized the creation of a Chief of Naval Operations who was to be responsible for the planning and preparedness of the Navy. Still wary of the potential Prussianization of the military, Secretary Daniels made sure that the final bill authorizing the new office was worded so that the Chief of Naval Operations could not issue orders in his own name, but that all orders “directing” the fleet must also bear the Navy Secretary’s signature to be legally valid. In spite of this limitation, further movement towards a Navy General Staff was made in 1916 with the creation of the Office of Naval Operations to assist the CNO in planning and management. However, this organization can not be considered a true General Staff akin to what Elihu Root had introduced in the Army. During the interwar period, the Bureau Chiefs continued to function outside the authority of the CNO, and the General Board continued to serve as an advisory council to the Secretary along side the Office of Naval Operations. This state of affairs continued until changes were made to the command structure in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.²⁴

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 300-301.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

Until the entry of the United States into World War II, the Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet, the overall line commander of the Navy, carried out his duties with a relatively small staff aboard his flag ship. On December 18, 1941, by Executive order of the President, the office of Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet was expanded and made directly responsible to the President under the general direction of the Secretary of the Navy, and his administrative office was transferred from a seagoing warship to the Navy Department Building in Washington, D.C.²⁵ On December 30, President Roosevelt chose for the post Admiral Ernest J. King, who accepted the appointment on the condition that “CINCUS,” the traditional acronym signifying the office, be scrapped for the less ominous-sounding “COMINCH.” On March 18, 1942, a second Executive order was issued designating King as Chief of Naval Operations, with the unprecedented authority to direct and coordinate the Bureaus of the Navy Department.²⁶ As COMINCH-CNO, Admiral King was the most powerful U.S. Navy officer in history; however, his combined position was created by Executive orders, not by an act of Congress. This did not prevent King from using all the power at his disposal to both prosecute the war as well as oppose what he perceived as the encroachment of the War Department on the Navy’s traditional prerogatives.

In both his diary and McGeorge Bundy’s biography, Henry Stimson remarked that the Navy languished in a backward state because it had never been led by a reformer such as Elihu Root. It is true that no Secretary of the Navy, including Josephus Daniels (under whose administration the office of CNO was created), really wanted to institute a naval General Staff for fear that it would give military men unchecked power. This

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 301.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

cautious attitude seemed justified in 1942, when Admiral King was reprimanded by the President for overreaching in an attempted to gain power over procurement and logistics at the expense of the civilian leadership.²⁷ By contrast, Henry Stimson, a civilian Secretary of War, exercised undisputed authority over the Army General Staff and Bureaus Chiefs through an administrative system that had taken shape during decades of gradual, bureaucratic evolution. That notwithstanding, Stimson's regard for Root's reforms was clouded by his reverence for his mentor. A less biased observer would note that although Root introduced the General Staff to the Army, his resignation as Secretary of War before the General Staff's survival as an institution was assured left to others the difficult task of making it a permanent feature of Army administration. In this respect, it can be argued that Stimson himself was more important than Root in securing the long term survival of the Army General Staff. Be that as it may, in Stimson's mind, no one could measure up to Elihu Root. As for Admiral King, it is probably too mild to say that Stimson disliked him; his regard for King probably bordered on hatred. However, it cannot be said that King was unconcerned with administrative reform. In this regard, Admiral King was somewhat like Root in that he sought to reorganize the Navy Department for the purpose of strengthening the office of COMINCH-CNO. The comparison abruptly ends, however, when one considers that Root's reforms sought to strengthen military accountability to civilian authority. King, by contrast, attempted to institute reforms that would strip power from the civilian leadership and bring about the very Prussianization of the Navy that men such as Josephus Daniels feared.

²⁷ Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 235-237.

II. *On Active Service* as an Argument for the Next Wave of Military Reform: The Liability of Divided Leadership Made Manifest in the Antisubmarine War

In chapter 20 of *On Active Service*, Stimson's allusions to Elihu Root's War Department reforms served as a brief preface to the chapter's major theme, which was the disagreement of the Army and the Navy on matters critical to the war effort. It is the transition from these prefatory remarks to the balance of the chapter, however, that reveals Stimson's beliefs. Bundy wrote,

What seemed important to Stimson, in retrospect, was to look behind the disagreements towards their causes, in an effort to prevent or minimize their future occurrence. The best way to do it is to study one particular disagreement in some detail. And the one with which Stimson was most deeply concerned was the prolonged struggle over antisubmarine warfare.²⁸

Bundy subsequently recounts at length Stimson's views regarding the War Department's disagreement with the Navy over the proper conduct of the antisubmarine war and of the Army's need to develop the AAFAC into an offensive antisubmarine unit patterned on the RAF Coastal Command. A full recounting of Bundy's version of this familiar story is not warranted. What must be understood, however, is that in Stimson's mind, the reason the American antisubmarine effort languished was because the Navy was led by bullheaded and intractable admirals like Ernest King. Moreover, the reason the Navy fell prey to such recalcitrant men was because it had never benefited from the reforming efforts of a powerful Navy Secretary as had the Army under the leadership Elihu Root. The remedy for this unfortunate state of affairs, in Stimson's opinion, was two-fold. First, the Navy should be compelled by legislative act to accept administrative reforms similar to those which Elihu Root forced on the Army. This would do much to force "the Admirals" to submit to civilian authority. However, this reform alone would not ensure

²⁸ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *Op. cit.*, 508.

Navy cooperation with Army initiatives since the Navy would remain under its own department secretary, who might, as in the case of Frank Knox, refuse to assert control over military affairs. Therefore, a second and equally important reform would entail the unification of the armed forces into a single Department of Defense under a single Defense Secretary, who, in the spirit of Elihu Root, would bring “the Admirals” firmly under civilian control and force interservice cooperation.

In *On Active Service*, Bundy wrote of five major lessons which Stimson believed the public should learn from a retrospective consideration of the antisubmarine war. To begin, Stimson believed that the record of Allied antisubmarine activity proved that the Army was right and the Navy was wrong on the tactical issues involved in combating the U-boat menace. He pointed out that after 1942, when airborne radar came into extensive use, “five-sixths of the submarines destroyed from the air were killed by shore-based aircraft.”²⁹ Moreover, according to Bundy,

The vast majority of these shore-based kills were accomplished by aircraft flying under the control of Slessor’s Coastal Command in accordance with the principles of air autonomy and aggressive search so long and vainly argued by Stimson on the American Navy. The early Navy notion that convoy escort was the *only* way of fighting the submarine was in Stimson’s view completely exploded by the brilliant operations of the Navy’s own hunter-killer groups in 1943 and afterwards, not to mention the shore-based campaigns of Coastal Command first in the Bay of Biscay and later in Norwegian waters.³⁰

A second, related lesson was of the need for military men to listen closely to the scientists. Stimson believed that the contribution the scientists made to antisubmarine warfare was enormous and extended beyond mere technical advice. “Scientists like Bowles and Bush proved themselves to be capable of sound strategic comment and of the tactical control and use of antisubmarine weapons,” Bundy wrote. He further commented

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 514.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

that Stimson found these men, “far wiser than either naval or air officers who had become wedded to a limited strategic concept.”³¹

The third lesson of the antisubmarine campaign was of the importance for clear lines of command responsibility. Stimson faulted the Navy for not adopting the British policy, until 1943, of having “a vigorous and independent group of senior officers conducting antisubmarine warfare in a continuous campaign.”³² He charged that the Navy was more concerned with fighting the war in the Pacific than against the U-boats, and that antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic “were left to commanders not always chosen from the top drawer.”³³ A fourth lesson of even greater import was that the Joint Chiefs of Staff was an “imperfect instrument” for top-level decision making because it was incapable of “enforcing a decision against the will of any one of its members.” Stimson compared the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the post-war Security Council of the United Nations.

Any officer, in a minority of one, could employ a rigorous insistence on unanimity as a means of defending the interests of his own service. Quite aside from the question of which service was right as to antisubmarine tactics, there was no justification for a situation in which the Army and the Navy worked at cross-purposes for more than a year, each appearing to the other as an ignorant, presumptuous, interfering bungler.³⁴

Stimson credited the success of the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff with General Marshall who exercised a level-headed determination to stand firm on the most important issues, while compromising on those of lesser importance for the sake of maintaining an amicable working relationship with the Navy leadership. In other words, the success of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the war was mostly attributable to Marshall’s character.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 515.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Had another, lesser man been Army Chief of Staff, there was nothing in the Joint Chiefs of Staff structure that prevented disagreements among its members from bringing the war effort to a grinding halt. By raising this point, Stimson argues that reforms were necessary which would make all the service chiefs accountable to a single Secretary of Defense, since there was no guarantee that future Army Chiefs of Staff would be as successful as Marshall at effecting compromise and cooperation.

The fifth, and according to Stimson, the “most important,” lesson of the antisubmarine war was that it served as a perfect example “of the destructive effect of the mutual mistrust of the two services.”³⁵ Unfortunately for the Allied cause, questions concerning tactics were “surrounded by all sorts of interservice recriminations,” and opened up wounds that had been festering since the early 1920’s.

It was unfortunate that the Army side of the question should have been mainly an Air Forces operation, for the Navy and the Air Forces had a mutual grudge of over twenty years’ standing—the Navy feared that the Air Forces wished to gain control of all naval aviation, while the Air Forces saw in the Navy’s rising interest in land-based planes a clear invasion of their prescriptive rights. The Air Forces considered the Navy a backwards service with no proper understanding of air power; the Navy considered the Air Forces a loud-mouthed and ignorant branch which had not even mastered its own element.³⁶

As a result, when military leaders should have been considering what methods of combating U-boats was the most tactically sound, “at all echelons” emotionally charged accusations of incompetence and encroachment clouded rational discussion on this most vital issue.³⁷

Bundy concluded chapter 20 of *On Active Service* with a prescription of how the deep problems made manifest in the antisubmarine war could be remedied. “To Stimson

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 516.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

and others thinking of the future,” he wrote, “it seemed evident that the primary objective of the postwar period in military affairs must be to end this division of feeling.”³⁸ Bundy briefly discussed the Congressional efforts to bring about service unification beginning with the Woodrum Committee hearings in the House of Representatives in 1944.

Stimson, like most of his War Department colleagues, believed that the consolidation of the armed forces into a single department would be enormously helpful in reducing friction and duplication of effort. He saw it as a means of eliminating the waste of time and money involved in the necessarily cumbersome method of “co-operation” and as a way of insuring action when and if “co-operation” ceased to exist.³⁹

However, Stimson knew that any move towards unification would be strongly opposed by “the well-known Admirals.” Nevertheless, in the spirit of his mentor, Elihu Root, Stimson became an ardent supporter of Congressional legislation to bring about the unification of the armed forces in a single Department of Defense under a single civilian Secretary of Defense. In 1947, Congress passed the National Security Act which provided for this reorganization. Shortly afterward that same year, *On Active Service in Peace and War* was published, making clear Stimson’s views on the legislation.

Many people supported service unification for a variety of different reasons. The most common argument, shared by President Truman, Congress, and the American taxpayers, was that such a reform would eliminate duplication and waste. Stimson clearly shared this view. However, from his perspective, the very real consequences of duplication and waste had become most evident in the Navy’s obstructionism and bungled leadership of the U.S. antisubmarine effort. Thus, the lessons of the Battle of the Atlantic and the need for service unification became inextricably linked in Stimson’s mind. It is impossible to determine whether or not he would have supported service

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 518.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

unification had he gotten his way in the creation an American version of Coastal Command. What we know for certain is that he did not succeed in this endeavor, and many months of planning for an Army-led antisubmarine offensive were wasted. Stimson believed that such a disappointing and wasteful outcome could have been averted had he possessed the power during World War II to order the Navy to submit to his will. However, only an Act of Congress could give a single civilian Secretary overarching power to command both the Army and the Navy in the manner Stimson envisioned. It is to this Congressional activity which we must now turn, and examine the degree to which the antisubmarine war shaped the rhetoric for and against service unification between 1944 and 1947.

Chapter 5

The Question of Land-Based Naval Aviation in the Armed Forces

Unification Debate

As government officials and military leaders grew more confident of Allied victory in the Second World War, they began to consider plans for the post-war reorganization of the military. A chief concern shared by most policymakers was how to strike a balance between the strong public demand for rapid demobilization at the end of the war and the strategic need to maintain a potent post-war military force. Some believed that the balance could be achieved by passing a Universal Military Training law which required all adult males to undergo basic military training, forming a massive reserve force capable of mobilization at short notice. In addition to UMT, questions of economy loomed large as policymakers tried to figure out where best to invest the nation's post-war defense budget and maintain an effective military force. To achieve true economy in the post-war military, many believed that duplication and waste must be eliminated without regard for the prerogatives and traditions of the military services. Everything would be subject to the paring knife of Congress and an entire reorganization of the military was under consideration with an eye towards streamlining and efficiency.

One cost saving measure being considered was the unification of the War and Navy Departments into a single Department of Defense under a single Defense Secretary. Throughout the nation's history, the Army and the Navy were each responsible for their own procurement of munitions and material, and each were responsible for their own logistics. Both service secretaries would annually beggar Congress for a greater share of

the nation's limited defense budget, making the services competitors rather than partners in the national defense. During World War II, many instances of waste and duplication became apparent which might have otherwise been avoided had the two services cooperated jointly with a single budget, a single system of procurement, and with a single service corps responsible for logistics. Anecdotes of waste and duplication were rife in both services, but a few examples of large scale duplication stand out. One such example was the Navy's maintenance of a massive Marine Corps, which during World War II grew out of proportion to its historical purpose and functioned as an alternate Army. Another was the Navy's operation of a fleet of long-range, land-based airplanes of Army Air Forces design which the Navy occasionally used to attack island targets in the Pacific, as well as for antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic. Under an overarching Defense Secretary, these redundancies would be eliminated and clear lines drawn between the tasks assigned to each service. In spite of these pro-unification arguments, there remained a significant number of traditionalists in Congress and the military who opposed unification, claiming that a "one size fits all" model of management and resource distribution was unrealistic.

Towards the end of the Second World War, issues such as Universal Military Training, the creation of a single Department of Defense, the fate of the Marine Corps, and the survival of Naval Aviation became conflated. In 1944, the House Select Committee on Post-war Military Organization, also known as the Woodrum Committee, began investigations on this spectrum of interrelated issues. These issues have been amply explored elsewhere and for the most part, are beyond the scope of this present study. It is our purpose here, however, to examine what place questions over the

disposition of land-based naval aviation played in the military unification debate. By an examination of this one facet of the reorganization debate, we will see that the acrimony engendered during the Army-Navy conflict over the proper conduct of the antisubmarine air war in the Atlantic was not settled in 1943 by the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement, but rather, remained a contentious issue and became part of the argument for post-war service unification.

Among military leaders, the strongest support for service unification came from career officers of the Army Air Forces who expected that their service would make out best if the military services were brought under a single Department of Defense. These officers believed that the post-war analysis would reveal that the strategic bombing campaign proved to be the decisive factor in achieving victory against the Axis powers. Looking forward to this vindication of their pre-war claims regarding the destructive potential of strategic air power, the Army Air leaders expected that in the post-war period, the Air Force would replace the Navy as the preeminent national defense service. This could only come, so they reckoned, if the Air Force could continue to develop its strategic air power doctrine freed from the domination of the land-based Army. The leadership of the Army Air Forces, however, understood that their colleagues in the land-based Army supported post-war military unification, which they also understood would entail the absorption of the War and Navy Departments as sub-departments within an overarching Department of Defense. For this reason, officers of the Army Air Forces realized that their dreams of independence from the Army could only be practically achieved if the existing military services were unified under a single Department of Defense, with the Air Force being separated from the Army and elevated to the status of a

third, co-equal military branch alongside the Army and the Navy. Although paradoxical, the Army Air Forces leadership understood that military unification was the best way to achieve Air Force independence, and for this reason, they overwhelmingly supported the military unification effort.

The Army Air Forces leadership sought to strengthen its case for independence at the expense of the Navy. Some Army Air officers believed that in the spirit of eliminating waste and duplication, the Navy should be entirely stripped of its air component, which would in turn be taken over by the newly formed Air Force. Some, on the other hand, conceded that tactical fleet aviation should remain under Navy control. Nevertheless, all Army air officers believed that the Navy should be denuded of its long-range, land-based aviation. They argued that land-based bomber type aircraft rightly belonged to the Air Force and whatever use the Navy had for such aircraft could be accomplished on the Navy's behalf by Air Force pilots. In their minds, the 1943 Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement was nothing more than a wartime compromise which did not establish a precedent. In fact, they saw it as a bad deal which resulted in the misuse of air assets that would have otherwise been put to better, more effective use under Army Air Forces control. If the military unification proponents in Congress meant to create an independent Air Force having control over all land-based aircraft as part of any post-war reorganization package, than Army Air officers would most certainly lobby for military unification within the bounds permitted to professional officers.

For the most part, as stated, career officers of the traditional "ground based" Army were also in favor of a post-war reorganization that included military unification under a single Department of Defense, as well as of Air Force independence and

elevation to the status of a third, co-equal military branch alongside the Army and the Navy. As Secretary of War Henry Stimson expected, however, the most strident opposition to military unification, and specifically to Air Force independence, came from the Navy. The Navy men believed that unification under a single Defense Secretary would be detrimental to the sea service, contending that officers possessing highly technical knowledge about matters such as naval engineering and gunnery might be cut out of the appropriations process. Moreover, the Navy men feared that matters of specific concern to the Navy would no longer get a fair hearing in Congress if the reorganization plan meant replacing the House and Senate Naval Affairs Committees with the more general House and Senate Armed Forces Committees. Of especial concern to the Navy, however, was that reorganization might result in the Navy being stripped of its air component. The Navy men knew that the independence minded Army Air officers coveted all military aviation, and that in the reorganization debate, the Navy would have a tough time convincing an economy-minded Congress that the Navy's air component was not a duplication of the Air Force's specific area of competency. When debate on this issue was joined, the wartime competition between the Army Air Forces and the Navy over control of land-based antisubmarine aircraft was cited by both sides as evidence both in support and in opposition to the Navy's need to retain its land-based aircraft. The lingering animosity between the two services regarding how the matter was handled in 1942-1943 fanned the flames of distrust and acrimony through the remainder of the decade and had an effect on shaping the outcome of the reorganization debate.

I. The House Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy

By 1943, the desire to eliminate unnecessary duplication and considerations of post-war military organization became intertwined subjects in the minds of the Army and Navy leadership. This conflation “evolved from a combination and expansion of a series of related studies,” conducted by the by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee under the auspices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹ The first study grew out of discussions among the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning the Navy’s revised 1943 Aircraft Program. In June, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee directed an *ad hoc* subcommittee to,

Submit appropriate recommendations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff relative to the missions or roles of the Army and Navy, as now organized, in order to eliminate unnecessary duplication and in order to more effectively apply available means for the prosecution of the war.²

This *ad hoc* committee took up its charge at the height of the interdepartmental squabbling over which service should command land-based antisubmarine aviation in the Atlantic. The Army and Navy committee members could not come to an agreement on this issue and twice expressed their divergent views in separate reports to the JSSC.³ That November, a second study was initiated when Army Chief of Staff Marshall indicated to the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff his support for the idea that there should be a single “Department of War” encompassing all the services in the post-war period. As a result, the Joint Chiefs of Staff charged the JSSC to prepare a study and

¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, May 20, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 131, Folder 10, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

make recommendations regarding unification.⁴ Although the JSSC understood that the two studies originated out of different specific concerns, the committee members recognized the interrelationship between aircraft programs and the need to economize by eliminating unwarranted duplication. For this reason, the JSSC decided to merge the two studies into one.⁵

In February, 1944, the Washington Post reported that it had learned of a study under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff providing for the “consolidation of the Army, Navy and Air into one Department of War,” indicating the probable approval of the plan. In addition to a single department secretary, the plan called for a general staff with chiefs of equal rank for the Army, Navy, Air and Supply. Moreover, according to the Washington Post, under the new military organization, “all land-based planes would function under a single air command,” but, “the Navy would continue to control all carrier-based planes.”⁶ Such a measure, it was reported, would promote unity of command and military efficiency while eliminating duplication. Furthermore, the report stated, “wherever unity of command has been achieved, there has been comparatively rapid success,” however, “where it has been lacking, there have been disappointment, excessive casualties [and] unpardonable delay.”⁷ No direct reference to the failure by the Army and Navy to effect unity of command in the air war against the U-boats is mentioned, but the subject of the article is highly suggestive that this was foremost on the reporter’s mind.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ D. W. Wainhouse, Memorandum for Officers in the Special Planning Division, W.D.S.S., February 28, 1944, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 161, Post War Planning File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷ *Ibid.*

On March 8, the JSSC reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was unable to produce a comprehensive study on the subject of post-war military organization and elimination of duplication and suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff establish a special committee devoted to this subject alone.⁸ Coincidentally, on this date Congressman James Wadsworth of New York introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives calling for a Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy “to investigate all matters relating to the post-war military requirements of the United States.”⁹ The resolution was passed on March 28 and Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum of Virginia was appointed committee chairman. The Woodrum Committee would begin hearings on April 24, 1944.¹⁰

Meanwhile, on April 15, Brigadier General W. F. Tompkins, director of the Army General Staff’s Special Planning Division, notified General Marshall of the JSSC’s continued inability to assign specific missions for the Army and the Navy, especially regarding the distribution of air forces, was due to the uncertainty of whether or not there would be a single Department of Defense in the post-war era.¹¹ To settle this question, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering what specific charges should be assigned to the special research committee on post-war organization suggested by the JSSC. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not agree on the charges. Admiral King wanted the committee to consider specifics, namely, whether there should be two departments (War and Navy) each with their own secretary, three departments (including Air) also with

⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, May 20, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 131, Folder 10, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*. See also: *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4, “*Aggressive and Determined Leadership*,” June 1, 1943-December 31, 1944, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), editorial note, 416.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ W. F. Tompkins, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U. S. Army, April 15, 1944, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*.

their own secretaries, or three sub-services in one department with one Secretary of Defense. Marshall responded that he favored proceeding on the assumption that there would be only one department and that post-war plans should be made with this in mind.¹² Although the disagreement seemed minor, it portended greater troubles ahead with the unification issue. Nevertheless, on May 9, the Joint Chiefs of Staff appointed the “Special Committee for Reorganization of National Defense,” composed of two Army and two Navy officers and chaired by Admiral James O. Richardson to investigate the matter further.¹³ As matters transpired, the report of the Richardson Committee would not be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff until after the war had ended.

Meanwhile, in an April 17 memorandum to Henry Stimson, General Marshall indicated that he had learned from James Wadsworth that the Woodrum Committee would commence its hearings the following week. With some misgiving, he remarked that instead of starting with questions surrounding the issue of universal military training, the committee would first take up the reorganization of the Army and the Navy. Marshall anticipated problems from the Navy witnesses. “Most of the opposition it is assumed, I hope incorrectly,” he wrote, “will come from the Navy and this would mean that a completely frank and vigorous statement by me might well, in effect, prejudice the future harmonious dealings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”¹⁴ Marshall wanted nothing to occur which would upset the harmony of the Army and the Navy in the current war effort. For this reason, he asked Congressman Wadsworth if General Arnold might be kept out of

¹² George C. Marshall, Memorandum for Admiral King, April 17, 1944, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*. See also: *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4, “Aggressive and Determined Leadership,” June 1, 1943-December 31, 1944, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 419-421.

¹³ *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 5, “The Finest Soldier,” January 1, 1945-January 7, 1947, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), editorial note, 313-314.

¹⁴ George C. Marshall, Memorandum for the Secretary of War, April 17, 1944, *Ibid*.

the first phase of the investigations, to which Wadsworth was agreeable. The bigger problem would involve Admiral King. “Should Admiral King appear early in the affair and give testimony in opposition to the reorganization,” Marshall wrote, “then I should certainly wish to move in myself in a vigorous manner though I should deplore the necessity.”¹⁵ Under the circumstances, the War Department planned to proceed cautiously.

Before the commencement of the Woodrum Committee hearings, the War Department attempted to coach its own witnesses in an effort to present a unified departmental policy regarding post-war planning. A memorandum was circulated which stated that official War Department policy included the creation of a single “Department of War” encompassing all the branches of the military, including an independent Air Force.¹⁶ In a somewhat similar vein, since Henry Stimson was slated to be the lead witness, General Marshall sent a memorandum to Harvey Bundy suggesting certain revisions to the Secretary’s prepared statement so as to avoid his raising any controversies that would rouse the ire of the Navy. Marshall, urging that the Secretary stick to broad principles, wrote,

Opposition to the consolidation will be based, I imagine in many instances, on fear regarding details. For example, the naval people fearful of their air being taken from them, or the Marine Corps fearful that it may be subjected to serious emasculation; our air people fearful that they will not get all the air they think they should have, etc., etc.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ W. F. Tompkins, Memorandum for Robert P. Patterson, April 19, 1944, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 161, Post War Planning File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷ George C. Marshall, Memorandum for Mr. Bundy, April 23, 1944, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4, “*Aggressive and Determined Leadership*,” June 1, 1943-December 31, 1944, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 431-433.

Marshall reiterated the need for Stimson to set the tone of the War Department witnesses by addressing the fundamentals of proper organization but that he should leave the contentious matter of details to a later date.

When Secretary of War Stimson sat as the first witness before the Woodrum Committee on April 25, he was squarely facing one of his closest political allies. Although Democrat Congressman Clifton Woodrum chaired the committee (as the Democrats were the majority party in Congress), the real sponsor of the committee was Stimson's friend, New York Republican Congressman, James Wadsworth. Stimson and Wadsworth's friendship dated back as far as 1910, when the former ran for governor of New York while the latter was Speaker of the State Assembly. From 1915 to 1927, Wadsworth served in Washington as Senator from New York, succeeding Elihu Root, with whom both he and Stimson were personally close. Wadsworth was defeated in his 1926 Senate reelection bid, but returned to public service when he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1932, where he served until his retirement in 1951.

Stimson's diary makes occasional reference to James Wadsworth dropping by his War Department office unannounced for leisurely conversation, something which few of Stimson's other associates were free to do. Although there is no textual evidence that Stimson and Wadsworth previously conferred on the business of the Woodrum Committee, it is likely that that they did. Since his days in the Senate, where he served on the Military Affairs Committee, Wadsworth acquired the sobriquet, "Mr. National Defense." His advocacy for military matters was carried over into the House of Representatives. Given their close personal friendship and mutual interests in military affairs, one can safely speculate that Wadsworth and Stimson discussed War Department

business freely. It may even be theorized that Wadsworth's idea to sponsor the resolution creating the House Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy grew out of conversations with Stimson during which the Secretary shared with Wadsworth his frustrations over the Navy's unwillingness to sign on to the War Department plan for an antisubmarine offensive in the Atlantic. Of course, this is only speculation, as no textual evidence exists to this effect. Nevertheless, such a scenario is not far-fetched. Whatever the case, Stimson's remarks before the committee were well received, for the most part, by a friendly audience.

On the whole, Stimson's prepared testimony was unremarkable. As General Marshall had advised, the Secretary spoke in broad terms of the need to consolidate the armed forces into a single defense department for the sake of efficiency. Stimson spoke in laudatory terms of the Navy's cooperation with the Army in the war effort and of the need to reorganize after the war so that future military leaders would continue their cooperative efforts in managing the national defense.¹⁸ Nothing in his remarks could be considered insulting to the Navy or indicative of the War Department's desire to strip the Navy of its air component. However, a far more telling indication of Stimson's lingering antipathy towards the Navy leadership is found in the text of an undated *aide memoire* titled "Brief for Woodrum Committee in Executive Session." In it, Stimson outlines the deleterious conditions which prevailed in the War Department before the reforms enacted by Elihu Root. The document also covers in detail how Root's reforms strengthened civilian control over the War Department and notes the beneficial aspects of having a well organized General Staff. New administrative problems arose as a result of the

¹⁸ Statement by the Secretary of War before the House Select Committee on Post War Military Policy, April 25, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 144, Folder 9, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

emergence of air power, which Stimson wrote he would leave for Robert Lovett to discuss, but the general gist of the Secretary's notes endorsed Air Force independence from the Army. Among the various issues Stimson's *aide memoire* covered, the most telling refers to the importance of reforming the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization so that the unified, post-war "War Department" would function under a single Chief of Staff with authority over all land, air and sea operations. The great advantage to this arrangement, Stimson noted, was that an overarching Chief of Staff, "can in the name of the President order cooperation of the three elements instead of merely persuading."¹⁹ Clearly, Stimson's *aide memoire* is hinting at instances where the War Department's efforts were blocked by the recalcitrant Navy leadership. It is hard to believe that Stimson was not recalling the foremost example of when such persuasion proved ineffective, namely, when Admiral King refused to cooperate with the War Department's aerial antisubmarine campaign in the Atlantic. Although Stimson's notes do not mention the problems between the Army and the Navy in effecting unity of command in the antisubmarine war, it is important to consider that the document in question was meant to serve as a memory aid during closed discussions. It is very possible that Stimson elaborated on this point off the record in executive session and discussed in great detail his failure to persuade both Knox and King to support the War Department's antisubmarine offensive.

It would serve no purpose to review all the testimony offered before the Woodrum Committee by witnesses who spoke on post-war organizational matters other than those pertaining to the disposition of land-based naval aviation. Such testimony has

¹⁹ Brief for Woodrum Committee in Executive Session, Post-War Departmental Reorganization, undated, NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File.

been amply covered in other studies of post-war military unification. It is sufficient to note, however, that by design, the War Department witnesses following Stimson addressed matters in greater detail, especially in their areas of professional competency. An example of this was when General Joseph T. McNarney, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, testified immediately following the Secretary of War that same day. McNarney's statement, like Stimson's, was uncritical of the Navy leadership, but he did go into greater detail regarding how the post-war military should be composed of a separate Army, Navy and Air Force, each with its own Chiefs of Staff. He spoke of establishing three undersecretaries for the Army, Navy and Air Force, each under a single Secretary of the Armed Forces in a unified Department of Defense. The advantage of a single, overarching Secretary of the Armed Forces over the present system, according to McNarney, was that he "would be able to resolve many of the administrative difficulties which in the past have been troublesome to handle."²⁰ As with Stimson, there was no direct reference to the antisubmarine dispute with the Navy, however this recent matter was one of the more troublesome administrative difficulties involving the divided War and Navy Departments, and it is easy to imagine that the general was recalling his part in negotiating the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement as he spoke before the committee.

If there was a single bombshell dropped during the Woodrum Committee hearings, it happened the next day, April 26, when the Assistant Secretary of War for Air, Robert A. Lovett offered his statement. In his opening remarks, Lovett made clear that he was before the committee to testify to the merits of Air Force independence within a

²⁰ Statement by Lieutenant General T. McNarney, Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army before the House Select Committee on Post War Military Policy, House of Representatives, April 25, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 144, Folder 9, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

single defense department. He discussed how the urgency of war had allowed for the rise of two air arms resulting in “a considerable amount of overlapping activities, certain uneconomical duplication and competition and, in some instances, to blurred lines of responsibilities between the Services.”²¹ Lovett made clear that his arguments for reorganization were not *necessarily* War Department policy, but that they were his own opinions formed during his close personal experience with management of the Army Air Forces during the war. Lovett stated that in the post-war period, he believed it was desirable for the Navy to retain a highly specialized “Fleet Air Force” which would “consist of carrier and ship based aircraft.” However, according to Lovett, “permanent land based aircraft will become the responsibility of the United States Air Force.”²²

Moreover, according to Lovett,

I assume that aircraft for Sea Forces and Ground Forces will be allocated and disposed in the interest of national defense by a combined and unified staff consisting of the top Ground, Sea and Air officers in this country, and not on the tortured interpretation of antiquated documents dealing with vague theories and doctrines which have to be thrown away the moment war breaks out.²³

Clearly, Lovett is making reference to the arguments advanced by the Navy during the dispute over the antisubmarine offensive that it should control all over-water aviation as per the terms of the 1935 *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy*. Here, at the highest level, Lovett is declaring the War Department’s belief that the 1935 *Joint Action* should be considered null and void and that the Navy should be stripped of its land-based airplanes. In spite of his earlier assertion that his testimony was his own personal opinion

²¹ Statement by Robert A. Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air, before the House Select Committee on Post War Military Policy, House of Representatives, April 26, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 144, Folder 9, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

and not necessarily War Department policy, it must be kept in mind that the War Department witnesses coordinated their testimony prior to the commencement of the Woodrum Committee. Secretary Stimson knew full well what Lovett planned to say and it is unlikely that he did not fully approve of it. Furthermore, by Lovett couching his statement within the disclaimer of “personal opinion,” it gave the War Department some leeway in dealing with the Navy leadership which was sure to react hostilely to the Assistant Secretary’s statement. The War Department leadership anticipated a backlash from the Navy, but rapidly unfolding events complicated matters even worse than Stimson and his subordinates had expected.

One of the reasons that Marshall and Stimson were optimistic about the movement toward post-war military unification was because Navy Secretary Frank Knox, unlike the uniformed leadership, favored the creation of a single defense department. For this reason, the War Department leadership expected Knox to testify favorably before the Woodrum Committee, making passage of any future unification bill much more likely. However, only four days into the committee hearings, on April 28, 1944 Frank Knox died of a sudden heart attack before he had the opportunity to testify. In the face of this leadership crisis, Undersecretary of the Navy James Forrestal became acting Navy Secretary until his formal confirmation as Secretary of the Navy by the Senate on May 19. Unfortunately for the War Department advocates of an independent Air Force, Forrestal proved a much less tractable Navy Secretary than had Frank Knox. Under James Forrestal, the Navy would dig in its heels and fight against Air Force independence as well as any threat to the Navy’s prerogatives regarding the use of land-based aircraft.

The untimely death of Frank Knox served to disrupt the workings of the Woodrum Committee, not so much on account of Knox's absence, but because it pushed James Forrestal into the role of acting Navy Secretary. On April 28, the same day Knox died, Forrestal's testimony before the Woodrum Committee left some committee members in a state of frustration. In a memorandum to General Marshall, General Tompkins remarked that committee chairman Clifton Woodrum was disappointed that the Navy did not have "any opinions on over-all policy" regarding a single Department of the Armed Forces and that Forrestal had been evasive in commenting on the testimony of the War Department witnesses. According to Tompkins, Forrestal replied to Congressman Woodrum that he, "was testifying today as Acting Secretary of the Navy and would prefer to appear later to testify in his capacity as Under Secretary of the Navy."²⁴ In spite of his evasive manner, Forrestal did testify on the question of duplication, stating that some duplication, especially in aircraft development, "might be wise."²⁵ In time, Forrestal would come out as a strong opponent of Air Force independence and as a staunch advocate of the Navy's retention of its own air component, including its land-based antisubmarine aircraft.

In spite of Forrestal's perceived equivocation, others in the Navy Department spoke out with more forceful opinions. On May 15, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, Artemus L. Gates, testified before the Woodrum Committee. Although Gates expressed his appreciation of the committee's fact-finding role, he strongly opposed any move by the Army to denude the Navy of its land-based air component. Gates feared that

²⁴ W. F. Tompkins, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, "Comments on Navy Testimony before the Woodrum Committee on a Single Department for the Armed Forces," April 28, 1944, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

military reorganization would entail just such an outcome, as had occurred in Great Britain at the end of World War I when the Royal Navy was entirely stripped of both its land-based and carrier-based aviation in order to create the RAF. In his prepared statement, Gates remarked,

It is my firm conviction, and I cannot emphasize this too strongly, that if the Navy is to continue to be fully effective, it must control and have, as an integral part of it, its own naval aviation. . . . place it under the control of an agency other than the Navy, you will impair the effectiveness of that element and the effectiveness of the Navy as a whole.²⁶

Gates further stated that he was under the impression that seaplane and carrier-based aircraft would be left to the Navy under the War Department's reorganization scheme, but that all naval land-based aircraft would become the responsibility of the Army. He believed this a meritless distinction, stating that,

While carrier-type and ship-based planes constitute a very real part of the air striking power of the Navy, the land-based types have indispensable supporting functions insofar as the over-all naval effort is concerned. I refer specifically to land-based patrol planes, amphibians, scout and various classes of utility and training planes.²⁷

Gates went on to discuss the need for the Navy to maintain shore bases for its land-based aircraft involved in intrinsically naval tasks such as antisubmarine operations.²⁸

Forrestal and Gates were not the only opponents to an independent Air Force. Opposition to the War Department's plans was coming from a key member of the Woodrum Committee as well. Tompkins noted in his memorandum that Georgia Democrat Congressman Carl Vinson, also a member of the House Naval Affairs Committee, "is definitely against the Army's proposal and intends to make matters as

²⁶ Hearings Before the Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy, House of Representatives, Seventy-Eighth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 224

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

difficult as possible.”²⁹ Vinson knew from long experience that the Navy’s retention of its own air component, including its land-based antisubmarine aircraft, was a closely guarded prerogative of the Navy leadership, and any question involving its curtailment was sure to spark the anger of Navy proponents. In a separate memorandum to General Marshall, Tompkins remarked that “Mr. Vinson favors amalgamation of the Army and Navy, but is against a separate component for Air.” Hinting that he understood Vinson’s plan to stoke controversy, Tompkins added, “in this connection Mr. Vinson stated that he was responsible for this item being placed first on the Committee’s agenda.”³⁰ If this was Vinson’s purpose, he was successful. As the Woodrum Committee went forward with its agenda, the issue of an independent Air Force and the fate of the Navy’s land-based aviation became even more of an intertwined and contentious issue.

Although the Woodrum Committee originally intended to investigate a variety of issues pertinent to post-war military organization, the future status of naval aviation emerged as the most important and divisive issue very early during the hearings. During the first month of hearings, the Woodrum Committee heard testimony from multiple witnesses from the War and Navy Departments, as well as from high ranking uniformed officers of both services. On May 26, a Navy General Board memorandum circulated to the upper echelon of the Navy and Marine Corps summarized the testimony of all the witnesses and highlighted the key issues being debated. Regarding the Navy’s air component, the memorandum indicated that the War Department and Army witnesses

²⁹ W. F. Tompkins, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, “Comments on Navy Testimony before the Woodrum Committee on a Single Department for the Armed Forces,” April 28, 1944, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*.

³⁰ W. F. Tompkins, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, “Hearings on Single Department before the House Select Committee,” April 28, 1944, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*.

“generally agreed that the Navy should have control of its own air arm, but the question exists whether it should include anything more than carrier and ship-based aircraft.”³¹ Furthermore, the memorandum stated that the “Army’s use of the word “duplication” is misleading since it implies waste, and most of the examples claimed by the Army as “duplications” were more correctly termed “parallels”.”³² Moreover, in an effort to clarify Navy Department policy on the key issues, the memorandum noted that “the Navy must have its own air, including some land-based types.” In addition, the memorandum noted that any effort towards Air Force independence was premature and would only become clear when a detailed history of the war was compiled after the end of hostilities.³³ Shortly after the circulation of this memorandum, the Woodrum Committee went into a sort of dormancy as all parties became focused on the imminent invasion of France.

In addition to investigating the ramifications of service unification, the Woodrum Committee was also charged with investigating the merits of establishing a universal military training program in the post-war period. By January, 1945, the Woodrum Committee had become deeply enmeshed in questions regarding the organization of such a program. The complex political aspects of this issue were also being debated in other congressional committees and were affected by the strong partisan interests of organized labor and the farming bloc and were likely to flare into a political firestorm detrimental to the war effort. For this reason, Congress and President Roosevelt seemed tacitly to wish

³¹ General Board of the Navy, Memorandum to SecNav, et al., May 26, 1944, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 131, Folder 10, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

the UMT issue to fade from public view.³⁴ On January 4, 1945, Under Secretary of War Robert Patterson wrote to Secretary Stimson,

It is my feeling that for the time being the less public discussion that goes on concerning plans of a post-war nature, the more successful we will be in concentrating the attention of Congress and the people on the immediate problems concerned with winning the war.³⁵

Patterson further remarked that, with Stimson's approval, he would request of congressmen Woodrum and Wadsworth that the work of the committee be postponed "in view of the more pressing problems that have to do with winning the war."³⁶ In a handwritten note scrawled at the bottom of the memorandum, Stimson wrote, "I freely and strongly agree with you, that postwar discussions at present should be postponed."³⁷

The following day, Patterson informed Stimson that he had discussed the matter with Congressman Wadsworth who was sympathetic to their concerns. Patterson further informed Stimson that Wadsworth wished for a private conference with both service secretaries and the committee members in Stimson's office to discuss the question of postponing further hearings.³⁸ The postponement became indefinite and the work of the Woodrum Committee remained unfinished. It submitted no prospective legislation to Congress. Nevertheless, by addressing questions regarding the disposition of the Navy's land-based aviation, the Woodrum Committee served to raise the suspicions of the Navy

³⁴ Arthur Krock, "Momentous Problems Laid Before Congress," *New York Times*, (January 7, 1945), pg. E5.

³⁵ Robert P. Patterson, Memorandum for the Secretary of War, January 4, 1945, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*. See also: *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 161, Post War Planning File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Robert P. Patterson, Memorandum for the Secretary of War, January 5, 1945, *NARA, Record Group 107, Formerly Top Secret Correspondence of Secretary Stimson 1940-1946, Post-War Military Policy File*. See also: *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 161, Post War Planning File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

that anything having to do with Air Force independence and service unification was a direct threat to its prerogatives. The Navy's resistance to unification and Air Force independence would become more strident when the question was taken up again in the immediate post-war period.

II. The Richardson Committee Report and the Eberstadt Report

After nearly a year of hearing testimony from ranking Army and Navy officers, on April 11, 1945, the Special Committee for Reorganization of National Defense chaired by Admiral Richardson completed its work and submitted its report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Overwhelmingly, the majority of officers interviewed favored a post-war reorganization that included a single Department of Defense. This included many ranking Navy officers, most notably Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and overall Allied commander of the Pacific Ocean Area. On account of such broad support, the committee almost unanimously favored the creation of a single Department of Defense under a single Defense Secretary along with Air Force independence from the Army. With regard to naval aviation, the report stated that in any post-war reorganization, "there shall be maintained as an integral part of the Navy an aeronautical organization commensurate with its needs, including requisite numbers and types of aircraft."³⁹ However, in spite of this assertion, Richardson dissented from the opinion of the majority and rejected calls for unification. He feared that there would be detrimental consequences for the Navy, and specifically for naval aviation, if the proposed reorganization took place. Richardson remarked in his dissenting report that,

³⁹ "Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Committee for Reorganization of National Defense," Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, First Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945), 414.

I am not convinced that an air force should be set up on a basis coordinate with the Army and Navy. Proponents of this idea assert that this is necessary for full development of air power. Naval air power has developed within the Navy. I fear that the creation of an air force on a basis coordinate with the Army and Navy would inevitably draw the naval aeronautical organization out of the fabric of the Navy into which it is now intimately woven. Such disintegration of the Navy would be prejudicial to the effectiveness of the armed forces as a whole.⁴⁰

Immediate action on the report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was precluded by the death of President Roosevelt on April 12 and any effort towards unification was deferred until Harry Truman had settled in as Commander in Chief. After some delay, on October 16 the committee's report, including Richardson's dissent, was forwarded to President Truman. In the near future the report would prove something of an embarrassment for the Navy.

James Forrestal believed that the ascension of Harry Truman to the presidency signified difficult times ahead for the Navy. Franklin Roosevelt, a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, maintained a sentimental loyalty to the sea service which at times bordered on preferential. Truman had no such Navy background and seemed unlikely to brook any Navy recalcitrance towards service reorganization. Truman rose to national prominence while chairing the wartime Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, which had as its goal the elimination of costly waste and duplication within the armed services. His tenure as committee chair led him to become an outspoken advocate for service unification, to the extent of his publishing an article in the popular magazine *Collier's* in 1944 titled, "Our Armed Forces MUST Be Unified."⁴¹ Forrestal realized that during Truman's watch, it would be politically damaging for the Navy to simply oppose moves towards unification. Instead, the Navy must advance its

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 430.

⁴¹ Harry S. Truman, "Our Armed Forces MUST Be Unified," *Collier's*, (August 26, 1944).

own, well thought-out reorganization plan that would improve national security while at the same time ensure that the Navy's prerogatives in carrying out its mission were safeguarded. For this reason, on June 19, Forrestal requested that his longtime friend and former chair of the Army-Navy Munitions Board, Ferdinand Eberstadt, head a committee of approximately thirty naval reserve officers to prepare a national security reorganization plan on behalf of the Navy.⁴²

The Eberstadt Committee was charged with determining whether or not unification of the Army and Navy in a single defense department would improve national security, and if not, to suggest what changes should be made to the present organization to effect improvement. After three months of study, on September 25 the committee submitted its report. In sum, the committee found that service unification was unwarranted, but that defects in coordination existed "between the State Department and the military departments and between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military and civilian agencies responsible for industrial mobilization."⁴³ Although it rejected service unification as a remedy, the Eberstadt Report suggested the creation of a National Security Council and a National Security Resources Board, both to be composed of civilian department heads and the military leadership, to "formulate and coordinate overall policies in foreign and military affairs and advise on the combined military budget."⁴⁴ The full scope of the Eberstadt Report has been dealt with in other studies of armed forces unification and a full treatment here is not warranted. It is sufficient to note, however, that the Eberstadt Committee called for the creation of a cabinet level

⁴² Demetrios Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification: A study of Conflict and the Policy Process*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 40.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

“Department of Air” which would “absorb that aviation presently under the control of the Army Air Forces.”⁴⁵ Although Navy Secretary James Forrestal embraced most of the committee’s conclusions, he could not bring himself to accept the report’s call for Air Force independence from the Army. The Eberstadt Report, like the findings of the Richardson Committee, would soon put the Navy in an awkward spot publically as the Senate began investigating the feasibility and benefits of service unification in the post-war period.

III. 1945 Senate Military Affairs Committee Hearings

On January 6, 1945, Alabama Senator J. Lister Hill introduced a bill providing for a single “Department of the Armed Forces” under a single department secretary with three separate undersecretaries of the Army, Navy and Air. This bill was followed on October 15 by a slightly different proposal sponsored by Senators Harley M. Kilgore of West Virginia and Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado which called for a single “Department of Military Security.” Both bills, S. 84 and S. 1482, respectively, came before the Senate Military Affairs Committee, which began hearings on the prospective legislation on October 17. For two months, the committee heard testimony from multiple War and Navy Department witnesses on all manner of subjects having to do with post-war military organization which the proposed legislation might affect. One of the central issues repeatedly raised during the hearings was the possibility of Air Force independence and what effect this would have on limiting the future development of naval aviation.

The lead-off witness before the committee was the new Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, who was appointed by President Truman after Henry Stimson’s retirement

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

on September 21. Patterson, as well as the many subsequent War Department witnesses, spoke in broad terms of the benefits of service unification, noting how unification would streamline the command structure and save money by eliminating interservice duplication and competition for resources.⁴⁶ In many ways, this was a repetition of the War Department stance taken during the Woodrum Committee hearings the previous year. However, during the current hearings, issues surrounding naval aviation, particularly the future of the Navy's land-based airplanes, became a contentious topic of discussion.

Many of the Navy witnesses before the Senate Military Affairs Committee commented on the Navy's need to retain control of its own aviation. On October 22, in response to South Carolina Senator Burnet Maybank's request that he provide a clear statement of the Navy's expectations regarding the status of the post-war "Naval Air Force," James Forrestal submitted an outline which affirmed that the post-war Navy would be "built around naval aviation as the spearhead of attack and as the most important single element."⁴⁷ Furthermore, the outline affirmed,

In fulfilling its mission, naval aviation will be trained to participate in fleet engagements, conduct fast carrier strikes, support amphibious landings, conduct antisubmarine warfare, establish patrol, photographic, and reconnaissance flights in support of fleet movements and actions.⁴⁸

On October 23, Admiral King testified, stating that he feared a single department of defense with an independent Air Force might ultimately serve to denude the Navy of its aviation component. King pointed out that the Royal Navy had suffered during the Second World War by not having a fully developed naval air doctrine, which, he believed, was due to the fact that the newly independent Royal Air Force had stripped the

⁴⁶ Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, First Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945), 9ff.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Royal Navy of its air component shortly after the First World War. This, he feared, might happen under a single Department of Defense in which the Navy's interests were only partly represented. "It follows," King remarked, "that if the Navy's welfare is one of the prerequisites to the Nation's welfare—and I sincerely believe that to be the case—any step that is not good for the Navy is not good for the Nation."⁴⁹ The following day, when answering questions put to him by Senator Maybank regarding Air Force independence, Marine Corps Commandant, General Alexander Vandergrift remarked,

Mr. Chairman, I read in the papers this morning of Admiral King's testimony, and I agree with him on that. I feel that the question of a separate air force is one that confronts the Army. If the Army desires to separate its air arm from the ground arm, that is well within their province.

As it applies to the naval service, we feel that we should have naval air, both carrier-born and land, in order to carry out the naval missions.⁵⁰

The Navy argument, put simply, was that both carrier and land-based aviation were vital components of the Navy's arsenal and were essential to the performance of its mission, and any attempt to limit the development of naval aviation would ultimately prove detrimental to national security. So far, the War Department witnesses did not challenge this assertion. However, matters would become more heated the following week when the committee convened to hear Army witnesses.

After a five day adjournment, the committee resumed its business on Tuesday, October 30 and heard the testimony of only one witness, Army Ground Forces Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins. In his prepared statement regarding the roles and missions of the services in a unified defense department, General Collins asserted that, "the Air Force should include all land-based combat aircraft except those allocated to the Army and Navy for reconnaissance, spotting of gunfire, command and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

messenger service.”⁵¹ On November 2, in response to questions put to him about the future capabilities of airplanes, commander of the Far East Air Forces, General George C. Kenney, remarked,

I believe in the future of the United States Air Forces. I believe that air power is this Nation’s first line of defense and that only in air power can we find a weapon formidable enough to maintain the peace... I believe that only airmen, familiar through years of experience with operations in three dimensions, are qualified to argue requirements for the Air arm. An equal status under an over-all, single department is, I am convinced, a prerequisite to national security. Strategy is now global and the airplane masters global distances. Any arbitrary assignment of air responsibility over water areas to the Navy, and over land areas to the Army or Air arm, completely negates the experience gained in this war and the performance of aircraft to come. Primary responsibility for air warfare must rest with the coequal, coordinate Air Force, whatever the character of the earth’s surface underneath.⁵²

Clearly, General Kenney had in mind the complete scrapping of the 1935 *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* which would be rendered obsolete upon the creation of an independent Air Force. Later in his testimony, in response to a question from Senator Maybank about Air Force independence, General Kenney expanded upon this theme.

Prior to the last war we saw no conflict between the Army and the Navy. The high-tide mark was the boundary line. The Navy fought out at sea, the Army fought out on the land, and there was no overlapping of the military mission. The airplane came into the picture in the last World War. If anyone could look into the future and see the development coming up, they could see there was a conflict coming, because the airplane did not know whether it was over the land or the sea. As things developed, land-based air could sink vessels out at sea, and carrier-based air could smash bunkers, and railroad yards, and bridges on the land, and we have an overlapping of functions. There was bound to be conflict as to jurisdiction and ownership of the real estate and water, and everything else.

Kenney continued,

This war has shown, however, that it has gone far beyond the state of a conflict between two services. It is a conflict to see who is gaining control of the decisive element in warfare. If the airplane has become the decisive element in warfare, it no longer deserves a subordinate place in the Army or Navy. It is entitled to stand

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 162. General Collins reiterated the same point again later in his testimony. See also: *ibid.*, 169.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 233.

on its own feet, develop its own methods, and carry out its own mission, or in making a decision... Therefore, I believe no matter what organization we get, the Air has got to be free to develop under its own leaders.⁵³

Taken with the remarks of General Collins about all land-based aviation being the rightful possession of the Air Force, Kenney's frank repudiation of the 1935 *Joint Action* as a basis for future cooperation between the services convinced the Navy leadership that those advocating for an independent Air Force were out to hijack naval aviation and leave the Navy in the same weakened state as that of the Royal Navy after World War I.

The Navy rebuttal came on November 8 when Vice Admiral Charles M. Cooke testified. While specifically addressing General Collins' earlier testimony regarding the need for unified command, Cooke asserted that the antisubmarine war in the Atlantic both before and after the Allied invasion of France was "completely a sea campaign" and was therefore properly under the executive direction of Admiral King.⁵⁴ He rejected what he perceived as a plan to "emasculate" naval aviation by arbitrarily restricting the types of planes the Navy could employ, which by doing so would, "put the United States Navy in the same position as was the Royal Navy in 1941 from which inferiority it has not yet by any means fully recovered."⁵⁵ Ships and aircraft, including land-based aircraft, Cooke asserted, "work as a unified whole," and form "the only sort of navy that is potent."⁵⁶ Cooke spoke at length about the efficacy of the Navy and his comments focused mostly on the war in the Pacific. Nevertheless, in his statement regarding the Battle of the Atlantic, he curiously omits any mention of the contribution made by the Army Air Force Antisubmarine Command or RAF Coastal Command in the war against

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 236-237.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 278.

the U-boats. Although he was technically correct that Admiral King was executive director of such operations, his failure to acknowledge the participation of the AAFAC and the RAF Coastal Command provided a misleading half-truth to the committee members who might themselves be unfamiliar with the conduct of air operations during the Battle of the Atlantic.

The following day, Lieutenant General James H. Doolittle spoke at length of the various missions conducted by the Army Air Forces during the war. In an apparently unintentional rebuttal of Admiral Cooke, Doolittle mentioned in passing the “purely defensive operations” conducted by the Army Air Forces in Europe, among which he counted the “antisubmarine campaign.”⁵⁷ However, this contradictory remark about the AAFAC was overshadowed by assertions made a little later in his testimony. While speaking of the technological capabilities of modern airplanes, Doolittle derided the arbitrary assignment of missions as spelled out in the 1935 *Joint Action*. “And here I would like to explode another fallacious notion,” Doolittle remarked,

That land-based air should fly over the land only and sea-based air over the sea; that upon reaching the coast line one should relinquish and others take over. Such curtailment of mobility is untenable to air thinking and to effective air operations. When ground or sea transportation comes to the shore line it is stopped, that is as far as it can go; but the airplane doesn't know whether it is over land or sea, and the experienced airman doesn't much care.

Furthermore, all land-based air must be under one agency. We cannot efficiently split our forces. General Kenney's testimony clearly pointed this out.

Carrier-based aviation should remain under Navy control, but all land-based aviation must be under one agency.⁵⁸

The one agency to control all land-based aviation advocated by Doolittle was an independent Air Force. He reasserted this claim again later in his testimony.⁵⁹ If these

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

provocative comments were not enough, Doolittle next dropped a bombshell certain to stoke interservice acrimony.

During questioning, Senator Hill asked Doolittle to comment on public remarks made by Admiral Nimitz that sea power was responsible for compelling Japan to sue for peace as well as remarks in the press made by Admiral Mitscher that the defeat of Japan was brought about through carrier supremacy. In reply, Doolittle praised both admirals as great sea commanders, but asserted that it was teamwork rather than a single agency which defeated Japan. He further remarked,

I do feel, however, very strongly that it was not sea power that compelled Japan to ask for peace, and I do not believe that it was carrier superiority that won the air war. I feel also that our B-29 boys are probably resting uneasily in their graves as a result of those two statements.⁶⁰

Moreover, while commenting on a recent *Washington Post* article that carriers had superseded battleships as the primary capital ships of the Navy, Doolittle stated, "I am in complete agreement, that the battleship is obsolete." He continued,

I feel that the battleship has been obsolescent for the last 20 years and obsolete for the last 10. The carrier has reached, probably, its highest degree of development. I feel it has reached its highest usefulness now and that it is going into obsolescence. The carrier has two attributes. One attribute is that it can move about; the other attribute is that it can be sunk. As soon as airplanes are developed with sufficient range so that they can go any place that we want them to go, or when we have bases that will permit us to go to any place that we want to go, there will be no further use for aircraft carriers. That is all.⁶¹

In response to a follow up question, Doolittle added,

Incidentally, on the utility of the carriers, I think it is interesting to note the effects of the carrier operations against the Japanese mainland as compared to the land-based operations. The carriers dropped 6,760 tons of bombs on the Japanese mainland. The B-29's dropped 146,899 tons, not including the mining operations. All land-based air, including General Kenney's forces, dropped a total of 162,732

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 308.

tons. In other words, 96 percent of the damage in Japan was done by land-based airplanes; 4 percent by carrier-based airplanes.⁶²

The Navy's reaction to Doolittle's statements was angry and swift.

The following day, the *New York Times* carried a front page article titled "Doolittle Talks on Merger Cause Protest by Navy." The paper reported that Navy Secretary James Forrestal had promptly objected to the general's remarks in an open letter to Secretary of War Robert Patterson, accusing Doolittle of "impugning the good faith" of Admirals Nimitz and Mitscher for their opinions regarding air and sea power. Referring specifically to Doolittle's statement that B-29 pilots killed in action were "resting uneasily in their graves," Forrestal wrote, "I question especially whether death in any particular line of duty—and the resultant grief at home—should be appealed to in order to advance any individual point of view."⁶³ Forrestal expressed disappointment that a man of such high caliber as James Doolittle would make such a remark and warned of the harm that might come to the nation as a result of such tactlessness. "If we allow an honest difference over principle to degenerate into an exchange of personalities," Forrestal wrote, "we shall do irreparable harm to the end which we all seek in the name of national security: the comradeship of all branches of the armed services. Once destroyed in a passing controversy, that spirit cannot be revived by any legislative fiat or organizational chart."⁶⁴ Forrestal further opined that a presidential commission on the merits of unification might do more to ensure civility among those testifying, but lacking

⁶² *Ibid.*, 309.

⁶³ Frederick R. Barkley, "Doolittle Talks on Merger Causes Protest by Navy," *New York Times* (November 10, 1945), 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

this, he urged that all Navy personnel maintain a civil tone free of acrimony or recrimination while discussing this matter in public or private.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the Navy's continued acquisition of land-based bomber type airplanes served to rankle the Army Air Forces leadership. On the same day that Doolittle testified before the Senate Military Affairs Committee, Army Air Forces General Carl Spaatz received a memorandum from Colonel Fred M. Dean, chief of General Arnold's Advisory Council, regarding the Navy's inventory of land-based planes. According to Dean, Arnold questioned why the fact that the "U.S Navy had an inventory of 2,212 land-based bombers as of 1 September 1945" should not be "brought out into the open at our hearings."⁶⁶ Of these land-based airplanes, 845 were B-24's, the principal plane used by both the AAFAC and the Navy for antisubmarine operations in the Battle of the Atlantic. Arnold was also said to remark that the Navy possessed 1,008 land-based transports and an additional 1,975 land-based utility aircraft.⁶⁷ It is unclear whether or not this memorandum was sent as a result of Doolittle's testimony regarding the impact of land-based planes in the defeat of Japan. It is important to note, however, that General Spaatz would be the next Army Air Forces witness to testify before the Senate Military Affairs Committee.

General Carl Spaatz testified before the committee on November 15. He spoke mostly about the merits of unification and of the need for the Air Force to retain qualified personnel in the post war-period. Nevertheless, Spaatz, an ardent supporter of Air Force independence, found an opening to criticize the Navy's buildup of land-based aviation.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Fred M. Dean, Memorandum to General Spaatz, November 9, 1945, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

At one point in his testimony Spaatz was questioned whether or not the time was ripe for military unification. In response, Spaatz remarked,

I think we can agree with Mr. Atlee's statement to the effect that there is no longer discontinuity of earth and sea, because the air covers all.

You could formerly have a Navy at sea and an Army on land and you need have no conflict between them, when there is no third element that affects both of them equally. You will not have a conflict between the Army and the Navy in that case, except to a minor extent. The real conflict began only after the airplane came into the picture.

Each, both the Army and the Navy, wanted the airplane to itself. They never admitted it, until this war—it was a result of this war—that there could be such a thing as air power standing on its own feet.⁶⁸

In no uncertain terms, Spaatz opposed a large naval air component. A little later in his testimony he cautioned of the dangers associated with it, stating,

If we are going to continue the two-departmental system and build up a large air force under Navy control, carrier-based air force, and a large land-based air force—because we will certainly need that, an air force which is going to impose itself on the Arctic, between us and any possible enemy—there is bound to be tremendous confusion of responsibilities, tremendous duplication, tremendous expense. I think we will be paying an exceptionally high price for national defense in that case.⁶⁹

Implicit in these remarks was Spaatz's belief that improved national security at a less expensive price would result from Air Force independence with a concomitant curtailment of naval aviation. Like that of Doolittle, news of Spaatz's testimony made the front page of the *New York Times*, not because of any acrimony it stoked with the Navy, however, but because of his assertion that a future attack to the United States might come by way of the Arctic.⁷⁰

The Navy found itself in a somewhat embarrassing situation when Admiral Nimitz testified on November 17. In his prepared statement, Nimitz drew the

⁶⁸ Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, *Op. cit.*, 350-351.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁷⁰ Anthony Leviero, "Spaatz Declares for Service Unity," *The New York Times* (November 16, 1945), 1, 5.

committee's attention to the positive comments he had made regarding service unification in the Richardson Committee report and stated that he had since changed his mind and no longer supported the immediate unification of the Army and Navy. "With the passage of time and with greater war experience," Nimitz affirmed, "I must revise the foregoing statement, since I no longer favor the single department. I now believe that the theoretical advantages of such a merger are unattainable, whereas the disadvantages are so serious that it is not acceptable."⁷¹ Nimitz expounded at length on the merits of American sea power and seconded his assertions that sea power was responsible for the defeat of Japan. He believed that the Navy's strength depended on its special interests being represented by its own cabinet secretary, and that the Navy could only suffer if it came to be represented by a secretary not exclusively concerned with naval affairs. He also derided the logic which justified an independent Air Force, comparing it to the establishment of an independent submarine force separate from the Navy.⁷²

On November 23, the day before his resignation was to take effect, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy testified before the committee and ridiculed the Navy's resistance to service unification. McCloy considered the Navy's argument against unification hypocritical, remarking,

I think it is important to point out that the Navy Department now and for some time in the past has comprised every element which would be included in a single department. The Navy has had during this war:

- (a) The largest surface fleet in the world.
- (b) An air component of some 40,000 carrier-borne aircraft, and what is not so generally known, over 2,000 land-based planes, of which nearly 1,000 are four-motored heavy bombers.
- (c) The largest submarine fleet in the world.
- (d) A marine force which long ago discarded its ancient functions and became a full-fledged land army organized in divisions and fighting side by side

⁷¹ Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, *Op. cit.*, 383-384.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 391.

in either amphibious or straight land operations with divisions of the United States Army.

(e) A Marine Air Force for cooperation with these divisions.⁷³

McCloy further added that only days before, Admiral William Halsey publically jested that “we unify the armed forces by moving everybody under the Navy.”⁷⁴ McCloy continued,

I am sure Admiral Halsey was being facetious in suggesting that unification is acceptable only if the Navy runs it, although Secretary Gates said very much the same thing before the Woodrum committee. I am equally sure that his statement accurately reflects the experience of the Navy Department that all types of operations can be directed effectively and happily under a single department when men of good will make up their minds that that is what is going to be done.⁷⁵

McCloy concluded his remarks by referring to both the Eberstadt and the Richardson Committee reports, with the summary of the latter being read into the committee record.⁷⁶ Apparently, this was meant to underscore Nimitz’s late reversal of opinion as well as the disunity of naval opinion regarding unification.

Most of the remaining Navy witnesses rebutted the assertions of the air power advocates that land-based aviation was somehow the special province of the strategic air force. On November 30, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Nimitz’s Deputy Chief of Staff in the Pacific argued against relegating land-based antisubmarine operations to any agency other than the Navy. Referring to the war in the Atlantic against the U-boats, Sherman stated,

During those critical days of the antisubmarine campaign in the Atlantic it was amply demonstrated that the ships and aircraft, both from shore bases and ships, must be trained and operated as a single tactical combat team. Independent aviation is not good enough for those purposes. We must have naval aviation.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 465-468.

Naval aviation must retain complete control of its own material and of the procurement and training of its own personnel.⁷⁷

Sherman then returned to the familiar story of the Royal Navy having been denuded of its aviation component during the interwar years and warned of the dangers that might befall the U.S. Navy should similar circumstances prevail after the Air Force gained independence from the Army.⁷⁸ This same cautionary tale was also raised by Admiral Leahy who testified on December 4.⁷⁹

As the work of the committee was drawing to a close, the remaining Navy witnesses disclosed their fears for the future of naval aviation in the event that the Air Force gain independence from the Army. On December 13, Secretary Forrestal reappeared before the committee to further protest against General Doolittle's remarks of November 9. While raising the Navy's objection to proposals for Air Force independence, Forrestal remarked with candor,

Our strongly held belief is that Naval Air must remain integrated with the Navy and not separate from it.

Many of our misgivings about this proposal are derived from the fact that the Army Air Forces have indicated publically that they don't believe in Naval Air.⁸⁰

The following day, Admiral DeWitt Ramsey, Deputy Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, testified that it was Navy aircraft, both carrier-born and land-based, that "carried the offensive to Hitler's underseas fleet," and "thus paved the way for the ultimate safe passage and delivery of the men, materials, and supplies which made the invasion [of

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 525.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 584.

Africa and Europe] possible.”⁸¹ Referring also to scouting and search and rescue aircraft, Admiral Ramsey continued,

The Navy will have in the foreseeable future a continuing need for all the types of planes with which it ended this war and when they are not ship or tender based it will have need also for shore bases from which to operate them. It can never subscribe to the limitations which the Army Air Forces desire to impose upon the pattern of the naval aviation effort.⁸²

Admiral Ramsey, like Secretary Forrestal, feared the Air Force’s intentions. This is evidenced by the ensuing exchange:

The Chairman: What do you mean by “pattern,” Admiral?

Admiral Ramsey: I mean the pattern of the organization, Senator, afloat and ashore.

The Chairman: It does not have anything to do with the operation of your units?

Admiral Ramsey: It is apparently the desire of the Army Air Forces to restrict such operation.⁸³

The Navy’s final witness, Admiral Henry K. Hewitt, commander of the U.S naval forces in Europe, testified on December 15, and succinctly summed up the Navy’s misgivings about unification and Air Force independence.

Discussion as to the separation of the land air force from the Army is not the direct concern of the Navy, except that the establishment of a separate land air force would tend to reduce the naval representation in the higher councils from 50 to 33½ percent. There would in this case be danger that the naval advice would not have sufficient weight and that the Navy’s air force would be taken away from it, which would be a disaster, and a direct failure to profit by the lessons of the British Navy. It is difficult to see the logic of a proposal which on one hand urges unification as a requisite for increased efficiency, and on the other hand urges separation (land air force from the Army) for the same purpose.⁸⁴

The committee concluded its business two days later without passing either S. 84 or S. 1482 on to the full Senate for ratification. For the time being, largely due to the Navy’s misgivings, legislation on unification and Air Force independence was stalled.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 611.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 611-612.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 625.

IV. Army-Navy Partisanship and Presidential Intervention

In the closing days of the Senate Military Affairs Committee hearings regarding S. 84 and S. 1482, Congressmen Carl Vinson and Andrew May floated a bill that provided for an independent Air Force which did not, however, provide for a single Department of Defense. According to *New York Times* reporter Thomas J. Hamilton, this scheme was cooked up by the Navy to gain Army Air Forces support as the Navy tried to save itself from absorption by the War Department.⁸⁵ Whatever the motive, the bill and the political machinations underlying its introduction did not sit well with the higher echelons of the Army Air Forces. In a memorandum for General Spaatz, Colonel W. B. Leach, an Army Air Forces operations analyst noted that the bill's purpose was to defeat the War Department's proposals for unification.⁸⁶ Colonel Leach, however, resented the manipulation of the Army Air Forces interests for the sake of Navy autonomy. The time had come, he asserted, for the independent Air Force to assume its rightful place and supplant the Navy as the nation's first line of defense. "In the long view," Leach wrote to Spaatz, "the AAF must be responsible for national security, with the Navy providing water transport and the Army providing troops of occupation." Leach continued,

For the next twenty years, the Navy will be the mortal enemy of the AAF and, indirectly, of national security. It has a strongly entrenched position and will fight to hold it, regardless of the merits. The opposition to unification is basically a fight to prevent the establishment of a tribunal (a Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces) before which the Navy's claims to money, men, and function can be objectively considered. It prefers to fight for these things before the public and before the Congress where its public and legislative weapons, forged and

⁸⁵ Thomas J. Hamilton, "Navy Defense Plan Bars Unification, Gives Air Equality," *New York Times*, (December 13, 1945), 1, 5.

⁸⁶ W. B. Leach, Memorandum for General Spaatz, December 13, 1945, *Box 1266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

tempered through a long series of years, give it an overwhelming advantage which depends in no degree upon the merits of its case.⁸⁷

General Spaatz needed little convincing of Leach's assertions and would continue to take an adversarial stance in his ongoing dealings with the Navy.

On December 19, after the Senate Military Affairs Committee adjourned for the year, in a public announcement President Truman called upon Congress to enact legislation that would combine the War and Navy Departments into "one single Department of National Defense" composed of three component branches, namely Army, Navy and Air.⁸⁸ According to the *New York Times*, this announcement was well received by supporters of unification but "with wrath by opponents in Congress."⁸⁹ One such opponent was Congressman Vinson, chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, who was quoted as saying that "the very phraseology of the scheme smacks of the Germany of the Kaiser and of Hitler," and that Truman was playing "military power politics" which would "sink the Navy."⁹⁰ Congressional support from some quarters notwithstanding, the *Times* reported that Senator David Walsh, chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee and an opponent of unification, insisted that his committee would study any proposed legislation and delay the matter further.⁹¹

During the Christmas recess, Senate Military Affairs Committee chairman Elbert Thomas acted upon President Truman's call to draft a new unification bill. He appointed a subcommittee consisting of Senators Lister Hill and Warren Austin to work with Major General Lauris Norstad representing the War Department and Vice Admiral Arthur

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Harry S. Truman, The President's Message on Unification, December 19, 1945, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 139, Folder 1, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

⁸⁹ "Long Battle in Congress On President's Plan Likely," *New York Times*, (December 20, 1945), 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Radford of the Navy to craft unification legislation that was acceptable to both services.⁹² Over a period of about three months, the subcommittee consulted a number of cabinet officials and military commanders including Secretaries Forrestal and Patterson, Chief of Naval Operations Nimitz, Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower, as well as Ferdinand Eberstadt, and worked through nine drafts of legislation.⁹³ On April 4, 1946, the ninth and final draft of the bill was presented to President Truman who expressed his approval of it and of his hope that it would be passed by Congress.⁹⁴ The Thomas-Hill-Austin bill (S. 2044) provided for a single military department with a single Secretary of Common Defense, a single Chief of Staff, with the Army, Navy and Air as three subordinate agencies.⁹⁵ However, regardless of the pains taken by the drafting subcommittee to craft legislation acceptable to all parties, the Navy leadership still opposed S. 2044. As in the earlier unification debates, one of the major Navy objections to the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill was that it failed to safeguard the Navy's prerogatives to employ land-based aviation for naval missions.

In the month before the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill came before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, James Forrestal prepared a position paper in which he outlined his objections to the bill. "Since the Navy is primarily concerned with national security as a whole," Forrestal wrote, "it is careful to examine any proposed legislation with a view to

⁹² Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 11.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Caraley, *Op.cit.*, 127.

⁹⁵ Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, *Op. cit.*, 1-9.

the continuation of its fighting efficiency, in order not to become the weak link in the chain.”⁹⁶ He continues,

Such examination is necessary, for the Navy has become increasingly aware of the intentions of the Army in regard to the details of reorganization. During recent weeks senior officers have indicated their views concerning the composition of the Marine Corps and of Naval Aviation. In brief, their views include a desire to restrict the use and size of the Marine Corps..., and to remove from the Navy all land-based aircraft employed in antisubmarine warfare, long-range sea reconnaissance, protection of shipping, and air transport.⁹⁷

Moreover, Forrestal writes,

There are many other instances from which we can deduce the desires of prominent senior officers of the Army Air Forces for a separate Air Force ultimately exercising complete authority over all matters concerning aviation including training, research and production not only of aircraft but of all weapons which pass through the air. From other statements which have been made it is evident that there prevails a lack of appreciation by such officers of the importance of the Navy, its past accomplishments and its future capabilities. From the manner in which such sentiments have been expressed there is little doubt that great pressure would be exerted, under the provisions of the Thomas Sub-Committee present bill, to destroy the effectiveness of Naval aviation and the Marine Corps.⁹⁸

Forrestal singled out the three “major deficiencies” in the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill as its creation of a single “Department of Common Defense,” its creation of a single chief of staff over all the armed forces, and its “Lack of Safeguards for the Marine Corps and for Naval Aviation.” Concerning this last deficiency, Forrestal wrote,

The importance of Naval air power as a single factor in sea power is emphasized by the composition of our modern Navy in which Naval aviation approximates forty per cent of the Navy as a whole. Naval Aviation is integrated with the Navy itself to the extent that the fleet now depends upon Naval Aviation as the dominant offensive force, and full recognition of this is indicated by the assignment of flying officers to many of the Navy’s most important commands. Furthermore the sea must be reconnoitered and submarines eliminated in order to

⁹⁶ Restatement of the Navy’s Views With Regard to Reorganization, April 17, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

develop the full power of the Navy and to defend convoys. No one is qualified to speak for air power in this country without a full understanding and appreciation of the power of our integrated air-surface Navy. The proposal that the scope of Naval Aviation—thus the effectiveness of the fleet itself—be limited by type of landing gear or means of propulsion is untenable. The Navy should under no circumstances be deprived of the use of any weapon or equipment best to perform naval tasks.⁹⁹

It is uncertain whether or not Forrestal circulated this position paper or used it privately to organize his arguments before his appearance before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee. Whatever the case, the document indicates Forrestal's thinking regarding the vulnerability of naval aviation and specifically of land-based types used for purposes such as antisubmarine warfare.

V. Henry Stimson and the Post-War Unification Debate

While Forrestal was considering the argument he would make before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee regarding S. 2044, Secretary of War Robert Patterson was trying to enlist the help of his former boss, Henry Stimson, in an effort to drum up public support for the proposed unification legislation. In a letter dated April 22, Patterson wrote, "Dear Colonel: I have been wondering whether you would be willing to write a short article, pointing out the value of a single department of the armed forces. I believe that it would have great value at the present time."¹⁰⁰ Patterson proceeded to briefly review the recent efforts to bring about service unification, mentioning in particular the work done by the Woodrum Committee in 1944 and the near unanimous recommendations in the Richardson report which had been made public in 1945.

Patterson continued,

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Robert P. Patterson, Letter to Henry L. Stimson, April 22, 1946, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 22, General Correspondence*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Down to that time the issue had been an open one, so far as the Navy was concerned. Unfortunately, in the Fall of last year, the Navy Department made it a matter of loyalty to oppose the establishment of a single department. I am certain, though I cannot prove it, that this was the result of a decision by Admiral King. Nimitz and Halsey then announced that they had changed their minds and were not in favor of a unified command.¹⁰¹

Patterson went on to describe the recent work of the Senate Military Affairs Committee and the genesis of the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill, and of his unsuccessful efforts to win Forrestal's support for it. Patterson concluded,

You know the need of a single department, and your opinion would carry great weight. Your contribution, I am sure, would be welcomed by the Readers Digest, The Saturday Evening Post, or any other magazine. Or it might be in the form of a letter to the New York Times. I know that the President would be pleased if you would give public support to this program of his.¹⁰²

This letter was the first invitation to Stimson by Patterson to reenter the fray with the Navy over the unification issue.

Stimson replied on April 24 and alerted Patterson that it would be difficult for him to write anything due to the fatigue he was suffering as the result of a recent heart attack.

"I feel it acutely," Stimson wrote, "whenever I try to put the pressure of composition on my poor old head." He continued,

I want to help you and the President in this matter, but I should have to have help myself in doing it- particularly in the shape of a skeleton or draft which would show me the important things to say and the important things to avoid saying in the light of the recent past.

That is the situation. Whether under those conditions my help would be worthwhile to you, I cannot say. You can think it over and let me know.¹⁰³

Patterson responded on April 26,

Since getting your letter of April 24 I have given additional thought to the question of your writing something on unification. We here will of course be glad

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to Robert P. Patterson, April 24, 1946, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 22, General Correspondence*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

to send you a skeleton or draft which you can mutilate as you see fit. The immediate question which I would like to think over a little longer is whether it would be more helpful for you to issue a fairly brief statement in the immediate future, or for you to write a more comprehensive article which could not be published at once. The answer to this question depends primarily on the outcome of the maneuverings now going on in the Senate as to whether and under what conditions our bill will be submitted to the Naval Affairs Committee. We will probably know the answer to this early next week.¹⁰⁴

Patterson concluded by stating that he would write to Stimson again soon on this matter.

VI. 1946 Senate Naval Affairs Committee Hearings

The Senate Naval Affairs Committee began its hearings on the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill on April 30 with a reading of the proposed legislation and a brief discussion of the history of its composition by Senator Elbert Thomas, one of its sponsors. On May 1, Navy Secretary Forrestal was called as the committee's first witness. In his testimony, Forrestal stuck to the arguments outlined in his abovementioned position paper of April 17. After citing his objections to a single Defense Department and a single military chief of staff, he raised his concerns for the future of naval aviation, stating,

I say quite frankly that, basing our opinion upon the testimony and the published statements of responsible senior officers of the Army Air Force we have grave doubts about the future of naval aviation if this bill in its present form should pass. The consequences of curtailment or restriction of naval aviation, which now compromises about 40 percent of our total naval strength—and I am talking about personnel, matériel, and appropriations, or any other criteria by which you measure our naval strength—would expose us to the same risks that were forced upon the Royal Navy after the last war as the result of the creation of a separate air force, that is, the Royal Air Force.¹⁰⁵

This remark was quickly followed by questions from various senators on a range of topics, and Forrestal did not mention the importance of land-based aircraft to the Navy's

¹⁰⁴ Robert P. Patterson, Letter to Henry L. Stimson, April 26, 1946, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 22, General Correspondence*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁵ Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 45.

mission as he did in his April 17 position paper. Nevertheless, the topic was taken up by subsequent witnesses.

On May 3, Admiral Nimitz spoke before the committee at length on the importance of land-based aviation to the Navy's mission. In his opening remarks he indicated that there was much in the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill that he found agreeable, however he was bothered by its failure to safeguard the Navy's right to control the size of the Marine Corps and to maintain land-based aviation for antisubmarine warfare and reconnaissance. He repeated Forrestal's assertion that ranking Army officers intended to "remove from the Navy all land-based aircraft employed in antisubmarine warfare, long-range sea reconnaissance, and in the protection of shipping."¹⁰⁶ According to Nimitz, land-based aircraft had been in use by the Navy for antisubmarine warfare and reconnaissance since World War I, although the Navy relied primarily on tender-based seaplanes for these tasks. During the interwar period, however, certain technological improvements changed the aspect of naval warfare. Nimitz stated,

With the improvement in performance and reliability of land planes for operation over the sea, and as a result of the need to carry on naval reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare in cold weather, in areas where airdromes are more readily available than good seadromes, and in areas where enemy fighters were apt to be encountered, it became advantageous to use a considerable proportion of land planes and amphibians for naval reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare. Antisubmarine warfare, which includes the integrated operation of surface craft, carrier-based aircraft, and patrol planes should continue to be recognized as a responsibility of the Navy and the Navy should be specifically authorized to operate such land based aircraft as it requires for this essential purpose... The right of the Navy to use the best aircraft available for these purposes should be established definitely.¹⁰⁷

During questioning, Senator Saltonstall asked if ideally the Navy intended for the Army to control air operations over certain areas while the Navy would control other areas.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

Nimitz replied in the affirmative, but remarked that such an arrangement did not preclude or prohibit the Army Air Forces from attacking enemy targets at sea. Senator Saltonstall challenged Nimitz on this point, asking whether or not this proved the argument “that there is duplication of effort and duplication of expense for the Navy to have land-based planes for those purposes.”¹⁰⁸ Nimitz promptly replied that there was no overlap in the kinds of planes flown by the Army Air Forces and the Navy. Admiral Forrest Sherman, who had accompanied Nimitz to the hearings, interjected, stating that,

The type of aircraft used for naval reconnaissance purposes to watch the surface of the sea, and the type of aircraft which would be at all effective in detecting the approach of an air raid over the Polar regions, are quite different. The aircraft to detect an air raid across the Polar region has to be a very large, high-flying aircraft, containing elaborate radar installations, and by its construction would probably be unsuitable for use in antisubmarine warfare and its power plant and design would be quite different from the one we find necessary for our purposes.¹⁰⁹

Nimitz followed up by reminding the committee that Admiral Radford was scheduled to testify and planned to cover these points in greater detail.

Earlier during questioning, Nimitz had been asked if the current roles and missions of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps were designated by Congress, to which he replied that they were not, but were regulated by the *Joint Action of the Army and Navy*.¹¹⁰ Returning to this point, Senator Walsh asked whether or not the Joint Chiefs of Staff were able to assign missions so as to ensure that there was no overlapping between the services.¹¹¹ Nimitz replied he and his counterparts were currently trying to do just that “on the functions of the Marine Corps vis-à-vis the function of the Army ground forces,” and also on the “function of the Army Air Forces vis-à-vis naval aviation,” but

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

with great difficulty. “So where an honest difference of opinion exists at the Joint Chiefs of Staff level,” Nimitz advised, “it may be wise for the Congress to lay down certain general principles.”¹¹² He further recommended “that any legislation for reorganization of the services include provisions approximately as follows:”

- (a) No service will attempt to restrict in any way the means and weapons used by another service in carrying out its functions.
- (b) No service will attempt to restrict in any way the areas of operations of the other services in carrying out their functions.
- (c) Each service will lend the utmost assistance possible to the other services in carrying out their functions.

The three foregoing provisions are taken from agreements which have in the past been approved by the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy and which, when observed, have proved to be most conducive to interservice harmony and to efficiency in combat.

Those are the provisions that were written into this Joint Army-Navy action.¹¹³

There was discussion off the record at this point regarding naval aviation and the Marine Corps. Immediately following, Nimitz was asked to clarify statements he made in 1945 to the Richardson committee that naval aviation and the Marine Corps needed to be protected by provisions in any reorganization legislation. Senator Walsh queried if Nimitz could provide information regarding the opinions of the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning naval aviation and the Marine Corps. Nimitz responded that Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower believed the Marine Corps should be reduced to the size of a lightly armed regiment. General Spaatz, head of the Army Air Forces, Nimitz remarked, “has expressed the view that all land-based aviation other than of carrier-type planes should be a function of the Army Air Forces. This runs counter to the Navy’s need to operate land-based aviation for overseas reconnaissance and for antisubmarine

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 99.

work.”¹¹⁴ Discussion followed concerning the amphibious capabilities of the Marine Corps and Army, but soon thereafter returned to air matters when Senator Walsh succinctly asked, “What are the desires of the Army Air Forces with respect to naval aviation in the event of merger?” Nimitz replied, “I believe that it is the ultimate ambition of the Army Air Forces to absorb naval aviation in its entirety and set up one large air force.”¹¹⁵

Nimitz revealed in his testimony that the three members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff held deeply divergent views concerning the future disposition of the Marine Corps and of Naval Aviation.¹¹⁶ In the months leading up to the Senate Naval Affairs Committee hearings, Admiral Nimitz and Generals Eisenhower and Spaatz were locked in a protracted argument, not only concerning the Marine Corps and Naval Aviation, but also whether or not the *Joint Action of the Army and Navy* should continue to serve as a binding agreement to define the roles of the military services.¹¹⁷ On March 15, 1946, General Eisenhower summarized the Army opinion regarding these issues in a Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum. Concerning naval aviation, Eisenhower wrote,

General Spaatz proposes that the Navy be entirely responsible for ship, carrier and water based aircraft. The Army Air Forces will be entirely responsible for land-based aircraft except for the few land-based transport type aircraft essential for internal administration and certain other land based types for the performance of training.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹⁶ The position papers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff detailing this dispute are designated Series JCS 1478. Although they are referenced in the finding aid for the Joint Chiefs of Staff files at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, the file folder containing this series is not in the designated box. Attempts to locate the file folder by the NARA staff have thus far proved unsuccessful. General Eisenhower’s JCS 1478 papers are reprinted in *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The Chief of Staff: VII*, Edited by Louis Galambos, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

¹¹⁷ Dwight, D. Eisenhower, *Memorandum by Chief of Staff, U.S. Army*, March 15, 1946, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The Chief of Staff: VII*, Edited by Louis Galambos, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 928.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 930.

Regarding antisubmarine warfare and protection of shipping, Eisenhower added,

The Army Air Forces can and would designate an appropriate number of air force units to operate with the Navy under the principles of unified command to assure development of tactics and technique in such coordinated operations and will insure the proper indoctrination of all air force units which are likely to participate. This will provide for the maximum needs for air power in these operations, which might conceivably reach peaks involving a large portion of land-based air, while at other times requiring only a minor portion. Any question as to the allocation of available air power in order to insure the maximum realization of its capabilities would be resolved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Air Forces so allocated will, of course, operate under the Theater or Task Force commander to which allocated under the principles of unified command.¹¹⁹

Admiral Nimitz, however, rejected this and the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained divided over this issue. On April 2, Eisenhower proposed an interim “working arrangement” as the three Joint Chiefs continued to work at defining the specific roles and missions of the services. Concerning land-based aviation, Eisenhower suggested,

Recognize (1) that land-based air operations are normally a function of the Army Air Forces; (2) that the Navy will continue to operate certain land-based aircraft and air units to maintain that part of the “know-how” now in the Navy and to provide for the training of Army Air Forces and to insure the orderly transfer of functions as ultimately determined. To accomplish this, there will continue to exist in the Navy operational land-based units of not to exceed----- multi-engined or equivalent types of long-range, land-based aircraft, which will in emergency be reinforced by adequate numbers from the Army Air Forces as directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹²⁰

Additionally, according to the proposal, the Army Air Forces would be charged with procurement of all land-based types, but collaborate with the Navy in the design and procurement of antisubmarine and sea reconnaissance types. Furthermore, Eisenhower proposed,

Any expansion of antisubmarine and fleet reconnaissance operations in time of emergency or in war time will be provided by the Army Air Forces as directed by

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 976. Eisenhower left the number of Navy land-based planes unspecified in this document.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To this end the Navy will conduct indoctrination and training of Army Air Force units in these specialized operations.¹²¹

However, in spite of the attempt to reach a compromise, Eisenhower's proposal was rejected by Nimitz and the matter remained in contentious dispute. By April 10, Eisenhower proposed suspending the exchange of additional papers on the subject.¹²² This is where matters stood when Nimitz testified before the Senate Naval Affairs committee on May 3.

The controversy over the future of land-based naval aviation was raised again by Ferdinand Eberstadt, who testified before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee on May 9 concerning the military reorganization study he conducted at the request of James Forrestal in 1945. In the back-and-forth of questioning, Eberstadt revealed that this was a key issue separating the Army and the Navy:

Mr. Eberstadt. ...The Navy did not accept the report unanimously because the report, as you know, sets up a separate department of air and there were in the Navy then and I think they still are, many who will not agree to that.

The Chairman. You mean, will not agree to a separate department of air for the Army?

Mr. Eberstadt. Well, it is often expressed that way, Senator.

The Chairman. Or department of air for both the Army and Navy?

Mr. Eberstadt. Oh, for the Army. I have never heard anyone in the Navy suggest a separate department of air for the Navy, except that there are a great many in the Navy who are in agreement with the idea that air transport ought to be consolidated.

The Chairman. Yes.

Senator Robertson. Excuse me for interrupting. Isn't it so, that the Navy feels that their carrier planes form a very important arm for the future, they having demonstrated their value in the last war; and also that the Navy feels it necessary that they should have land-based planes for patrol work?

Mr. Eberstadt. Reconnaissance.

Senator Robertson. Patrol and reconnaissance, yes.

Mr. Eberstadt. Yes, patrol, observation.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 977.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 997.

Senator Robertson. And those, too, were absolutely essential to the Navy, they seem to think. As I gathered, the point of difference between the Air Force and the Navy is on the question of land-based planes.

Mr. Eberstadt. I would say that is the main point of difference.¹²³

Following this exchange, the committee continued its questioning of Eberstadt, but on topics unrelated to naval aviation. After adjourning, the committee did not reconvene until July 2.

In the meantime, Robert Patterson continued to urge Henry Stimson to take action on behalf of the unification effort. In a May 7 letter to Stimson, Patterson wrote,

If you agree, I propose to ask Senator Thomas of the Senate Military Affairs Committee to write you a letter asking for an expression of your views on this subject. Enclosed herewith is a proposal draft of a reply. If you are agreeable to this, please let me know. I will then see that Senator Thomas writes you and you can then send him the enclosed draft, changed as you see fit, or anything else you desire.¹²⁴

Patterson concludes with an interesting proposal:

Carl Detzer of the Readers Digest is now writing an article on this subject which will be finished in a few weeks. Both Colliers and the Readers Digest have agreed to publish it. Subject to your concurrence, and subject also to its being a good article, I will send it to you to see if you would like to have it come out over your name.¹²⁵

Attached was a three-paged letter which explained the familiar War Department party-line of the merits of unification.

Stimson replied on May 13 that he thought the idea of exchanging letters with Senator Thomas was good, but that he had heard through John J. McCloy that President Truman was about to propose his own unification plan. For this reason, Stimson thought his letter to Senator Thomas should wait until after the details of the President's plan

¹²³ Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 181.

¹²⁴ Robert P. Patterson, Letter to Henry L. Stimson, May 7, 1946, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 22, General Correspondence File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

were made public. “As to the second suggestion, namely Carl Detzer and the Readers Digest,” Stimson wrote, “I am a little shy about attaching my name to journalistic ghostwriting. The same question of timing will also inhere in this project, so you had better leave me out of that.”¹²⁶ Although Stimson opted not to sign on to any ghostwritten articles, he was definitely back in the fray with the Navy over service unification. As we shall see, the former Secretary of War would soon publish an account of the interservice rivalry concerning antisubmarine aviation during the Battle of the Atlantic for the express purpose of publically making the case as to why military unification was warranted.

During the adjournment of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, the Navy was at work attempting to strengthen its case for the retention of its land-based aviation. On May 23, the Operations Evaluation Group, the Navy’s team of scientists tasked with analyzing the effectiveness of antisubmarine methods, produced a memorandum titled “Relative Effectiveness of Army and Navy Anti-Submarine Aviation.” Relying on the statistical analysis of the number of submarines sighted compared to man-hours flown, the study concluded that “Naval Planes were 208% as effective as Army planes in converting enemy sightings into effective attacks, and 340% as effective in converting them into kills.”¹²⁷ Around the same date, James Forrestal’s office compiled a thirty-three page paper titled, “History of the Attempted Suppression of Naval Aviation by the Army.”¹²⁸ In the meticulous style of a legal brief, the paper covers the struggle between

¹²⁶ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to Robert P. Patterson, May 13, 1946, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 22, General Correspondence File*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹²⁷ E. B. Gardner, Memorandum for Captain A. B. Vosseller, May 23, 1946, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C.

¹²⁸ “History of the Attempted Suppression of Naval Aviation,” undated, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 139, Folder 1, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton*

the Navy and the Army over the control of naval aviation beginning with the Benson Board in March, 1917, and concludes with a synopsis of the current unresolved Joint Chiefs of Staff dispute over roles and missions of the respective military services. The wartime contest for control of antisubmarine aviation and the perceived effort to denude the Navy of land-based aircraft through unification legislation is covered in this document in great detail. The author of the document is not mentioned, but its style suggests that it was written by Forrestal. Its purpose seems to be that of an *aide memoire*, to give the reader an historical frame of reference regarding the ongoing dispute over the control of naval aviation. It is uncertain whether this document was intended for circulation or if it was only intended for Forrestal's own use.

VII. President Truman Intercedes

On May 13, President Truman summoned the War and Navy Department leadership to the White House for a conference about reconciling the Army and Navy views on unification. Accompanying Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal to the meeting were Admiral Nimitz, General Spaatz, and Deputy Army Chief of Staff, General Thomas T. Handy.¹²⁹ During the meeting, Truman directed that the War and Navy Departments present to him by May 31 a report outlining their areas of agreement and disagreement so that the Executive branch could present a unified position as Congress considered the unification issue. Although the press reported that Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal left

University Library. The last event mentioned in this paper is the submission of a memorandum by Admiral Nimitz to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on May 23, 1946.

¹²⁹ "Truman Confers on Forces Merger," *New York Times*, (May 14, 1946), 28.

the meeting with a friendly, cooperative attitude, divisions over the familiar issues remained.¹³⁰

Regardless of the Secretaries' spirit of cooperation, on May 15, Senator David Walsh and Congressman Carl Vinson, respectively chairman of the Senate and House Naval Affairs Committees, issued an indirect ultimatum to President Truman through a letter to James Forrestal indicating that Congress would not approve a single Department of Defense. In addition to objecting to a single department secretary and a single overall chief of staff, the legislators objected to any curtailment of the Marine Corps and of "transferring the vital function of naval aviation to the Army Air Corps or to a separate Air Corps."¹³¹ Walsh and Vinson concluded,

Any compromise which results from a conference by the War and Navy Departments which does not embody most of the views of those members of Congress who have made a study of the importance of sea-air power in our national defense structure, and which in general does not conform with the views expressed in this letter would not, in our opinion, be in the best interests of the United States. We believe further that a bill which does not support these views will not receive the approval of the Congress.¹³²

A few days later, the *New York Times* reported that this ultimatum effectively killed any chance that Congress would pass unification legislation in the foreseeable future.¹³³

Nevertheless, in spite of the intransigence of the naval advocates in the House and Senate, Patterson and Forrestal were able to compromise on at least one key issue, namely, that the War Department agreed to yield on the creation of a single, overall military chief of staff. However, Patterson and the War Department refused to yield on

¹³⁰ "Truman Asks Data on Merger Views," *New York Times*, (May 15, 1946), 4.

¹³¹ "Naval Chairmen Reject Merging of Armed Forces," *New York Times*, (May 20, 1946), 1.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³³ "Pattern of Defense Forces is Set," *New York Times*, (May 26, 1946), E4.

its intention to create a single Defense Department with a single department secretary.¹³⁴

As before, the future of the Marine Corps and of land-based naval aviation remained a contentious and unsettled issue.¹³⁵

On May 31 as directed, Patterson and Forrestal submitted their report to President Truman of their efforts to reconcile the views of the two departments concerning the unification issue. Their letter outlined the several areas of agreement between the departments, such as the need for a Council of Common Defense, a Central Intelligence Agency, a National Security Resources Board, as well as the War Department's repudiation of the need for a single overall military chief of staff. However, the letter indicated that the two departments could not agree on key issues. Among these were the War Department's continued insistence on the need for—and of the Navy's continued rejection of—a single Department of Defense with three subordinate branches of naval, ground and air forces, the curtailment of the Marine Corps, and the Air Forces' absorption of land-based naval aviation. Regarding the War Department view of this last item, the letter states,

The nation cannot afford the luxury of several completely self-sufficient services. The War demonstrated that they must be complementary—mutually supporting. With respect to land planes, there are no purely naval functions which justify uneconomical duplication of equipment and installations. For example, the Air Force already performs long-range reconnaissance for the ground forces and itself. The Navy's recognized requirement for the products of long range reconnaissance can be effectively filled by the Air Force. As regards anti-submarine warfare, it is the view of the War Department that the experience of the Army Air Forces in the last war adequately justifies the belief that land-based planes operated by the Air Forces can meet this requirement.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ "Army, Navy Refuse to Yield on Merger," *New York Times*, (May 29, 1946), 10.

¹³⁵ "Merger Fight Nears End," *New York Times*, (May 29, 1946), 10.

¹³⁶ Joint Letter to the President from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, May 31, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*. See also: Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 206.

The Navy's counterargument stated,

To accomplish its fundamental purpose, the Navy needs a certain number of landplanes for naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and protection of shipping. Experience indicates that such landplanes, to be effective, must be manned by naval personnel trained in naval warfare. Lack of such aircraft under complete naval control as to design, procurement, operations, personnel, training and administration might be disastrous to our national security.¹³⁷

It is interesting to note that, the Navy's argument notwithstanding, the War Department appealed to the effectiveness of the AAFAC in the Battle of the Atlantic as an historical justification for the Air Forces' future absorption of antisubmarine aviation. The joint letter was followed by a "full oral presentation of the points involved," by the secretaries before the President on June 4.¹³⁸

On June 15, President Truman wrote a joint reply to Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal, thanking them for their work at reaching reconciliation and acknowledged the areas of agreement reached between the two departments. On the matters where disagreement persisted, President Truman ruled that the policy of the Executive Branch would be for the creation of a single military department with a single department secretary. The President also recognized the need to retain within the single military department the three coordinated services of the Army, Navy and Air Force, while also affirming the necessity of the Navy to maintain a Marine Corps for the purpose of conducting "limited land operations as are essential to the prosecution of a Naval campaign."¹³⁹ Concerning naval aviation, Truman wrote,

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Harry S. Truman, Letter to Robert Patterson and James Forrestal, June 15, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

The Air Force shall have the responsibility for the development, procurement, maintenance and operation of the military air resources of the United States with the following exceptions, in which responsibility must be vested in the Navy:

(1) Ship, carrier and water-based aircraft essential to Naval operations, and aircraft of the United States Marine Corps.

(2) Land-type aircraft necessary for essential internal administration and for air transport over routes of sole interest to Naval forces and where the requirements cannot be met by normal air transport facilities.

(3) Land-type aircraft necessary for the training of personnel for the aforementioned purposes.

Land-based planes for Naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and protection of shipping can and should be manned by Air Force personnel. If the three services are to work as a team there must be close cooperation, with interchange of personnel and special training for specific duties.

Within its proper sphere of operation, Naval Aviation must not be restricted but must be given every opportunity to develop its maximum usefulness.¹⁴⁰

A virtually identical copy of the abovementioned letter was sent to Senators Elbert Thomas and David Walsh, respectively chairmen of the Senate Military and Naval Affairs Committees, and Representatives Andrew May and Carl Vinson, respectively chairmen of the House Military and Naval Affairs Committees.¹⁴¹

Secretary of War Patterson replied to Truman on June 18, acknowledging the President's ruling on the points of disagreement and pledged the War Department's "wholehearted support" in carrying them out.¹⁴² Forrestal's acknowledgement to the President was sent a few days later. His response, however, was more complex than Patterson's and evidences something of a manipulative intent.

Forrestal's June 24 response to President Truman acknowledged the President's rulings, and assured him that he believed "the foregoing objectives attainable, and the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Harry S. Truman, Identical letters to Senators Thomas and Walsh and Representatives May and Vinson, June 15, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

¹⁴² Robert P. Patterson, Letter to President Truman, June 18, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

recognized difficulties in drafting legislation which will insure their success, surmountable.”¹⁴³ However, regarding naval aviation, Forrestal adds,

One of the other points in your letter of 15 June relates to the subject of land-based planes for Naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare, and protection of shipping. I am glad to note that the Navy is to have a continuing part in the future development of these operations, so that full advantage may be taken of its experience in this field and of the lessons learned in the late war. Admiral Nimitz joins me in this expression.¹⁴⁴

This passage seems to contradict President Truman’s clear statement in his June 15 joint letter to Forrestal and Patterson. It is unclear, however, if Forrestal is trying to knowingly employ sophistry to undermine the President in this letter. In a different letter sent that same day to Carl Vinson, Forrestal wrote that he was forwarding the Congressman a copy of his letter to Truman, “because I wish to make reference to those paragraphs that dealt with naval aviation and oversea reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare.” Forrestal continued,

You will note that the President’s letter in this regard had a certain ambiguity which I know is not intended – that is to say he defined those parts of naval aviation which should be retained by the Navy but by exclusion of reference to reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare it could be implied that he proposed to deny us all the necessary equipment and personnel to fulfill our mission in this regard. I am advised that such was not the intent and that is the reason the paragraph on naval aviation in my letter to the President is phrased as it is.¹⁴⁵

Forrestal’s explanation to Vinson raises some important questions. Speaking of Truman’s relegation of antisubmarine aviation to the Air Force, Forrestal remarks that he was “advised that such was not the intent” of the President. Who it was that advised Forrestal of this is not mentioned. Perhaps Forrestal meant that he learned this directly

¹⁴³ James Forrestal, Letter to President Truman, June 24, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*. See also: Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 211, 215.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ James Forrestal, Letter to Carl Vinson, June 24, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 52, Folder 56, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*.

from conversations with the President. It must be remembered that Forrestal and Patterson met with the President on June 4, only days after the War and Navy Secretaries had submitted their joint letter to Truman regarding their views on unification. It is possible that Forrestal was given to understand from Truman himself that he intended for the Navy to retain its land-based antisubmarine aircraft as a result of this follow-up discussion. However, it seems more reasonable to conclude that Forrestal's contradiction of the President was, in fact, polite defiance, with the purpose of giving the President enough leeway to honorably backtrack on this issue. This seems a more reasonable interpretation given Forrestal's statement to Vinson later in his letter:

As I think you are well aware, this whole business of unification has been a troubling and embarrassing business for me. I cannot successfully play hypocrisy. The letter I have written the President, as I said earlier, is most carefully considered from that standpoint. It represents the maximum to which I can go. If it does not conform with his wishes I shall have no alternative except to withdraw – which I am not putting in the category of national calamities. It is very easy to begin to take one's self much too seriously in all these matters.¹⁴⁶

Whatever the circumstance, Forrestal seemed to have gained the upper hand. When reporting of the Navy Secretary's letter to the President, the *New York Times* also noted that although the Senate Military Affairs Committee was revising the unification bill following President Truman's recommendations, it had no real hope of passage during that session of Congress.¹⁴⁷

VIII. Senate Naval Affairs Committee Hearings Resume

Hearings before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee resumed on July 2. Admiral William Halsey testified in closed session, rejecting the revised unification plan since it

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ William S. White, "Forrestal Backs Unification Aims," *New York Times*, (June 27, 1946), 1, 44.

would give “Army” interests a two-to-one voting majority in the Joint Chiefs of Staff and thus prove detrimental to the Navy. He also spoke of his experiences in the Pacific where he believed that land-based naval aircraft did a superb job of protecting his fleet by sweeping the sea in front of him clear of Japanese submarines. Halsey added,

Under the present functions of the Army Air Force, I do not think, I do not believe, that they would or could properly train a man for this very vital and very important duty as a means of saving ships and lives.

I think one of the best showings of that business is Admiral Doenitz, the German admiral, in his statement about how he lost the U-boat war in the Atlantic.

I presume you gentlemen have a copy of that; If you haven’t I will see to it that you get one. And in this he bitterly assailed the fact that there was no air assignment to the Navy and that, in consequence, when he wanted to start his wolf pack tactics with his U-boats, that he had to requisition air from the Army, and then had to completely train them in recognition and navigation and all other purposes that come to that job, and when he had them finally trained, he had been licked. It was too late.¹⁴⁸

During questioning, Halsey remarked that the Navy then possessed only 250 land-based planes, which accounted for less than five percent of all naval aircraft. Nevertheless, he remarked, they were manned by naval aviators who were specifically trained for sea reconnaissance and antisubmarine operations. Army land-based bombers were unsuited to the task, he added, because their crews were not trained for that sort of work.¹⁴⁹ The incongruity of Halsey’s remarks linking antisubmarine operations with Admiral Doenitz’s lack of naval patrol planes went unchallenged by the committee. Neither did the committee members press Halsey about the possibility of training Army air crews to perform antisubmarine operations as had been done with the AAFAC and the RAF Coastal Command during the Battle of the Atlantic. By all indications, the Senate Naval

¹⁴⁸ Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 229-230.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

Affairs Committee hearings had become an uncritical forum in which the Navy would hammer home its opposition to unification.

On July 9, Admiral Thomas C. Kincaid testified before the committee. During the war, Kincaid held a number of important commands in the Pacific, and at the time of his testimony, had assumed command of the Eastern Sea Frontier, the former command of Admiral Adolphus Andrews and the main theater of U-boat activity in the western Atlantic. During his testimony, Kincaid began by asserting that land-based aviation was vital to the Navy for antisubmarine warfare, reconnaissance work, and the protection of shipping. According to Kincaid,

Reconnaissance and antisubmarine planes are just as much a part of a task force or fleet disposition as the destroyers in the screen or the fighter “cap” overhead. To put these weapons under the control of another agency seems to me to defeat the very purpose of this bill. It seems to me that the division of authority and responsibility between the services should be made on a functional basis.¹⁵⁰

As the hearings proceeded, Senator Walsh asked Admiral Kincaid several leading questions as to why S. 2044 was detrimental to the Navy. His questioning led to the following exchange concerning land-based aviation:

The Chairman. Do you believe that shore-based aircraft operated by personnel of the Air Force to be created by S. 2044 would furnish adequate support to the fleet if they were under the operational control of a naval commander?

Admiral Kincaid. Definitely not. A group of that sort must be not only under operational control at the time it is in operation, but it must be under control during the period, preparatory period beforehand, during training, during development.

The Chairman. Do you believe that the assignment of all shore based aircraft to a separate Air Force would result in a repetition of the British experience with the RAF?

Admiral Kincaid. Exactly the same thing. The RAF took no interest whatever in a naval air arm. The same thing would be true of a separate Air Force.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 261-262.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 264-265.

Admiral Kinkaid went on to discuss his first hand experience of the Navy's reliance on land-based planes for reconnaissance, antisubmarine operations and protection of shipping in the Pacific and affirmed his opinion that these were essentially naval operations.¹⁵² Admiral Kinkaid fielded questions on other topics, however, before pursuing the topic of guided missile development, Senator Robertson remarked to the Admiral, "If I might say so, I think you have made an excellent case for the absolute necessity for the Navy having their own land-based planes."¹⁵³ Senator Robertson's complimentary tone was indicative of the committee's generally uncritical acceptance of the Navy's point of view concerning the need to safeguard the Navy's land-based aviation.

On July 10, Admiral Raymond Spruance testified, reiterating much of what Admiral Kinkaid had said regarding the Navy's need to retain land-based aviation. He particularly praised the usefulness of the PB4Y for reconnaissance and for striking Japanese shipping at Truk, as well as for other offensive operations in the Pacific.¹⁵⁴ This four engined, land-based airplane was the Navy version of the B-24 Liberator, which, it will be recalled, was the type of airplane that the Navy preferred for antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic, and was the subject of intensive interservice haggling in 1943 leading to the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement. Although Admiral Spruance does not mention antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic, he reaffirmed his belief, as did Admiral Spruance, that antisubmarine warfare was essentially a naval operation and that land-based airplanes were essential to the Navy so that it could perform this mission.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 271-272.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 288ff.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

Furthermore, he concluded, it would be foolish of the Navy not to make use of existing Army designs, like the Liberator, if they proved suitable to carrying out the Navy's mission.¹⁵⁶

The Army Air Forces leadership was trying to follow the progress of the hearings as much as possible given the fact that they were closed meetings. On July 10, General Spaatz wrote to General Arnold, who was by then in retirement, about what he had learned of the proceedings. In his letter, Spaatz wrote,

Senator Walsh revealed that Admirals John H. Towers and Thomas C. Kincaid protested vigorously and stated that the removal from the Navy of land-based planes would leave the Navy without its eyes. Both men testified that their experiences throughout the war demonstrated conclusively that it was absolutely necessary for the Navy to maintain control of the planes over a fleet, including land based planes, for successful fleet activities.

Senator Walsh also states that the Navy has complained to the Committee that the new bill carrier proposals not agreed to by the Navy Department and “a good deal was contrary” to what Navy spokesmen understood to have been the area of agreement with the Army. He has expressed his belief that it will be impossible to enact any legislation for unification of the services at this session of Congress.¹⁵⁷

Although the air power advocates knew that unification bill would not leave the Senate Naval Affairs Committee in its present state, the Navy still had one more day of testimony during which it would attempt to deliver the *coup de grâce*.

The following day, July 11, was the last day of testimony on S. 2044 before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee. Admiral Richmond K. Turner appeared on behalf of Admiral Nimitz, the Chief of Naval Operations and spoke on the importance of land-based naval aviation for conducting both defensive and offensive missions.¹⁵⁸ Turner

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁵⁷ Carl Spaatz, Letter to General Arnold, July 10, 1946, *Henry Harley Arnold Papers, Reel 20, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹⁵⁸ Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 310.

rejected the idea that naval operations could be performed by the Army Air Forces, stating,

My war experience showed that, except in one particular, Army planes were largely ineffective when used for naval reconnaissance. The planes were not designed for the purpose, their crews were not trained for the duty, and their cooperation with Naval commands afloat and ashore was defective.¹⁵⁹

Admiral Turner explained that the one instance where Army cooperation in a naval mission worked well was when the Army assisted with photo-reconnaissance over Iwo Jima. Turner next spoke of how land-based aviation was used to good or bad effect by other countries during the war. Speaking of the RAF, he said,

The British have never had success with using the RAF planes for reconnaissance or antisubmarine warfare. The attack effectiveness—that is, the bombing effectiveness—of the coastal command of the RAF, which operated principally for naval purposes, has never been satisfactory.¹⁶⁰

During questioning, Senator Walsh asked Turner why the Navy found it necessary to organize land-based squadrons during the war. Turner replied that the Navy had always believed there was a need for such squadrons, but that peacetime appropriations bills did not provide for the expansion of the Navy's land-based aviation needs. Turner continued,

Immediately upon the outbreak of war, or the imminence of war, we tried to get such planes. We were not successful because we could not get priorities until it was apparent that there were no planes available for purely naval functions, because the Army Air Forces insisted on concentrating its effort entirely on the attack on Germany and only sent planes to the southwest Pacific which it was forced to do. It was then when the Navy had to take over these planes, and a great deal of time was lost in converting Army planes for Navy use.¹⁶¹

When questioned further about the potential of the Army Air Forces taking over antisubmarine warfare and sea reconnaissance, Turner repeated the familiar Navy response that Army air crews would not adequately perform such operations for lack of

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

appropriate training.¹⁶² He further asserted that, even if the disposition of the Marine Corps and land-based naval aviation were settled to the Navy's satisfaction, he would still oppose the unification bill.¹⁶³

Before the committee adjourned, the chairman had a number of written statements from prominent naval officers read into the record. In their respective statements, both Admirals King and Mitscher repeat the standard Navy line that land-based aviation is vital for the Navy's performance of antisubmarine and sea reconnaissance duty.¹⁶⁴ This was reiterated in Admiral Aubrey Fitch's statement, in which he also emphasized the Navy's historic development of aircraft types which were different from those of the Army and more suited to naval missions. He specifically mentioned the Navy's need to modify the Army B-24 during the war so as to make it suitable for antisubmarine warfare, since the Navy had been prevented from developing a suitable land-based type for this purpose during the interwar years.¹⁶⁵

One of the last written statements read into the record was made by Captain J. P. W. Vest, then serving as the Navy's chief of aviation training. From early 1941 until the spring of 1942, Vest was an American naval observer in Great Britain. In 1943, he served as a member of the combined American and British Allied Antisubmarine Board, before taking command of the USS *Croatan*, an escort carrier in the Atlantic. In his statement, Vest remarks that during his service on the Allied Antisubmarine Board he was able to closely observe the British antisubmarine methods involving the cooperative effort of the Royal Navy and the RAF Coastal Command. Vest believed that the

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 324; 329.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 335-336.

absorption of naval aviation by the RAF in 1919 and its subsequent neglect in favor of strategic bombing put the Royal Navy at a serious disadvantage at the outset of the Second World War.¹⁶⁶ Due to the RAF's neglect of naval aviation, the RAF Coastal Command was forced to rely on American types, such as Catalinas, Flying Fortresses, Liberators and Mariners, to conduct sea reconnaissance and antisubmarine operations.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, because the Coastal Command was a neglected service, many RAF officers considered service in it a dead-end for their careers. Thus, the service did not attract the better airmen. In sum, general lack of enthusiasm for naval missions and poor training left the Coastal Command the least capable branch of the RAF until late into the war, resulting in great loss of life and material to U-boat attacks.¹⁶⁸ In conclusion, Vest warned that a similar situation could transpire in the United States if an independent Air Force were to absorb the Navy's air component.¹⁶⁹

XI. Conclusion

The Senate Naval Affairs Committee adjourned on July 11 without commending the revised Thomas-Hill-Austin bill to the full Senate. As a result of the committee's inaction, the bill had no hope of passage during that term of Congress. Nevertheless, in spite of this setback, Senator Thomas vowed to reintroduce a similar unification bill in the next congressional session.¹⁷⁰

Proponents of unification were angered by the Navy's blockage of the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill. In a July 23 interview with the *New York Times*, Lieutenant General

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 340-341.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁷⁰ "Army-Navy Merger Shelved," *New York Times*, (July 20, 1946), 2.

James Doolittle repeated his assertions made earlier before the Senate Military Affairs Committee that the battleship was obsolete and the aircraft carrier obsolescent. He further remarked that “Navy men realized that the future security of the nation and the world lay in land-based aircraft, as provided by their demand for control of a strategic air force of their own.”¹⁷¹ Doolittle criticized those Navy men who had claimed that the recent atomic tests at Bikini had proved inconclusive in their effort to discredit the primacy of air power over naval forces in future wars. To reinforce his argument that land-based Army aircraft could defeat ships at sea, Doolittle further declared that “more than half of the antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic when the submarine menace was most critical had been carried out by land-based Army planes.”¹⁷²

On August 6, in a personal letter, General Arnold wrote to General Spaatz, “in my opinion, the Unification of the Armed Forces is a “dead duck”,- just as dead as dead can be.”¹⁷³ Arnold further lamented the pending combination of the Military and Naval Affairs Committees in the House and Senate, since the chairmanship of each would probably fall respectively to Carl Vinson and David Walsh, both strong proponents of the Navy and opponents of unification. Nevertheless, he opined that most in Congress still supported unification and an independent Air Force. In conclusion, Arnold wrote,

I just want to repeat a thought I have told you several times, and that is this: both King and Leahy outlined their thoughts of what the Navy of the future should be, -- thoughts which conform to those of the present people in power in the Navy--, when they said to me, “‘Hap’, if you will let us have your Air Forces, -- with our Marine Ground Force and our Navy, there will be no need for an Army.” That was not all wishful thinking on the part of King and Leahy! And it is not all

¹⁷¹ “Doolittle Urges Unified Air Force,” *New York Times*, (July 24, 1946), 19.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Henry Harley Arnold, Letter to General Spaatz, August 6, 1946, *Henry Harley Arnold Papers, Reel 20, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

wishful thinking on the part of the Navy, itself. Slowly, but surely, they are laying a foundation upon which to build a very fine, rugged “edifice”!¹⁷⁴

In spite of Arnold’s assertion that unification was dead, proponents of the measure were at work reforming legislation for presentation to the next session of Congress. In the meantime, both the proponents and opponents of military unification were honing their arguments in expectation of the next round of congressional hearings. They were also at work making their case for or against unification in the court of public opinion. It should be recalled that earlier, in May 1946, Secretary of War Patterson requested that Henry Stimson sign his name to a ghostwritten article in support of unification. Although Stimson refused to do so on general principles, he was not opposed publishing his own work supporting unification in the popular press. On July 22, Stimson wrote to his wartime science advisor, Edward Bowles, stating that,

I am going to need your help in one or two of the portions of the book which I am now preparing to publish with the aid of Mr. McGeorge Bundy. I want particularly to get the ordered facts and dates of the various steps which you and I took to promote the use of radar in, first, the submarine problem and, second, some of the later problems.¹⁷⁵

As we shall see, the result of Stimson’s efforts was his memoir, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, of which chapter 20 was published separately as “A Time of Peril” in the *Ladies Home Journal*. This article would serve as both a history of the Battle of the Atlantic as well as thinly veiled propaganda meant to sway public opinion in support of military unification.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Henry L. Stimson, Letter to Edward Bowles, July 22, 1946, *The Personal Papers of McGeorge Bundy, Series 2, Henry L. Stimson, John F. Kennedy Library, National Archives and Records Administration, Boston, MA.*

Chapter 6

The Unification Issue Settled: The National Security Act of 1947

I. Interservice Agreement on Roles and Missions of the Armed Services

Congress went into recess on August 2, 1946, and no further action was taken on the Thomas-Hill-Austin bill. According Admiral Arthur Radford, unification of the armed forces became a “back burner” issue that summer, however Navy Secretary Forrestal “went on the offensive” with the President and with Secretary of War Patterson that autumn to secure a settlement amenable to the Navy.¹

According to Radford, the Army position remained that of favoring immediate unification while leaving the details to be worked out at some future date. At a meeting in September, both Patterson and Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower questioned why the Navy should fear “that any such subsequent actions would impair their ability to perform their missions.” Radford wrote, “Secretary Forrestal’s reply was blunt: the Navy *did* have deep apprehensions, with good reason he thought, in regard to the Marines and certain aspects of naval aviation.”² According to Radford,

This September meeting was a milestone in the unification talks, which had been going on for over a year. It set the stage for formal and informal negotiations that fall, mostly between Mr. Forrestal and Mr. Symington and involving the differences between naval aviation and the Air Forces.³

Around this time, both the War and Navy departments produced a flurry of historical studies which outlined their respective views on the progress of unification.⁴ Although

¹ Stephen Jurika, editor, *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: the Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 96.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴ For example, see: “Chronological Survey of Studies of Unification of Armed Forces,” undated, after August 3, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 139, Folder 1, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*; Symington, Stuart, Memorandum for the

these studies reveal no new information regarding unification, they are indicative of the respective services' intransigence as of the fall of 1946 on the issues of the future disposition of the Marine Corps and of the Navy's retention of land-based aviation.

During the summer and autumn of 1946, the interservice rivalry over the disposition of land-based naval aviation was affected by international events. Since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union had been attempting to secure the freedom of its ships to access the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus Straights and the Dardanelles, and by 1946, the USSR was demanding of Turkey a share in the control of the waterway. In response, the United States pledged military assistance to Turkey in the event it should ever face a Soviet attack. However, a controversy erupted as to which service would take the lead in asserting American military might in the region. In an October 17 memorandum for General Spaatz, Assistant Chief of Air Staff George C. McDonald wrote, "a pronounced ground swell pointing to U. S. Naval Power in the Mediterranean as the primary American means to hold in check the U.S.S.R. has hit the American people from press, radio and rostrum in the last two weeks."⁵ McDonald listed three prominent figures who had enunciated this policy, namely diplomat W. Averil Harriman, radio commentator George Fielding Eliot, and outspoken anti-communist, Father Edmund Walsh. McDonald further noted that two of these three "have made the gratuitous remark about the national economy not being able to support all three services and faced with a choice should slight the Army."⁶ Furthermore, McDonald wrote,

Commanding General, Army Air Forces, September 3, 1946, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*; "Rough Draft Memorandum," September 18, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 5, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

⁵ George C. McDonald, Memorandum for General Spaatz, October 17, 1946, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

There may be someone or several carefully placed Navy Protagonists indoctrinating these public informers with a good line of Navy-Air Power dogma. The line is beautiful – first kill off the Army – then let the Navy and Air stand as the requirements – then argue that carrier air power can dominate the Mediterranean and you have Navy and Air merged into one service claiming the budget – NAVY.⁷

The McDonald memorandum evidences two interrelated issues that were vexing the Army airpower advocates. The first involved post-war advances in aircraft carrier design which would soon allow the Navy to operate much larger aircraft off of carriers.

According to Admiral Radford,

The new ship would be much larger than any carrier in service. It was to have a completely flush flight deck (no island structure for smoke stacks or navigating bridge). The Navy was anticipating difficulty in the operation of large land planes for anti-submarine work and reconnaissance. The flush deck would permit large planes of these types to operate from carriers. The Army Air Forces had become aware of the Navy's CVBX studies and were concerned about them. They realized that if we could in fact successfully build a large flush deck carrier it could operate heavy land planes of at least B29 size. This capability would permit the Navy to challenge the Strategic Air Force and, as can be imagined, they were not about to help us with our carrier plans.⁸

In light of this, it becomes clear why the recent favorable publicity concerning American aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean rankled the Army Air men. The second issue had to do with interservice rivalry for a greater share of the appropriations budget. Although this was nothing new in interservice politics, the degree to which control of land-based aviation played in the debate is significant. In the Navy's effort to justify its retention of land-based aviation, the Navy Department produced a memorandum in early October which argued that the transfer from the Navy to the Army Air Forces of responsibility for manning land-based planes for naval reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare and the protection of shipping would initially cost \$21 million and an additional \$10 million

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 95.

thereafter.⁹ The Army Air Forces were also maneuvering on budgetary grounds by attempting “to have the Bureau of the Budget remove funds for operation and procurement of naval land planes to be used in anti-submarine work.”¹⁰

A major breakthrough in the unification impasse took place two days after the November 5 mid-term elections when the economy-minded Republicans captured majorities in both houses.¹¹ According Admiral Sherman’s April 1, 1947 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee,

On November 7, 1946, Mr. Forrestal invited Mr. Symington, General Norstad, Admiral Radford and me to a meeting at his home at which it was agreed to draft a plan for unification acceptable to both the War and Navy Departments, and within the scope of the President’s letter of June 15, 1946.¹²

Admiral Sherman indicated that all parties agreed to resolve not only what form of organization the military departments would take in Washington, but also what form the military commands would take in both Washington and in the field. This also included “the status and future of naval aviation,” and “the status and future of the Marine Corps.”¹³ Sherman further indicated that he and General Norstad began work on an agreement that contemplated three separate administrative departments for the Army, Navy and Air Force, however under a single Secretary of Defense, and a military command structure that retained the Joint Chiefs of Staff in its present form. Additionally, they would attempt to draft

⁹ Memorandum: Cost of proposed transfer from Navy to Army Air Forces of responsibility for manning land-based planes for naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare, and the protection of shipping, October 9, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.*

¹⁰ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 97.

¹¹ The 1946 mid-term election was the largest Republican victory since the landslide of 1928 and was viewed by many as a referendum on the government’s need to rein in spending. Military downsizing and reorganization was one way the Republican Congress was expected to economize.

¹² Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services on S. 758, United States Senate, Eightieth Congress, First Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 154.

¹³ *Ibid.*

“a definition of functions of the services which would provide for the continuance of the Marine Corps and the safeguarding of naval aviation including antisubmarine warfare and naval reconnaissance components.”¹⁴ Admiral Sherman’s version of the story in his Senate testimony was matter-of-fact, and although factually correct, lacks the color which Admiral Radford adds to his recollection of the meeting in his *memoire*. According to Radford’s version of the story,

On Thursday 7 November I was told that Mr. Forrestal was having Norstad and Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington for luncheon at his home and that he wanted Sherman and me to join them later for coffee and discussion. The idea of the luncheon had sprung from a conversation he had had with Symington during golf the previous Saturday. It appeared to him that Symington and the Army Air Forces were somewhat unhappy with Patterson and his unwillingness to negotiate. Mr. Forrestal wanted to exploit that unrest.¹⁵

Radford continued,

At the afternoon meeting he wanted to discuss the Navy’s use of land-based aircraft. I told him that it was not my idea, or the Navy’s, to exclude the Army Air Forces from anti-submarine operations. We wanted to be the experts, developing tactics and equipment. We wanted to be able to train them to assist us, when they could. We pointed out to them that when they assisted us we must control their squadrons. The Navy felt it was completely impracticable to use a plane on one day for anti-submarine warfare and on the next for strategic bombing.

I give prominence to this meeting because in my opinion it was the most important one that fall. As a result of it a statement was drafted of the agreed principles that could be used as a basis for legislation about to be drafted by Clark Clifford. In the matters of Marine and naval aviation missions, which it was assumed would not have to be included in legislation, the agreement would be submitted for presidential approval.¹⁶

Nevertheless, in spite of the emergent optimism resulting from this meeting, relations between the two services continued to deteriorate.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁵ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 97.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

Admiral Radford recounts two examples of perceived Army Air Forces underhandedness which served to alienate the Navy. Firstly, he expressed the belief by Navy men that the Army Air Forces was trying to persuade young naval aviators to abandon the Navy and join the Army. He notes that in one instance, “one of our lieutenant commanders with a fine war record was trying to arrange a transfer to the Air Force, where he had been promised a promotion to lieutenant colonel.”¹⁷ In a second example, he recalled how Army Air Forces officers at the Air University at Maxwell Field, Alabama were openly proclaiming “their ultimate objective (for the new air force) to be complete domination of all military air activities in the United States.”¹⁸ Other examples of interservice confrontation abound, including a comical report of Army Air Forces Brigadier General Frank Armstrong, who, at a dinner party in Norfolk, loudly badmouthed the Navy and the Marine Corps, calling the latter “a small bitched up Army using Navy lingo.”¹⁹

In December, 1946, as representatives of both services were ironing out the details of proposed unification legislation, James Forrestal found it necessary to dispel the Army Air Forces’ fear that the Navy intended to set up its own strategic air force. According to Forrestal’s diary, on December 2 he met with Stuart Symington to discuss the role and authority of the proposed overall

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98. See also: Walter Millis, editor, *The Forrestal Diaries*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 226.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99. See also: Millis, *Op. cit.*, 226.

¹⁹ Wilson Starbuck, Memorandum to Director of Public Information, December 16, 1946, *James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 138, Folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library*.

Secretary of Defense, as well as to discuss the missions of the three branches of the armed services. According to Forrestal,

We talked particularly about land-based Air. I said no sensible person in the Navy ever entertained any idea about the creation of a strategic air force in the Navy. By the same token, I said there were very strong fears of the Army's desire to roll up Naval Air and get control of all aviation under the Army Air Forces. I remarked that the Army's approach to this whole question had been most unfortunate—that it had been unilateral and nonconclusive.²⁰

By the end of the meeting, Forrestal recounted that,

Symington said it might be possible to get the Army Air Forces to agree to a statutory assignment of certain land-based components to the Navy for antisubmarine and reconnaissance work provided this was limited to a moderate percentage of the total land-based big planes of the AAF.²¹

Nevertheless, in spite of Symington's conciliatory manner, acrimony surfaced again a few days later. Forrestal wrote that at a December 4 luncheon meeting with Stuart Symington, General Norstad, and Admirals Radford and Sherman, the net result of the meeting "was to bring out more clearly how difficult it was for us to come to an agreement with the Army Air Forces on any unification program."²²

Forrestal further wrote that,

Admiral Radford brought out very clearly and sharply the feeling on the part of officers in Naval Aviation that the granting of Department status to the AAF is a first step in much larger and more ambitious plans of the Air Forces to take over the whole business of national defense. Radford particularly aroused Symington's and Norstad's ire by asking what foundation there was for the Air Forces to believe that there was a place in the war of the future for a strategic air force. He pointed out that it was extremely dubious whether big bombers could be used effectively against any country unless they had fighter cover.²³

Radford also mentioned the meeting in his *memoire*, recalling that,

²⁰ Millis, *Op. cit.*, 223.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

²² *Ibid.*, 225.

²³ *Ibid.*

As is often the case in important negotiations this meeting seemed a great setback. Norstad and I had some sharp exchanges, and it became apparent the he was not getting his Air Forces conferees to reduce their opposition to the Navy's use of land planes. Symington, too, had his back stiffened. The meeting broke up, almost on a discordant note, and I was sure that Mr. Forrestal was deeply disappointed.²⁴

This is where matters stood for the remainder of the year.

In spite of the deepening mistrust between the services, a breakthrough on the unification issue occurred on January 3, 1947. Forrestal recounted in his diary a conversation with Secretary of War Patterson about the upcoming Senate hearings regarding unification. As the two rode back to the Navy Department from a Cabinet meeting, Patterson remarked that he was, "much disturbed in the growing evidence of bitterness between the Services," expressing fear that, "if the Army and Navy officers went down to testify in a mood of bitterness and hatred, they would do serious damage to the Services and the national defense."²⁵

Forrestal recalled,

I replied that he was simply stating what I had stated right along, that unless the two services were honestly and thoroughly back of a plan for integration and coordination, it would not be successful. In fact it would produce the opposite of the result we were after.

I told him that I had discovered a depth of feeling in Naval Aviation which had been very surprising to me—that it was not merely a question of the battleship admirals and the older men but of the younger ranks of officers—which had impressed me as quite dangerous. I told him that it came from various segments of Naval Aviation who remembered that they had had to fight hard *within the Navy* to get recognition and *outside* of it to retain their independence against the assaults of the Army Air Forces.²⁶

According to Forrestal, Patterson remarked that he was not committed to a single plan of organization for the services and that he was willing to be flexible on the

²⁴ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 98.

²⁵ Millis, *Op. cit.*, 228.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 228-229.

issue of service roles and missions. He further remarked that, “everything that was done heavyhandedly or without the freely given support of the officers of all Services would not be successful,” and that he believed that the officers of each service “must have the attitude that they’re all truly brothers in arms.”²⁷ Forrestal took the opportunity to advise Patterson that the uniformed Navy leadership, “had been at great pains to prevent the growth of bitterness within the Navy,” but chided that “it was difficult to create such an atmosphere when we had such speeches as were made by General Armstrong at Norfolk.” Forrestal concluded his recollection of the exchange, writing that, “The whole conversation was in an entirely different key and tenor than any talk I’ve ever had before with Patterson,” and that up until that point, Patterson admitted that he “had not paid much attention to the conversations that Symington had had with Norstad and Sherman.”²⁸

In Admiral Radford’s opinion, “this reversal of Patterson’s earlier “take it or leave it” attitude was revealing,” in that it was “positive proof of the success of Mr. Forrestal’s tremendous efforts during fall 1945 and all of 1946 to clarify the unification matter.”²⁹ Furthermore, Radford noted,

The progress that Sherman and Norstad seemed to be making in settling some of the important differences, Patterson’s shift to a more flexible position, and, most important, the convening of a new Congress all tended to make Mr. Forrestal push harder for a unification agreement.³⁰

This is evidenced, according to the editor of Forrestal’s diary, Walter Millis, by the fact that Forrestal’s appointment calendar showed for the next two weeks

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 99.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

following his January 3 conversation with Patterson, “numerous meetings which must, from the persons present, have been devoted to unification, and on January 11 the whole day was given over to the subject.”³¹ All this effort would lead to the momentous January 16 breakthrough agreement between the Army and the Navy on the terms of service unification.

On January 16, 1947, James Forrestal noted in his diary that,

Admiral Sherman, Symington, and Norstad agreed today on the final draft of the letter [to be signed by the two Secretaries] reconciling the Army and Navy views on the integration of the Armed Services. Talked to Clark Clifford at the White House, who wanted to make immediate release, but I insisted that that not be done until I had an opportunity to inform the principal Navy friends in the House and Senate—Senators Robertson, Byrd, Tydings, Brooks, Russell and Austin, ex-chairman Vinson of the Naval Affairs Committee, Cole, etc., in the House. I said this was desirable not merely from the standpoint of the Navy’s obligation to these men, but also by way of enlisting their sympathetic cooperation in the future.³²

The joint letter submitted to President Truman by Patterson and Forrestal briefly recounted the Secretaries’ May 31, 1946 letter wherein their divergent views on unification were outlined. The letter also noted that efforts had been underway by the War and Navy Departments to reconcile these differences and that an agreement had finally been reached by the two departments to support unification legislation which would include the following: (a) a single Secretary of Defense with limited, coordinating powers, (b) an independent Air Force functioning under its own Secretary, (c) a national security council, (d) a war council consisting of the Secretary of Defense and the three service Secretaries along with members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, (e) a National Security Resources Board and a Central Intelligence Agency, and (f) a uniformed

³¹ Millis, *Op. cit.*, 229.

³² *Ibid.*, 229-230.

command structure headed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.³³ However, the agreement was silent on the issue of the roles and missions of the Marine Corps and naval aviation. This was by design, for according to the Secretaries' joint letter, "We are agreed that the proper method of setting forth the functions (so-called roles and missions) of the armed forces is by the issuance of an Executive order concurrently with your approval of the appropriate legislation."³⁴ Appended to the letter was the draft of the Executive order suggested by the Secretaries. Among the various roles and missions of the three armed services, the provision pertaining to naval aviations stated,

The air aspects of [naval reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare, and protection of shipping] shall be coordinated with the Air Force, including the development and procurement of aircraft, and air installations located on shore, and use shall be made of Air Force personnel, equipment and facilities in all cases where economy and effectiveness will thereby be increased. Subject to the above provision, the Navy will not be restricted as to the types of aircraft maintained and operated for these purposes.³⁵

Also included was a provision which affirmed that the Marine Corps would be employed by the Navy for "limited land operations."³⁶

President Truman received the Secretaries' letter with hearty approval.³⁷

However, as Admiral Radford noted, "agreement by the two Secretaries and the President did not end the matter; Congress still had to initiate and pass the legislation, and opposition from the services could be generated through friends in Congress."³⁸ A final round of hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House

³³ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 2-3. See also: Millis, *Op. cit.*, 230; Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 99-100.

³⁴ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸ Jurika, *Op. cit.*, 100.

Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments was planned for that spring and passage of the unification bill was not automatically assured.

II. Army Air Forces Opposition to Navy Land-Based ASW Aircraft Development

In the mean time, the Navy was still facing the opposition of powerful forces in the Army Air Forces in the development of its post-war land-based antisubmarine aviation capabilities. Earlier, in October, 1946, Admiral Radford, in his capacity as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air, remarked that there had been an attempt “by the Air Forces to have the Bureau of the Budget remove funds for operation and procurement of naval land planes to be used in anti-submarine work,” and that Navy air officer in the Bureau of Aeronautics “were quite exercised about this rather backhanded move.”³⁹ Such maneuvering by the Army Air Forces continued into 1947. In late January, General Spaatz wrote to Admiral Radford regarding the strategic Air Forces’ support of antisubmarine and naval reconnaissance missions. In reply, Radford wrote,

I fully concur with you that in any possible future struggle of extended proportions, diversion of all or part of the Strategic Air Force to assist in these missions might be found necessary. With that possibility in mind, it appears highly desirable that we explore the possibilities of the B-29. Therefore, I would suggest an initial transfer of four B-29’s to the Navy for prototyping for these missions, and that such a transfer be considered as a step in continuing policy to determine the adaptability of aircraft of one service toward fulfilling the missions of the other service.⁴⁰

Radford added, however, that because of its intrinsic design characteristics, conversions of B-29’s for naval purposes would be inefficient and useful for only limited purposes.

He continued,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁰ A. W. Radford, Letter to General Carl Spaatz, February 4, 1947, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

From comparison of the specialized performance characteristics of the P2V-2 and P4M aircraft, which were designed for naval purposes, with the comparable characteristics of the B-29, it is clear that the latter will constitute a relatively inferior model for use in anti-submarine warfare because of its lack of speed and maneuverability at low altitudes and its inability to develop long range when operated from small fields.⁴¹

Radford further advised Spaatz that the intrinsic limitations of the B-29 could not be overcome by modifications. He concluded,

The Navy is in production of the P2V airplane and is committed to initial production of the P4M which it considers primary weapons for the accomplishment of its missions. It is therefore intended to procure these models, within the limits of funds which may be available to the Navy for this purpose.

The overall program would then consist of the development by the Navy of aircraft in which naval requirements are primary and also the adaptation of Army models in which Army requirements are primary. Your early concurrence in this concept is requested.⁴²

Spaatz replied on February 5, however, he ignored Radford's request to acknowledge the Navy's need to continue development of the P4M. Instead, Spaatz simply confirmed his authorization of the transfer of four B-29's to the Navy.⁴³

Admiral Radford replied on February 8 and acknowledged the Army Air Forces transfer of the B-29's. However, Radford pressed Spaatz on the Navy's desire to continue development of land-based antisubmarine aircraft. Radford wrote,

I am mainly concerned at the moment with your concurrence in the matter of continuing production of P2V and P4M airplanes as I indicated in my letter to you of February 4. I feel that it is necessary to have an affirmative statement from you under the terms of the recent agreement reached by the Secretaries of War and Navy. I intend to use such a statement before the Naval Sub-Committee of the House Committee on Appropriations in our hearings which are scheduled to start sometime toward the latter part of next week.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Carl Spaatz, Letter to Admiral Arthur W. Radford, February 5, 1947, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁴⁴ A. W. Radford, Letter to General Carl Spaatz, February 8, 1947, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

Spaatz responded on February 10 by advising Radford that he would not sign on to a funding request which would exceed the budget which the President had already submitted to Congress. “As you know,” he continued, “we had a considerable number of airplanes which we considered very essential for a well balanced, modern and up-to-date Army Air Force, which had to be eliminated for economy.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, he wrote,

I feel, as earlier represented to you, that in the interest of economy we should give the B-29’s a thorough tryout to see whether it will do your job before a special type is built in quantity for that function. We all understand that the agreement between the Secretaries of War and Navy gives this mission to you, but if that mission can be performed by a type of plane now in either of our air arms without destroying the value of such planes for another or primary mission for which they were procured, there will be an obvious economy.⁴⁶

This impasse over the development of specifically Navy aircraft types for antisubmarine warfare, naval reconnaissance and protection of shipping lingered for over a month before General Spaatz relented. His change of heart is evidenced in a March 19 letter to Spaatz from the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Chester Nimitz, who wrote, “I am glad to have your letter concerning your understanding of the proposed Executive Order, which is the same as mine.”⁴⁷ He added,

With respect to the specific problem of naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and protection of shipping, it is my view that the over-all program should include two principal features. First, the Navy should develop aircraft and forces in which naval requirements are primary. Second, the Air Force and the Navy should cooperate in making sure that, compatible with their primary mission, Air Force aircraft and forces are prepared to render assistance in these fields as a secondary mission.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Carl Spaatz, Letter to Vice Admiral A. W. Radford, February 10, 1947, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ C. W. Nimitz, Letter to General Carl Spaatz, March 19, 1947, *Box I 262, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

It is unclear why General Spaatz changed his position and acquiesced in condoning future development of specifically Navy types of land-based aircraft. The most logical explanation, as speculated by Jeffrey Barlow in *Revolt of the Admirals*, was that General Norstad convinced Spaatz “that his continued intransigence on this issue could affect the unification agreement worked out with the Navy.”⁴⁹ This seems all the more likely considering that Nimitz’s March 19 letter was sent just one day after the Senate Armed Services Committee began the final round of hearings on unification. Whatever the circumstance, as Barlow noted, “after some fourteen months of wrangling, the fight over the Navy’s right to operate land-based aircraft in support of maritime missions was at an end.”⁵⁰ All that remained was congressional passage of the compromise unification bill and the concurrent issuance of the Executive order outlining the roles and missions of the respective services.

III. The Senate Armed Services Committee Hearings

Shortly after Congress reconvened, on February 26, 1947 President Truman informed the Speaker of the House and the President pro tempore of the Senate that unification legislation had been worked out by the War and Navy Departments, adding that “it is my belief that this suggested legislation accomplishes the desired unification of the services, and I heartily recommend its enactment.”⁵¹ The Senate Armed Services Committee began its hearings on the new unification bill, S. 758, on March 18.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey G. Barlow, *The Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950*, (Washington, D.C: Brassey’s, 1998), 44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 7.

As in the earlier rounds of Congressional hearings, the line of inquiry was not limited to land-based naval aviation. As one would expect, the Senate hearings in 1947 explored the full range of issues having to do with unification, including the powers and duties of the overall Secretary of Defense, the roles of the subordinate service secretaries, the scope of power delegated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as what the roles and missions of the three armed services should be. This present study, will, however, generally narrow its focus on the testimony of witnesses pertaining to naval aviation, and especially on matters pertaining to land-based antisubmarine aviation.

The first witness to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 18 was Navy Secretary James Forrestal. In his prepared statement, Forrestal remarked that the contentious issues which had divided the War and Navy Departments regarding unification had been resolved in the bill presently before the Senate.⁵² During questioning, Forrestal was asked by Republican Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, a strong Navy supporter and outspoken opponent of unification,⁵³ about his opposition to S. 2044 during the last session of Congress. “Now,” the Senator inquired, “I would like to have you tell me just why you are for this bill and why you were against that bill?”⁵⁴

Secretary Forrestal: I will be very glad to. I tried to indicate those reasons at the outset.

I thought the other bill would really result in the destruction of the thing that I very deeply feel is required to be kept; the sense of an individual entity of a service, on the part of the Navy, the Marines, and Naval Aviation. I felt, in fact I knew, that that bill would destroy that imponderable and extremely valuable asset to the Nation.⁵⁵

⁵² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³ Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 346.

⁵⁴ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Forrestal went on to explain that naval aviation and the Marine Corps were explicitly preserved in the bill currently under consideration. However, during questioning, Forrestal revealed that their endurance as a permanent feature of the military establishment was not absolutely guaranteed. Democrat Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia, an opponent of military unification since 1945,⁵⁶ inquired of Forrestal if, under the terms of the present bill, an overall Secretary of Defense hostile to naval aviation and the Marine Corps might “possibly destroy their effectiveness” by “inducing Congress not to make appropriations for them.”⁵⁷ Forrestal agreed that technically this was possible, but that the President could overrule the Secretary of Defense and restore funding in the budget request. Forrestal pointed out that Congress had the final authority in appropriations, and predicted that the political firestorm resulting from any attempt by a Secretary of Defense to cut naval aviation or the Marine Corps would prompt Congress to restore funding.⁵⁸ Forrestal could not know it at the time, but just such a firestorm would erupt in 1949 when his successor as Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, with the approval of President Truman, cancelled construction of the unfinished super carrier USS *United States*. This event sparked the so called “Revolt of the Admirals,” which ushered in a new period of rivalry and recrimination between the Navy and the Air Force less than two years after the passage of the National Security Act. However, this lay in the future, and although Senator Russell’s questioning revealed these dangers to naval aviation in the current bill, Forrestal nevertheless optimistically testified for its passage.

⁵⁶ Gerard Clarfield, *Security with Solvency: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Shaping of the American Military Establishment*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 39.

⁵⁷ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42; 48-49

Many of the following witnesses also addressed questions pertinent to the preservation of naval aviation. On March 20, Secretary of War Robert Patterson affirmed before the Armed Services Committee that under the terms of S. 758, the Navy was to retain naval aviation and the Marine Corps.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, some Senators still expressed doubt that naval aviation would endure as a component of the Navy. During questioning, Senator Bridges confronted Patterson with this concern, stating,

Now, in this bill, there is provision for the Navy to retain Naval Aviation as an arm of the Navy. Do you think that is safeguarded? I mean, do you think that the super-Secretary could eventually edge Naval Aviation practically out of existence? Retain it in name, but gradually edge it out until it is all centralized in the Air Force?⁶⁰

Patterson flatly replied “no;” a so called “super-Secretary” of Defense could not eliminate naval aviation. “Congress can,” he affirmed, “either by passing an act or in its actual action annually on appropriations. They can on any activity. There is nobody immune from that.”⁶¹ The theme of this exchange was repeated with a number of following witnesses.

The next three witnesses to testify before the committee were the incumbent Joint Chiefs of Staff. On March 25, Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower was questioned by Democrat Senator Harry F. Byrd⁶² of Virginia if he had any objections to the bill’s establishment of the “basic functions” of the armed services. Eisenhower replied that he did not object, “as long as the functions established are basic, and so long as you do not attempt to say that we must have X amount of this, Y amount of that, and Z amount of

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Senator Harry F. Byrd was the brother of polar explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd. He has been described as a “hard-core” Navy supporter and was strongly opposed to unification. See: Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS and NSC*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 63.

something else, to be retained forever.”⁶³ Senator Byrd pressed Eisenhower further on this point a little later during questioning. After having the proposed Executive order defining the roles and missions of the armed services read into the record, the senator asked again if General Eisenhower had any objections to setting up the “basic functions of the Army, Navy and Air Forces.”⁶⁴ Eisenhower replied again that he had no objection, “as long as we do not attempt to get into refinements.”⁶⁵ An interesting exchange followed:

Senator Byrd. You would not regard this as a refinement, I assume; that the naval aviation should remain in the Navy and not go to the Air Forces?

General Eisenhower. I have never heard the point questioned, Senator Byrd.

Senator Byrd. I want to be clear on that.

General Eisenhower. Of course.

Senator Byrd. And that is one thing: I cannot vote for this bill if there is any question whatever that the Naval Air Force can be taken away from the Navy by Executive order. I want it written in plain and unequivocal language right in the bill.

General Eisenhower. I believe it is basic, though, Senator, that if you allow each of three services to come down here, if you have no single civilian head of government who can tell you that he has through the years studied to see where everything belongs in its proper niche, and if each of the three of us comes down, each concerned with his own job, trying to get every possible thing he can think of, and if we destroy the element of what you might call faith between the three, then you are not going to get what you want for the money you want to spend.

Senator Byrd. That is my conviction also. I agree with that, but I regard this as basic and I want to know if you so regard it.

General Eisenhower. I regard it as important as to general functions, but not when you get into refinements.

Senator Byrd. You regard the Naval Air Force as a basic part of the Navy?

General Eisenhower. That is exactly right.

Senator Byrd. And you so regard the Marine Corps?

General Eisenhower. But that does not mean that I would be in agreement if the same thing were proposed as to every single type of formation within naval aviation that they have ever had. I agree that naval aviation belongs to the Navy. I agree that the Navy needs a Marine Corps. Of course they do. But there can be many questions as to size, composition, method of training, method of equipment,

⁶³ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 93.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

that are not basic. They are what I would call operational and organizational details.

Senator Byrd. I think that is clear.⁶⁶

Eisenhower's position seemed to have changed little since March-April 1946, when he had proposed defining the specific roles and missions of the services in a series of Joint Chiefs of Staff memoranda.⁶⁷

General Spaatz testified later that morning. After remarking that he believed carrier aviation should be completely controlled by the Navy, he was queried by Democrat Senator Leverett Saltonstall⁶⁸ of Massachusetts concerning the "great issue" of "the Navy with land-based airplanes" guarding American shores, and whether or not this problem has been worked out satisfactorily in the current legislation.⁶⁹ Spaatz responded that the proposed Executive order solved the problem from the Air Force's point of view, provided that a Secretary of Defense was created by Congress with sufficient power to enforce it.⁷⁰ General Spaatz quoted the paragraph in the Executive order outlining the Navy responsibility for naval reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare and protection of shipping which stated that,

The air aspects of those functions shall be coordinated with the Air Force, including the development and procurement of aircraft and air installations located on shore, and use shall be made of Air Force personnel, equipment, and facilities in all cases where economy and effectiveness will thereby be increased. Subject to the above provision, the Navy will not be restricted as to types of aircraft maintained and operated for these purposes.⁷¹

Spaatz continued,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

⁶⁷ **See Chapter 5, pp. 49-50.**

⁶⁸ Senator Saltonstall's interest in military aviation can be accounted for by the fact that Massachusetts was home to a number of major defense contractors. These included companies such as the American Appliance Company (later renamed Raytheon), which was instrumental in the development of radar and guided missiles, and General Electric, which was a major supplier of military aircraft engines.

⁶⁹ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 118.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 118-119.

With that written into the roles and missions, there can be no possibility of unwarranted duplication of the large land-based airplanes, which are the most expensive. It will insure the equipment needed by the Navy for the antisubmarine protection. As for any augmentation of the force which may be necessary from our strategic bombers, the machinery is set up so that the Air Force in case of emergency can assist the Navy, operating, of course under their operational control.

Our strategic airplanes would have this function, not as a primary role, but as a secondary role. This would meet emergencies too great to be handled by the antisubmarine planes in existence in the Navy.⁷²

It is difficult to determine Spaatz's true beliefs, even in light of this seemingly conciliatory testimony. It should be recalled that only one month earlier he was prepared to obstruct the Navy's funding request to Congress for the P2V antisubmarine airplane and that he would prove formidable in opposing the expansion of naval aviation in the years to come. Nevertheless, his March 25 testimony stands on its own merits as an endorsement of the unification legislation then under consideration.

Admiral Nimitz testified before the Armed Services Committee the following day, March 26. After reading his prepared statement, Nimitz responded to questions regarding the current unification bill. In an exchange with Admiral Nimitz, Senator Saltonstall came back to the same point he pursued with General Spaatz the day before:

Senator Saltonstall. May I ask you, Admiral:

The question which, from the Navy's point of view were emphasized most last year, as I remember it, were the question of the functioning of the Marine Corps and the question of land-based airplanes.

Now, I tried to ask General Spaatz yesterday about the land-based airplanes, and from what he said and from what Admiral Sherman said, I gathered that the problem was entirely satisfactorily worked out now, or would be, from the Navy point of view. Do you agree with that?

Admiral Nimitz. In the Executive order, the functions, roles, and missions have been carefully delineated, and I believe that is satisfactory.

I heard the question propounded to General Eisenhower, as to whether he had objections to those functions being incorporated in the law.

Senator Saltonstall. You mean about the Marine Corps?

⁷² *Ibid.*, 119.

Admiral Nimitz. All the functions. I certainly can see no objection to it, but I can see some difficulties in trying to write into legal language these military functions.⁷³

A lengthy discussion followed concerning the role and mission of the Marine Corps.

Questioning eventually turned to the subject of the proposed overall Secretary of

Defense. In an exchange with Senator Bridges, Admiral Nimitz revealed the

vulnerability of naval aviation under the current bill:

Senator Bridges. Well, now, Admiral, the super-Secretary here is given the right to make budgets, and coordinate the budgets of the three Departments, and submit them to Congress. Do you think, for instance, that under this bill, as generally drawn as it is, naval aviation and the Marine Corps are absolutely and fully protected?

Admiral Nimitz. I think they are adequately protected.

Senator Bridges. Well, adequately; but you would not want to say they are fully protected?

Admiral Nimitz. I would say there is no provision in the bill that fully protects the Army Ground Forces, that fully protects the Army Air Forces, or fully protects the Navy, with its components, the Marine Corps, and naval aviation. But I think they are adequately protected.

I think that the Secretaries of the Departments, aided by their military Chiefs will make ample representation that will reach the President and reach the Congress if they are not adequately protected.⁷⁴

In less than two years, Nimitz's prescience regarding the protection of the Navy's interests would be put to the test in the imbroglio involving Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, Navy Secretary John Sullivan, and Chief of Naval Operations Louis Denfeld over the cancelation of the super-carrier USS *United States*. This episode, however, is beyond the scope of this present study. It is sufficient to note, however, that in 1947, Admiral Nimitz believed the Executive order an adequate safeguard to naval aviation to the extent that he advocated passage of the unification bill then under consideration.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

The Senate Armed Services Committee resumed hearings on April 1, calling as its next witness Vice Admiral Forrest Sherman. Sherman began by recounting the abovementioned November 7, 1946 meeting at Secretary Forrestal's home where it was agreed that he and Admiral Radford would cooperate with General Norstad in the drafting of a compromise unification bill. Among the issues they planned to address in the compromise bill, according to Sherman, was "a definition of the functions of the services which would provide for the continuance of the Marine Corps and the safeguarding of naval aviation including the antisubmarine warfare and naval reconnaissance components."⁷⁵ During questioning, Sherman explained that the primary point of contention between the War and Navy Departments was whether the new bill would maintain the traditional two department organizational structure, whether there would be the creation of a third department to oversee an independent Air Force, or whether there would be one, overarching Defense Department with three subordinate military branches. Senator Edward V. Robertson, the committee's most outspoken opponent of unification,⁷⁶ asked Sherman to clarify the positions of the Army, Navy and Air Force regarding the preferred organizational structure. Sherman responded and a revealing exchange followed:

Admiral Sherman. Previous to our initial agreement last November, the Army, at the end of the war, had strongly advocated a single department. The Navy had strongly resisted a single department. The Navy, however, last year, from time to time, took the stand, through various spokesman that it insisted that the Navy Department should continue as a separate entity; that if, on the other hand, the existing War Department felt it advisable to divide, and to have a Department of

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁶ Senator Robertson opposed legislation providing for military unification and the creation of a single Department of Defense on the grounds that it might result in a military government in the United States similar to that of Nazi Germany. He also opposed the legislation for fear that the new intelligence agencies provided for in the bill might develop into an "American gestapo." See: Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63.

the Army and a Department of the Air Force, that was their problem, and the Navy would interpose no objection, because that was a problem for the Army.

Senator Robertson. Provided, I take it that the Navy Air Division would be maintained by the Navy.

Admiral Sherman. Yes, sir.

The Navy, throughout this whole period of controversy, starting at the end of the war, has always adhered firmly to the position that the Navy, with its own naval aviation, and its own Marine Corps, and its own Navy Department should continue.

Senator Robertson. When you say "naval aviation," you mean both carrier-based and land-based planes?

Admiral Sherman. Yes, sir; naval aviation, to my mind, has always included the three major components, the aircraft that operate from carriers, those that operate from battleships and cruisers, and those that operate from tenders, or shore bases, for purposes of reconnaissance and submarine warfare and protection of shipping.

That has been the Navy position throughout.⁷⁷

Senator Roberts inquired of Sherman as to when the Navy "abandoned their idea of individuality" and agreed to a three service organization with an overarching Secretary of Defense. He also asked at what point the Army abandoned the idea of all military aviation being subsumed into an independent Air Force. Sherman replied that the November 7 meeting marked a turning point in interservice relations when both sides agreed, for the good of the country, to compromise for the purpose of effecting service unification.⁷⁸

Senator Byrd next took up the questioning and inquired of Admiral Sherman whether or not naval aviation was adequately protected by the proposed Executive order and whether he objected to a definition of the function of naval aviation being written into the unification bill itself. Sherman replied that he had no objection, "if it were done briefly," and only outlined "basic functions."⁷⁹ Senator Byrd was not satisfied. "I want this specific question answered," he said. "Are you willing to support inclusion in the

⁷⁷ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, *Op. cit.*, 169-170.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

bill of the basic functions of naval aviation as enunciated by you?"⁸⁰ Although Sherman answered in the affirmative, Senator Byrd pressed him further, and his misgivings about the current bill are revealed in the following exchange:

Senator Byrd. And you are willing to incorporate the basic functions of the Marine Corps?

Admiral Sherman. Yes, sir.

The Chairman. By the same token, Admiral, if you start with the naval aviation and the Marine Corps, then necessarily you must put all of the wording, let us say, of the functions of all branches of the Armed Forces into it.

Admiral Sherman. That is correct, sir.

And I would like to come back to the point that if it is attempted to do that too extensively and too exactly, it could have a very undesirable effect for the future.

Senator Byrd. But you do not consider your definition of the basic functions of naval aviation, or the Marine Corps to be too extensive. You regard that as a minimum, do you not?

Admiral Sherman. Yes, sir.

Senator Byrd. And I think there is a clear difference as to naval aviation, because the effort may be made for the Air Force to take over naval aviation. And I have said before and repeat now, that I do not intend to vote for any bill that will not protect naval aviation; likewise, that will not protect the Marine Corps.

I think General Eisenhower, as I recall it, said something about the fact that it was his thought that the Marine Corps should be part of the landing force, or part of the Army; I have forgotten his exact language. But I regard the Marine Corps as absolutely essential in case of war, as I regard naval aviation as being absolutely essential to the Navy.

And you, as a naval officer, I know, will agree with me on that.

I am not going to depend upon any Executive order to outline those basic functions. I agree that we cannot go into detail, necessarily, about the other functions of the Navy or the other functions of the Army. But I do think those two basic functions should be incorporated into this bill, and I wanted to get your opinion as to whether you saw any objection to that.⁸¹

Senator Robertson shared Senator Byrd's apprehensions concerning the fate of naval aviation under the current bill and likewise demanded that its role be more precisely defined in the legislation.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 177.

Sherman was back before the committee the next day for a second round of testimony. After some discussion concerning recent wartime examples of unity of command in the field, Senator Robertson again raised the question as to whether or not Congress should more precisely define the role of naval aviation in the current unification bill. As he stated the previous day, Sherman replied that he would not object to this, provided that such legislation “should be drafted in such a form that it does not freeze the type of establishment and freeze the strategic concepts that we have now.”⁸³ Sherman warned that Congress should not act rashly in this regard and reminded the committee that the pending Executive order was agreed to by the services because it insured flexibility in the face of potentially shifting strategic necessity. Sherman further warned that any statement of functions drafted into the legislation should be something agreed upon by the services, otherwise it might disrupt interservice harmony.⁸⁴ Senator Robertson queried Sherman why he preferred that military roles be defined by an Executive order and whether or not he would favor such a definition by congressional action. Admiral Sherman replied that congressional action was certainly acceptable, but that he preferred an Executive order since it is “more quickly and often revisited” and “has a greater measure of flexibility; whereas a statute is apt to stay on the books for many years.”⁸⁵ Sherman continued,

I would like to mention an example:

In an act passed, I believe, in 1920, the Navy was barred from the control of air operations from shore bases. The result of that legislation, which stayed on the books and is still on the books was that when the emergency arose, immediately prior to the war, we had no land-type reconnaissance and patrol planes. So the development of naval patrol plane operations, using land planes, was forced on us when we were preparing to operate out of Iceland, through the winter of 1941-42.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Then the realities of the situation, the necessity for operating effectively to defend shipping against submarines, at that time caused us to acquire, by agreement with the Army, our first squadron of land-type patrol planes.

And we were not as well prepared as we should have been. The condition that we found ourselves in during the winter of 1941-42, where we were operating seaplanes under conditions where we had the water freezing on them as we took off, and so on, is an example of the possible bad effects of permanent legislation which is in such detail that it prevents progress in the development of equipment.

At the time that law was passed, there were no long-range land-type patrol planes. The type that we got in 1941 was the Hudson, which had been developed in this country and had been used by the British Coastal Command for the same purposes, and we actually got our first squadron of naval land-type patrol planes by an allocation from British production at the Lockheed plant to meet the realities of the situation after the beginning of the emergency.⁸⁶

Senator Robertson asked if the Navy, when it realized the necessity of developing land-based planes for antisubmarine work, ever attempted to have the legislation repealed before 1942. Sherman replied that he was unsure of any movement towards repeal, but noted that the realities of war in 1942 forced the Navy to act in spite of the law. An interesting exchange followed:

Senator Robertson. But the Navy must have realized long before 1942 the necessity of land-based planes for patrol purposes.

Admiral Sherman. We did, sir, for several years.

Senator Robertson. Was any effort made to repeal that act, to enable you to carry those functions out?

Admiral Sherman. I think that the efforts were made on more or less the service level. What representations were made to Congress, I do not know. I came to the Navy Department in 1940, and we met with no serious opposition in taking the action we did when the necessity arose.

Senator Robertson. You met with no opposition within the Congress, at all?

Admiral Sherman. The matter, as far as I know, has never been taken cognizance of by Congress.

The Chairman. That is proven by the fact that the law is still on the books.

Senator Robertson. It seems to me that you can hardly blame the Congress for that, if the Navy took no action at all.

Admiral Sherman. I do not, sir.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 195-196. Admiral Sherman is here citing a provision in the June 5, 1920 Army Appropriations Act which stated that "hereafter the Army Air Service shall control all aerial operations from land bases," and that "Naval Aviation shall have control of all aerial operations attached to a fleet." **See above: Chapter 1, page 7.**

Senator Robertson. To me, it is no argument why the various functions of the Department should not be subject to congressional action in the broad sense that you mention.

Admiral Sherman. No, sir; I do not bring that up as an argument why they should not be delineated by the Congress in the broad sense. I brought that up only as an example of the reasons for avoiding too much detail.⁸⁷

Sherman's remarks were the most detailed reference to the Battle of the Atlantic in testimony offered before the Senate Armed Services Committee. It is interesting to note that he did not broach the subject of the War Department's attempt to establish the Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command as an American version of the RAF Coastal Command nor of the interdepartmental squabbling over jurisdiction in the antisubmarine war. Neither did Sherman mention the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement by which the Army reallocated a sizable number of antisubmarine equipped B-24's to the Navy in 1943. It must be remembered, however, that his intention was to cast the current unification legislation and its attendant Executive order in a positive light and not rekindle the flames of a rivalry which the current legislation hoped to quell. Mention of these contentious episodes in interservice relations during the Battle of the Atlantic would probably have proven counterproductive to this purpose and were thus not raised. In any event, the question of more precisely defining the role of naval aviation in the unification bill was still on the table.

The committee resumed its hearings on April 8. Admiral Sherman returned to testify, but concentrated on issues pertaining to the military budget process under the proposed unification bill. Major General Lauris Norstad, Sherman's main collaborator in drafting the compromise legislation under consideration by the committee, was next to testify. In his prepared statement, Norstad spoke in general terms of the merits of

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

military unification for effecting economy and efficiency, as well as of the need in modern warfare to develop the full potential of air power through an independent Air Force. When asked by Senator Saltonstall to state his views on the fact that the current legislation provided for the Navy's retention of land-based aviation, Norstad merely quoted the part of the bill referenced by Senator Saltonstall and affirmed that the Executive order did nothing to change it.⁸⁸ Senator Saltonstall did not press the matter any further and moved to a line of questioning about the powers of the proposed Secretary of Defense.

The issue of whether or not naval aviation was adequately protected in the proposed unification legislation was again raised on April 15, when Undersecretary of War Kenneth Royall, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. For the most part, Royall's testimony concentrated on issues having to do with the procurement process. However, at one point during questioning, Senator Robertson raised the issue of whether or not the overall Secretary of Defense would have the authority to abolish the Marine Corps or naval aviation. Undersecretary Royall replied that he believed the unification bill and its attending Executive order prevented the Secretary of Defense from abolishing naval aviation. However, he believed that the wording of the law did allow the Secretary of Defense to abolish *land-based* naval aviation, "if the exigencies of the occasion and the President permitted him to do so."⁸⁹ Senator Robertson took issue with this assertion, remarking that it was in contradiction to what Navy Secretary Forrestal had said during his testimony. Undersecretary Royall demurred. "You understand that that is

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁸⁹ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services on S. 758, United States Senate, Eightieth Congress, First Session, on S. 758, Part Two, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 359.

just my opinion of what the law means,” he replied. “My opinion may not be correct.”⁹⁰ Nevertheless, he reaffirmed his belief that the Secretary of Defense, with the approval of the President, could reassign military roles, including the duties that the current unification bill and the attendant Executive order assigned to land-based naval aviation.⁹¹

On April 24, Marine Corps Reserve General and former Congressman Melvin J. Maas, President of the Marine Reserve Officers Association, testified before the committee that 95 percent of the association’s membership opposed “many features” of the unification bill.⁹² With regard to naval aviation, Maas was especially concerned that a new Department of the Air Force would dominate in the procurement of all military aviation to the detriment of the Navy’s aviation component. He claimed to have witnessed just such a situation while serving on a congressional committee studying the Royal Air Force in England in 1941, when, he asserted, the RAF concentrated its efforts at building up its strategic air force to the detriment of the Fleet Air Arm. Such a situation in the American armed forces, he believed, would be a “serious step backward.”⁹³

After Maas’ testimony, as the committee was preparing to adjourn, South Dakota Republican and committee chairman Chan Gurney⁹⁴ announced that he had received on April 21 a letter from former Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and that he wished to have the letter inserted into the record.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 363-364; 373.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 447.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Senator Gurney was a strong supporter of military unification.

In his letter, Stimson states that he had learned from Secretary of War Robert Patterson that committee chairman Gurney wished to know his views on S. 758. In expressing his approval of the bill, Stimson wrote,

I earnestly hope that the Congress will enact his [*sic*] bill at this session, providing as it does for a National Defense Establishment united under the direction of a civilian Secretary of National Defense. I consider this measure to be one of the most important peacetime forward steps ever proposed in our military history, ranking in significance with the great Army reforms of Elihu Root made after the Spanish War, and it is my belief that the opportunity for advance which is now presented must not be ignored; it will not come so readily again.⁹⁵

Stimson wrote that S. 758 was the product “of intense and prolonged effort” by the Administration and Congress, and “in that effort I have shared only to a limited extent.”⁹⁶ A considerable portion of the letter presents an overview of the administrative changes that would be effected once an overall Secretary of Defense was created and of the merits of an integrated and streamlined “Military Establishment” under the Chief Executive as provided for in the bill. Stimson continued,

At the same time I see nothing in this bill that justifies any fear that tested and invaluable instruments of war like Naval aviation—or specially Army aviation for that matter—will be lightly and carelessly discarded. If it can be done under this bill, it can be done today, for nothing in the bill expands the power of the Commander in Chief in these matters; nor will the Secretary of National Defense have any power that is not subject to an appeal to the President. The power to receive such an appeal is inherent in the constitutional power of the President.⁹⁷

Stimson recounted the unification efforts which began in 1944 when the Woodrum Committee first considered post-war military policy. He noted that he and his late colleague, Navy Secretary Frank Knox, were in agreement that some form of administrative unification was needed, but that efforts to bring about unification were blocked by “those who were not sure that they agreed with us.” He continued,

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 258-259.

Some were merely insistent that any new move must be carefully studied; others feared that “unification” of this sort would lead to a suppression or at least undervaluation of one or another of the major services, or that in an excess of zeal such a valuable branch as that of naval aviation might be removed from its proper place as part of the Navy. Regrettably, this divergence of opinion occasionally became sharp and even bitter, until it began to appear that discussion of unification was serving merely to drive the Services further apart.⁹⁸

Without naming names or employing a recriminating tone, Stimson is clearly referring to the whole cast of Navy characters, both civilian and uniformed, who blocked the War Department’s efforts to effect unification since 1944. However he does praise Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal, as well as Admiral Nimitz and General Eisenhower for hammering out the compromise that resulted in the drafting of S. 758. In the remainder of the letter, Stimson discusses the parallels between the current effort to effect unification and the military reforms enacted under his mentor, Elihu Root.

When Elihu Root established the General Staff, integrating—unifying, if you please—the high command of the Army, he was faced by very decided military opposition from men in high administrative posts; but with the support of the top men of the Army and a majority of the Congress, he carried his work through successfully. Ten years later when the whole concept of the General Staff was violently challenged by an able administrative soldier of the old school, Gen. Leonard Wood was chief of staff, and I was Secretary of War; as a team we were successful in defending the Root reforms. Our military history has contained many examples of good reforms which have been frustrated by the differences of civilian officials of the armed forces and generals or admirals.⁹⁹

Stimson concluded by praising the former Presidents who supported the Root reforms and he likewise praised President Truman for his support of the current efforts towards unification. He closed by urging Congress to pass the unification bill.

As the hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee were drawing to a conclusion, one of the last witnesses to testify was Admiral Ernest J. King, Stimson’s nemesis in the earlier unification effort. The majority of Admiral King’s statement was

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 459-460.

taken up with matters pertaining to the creation of the National Security Council as provided in S. 758. Questioning concentrated on this topic as well, however, Senator Byrd, almost as an afterthought, brought up the subject of naval aviation.

Just one more question, Admiral. In the event that the present bill should be enacted providing for the Secretary of National Defense, do you think then the functions of the Naval Air Forces, for example, and the Marine Corps, should be set up more specifically in the bill than it is now set forth?¹⁰⁰

“Yes,” King replied, “on the whole I would think so, since I have read the hearings and have noted the varying interpretations as to what the current legislative phraseology means.”¹⁰¹ He further remarked that he was “quite firm” on the need to retain naval aviation and the Marine Corps.¹⁰² Nevertheless, King stated that he believed the unification bill and the attendant Executive order adequately safeguarded both naval aviation and the Marine Corps.¹⁰³ Admiral King was excused moments later.

The last witness who had anything to say on before the committee on the subject of naval aviation was Marine Corps Brigadier General Merritt Edson, an ardent opponent of S. 758, who testified on May 7 that he believed the Navy needed both carrier-based and land-based aviation to carry out its mission.¹⁰⁴ The Senate Armed Services Committee closed its hearings on S. 758 on May 9. The Bill was reported to the full Senate on June 5.

¹⁰⁰ Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services on S. 758, United States Senate, Eightieth Congress, First Session, on S. 758, Part Three, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 381.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 382-383.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

IV. Senate Floor Debate on S. 758

On July 7 the full Senate began debate on S. 758 with Armed Services Committee Chairman Chan Gurney summarizing the bill and urging its passage. Gurney remarked that all witnesses testifying before his committee who had broad military responsibility supported the bill, while the only opposition he encountered was from those with narrow, single-service experience.¹⁰⁵ He also spoke of the merits of omitting specific roles and missions of the armed services from the bill, and of the preferability of relegating such definitions to an Executive order. Moreover, Gurney specifically addressed the fears voiced by the bill's opponents that under the new law, the overarching Secretary of Defense could summarily eliminate naval aviation and the Marine Corps, affirming that this could not be done without the approval of both the President and Congress.¹⁰⁶

The leading voice of opposition to S. 758 was Senator Edward V. Robertson, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. On July 9, Robertson stated that at heart, the unification plan outlined in the bill was an Army plan and that the Army General Staff believed that everything that flies rightfully belongs with the Air Force. He also alleged a conspiracy between the old guard of the Army and the officers of the soon to be created Air Force whereby both groups would collude in an Army take-over of the Marine Corps and in the absorption of naval aviation by the Air Force.¹⁰⁷ Robertson further charged that the plan to write the roles and missions of the armed services into an Executive order and not into the actual unification legislation was an Army scheme, since the Army knew how easily Executive orders could be changed. "Executive orders are written with one stroke of the pen," Robertson remarked, "and can be changed or

¹⁰⁵ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 93, Part 7, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 8295.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 8298.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 8490.

cancelled with another. Under Executive order the functions of the Marine Corps and of naval aviation can be slowly whittled away, bit by bit, until nothing but the name remains.”¹⁰⁸ He affirmed that he intended to introduce an amendment to the wording of the bill which would outline the specific roles and missions of the armed services for the purpose of protecting both the Marine Corps and naval aviation.¹⁰⁹

Senator Robertson’s assertions were challenged by other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, most notably by Burnet Maybank, Democrat Senator from South Carolina, who claimed that the nation’s top military commanders supported the bill and that naval aviation and the Marine Corps were sufficiently protected in S. 758.¹¹⁰ This was echoed by Democrat Senator J. Lister Hill of Alabama, who emphatically declared,

I should like once and for all to blow away the biggest smoke screen that has so skillfully been laid around this bill by its artful opponents. The bill does not affect the Marine Corps or naval aviation, or even the Navy. Except for setting up a separate Air Department, it does not affect the Army or Air Force. It is not an armed service bill at all. It is an organization of the constitutional Commander in Chief for his own official family for supervising these services... The bill deals with civil organizations, not military organizations.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, Hill considered the creation of an independent Air Force as one of the major merits of the bill.¹¹² Speaking of the wartime organization of the Army and the Navy, Hill remarked,

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8492.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8494.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8499-8500. Senator Maybank supported the legislation in spite of his Navy background. He served in the Navy during the First World War and continued as a naval air cadet in the Navy reserves until 1921.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8501.

¹¹² Senator J. Lister Hill was a long-time supporter of the Army Air Corps and was an advocate for Air Force independence. His ties to the Air Force go back to 1925, when as a freshman congressman from Montgomery, he was instrumental in saving Maxwell Field from closure. In 1928, Hill succeeded in his bid to relocate the Air Corps Tactical School from Langley Field, Virginia to Maxwell Field. This organization was responsible for the development of the strategic air power doctrine adopted by the Army

Twenty years after Billy Mitchell we still had the same basic framework under which the Navy fought the pirates of Tripoli while the Army fought the Indians. Yet, above both land and sea there now lay a new battleground—the all-covering third element of the air. A smooth path extended across the historic domains of the older services. Shore lines meant nothing to this new air power. Yet the Army and Navy had their whole machinery geared to a line of demarcation at the high-water mark.¹¹³

Hill stated that the result of this narrow thinking was the devastation of Pearl Harbor.

However, he also mentioned the destruction wrought by the Germans during the Battle of the Atlantic and of the inadequacy of American air power as a reason for passing the unification bill.

The lesson of waste and defeat... extended all through the dark days of 1942. Hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping and supplies lie rotting on the bottom of the North Atlantic. The watery graves of thousands of merchant seamen; the shattered armies, air forces, and navies of England and Russia, Australia and Holland must be reckoned in the cost...

The lesson that we learned is team-work—coordination, integration, and unity. We learned it the hard way. It was taught us by the enemy in our defeats. The basic truth was forced on us constantly and daily throughout the war, in every aspect of our mighty effort: The armed forces can no longer stand separate and apart from one another.¹¹⁴

The rhetorical emotionalism notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that in 1947, the air power theories of Billy Mitchell, the 1935 *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy*, and the shipping and manpower losses of the Battle of the Atlantic were conflated into a single argument on the Senate floor in support of military unification.

In the course of debate, Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin proposed the addition of an amendment to the bill which would prohibit the transfer of the Marine Corps and of naval aviation to any of the other services, noting that this

Air Forces during World War II. The development of this strategic air power doctrine served to justify calls for Air Force independence from the Army. Under Hill's proprietary care, Maxwell Air Force Base grew to become one of the largest employers in Alabama.

¹¹³ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 93, Part 7, 8501.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

prerogative should lie with Congress alone and not with some “supersecretary” of Defense.¹¹⁵ Massachusetts Republican Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. immediately challenged the propriety of this, noting that the bill as currently written had the support of Marine Commandant, General Vandergrift.¹¹⁶ At length, McCarthy responded by drawing the Senate’s attention to the 1946 debate among the Joint Chiefs of Staff over the discontinuation of naval aviation and the Marine Corps as evidenced in the JCS series 1478 papers.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, McCarthy argued that the Senate Armed Services Committee only invited admirals and generals to testify about portions of the unification bill that they agreed with and that the committee “may have sold General Vandergrift a bill of goods” with regard to the safeguards in the bill meant to protect the Marine Corps.¹¹⁸

In the end, the bill was passed by voice vote of the Senate on July 9. Although his last minute attempts to amend the bill failed, Senator McCarthy’s charge that the Armed Services Committee only took testimony from agreeable witnesses confirmed what many had believed all along. This issue was also raised in the House of Representatives where a companion bill was under consideration by the House Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments.

V. House Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments Hearings

The House Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments held hearings on its version of the unification bill, H.R. 2319, between April 2 and July 1, 1947. A full

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8522.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8523. **See above: Chapter 5, pg. 49-51.**

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8524. Senator McCarthy had a strong sentimental loyalty to the Marine Corps. In 1942 at the age of 33, McCarthy joined the Marine Corps and served during World War II in the Pacific.

treatment of the testimony of the major War and Navy Department witnesses would prove a tedious repetition of what had been said before the Senate Armed Services Committee between March 18 and May 9, 1947. The testimony was, in essence, the same and few new issues were discussed. There were a few noticeable differences in the line of inquiry taken by the House Committee, however. Although the survival of the Marine Corps and of naval aviation had become conflated issues since 1944, to a greater extent than in the Senate hearings, the House Committee focused on the provisions in the unification bill meant to safeguard the Marine Corps as a separate, singular issue. The survival of naval aviation was also considered at length, but to the extent that naval land-based aviation was discussed, it was treated virtually as a settled issue—something to be protected under the terms of the proposed Executive order. Notwithstanding, the few instances when the subject of land-based naval aviation appears in the debate are illustrative of the degree to which the issue had evolved on the eve of the passage of the 1947 National Security Act.

On April 29, the fourth day of committee hearings, New York Republican Congressman and Navy war veteran Henry Latham¹¹⁹ pressed Secretary of War Patterson on rumors that the War Department hoped for the curtailment of naval and Marine aviation appropriations until after a unification bill passed Congress. Patterson's attempt at guarded response is evident in the following exchange:

Secretary Patterson. That is probably so. I say probably because I am not familiar with all the details of it. There was a discussion and a difference of opinion about the role of land-based planes. That is what it was, I think.

¹¹⁹ General Carl Spaatz possessed a list of the House committee members which included brief notations as to where each member stood on the issue of unification. Congressman Latham is described as "a strong Navy man" who opposed unification. See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

Mr. Latham. My recollection is that the War Department thought that a separate air force should have pretty nearly all the aviation, particularly marine aviation and a large part of naval aviation.

Secretary Patterson. I think the controversy prior to the agreement on this bill and so on, only related to land-based planes. That is my impression, but I may be wrong about that.¹²⁰

Although Patterson is correct that the unification compromise worked out between the War and Navy Departments allowed the Navy to retain control of land-based aviation for reconnaissance and antisubmarine operations, it is hard to believe the Secretary's protestations of ignorance over the degree to which this issue served as an impediment to military unification. Congressman Latham seemed unconvinced of the triviality to which Patterson attempted to relegate the matter. For the remainder of the hearings, Latham would prove the staunchest Navy advocate on the committee, raising questions pertinent to the survival of naval aviation over and over again.

On May 2, Admiral Forrest Sherman appeared before the committee and offered a statement in support of H.R. 2319, in which he affirmed that under the bill, the Navy was to retain control of land-based aviation for reconnaissance, antisubmarine operations, and for protection of shipping.¹²¹ During his testimony, Sherman, like every other witness before the committee, was asked whether he thought it appropriate for the text of the unification bill to be amended so as to include a clear definition of the roles and missions of the respective services rather than to leave such definitions to the proposed Executive order. Sherman responded that he preferred a statement of general functions in the wording of the bill, and that any attempt to be too precise might prove limiting as new

¹²⁰ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 155.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

military technology might necessitate a change in tactics. Pursuing the matter further, Michigan Republican and committee chairman Clare Hoffman¹²² asked,

You also mean, do you not, Admiral, that if we try to be too explicit in spelling this thing out, we might find ourselves hampered either preparing for war or in carrying on a war. You might find that the armed services are hampered by some law that Congress had passed years before.¹²³

Interestingly, Sherman replies by drawing on a lesson learned during the Battle of the Atlantic. He stated,

I am prepared to give you a specific example, sir. The Congress of the United States in the year 1926 passed a law which was interpreted as depriving the Navy of the use of shore-based aircraft for patrol purposes.

It was interpreted as meaning we could operate seaplanes from tenders for antisubmarine warfare, but we could not operate land-type patrol planes.

In the winter of 1941, with the submarine campaign going on in the North Atlantic, we finally broke that down, and, not as soon as desirable nor in the numbers that were desirable, we arranged to get one squadron of patrol landplanes out of British production so that we could do that job out of bases in Iceland in the wintertime. During the first winter of the war, we had pilots trying to take off in cold weather from the water, getting covered with ice on the take-off, because of an overprecise law passed in 1926 which stayed on the books and is still there and will become effective whenever the war powers under which we are now functioning disappear.¹²⁴

Sherman shared the convictions of the other witnesses who favored the passage of the unification bill regarding the advisability of not being too precise in defining the roles and missions of the armed forces in the bill. However, he is the only one who made reference to the contest over control of land-based antisubmarine aircraft during the Battle of the Atlantic to justify his opinion.

¹²² Spaatz's list of Committee members has a question mark next to Hoffman's name but notes "we have reason to think that he will be friendly." See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹²³ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, *Op. cit.*, 186.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 186. In his testimony, Admiral Sherman makes reference to the Air Corps Act passed by Congress on July 2, 1926.

General Eisenhower devoted much of his testimony to denying allegations that he was an “enemy of the Marine Corps”¹²⁵ and as such, hoped to see the absorption of the Marines into the Army after the unification bill was passed. To a great extent, these charges arose after his opinions regarding the future of the Marine Corps and of naval aviation as outlined in the JCS 1478 series memoranda became known during the Senate hearings. After Eisenhower affirmed his support for the continuation of the Marine Corps, Congressman Latham steered him back to the issue of naval aviation. Referring to the argument that a military force should have all of the tools at its disposal to carry out its mission, Latham asked Eisenhower if this concept supported the idea that the Navy should retain its aviation component. Seemingly accepting this as a matter of course, Eisenhower replied,

As a matter of fact, the only argument that has been developed that I have heard and would say one I have been able to remain aloof from, the only argument has been to the extent of their land-based aviation.

Anyone I have ever heard mention this thing, says that the fleet arm does belong to the Navy.

They have gotten into arguments about the land-based aviation, and the purpose, as I see it, is to avoid the spectacle of having two services planning on development, without limit great fleets of these enormous ships that cost \$500,000 apiece.¹²⁶

Like Patterson before him, Eisenhower seems to trivialize the argument by setting up land-based naval aviation as something of a ‘straw man.’ Since the matter of land-based naval aviation was explicitly addressed in the compromise leading to the current unification bill, it could be safely raised as an area of *past* controversy which need be of little concern in the weighty matters presently before Congress. The matter need not be brushed under the carpet, but rather, it can be trotted out as an example of a settled

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 298.

controversy which proves that satisfactory compromises have been made. Even if this inference is incorrect, it remains, nevertheless, disingenuous of Eisenhower to feign aloofness from a matter in which he was a key player in 1946 as evidenced by the JCS 1478 series memoranda.

Air Forces Chief of Staff, General Carl Spaatz followed Eisenhower in testifying before the committee that same day. In his prepared statement, he affirmed that there were no reasonable fears that the Navy would be denuded of its aviation component under the provisions laid forth in the unification bill. He emphatically remarked,

On this point our position is clear. The Air Force has subscribed to the Executive order to be issued by the President which defines the functions of the three armed services. We endorse the roles and missions assigned to naval aviation, including land bases and naval air units, and those assigned to the Marine Corps, including its air component.

“There is no justification, recognized by the Air Force, for fear that the Navy will be deprived of its essential aviation, or that the Marine Corps will be disestablished.”¹²⁷

During questioning, Spaatz was asked by Massachusetts Democrat John W. McCormack whether he foresaw in the future “any difficulties between the Army Air Force and the Naval Air Force in certain actions during a war period.”¹²⁸ Spaatz’s reply was very much in line with the vision of former Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. He stated,

I do not think there will be if the forces are organized under a single Secretary. I think that organization will insure that they will be trained together. For such cases where carrier-based aviation, for instance, enters into the picture with our air forces, we will have developed a system of operation that will enable the forces to operate together.

In the field of land-based naval aviation, as specified in the roles and missions where they are charged with antisubmarine warfare, I think under the terms of the roles and missions that the interest of the Nation is safeguarded

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 331.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 334. From the context of the passage, Congressman McCormack was using the term “Army Air Force,” as a synonym for the future independent Air Force provided for in the unification bill. His intention was to determine if Spaatz believed there might be difficulties between the future U.S. Air Force and the Navy after the bill’s passage.

against duplications that have been in existence in the past, particularly in building up the expensive land-based establishments that run into many, many millions of dollars. I think under the roles and missions now prescribed the country will be protected against duplication which might otherwise take place in carrying out those functions.¹²⁹

McCormack followed up by asking Spaatz to comment on the “differences of opinion between the Naval Air Force and the Army Air Force preceding the negotiations which resulted in this bill.” Spaatz replied,

The difficulties primarily centered around the extent to which the Navy should have land-based aviation. Our position in that initially was that the Air Force should be charged with all land-based aviation excepting, of course, that land-based operation necessary for training carrier-based aviation.

The difficulty of the land-based aviation was resolved after we reached an agreement on the roles and missions.¹³⁰

McCormack inquired as to the subject of the agreement, to which Spaatz replied that it concerned the roles and missions of the services as outlined in the Executive order.

Spaatz continued,

The Air Force felt that the long-range, heavy airplane—which we call the very heavy bomber and which the Navy calls the patrol plane—being very expensive weapon carriers, should not be duplicated; in other words, both forces should not build up what we call a strategic air force.

In the proposed roles and missions, the Navy is given the antisubmarine warfare phase and they will be provided with the planes considered essential for that operation. This does not mean a large build-up of that particular type of airplane. Under these conditions the compromise was reached.¹³¹

Spaatz conceded that the Executive order could be changed at any time by the President, but opined that in practical terms, any change of roles and missions would be a very slow and difficult process since the services would have to rearm and retrain their personnel in order to carry out any newly assigned task.¹³² Of all of Spaatz’s testimony before

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 334-335.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 336.

Congress, these passages are the most illustrative of the connection between the wartime disagreement over control of land-based antisubmarine aviation and the movement for service unification. When asked of potential disagreements between the services, he pointed to a single, overarching Secretary of Defense as the solution to such problems. When asked immediately afterwards to give of examples of past disagreements, he refers to the interservice rivalry over control of land-based antisubmarine aviation during the Battle of the Atlantic. One can easily infer from Spaatz's remarks that, in his mind, had there been an overarching Secretary of Defense during the war, the Navy would have been forced into cooperating with the Army Air Forces in an Army-orchestrated antisubmarine offensive. This had been the argument advanced by Henry Stimson as evidenced by his diary entries since 1943. There is no evidence to suggest that Spaatz colluded with Stimson in formulating this testimony. Instead, it is more likely that this line of thinking, to a greater or lesser extent, pervaded the War Department and was embraced as one among many reasons why service unification was warranted.

Most studies of the House unification hearings note that the real controversy began when Navy Secretary James Forrestal was recalled to testify on June 10. The House Committee members were frustrated by their inability to find any Navy officers willing to testify against the bill and suspected the existence of a "gag order" imposed by the Secretary against those who might publically oppose the bill. Freshman Virginia Democrat Porter Hardy, Jr.¹³³ told Forrestal,

¹³³ Spaatz's list of Committee members notes "Mr. Hardy is a new Congressman from Norfolk. Colonel Johnson reports that he is for unification, but I have serious doubts about this." Spaatz does not elaborate as to the reasons for his doubts. One can speculate that since Hardy represented Norfolk, Virginia, Spaatz perhaps suspected that the Congressman might have had strong Navy sympathies. See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

A high-ranking Navy officer told me some time ago that if a poll were taken of all the Navy officers, there would be at least 80 percent voting against the bill... I made the suggestion to him that he should testify before this committee. He said, "If I did, I would be sent to the Antarctic."¹³⁴

Forrestal admitted that there were Navy Department regulations that prohibited individual officers from unofficially lobbying Congress, but denied that these rules constituted a "gag order" against those opposing unification. On June 23, Forrestal suspended the particular articles in the Navy Regulations which had been interpreted as a gag and soon afterward a number of active-duty Navy officers came forward to testify before the committee in opposition to the unification bill.¹³⁵

Even before Forrestal's easing of the regulations, on June 11 the committee began to hear witnesses opposing the unification bill. To elaborate on the testimony of every opposition witness would reveal the repetitive nature of the argument against unification. To sum the matter up in brief, those opposing unification generally based their opinions on the fear that unification would spell the demise of the Marine Corps and of naval aviation. Another repetitive argument centered on the need to have the roles and missions of each service specifically spelled out in the unification bill and not relegated to an Executive order. Such were the themes taken up by Melvin Maas, the first opposition witness to testify. However, in the testimony of Maas and the other opponents of unification, a few important details emerge worthy of note.

After voicing his concerns for the survival of the Marine Corps, Maas launched into a defense of naval aviation. He elaborated on the familiar claim that control of its own aviation was vital to the task of the Navy, and that "the British nearly lost the war in

¹³⁴ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, *Op. cit.*, 364.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 389-390. See also: House Report 961, 80th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 9; Caraley, *Op. cit.*, 173-177.

1940 because their Navy, in effect, had no naval aviation.”¹³⁶ Later in his testimony, Maas was asked by Congressman Latham why the Navy, which had previously objected to unification under a single, overarching Secretary of Defense, had reversed its position and was now supporting unification. Latham asked, “Does it not look like the Navy has compromised some of its principles in this situation?” An interesting exchange followed:

Mr. Maas. It certainly appears on the surface that they have. There were some so-called naval victories in the compromise but I do not think they are justified by the price they paid for them.

Mr. Latham. The fact that the Navy got a few land-based aircraft obviously influenced them to say they were in favor of it.

Mr. Maas. The heart of the fight that the Navy was making at that time was the Army’s proposal to take all land-based aircraft away from the Navy.¹³⁷

In essence, Maas stated that the only reason the Navy leadership was going along with this compromise was because they believe it was the best deal they were going to get.¹³⁸

Among the opposition witnesses to testify was retired Rear Admiral Ellis M. Zacharias who appeared before the House Committee on June 19. With Zacharias’ testimony there begins a significant transition in the unification debate. The issue of the Navy’s retention of its aviation component, including its land-based patrol and antisubmarine aircraft, was at this point beginning to be eclipsed by the Navy’s contention that strategic bombing as developed during World War II was passing into obsolescence, and that the existence of an independent Air Force might tie a preponderant share of the nation’s military budget to an outmoded technology.

Zacharias touched upon many issues during his testimony and criticized the unification bill on a number of grounds. Among the points raised, he contended that after

¹³⁶ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 386

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 409.

unification, allocations for the Navy would be cut so as to build up the new Air Force, and that this would lead to the ultimate destruction of naval aviation.¹³⁹ Zacharias quoted recent remarks by Generals Spaatz and Armstrong that were disparaging to the Navy, which he argued were evidence of the Air Force's desire to seize preeminence in the military hierarchy after unification.¹⁴⁰ He also quoted a recent article in the popular magazine *Liberty* where one Colonel Allen of the Army Air Forces argued that the much touted long-range B-36 bomber had actually been planned as a wartime contingency in the event that Great Britain had been "knocked out of the war" and the United States was left, as a result, without air bases in Europe. Zacharias quoted Allen further, stating that, "in terms of speed, carrying power, and range, the B 36 is obsolete today as compared to secret planes already under way, so no purpose is served by "ying-yanging" over the B 36." On his own behalf, Zacharias added,

I would like to say, gentlemen, that this B-36, if the reports in the press are correct, is the plane that is supposed to go into production in the very near future, 100 of them. I think it was said, at a very high cost for each plane.

There you have a statement by an Air Force officer that it is obsolete already.

Now this is, I believe, the type of thing on the part of some individuals, that we are likely to encounter and I do not like it.¹⁴¹

When challenged by Minnesota Republican Walter H. Judd that Colonel Allen's opinion regarding the B-36 was overshadowed by the Air Force leadership who had recently testified before Congress in favor of funding the bomber, Zacharias rejoined,

I feel from sitting in here once before, I gained the impression that this committee was not cognizant of the scientific developments which are completed, which are under way, and which I think could very well, as General Arnold stated not long

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 505-506.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 507.

ago, “the day will soon come when we wont need any aviators in planes. It is going to be a missile,” and I heartily subscribe to General Arnold’s opinion.¹⁴²

In the midst of Zacharias’ testimony, committee chairman Hoffman exclaimed with some frustration, “We have been told here three or for times that these bombers were no good anyway, that the next war was going to be a push-button war, have we not gentlemen, and I am getting so I do not know about this war business.”¹⁴³

Zacharias’s assertions about the B-36 were challenged by California Democrat Chester Holifield¹⁴⁴ who inquired if the Admiral believed “that bomber type of warfare as used in World War II is an obsolete practice.” Zacharias replied,

It was my concept long before the war, that the high-level bombers were going to be an ineffective weapon in terminating the war.

One of the reasons for the feelings I now have regarding the separate Air Force is because of their insistence on the sole development of the high-level bomber... The performance of the high-level bombers has not justified their existence as I felt it should have...¹⁴⁵

After claiming to have seen first-hand the damage caused by the atomic bomb to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Holifield asked Zacharias what delivery system he thought could presently take the place of the B-36 in the event of imminent war.¹⁴⁶ Zacharias attempted to sidestep the question by remarking that he personally did not claim the bomber was obsolete, but was only quoting “some individuals.” He did point out, though, that according to the Strategic Bombing Survey, “72.1 percent of the bombs dropped by high-level bombers missed their target completely,” and that this record

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 506

¹⁴⁴ Chester Holifield was a member of President Truman’s Special Evaluation Commission on Atomic Bomb tests at Bikini Atoll and was a life-long proponent of civil defense. Spaatz’s list of Committee members notes “Mr. Holifield is for unification. He will work for it. He was a member of the old Military Affairs Committee.” See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹⁴⁵ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, *Op. cit.*, 509.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

should serve as a “precaution of having any false ideas creep in as regards to [the heavy bomber’s] perspective necessity in the future.”¹⁴⁷ With the recent Bikini atomic test in mind, Holifield then challenged Zacharias and inquired if he believed that large carriers and battleships had been rendered obsolete. The Admiral replied,

I will say categorically they are not obsolete, that they are going to require some modification, not particularly to prevent the effect of an atomic bomb, directly or indirectly, but in order to take care of the possibilities of missile warfare and very high speed weapons in the air.

They will have to be modified to consider the effect of atomic radiation, but there are many other considerations which I am quite sure are still under consideration.¹⁴⁸

The discussion resumed on June 20 when Holifield remarked that during the Bikini tests, “better than 90 percent of the ships in the target area were contaminated” with radiation, and for at least nine months afterward, “many of the ships were still too hot with radioactivity for human beings to stay on.”¹⁴⁹ Holifield continued,

I bring up this matter because of the fact that you have brought up in your testimony, Admiral, the factor of obsolescence of the large type of bombers such as the B-36, which could be a carrier for the bomb, as the B-29 was, and in the discussion of obsolescence, certainly we should take into consideration these changes, which in my opinion make the heavy battleship and the heavy carrier just as obsolete as the development in the anti-aircraft and proximity base homing devices might possibly make the bomber.¹⁵⁰

In an argument redolent of the Navy’s protestations against the unfairness of the test conditions when Army bombers sank the *Ostfriesland* 1921, Zacharias claimed that the Bikini tests were “held upon ships at anchor, and you will have an entirely different

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 510.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 524-525.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 525.

proposition with ships at sea where they are mobile” and could “leave the area immediately.”¹⁵¹ Zacharias added,

I want to emphasize the question of mobility, because that is the point which we feel is going to be a controlling factor in future wars, and our national security will depend upon the ability of the Navy to move freely about the oceans and transport weapons, whether they are aircraft, missiles, or others, to the vicinities where they can be used against an enemy.

As I see it now, the Navy and the aircraft carriers are still the only means of transportation for delivering those weapons against a potential enemy effectively.¹⁵²

The Navy’s contention that the B-36 was an expensive, obsolescent boondoggle and that the aircraft carrier remained the most reliable platform from which to launch aircraft capable of delivering atomic bombs was to become the central issue affecting inter-service relations after construction of the super carrier *United States* was cancelled by Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson in 1949. By that time, though, the Air Force no longer considered the Navy’s retention of land-based aircraft as a threat to its strategic prerogatives as it had during World War II, since naval land-based aircraft were confined to patrol and antisubmarine operations under the terms of the Executive order outlining roles and missions. After unification and the issuing of the attendant Executive order, the large aircraft carrier came to replace the Navy’s fleet of land-based airplanes as the principal threat to the Air Force’s monopolistic control over strategic bombing. Zacharias’ testimony in the 1947 unification debate foreshadows the position that the Navy would take in 1949.

The obsolescence of strategic bombing was also discussed by Admiral Arthur Radford who testified on June 26. Echoing the other opponents of the bill, Radford stated that naval aviation “will gradually dry up and loose its efficiency,” should the bill

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

pass in its present form.¹⁵³ However, when asked why he objected to passing legislation which would legally institutionalize and safeguard both the Navy and the Air Force organizations that were extemporized during the war, Radford replied,

I just feel that World War III is going to be different, and I would hate to see our new organization patterned after the organization of World War II. I think that that is the trouble, the basic trouble, with this bill. It is setting up permanently the pattern established by World War II. That is usually, historically the way we work. We organize for the next war by following the pattern of the last one.¹⁵⁴

Congressman W. J. Bryan Dorn,¹⁵⁵ freshman Democrat from South Carolina, remarked that he agreed with Radford on this point, but asked if he thought that “push-button” warfare was not yet still a long way off. Radford replied, “I do... However I feel that it is essential in establishing this new pattern that you make a realistic appraisal of what is coming.”¹⁵⁶ A little later in his testimony, Radford was asked by freshman Democrat J. Frank Wilson¹⁵⁷ from Texas if he subscribed to the theory “that practically all of our offensive weapons are antedated and outmoded at this time, and that if we are going into the next war it will be nothing but a push-button affair.” Radford replied that it depended on when the next war might come. “I would say,” he added, “that my own feeling is that before the next war comes there will be a great change in offensive and defensive weapons.”¹⁵⁸ Radford’s thinking is best summarized by an exchange with Congressman

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 572.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 582.

¹⁵⁵ William Jennings Bryan Dorn served in the Army Air Forces in Europe during World War II. Spaatz’s list of Committee members notes “Mr. Dorn is for unification.” See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹⁵⁶ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, *Op. cit.*, 582.

¹⁵⁷ Spaatz’s list of Committee members notes “Mr. Wilson is a new man and we have no line on him. I am asking Mr. Ewing Tomason to see Mr. Wilson, and have reasons to believe that he will be for unification.” See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹⁵⁸ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, *Op. cit.*, 590.

Dorn, after he was asked how, with the exception of a greater emphasis on air, he thought World War III would be fought.

Admiral Radford. I do not know. That, as I said, depends on when it comes, and I hope we do not have it. But, I think that the tendency will be to do away with the airplane as we know it today. We may not have piloted airplanes in World War III.

Mr. Dorn. In other words, your Navy will be carriers for rockets, for guided missiles; your submarine might emerge at some place near where a potential enemy is and shoot off the guided missile...¹⁵⁹

Speaking of future Navy ships, Dorn continued, "They might have these great guns, but I mean anti-aircraft defense against enemy aircraft. That would be the primary objective of your battleship or cruiser or destroyer." Radford responded, "Well, I think it is a little confusing even to refer to them as battleships or cruisers or carriers at that stage; there will probably be a complete redevelopment of all naval types in the years to come."¹⁶⁰ In sum, Radford was warning that the Air Force was, by its very nature, wedded to a single weapons system which might or might not be obsolete by the time World War III began. Because the Navy thought of air power as tool towards carrying out its maritime mission and not an organizing principle, it, rather than an independent Air Force, was more capable of adapting to changing tactical situations as new technology rendered established weapons systems obsolete.

Rear Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie appeared before the committee on June 30, and in terms similar to those used by Zacharias and Radford, he argued that creating an independent Air Force based on air power as an organizing principle was misguided. He stated that he believed strategic bombing as developed during World War II was over. He continued,

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 592.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 593.

There has been a suggestion brought forward that things are going to change greatly within a very short period of time, we are going to have supersonic speeds and tremendous aircraft that can get by anything.

That simply is not the fact; we have nothing in sight today, no means today of passing through the trans-sonic zone. Unquestionably, I believe in due course and in years to come after we get new materials, new fuels, other new developments, we will get into the trans-sonic and super-sonic range, but we have nothing in sight today, and the belief that we will continue strategic bombing in the old manner, such as was carried out against Germany and against Japan, is, I think, a mistake.¹⁶¹

Ofstie articulated his desire to see the roles and missions of naval aviation and the Marine Corps written into the bill rather than relying on such definition in the Executive order. New York Congressman James Wadsworth¹⁶² challenged him on this point, suggesting that such provisions in the bill would codify a rigid and inflexible military system and thereby deny the President his prerogatives as Commander in Chief. In response, Ofstie remarked that under the present bill, the “Navy and Marine Air Forces really are considered stepchildren, where the Air Force is set forth as the major important fighting force in the air, and it is not.”¹⁶³

The committee continued to take testimony from the opposition witnesses who had come forward after Forrestal’s suspension of the so-called gag order, however, their collective testimony centered on the well thrashed-out fear that the Navy would lose control of its aviation and that the Marine Corps would be subsumed into the Army once unification went into effect. Of those witnesses who testified before the close of hearings on July 1, only one made further reference to naval land-based antisubmarine aviation. On July 1, Vice Admiral G. F. Bogan during questioning asserted that he believed that

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 632-633.

¹⁶² Congressman James Wadsworth was a longtime friend of Henry Stimson and supporter of military unification. Wadsworth sponsored the legislation that created the Woodrum Committee in 1944. Spaatz’s list of Committee members regarding Wadsworth simply states, “for unification.” See: untitled document, January 15, 1947, *Box I 266, Carl Spaatz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

¹⁶³ Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, *Op. cit.*, 637.

under the terms of the unification bill, “it is the long range plan of the United States Air Force as set up to absorb naval aviation.”¹⁶⁴ When asked by chairman Hoffman if he had proof of this, Bogan replied, “I have here a doctrine of the Air Forces in the United States Air Service magazine and this is one of the doctrines published at the graduation exercises of the school at Maxwell Field.”¹⁶⁵ He proceeded to quote the passage, saying,

“An immediate vote now on unification is urged so that the present uncertainty can be ended and sound planning started. Unification, which means to the Air Forces the establishment of a fully autonomous Air Force, is indeed the A-1 priority of the Air Force today. They support the present bill heartily, but have not abandoned their belief in a single chief of staff of the armed service. They still feel that all air power, including the Navy’s ought to be under one command, and they are still deeply concerned—though at the moment chiefly in theory—with the antisubmarine problem, the quality of air weapons, and air personnel.”

In his own words, he added, “I mean that the long-range plan that the United States Air Force as presently constituted under this bill will eventually absorb naval aviation.”¹⁶⁶

Bogan’s assertion was challenged by Congressman Wilson in the following exchange:

Mr. Wilson. You do not think Congress will have anything to do with that?

Admiral Bogan. Congress will have a great deal to do with it and legislation may be necessary to accomplish it. It can be done by budget allocations over a period of time if by no other means.

Mr. Wilson. You mean they cannot be kept from absorbing naval aviation by budget appropriations?

Admiral Bogan. No, sir. I think they can by budget appropriations absorb the Navy by curtailing naval aviation appropriations.

Mr. Wilson. How could that happen then if it could not happen now? How could it happen under this bill when the Secretary of National Defense works absolutely under the President of the United States subject to appropriations by Congress and the Bureau of the Budget? How could it happen any quicker with this bill than it could happen now?

Admiral Bogan. In the recent budget hearing, sir, funds for land-based airplanes for the Navy were greatly curtailed. I regard that as step No. 1.

Mr. Wilson. What do you think will happen next?

Admiral Bogan. Next, many young naval officers, naval aviators, whose experience is largely air, who entered shortly before and during the last war,

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 692.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

realizing that Navy air power will probably not be the major part of the Navy, will shift to the United States Air Force.

Mr. Wilson. If naval aviation is kept up to its present strength and increased as it was during the last war, World War II, and appropriations are made by Congress for that purpose, there will be no way in the world that the Air Forces could swallow up naval aviation.

Admiral Bogan. It will not be the Air Forces, but it will be the United States Air Force, and I believe they will under this bill gradually absorb naval aviation. I believe this bill will be the death knell of naval aviation.¹⁶⁷

Bogan was the last witness to draw a connection between the struggle for control of land-based antisubmarine aviation and the unification bill. The committee heard two more opposition witnesses after Admiral Bogan before it closed debate on H.R. 2319 on July 1. When the committee adjourned, there were still twenty-six Navy and Marine Corps witnesses in line who were denied an opportunity to testify.¹⁶⁸

On July 16, committee chairman Hoffman submitted a report to the full House of Representatives that an amended version of the unification bill, now designated H.R. 4214, had been approved by the House Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments and urged its passage.¹⁶⁹ In addition to providing for the creation of the Air Force out of the old Army Air Forces, the report stated that under the bill, “the Department of the Navy remains as at present, and language has been inserted which will adequately assure the integrity and continued effectiveness of the Marine Corps and naval aviation concerning which some fears have been expressed.”¹⁷⁰ This reference to language safeguarding naval aviation is found in the text of the “National Security Act of 1947,” Sections 203 (a) and (b) which speak of the Navy’s retention of “such aviation as

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 692-693.

¹⁶⁸ House Report 961, 80th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 16.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

may be organic therein.”¹⁷¹ Committee chairman Hoffman exercised his prerogatives and appended a separate statement at the end of the Committee Report outlining his personal views which were at variance with the other members of the reporting subcommittee, namely Congressmen Wadsworth and McCormack, who were largely responsible for drafting the main report. One of Hoffman’s concerns was that the committee did not give adequate time to hearing the opposition witnesses who came forward after Forrestal had relaxed the Navy Regulations interpreted by opponents of the unification bill as a “gag order.” “Unfortunately,” Hoffman wrote, “these restrictions on the free expression of opinion by naval and marine officers were not lifted by the Secretary of the Navy until June 23, 1947, shortly before conclusion of the hearings when a general message was issued to the Navy by Secretary Forrestal which for the first time lifted the restrictions.”¹⁷² He opined that the testimony of several high ranking naval officers “disclosed that there is a very significant degree of intelligent opposition to certain provisions of the bill from within the naval service.”¹⁷³ Nevertheless, Hoffman favorably concluded that passage of the bill would “help ensure the coordination of our domestic, foreign, and military policies upon an informed basis,” and would “facilitate the integration of all our military services and their unified strategic direction and command.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 93, Part 7, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 9440-9441.

¹⁷² House Report 961, *Op. cit.*, 9.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

VI. Final Passage of the National Security Act of 1947

The floor debate in the House of Representatives on the revised unification bill took place on July 19. Both those for and against the bill rehashed the same familiar arguments in support of their position and no new issues emerged. The fate of naval aviation and the Marine Corps were discussed at length, as was the role that the independent Air Force would assume in the national defense, but no special reference to land-based antisubmarine aviation was made during the floor debate. Fourteen amendments were proposed toward the close of debate, of which seven were approved. Of these was an amendment proposed by New York Republican Sterling Cole¹⁷⁵ which read:

Naval aviation, both combat, service and training, shall include the entire aeronautical organization of the United States Navy; all land-based naval aviation; ship-based aviation; naval air-transportation services; fleet air forces; carrier forces; all aviation components of the United States Marine Corps; and all other aviation, air weapons, and techniques involved in the operations and activities of the United States Navy, together with the personnel necessary therefore.¹⁷⁶

The amendment further stated that “the Navy shall be generally responsible for naval reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare, and protection of shipping.”¹⁷⁷ The House of Representatives passed the amended bill by voice vote. Congressman Hoffman next called up the Senate unification bill, S. 758, and proposed amending it by striking out all text after the enacting clause and replacing it with the text of H.R. 4214.¹⁷⁸ On July 21,

¹⁷⁵ Sterling Cole had been a member of the House Naval Affairs Committee and his partiality towards the Navy continued while serving on the House Armed Services Committee.

¹⁷⁶ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 93, Part 7, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 9450.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 9456-9457.

the Senate rejected the House amendment to S. 758 and both unification bills were sent to a conference committee for reconciliation.¹⁷⁹

On July 24, the conference committee finalized a unification bill which incorporated much of the changes made to S. 758 by the House. The passage inserted into the bill which had been proposed by Congressman Cole had been slightly amended to read:

Naval aviation shall consist of combat and service and training forces, and shall include land-based naval aviation, air transport essential for naval operations, all air weapons and air techniques involved in the operations and activities of the United States Navy, and the entire remainder of the aeronautical organization of the United States Navy, together with the personnel necessary therefore.¹⁸⁰

The passage which read “the Navy shall be generally responsible for naval reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare, and protection of shipping,” was retained unaltered.¹⁸¹ Although Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. raised an objection to the incorporation of specific service functions in the bill, the conference bill was agreed to in the Senate on July 24.¹⁸² The House accepted the conference bill the following day.¹⁸³ President Truman signed the National Security Act into law and immediately issued the Executive order assigning the roles and missions of the armed services on July 26. That same day, the Senate, under the suspension of rules, confirmed James Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense.¹⁸⁴

After nearly four years of interservice wrangling and congressional investigations, service unification was finally accomplished. Although the National Security Act

¹⁷⁹ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 93, Part 8, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 9473.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9914.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 9923.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10198.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10418.

provided for Air Force independence from the Army, the Navy won statutory recognition of its right to maintain control over land-based antisubmarine aviation.

VII. Conclusion

Although service unification was brought about in July, 1947, the interservice squabbles over the future of naval aviation continued. The issue of whether or not the Navy should have control over land-based bomber-type aircraft soon migrated, however, to one where the Air Force would question the propriety of the Navy developing aircraft carriers and carrier-based aircraft capable of delivering strategic nuclear weapons. Although this new interservice conflict would erupt in force when Louis Johnson, Forrestal's successor as Secretary of Defense, canceled construction of the super-carrier *United States* in 1949, the first rumblings in this conflict can be seen in the House committee debates on the unification bill in 1947.

The issue of the Navy controlling land-based antisubmarine aviation was no longer a concern to legislators after the passage of the National Security Act and the issuance of its attendant Executive order on July 26. However, the contentious issue would be raised one more time. The story of the failure of the Navy to cooperate in an Army led antisubmarine offensive during the Battle of the Atlantic was about to be published by former Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. His account of the wartime interservice rivalry for control of land-based antisubmarine aviation would serve as an argument in support of the National Security Act of 1947 and of the comprehensive powers of the Secretary of Defense which the law created.

Chapter 7

The Redaction of Chapter 20 of *On Active Service In Peace and War*

As mentioned in chapter 5 of this study, on April 22, 1946, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson approached Henry Stimson in his retirement to see if the former Secretary of War would be willing to write an article in support of military unification for a popular magazine such as *Readers Digest* or the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹ Stimson was reluctant to embark upon such a project due to a recent heart attack. However, by the following July, he felt sufficiently well enough to begin work on his memoir, *On Active Service In Peace and War*, which was published a few months after the passage of the 1947 National Security Act. It must be understood, however, that work on this project was nearly completed while unification legislation was mired in Congress due to the opposition of Navy advocates, both uniformed and civilian. It must also be understood that chapter 20 of *On Active Service*, titled “the Army and the Navy,” was written with a mind towards its publication as a stand-alone article supporting unification in the manner Robert Patterson had suggested in April, 1946 during the height of the unification debate in the Senate. This chapter was published shortly before the release of *On Active Service*, albeit with significant editorial changes, in the February, 1948 issue of the popular magazine, *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

Stimson was assisted in the writing of *On Active Service* by the son of his long-time friend and War Department subordinate, Harvey Bundy. Of the product of their collaboration their collaboration, Stimson wrote,

This book contains an account of the years of my public service—my actions, motives, and estimates of results—from my point of view. The writing of the

¹ See above: Chapter 5, 43-44.

book has been the work of Mr. McGeorge Bundy. Its style and composition are his; but, where he writes of what I have thought and felt, he does so after we have worked together for eighteen months in an earnest effort to make an accurate and balanced account. We have aimed to present not only my past experience but my present opinions as clearly and as honestly as we can. The result is a record which I believe fully reflects my best judgment of what my public life has been.²

This was certainly the case regarding chapter 20, and there is ample evidence that Stimson exercised a significant supervisory role in its editing and redaction as the time for its publication drew near.

This study will examine the evolution of chapter 20 of *On Active Service*. By considering how this chapter was redacted, one may better understand the depths of Stimson's feelings as he sought to present the recent history of Army-Navy disunity during the Battle of the Atlantic as justification for the passage of military unification legislation then making its way through Congress. The subject of chapter 20 of *On Active Service* is already covered in detail in the fourth chapter of this study and a retelling of that story here is unwarranted. Instead, what is of concern here is the evolution of chapter 20 of *On Active Service* from its early draft to its final, published form. However, the purpose of this examination is not to trace every editorial change made to the manuscript before its publication. An effort to catalog every replaced pronoun or change in verb tense would prove tedious and pedantic. Just as tedious would be a complete list of every passage that was included in the first draft but cut from the final, published version. There are many such changes to the text which will not be given attention here. What will be examined, however, are instances where the text was significantly changed for purposes other than merely improving the flow of the narrative—in places where the inclusion or omission of a certain passage might either

² Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service In Peace and War*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), xi.

hamper the cause of military unification or bring about catastrophic harm to interservice relations at a time when such relations were already approaching their nadir.

I. The Redaction of Chapter 20

By the time the National Security Act passed both houses of Congress on July 26, 1947, work on the first draft of chapter 20 of Stimson's memoirs was nearly, if not totally, finished. However, Stimson was not pleased with its tone. Since the later stages of the unification hearings in Congress brought to light the apprehensions of career Navy officers that service unification would result in the eventual elimination of naval aviation, Stimson thought it proper to tone down the anti-Navy bias evident in his work. On August 7, 1948, in a hand-written note to McGeorge Bundy, Stimson wrote,

My dear Mac

Roberts³ told me that he thought the chapter on Army + Navy gave an unfair impression of the Navy, and that he thought it would make a bad impression on the gen reader. I read it again and fully agree with him. I think we must make an entirely new slant. I have written a few pages as a suggestion for such a slant, and also how I think it should be carried through with great compression. I send you the pencil sheets to give you my ideas. Please preserve it. It is my only copy. I am holding my marked up copy of that chapter for future talks with you.

I hope you got down safe and are not too uncomfortable. It is very hot and dry down here.

Affectionately,
HLS⁴

The later drafts and redactions of the chapters of *On Active Service* were kept by McGeorge Bundy and now repose at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Unfortunately, these chapters are not dated, and it is difficult to determine the exact date

³ Most likely Stimson is referring to George Roberts, a former law partner and close personal friend and confidant.

⁴ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, August 7, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques (1 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA. The reference to "Roberts" is not determined.

of their composition. Internal evidence, however, in most cases allows for the establishment of the sequence of their redaction, as well as a *terminus ante quem* and a *terminus post quem* of these documents. Another complicating factor is that some of the drafts are only fragments of a chapter, inserted in the file presumably after the portion they were meant to replace was entirely removed. For the most part, what the file contains is a kaleidoscope of partial, overlapping chapter fragments—each a work in progress—replete with hand-written marginalia, corrections and crossed-out excisions. Nevertheless, in spite of this confused state, a few instances of textual evolution stand out as noteworthy.

At some stage after the first re-write, Stimson sent Bundy a series of comments regarding the revised text. Pertaining to the Battle of the Atlantic, Stimson wrote:

I think you have much improved the story. One criticism is that from the standpoint of a biography of me, you have not brought out some of the things in the anti-submarine issue which would show my personal and individual part in it.⁵

Stimson commented on Bundy's inadequate description of the role he played in the development of airborne radar and its introduction as a tool in antisubmarine warfare, noting that it was he who had personally brought Edward Bowles to the War Department from M.I.T. for the purpose of fully applying radar technology to military purposes. "I had to push just as hard in the beginning with my own Air Corps as I did subsequently with the Navy," Stimson wrote. "In other words," he continued, "I was ahead of them both, and I was ahead of them through personal channels not open to anyone else."⁶

⁵ "Sub-section XI. Army and Navy (p.8)," undated, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, On Active Service- Notes and Drafts Chapter XX: (1 of 2)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Stimson's next criticism was leveled at a portion of the text that seems to have been so thoroughly revised in the surviving drafts that his reference to Navy dirigibles has been entirely removed. Nevertheless, the criticism he affords Bundy offers further evidence of Stimson's mindset towards the Navy's prosecution of the antisubmarine war.

Stimson wrote,

I think you could dramatize a little more the folly of the Navy theory of tying airships up to the command of the Sea Frontier Commander. To anyone who looks at a map of the Atlantic and pictures adequately the area of the anti-submarine battle, such a tying down of vital weapons seems perfectly ridiculous. Point out the number of Sea Frontier Commands among whom the planes were distributed. My recollection is that there were quite a number on the west side of the Atlantic alone. You might point out how it contrasted with the strategic vision which was being developed in the Army Air Force. This was not merely strategic bombing which you rather sniff at, but it was the much broader application of real and proper tactics – the flexible concentration of massed power wherever it was needed. In that respect the Air Force was far and away ahead of the Navy at all times during the war and probably still is. The method of Sea Frontier division was completely antithetic and fatal to it.

Perhaps this involves too much of a rewrite for you at this stage, but in my opinion the picture could be made truthfully and dramatically much more adverse to the Navy.⁷

Stimson's stated desire to publish an account "dramatically much more adverse to the Navy" betrays his intent to produce a work of anti-Navy propaganda, the purpose of which was to sway public opinion at a critical moment during the military unification debates in Congress.

Stimson also desired that the chapter contain a contrast between what he considered the lackluster Navy tactic of aerial antisubmarine defense compared to the War Department's preference for an aerial antisubmarine offensive. In the early draft of this chapter, Bundy made mention of the antisubmarine offensive carried out by the RAF

⁷ *Ibid.*

Coastal Command, but apparently omitted mention of the Army Air Forces

Antisubmarine Command. Stimson wrote,

Your contrast with the Coastal Command is admirable, but we had in the American Army a contrast which was equally clear as that with the Coastal Command. See Bowles's very able report which summarizes the possibilities of using a land based airport.⁸

Stimson wanted the desirability of the offensive tactic accentuated, but he did not wish for it to appear as though the difference in tactics was simply an American vs. British contrast. He wanted to make clear that the U.S. Army Air Forces during his tenure as Secretary of War was ready and able to take the offensive. Thus, the public was to be made aware that the contrast in tactics during the Battle of the Atlantic was not British vs. American, but rather Army vs. Navy.

A number of passages in the surviving drafts had been removed from the final, published version of the chapter although no specific directive survives from Stimson ordering Bundy to make these corrections. Pencil lines drawn through the stricken sentences might have been made by Stimson himself and served as sufficient instructions to Bundy to effect the changes. One very incendiary passage is found in a draft of chapter 20 written some time before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearings were completed in May 1947. A good portion of the passage is preserved in the final, published version, however Stimson deemed that a portion particularly hostile to the Navy should be stricken (indicated in italics). Writing of the imperfections of the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff, Bundy wrote:

It was an exact counterpart in military terms of the Security Council later established by the United Nations; *and in Stimson's view the Navy Department*

⁸ *Ibid.*

*played the role of Soviet Russia, employing a rigorous insistence on unanimity as a means of defending its own interests.*⁹

This was changed in the published version to read:

It was an exact counterpart in military terms of the Security Council later established by the United Nations; any officer, in a minority of one, could employ a rigorous insistence on unanimity as a means of defending the interests of his own service.¹⁰

In that same paragraph, an unflattering reference is made to Admiral King. Speaking of how much Stimson admired the leadership skills of General George Marshall, Bundy wrote:

But Stimson was appalled at the thought of what might have happened among the Joint Chiefs if Marshall had been replaced by any officer, however able, whose interests and attitudes were as *rigorously* limited by a service viewpoint *as those of Admiral King*.¹¹

The passage was retained in the final, published version, but reference to Admiral King was removed.

Another minor change to the chapter involved the renaming of subchapter 3, originally called “Planning for Army-Navy Peace” to the less-confrontational “Unification and the Future.” Although seemingly insignificant, the rewording removed the implications that the Army and Navy were ever at war with each other, and also that a period of “peace” implied a victor and a loser in the interdepartmental struggle. To be sure, these were not the only changes made to the text between the first draft and the final, published version. However, the other changes were not of a nature bearing on

⁹ “A Case History and its Lessons,” undated, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, On Active Service- Notes and Drafts Chapter XX: (1 of 2)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

¹⁰ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *Op. cit.*, 515.

¹¹ “A Case History and its Lessons,” undated, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, On Active Service- Notes and Drafts Chapter XX: (1 of 2)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

interservice relations and had more to do with improving the flow of the narrative. A full excursus of these changes is not warranted.

Sometime after the unification bill passed the Senate, but before Forrestal was confirmed as the first Secretary of Defense, Bundy added a conclusion to the manuscript which was drawn mostly from Stimson's April 21, 1947 letter to Senate Armed Services Committee chairman, Chan Gurney.¹² Bundy's initial draft of the conclusion was pared down for the sake of brevity, but in essence it presented the argument Stimson put forth in his letter to Senator Gurney that military unification was a continuation of the reforms begun by Elihu Root when he instituted the Army General Staff in 1904.¹³ The chapter was reworked at least two more times, however only minor grammatical changes were made. The final working draft was nearly identical to what would be published in *On Active Service* in early 1948.

II. Fact-Checking and Final Editing

Shortly before both the publication of "A Time of Peril" in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the complete text of *On Active Service* in book form, Bundy sent the chapter about the Battle of the Atlantic to two of Stimson's War Department subordinates, namely Edward Bowles and Robert Patterson, for feedback and fact-checking. On December 4, 1947, Bowles sent back a lengthy reply advising Bundy on a number of points that he believed needed clarification and elaboration. One point needing emphasis, he believed, was the different methods used by the British Admiralty and the U.S. Navy in managing the antisubmarine war. In making his point, Bowles reveals his lingering

¹² See above: Chapter 6, 29-31.

¹³ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *Op. cit.*, 519-523.

antipathy towards the Navy leadership. He noted that although Admiral King had appointed Admiral Francis Low as commander of the Tenth Fleet, “our antisubmarine warfare operations continued to be run by no less man than King himself out of the administrative headquarters in Washington.”¹⁴ Bowles continued,

The Admiralty, perceiving its mistake early, set up a command based at the Western Approaches, imputing to this command the same prerogatives and responsibilities given to any other combat fleet. King’s tight hold of the command and his obsessional support of his sea frontier commanders, who themselves operated under outmoded concepts came near being our undoing.¹⁵

Bowles then mentioned a wartime letter that had been sent to him by Stimson directing that he assist the Navy in the prosecution of the antisubmarine war. “The letter,” he wrote, “indicates how far the Secretary was willing to influence Navy operations.”

Bowles further noted that King’s response to the letter was “cordial,” but that “I found Low so hostile that it was hopeless even to try to give assistance from our side.”¹⁶

Bowles continued his critique by discussing that portion of Bundy’s work which dealt with the Navy’s control of the air war against the German submarines. Bowles remained critical of Admiral King’s insistence that air operations be controlled by local Navy commanders. He wrote,

I believe you could be so explicit as to state that in final analysis as far as King would condescend to go was to give to a top Army Air Forces commander responsibility only for the housekeeping activities of the antisubmarine aircraft units. This unbearable attitude was taken in the face of a proffer in which we named one of our top commanders for the air job in the hope of convincing them as to our belief in the urgency of a unified air effort and in the interest of applying the task force concept here just as it was being applied in other operations.¹⁷

¹⁴ Edward L. Bowles, Letter to McGeorge Bundy, December 4, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3), John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

At this point, Bowles indicated his understanding that there was a deeper purpose to Stimson's memoir than merely to satisfy an elderly patrician's sense of *noblesse oblige*.

He continued,

I believe you could afford to emphasize this point, for certainly insofar as antisubmarine warfare was concerned we could not have been further from the concept of task force doctrine. This intransigence on the part of the Navy you might want to tie in with your subsequent discussion on unification.¹⁸

Clearly, as far as Bowles was concerned, Bundy's collaborative effort with Stimson was intended not merely to tell the story of Navy bungling, but by doing just that it served as propaganda in support of the unification legislation that was then wending its way through Congress. Bowles indicated his understanding of this purpose more than once in his critique.

Bowles outlined the problem faced by General Marshall, Stimson, and the War Department staff in getting President Roosevelt to intervene and stipulate which service should have command of the antisubmarine air war. According to Bowles, General Marshall eventually realized that this was a lost cause. "The Commander in Chief," he wrote, "did not elect to resolve the difficulties of command, which were the real issues."¹⁹ Bowles also remarked that he believed an important point needing greater clarification was the shortcomings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their exercise of effective command. With regard to the impasse over command of the antisubmarine air war, he wrote,

To me, here you hit on one of the most striking demonstrations of the weakness of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to come out during the war. I understand there were about fifteen similar illustrations where this weakness made it impossible for anything more than a compromise action by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the instance of the antisubmarine impasse a whole year was spent in disputation at a

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

time when our nation was exposed to what was probably its greatest peril of the war, only to determine the Army Air Forces and the Navy could not work together on this problem. To think that we would suffer so much unnecessary waste of life and shipping by such oppositionist tactics is a credit neither to the Joint Chiefs of Staff nor to the Commander-in-Chief.²⁰

As before, Bowles ties the whole issue in with the current unification debate. He continued,

Even with unification this situation remains unchanged. I believe Stimson would hold to the view that unification will not be completely assured until there is such a sublimation of interests that none of the three component forces will look with suspicion on the idea of an over-all Chief of Staff.²¹

He was, however, not hopeful that this “sublimation” would happen anytime soon, and he feared that it would take another “major debacle” for this problem to be resolved.

Bowles also weighed in on Bundy’s treatment of the Navy’s fear that the Air Force would come to control naval aviation if the Navy were to relinquish its command of the antisubmarine air war. “It seems to me,” he wrote, “there is something more fundamental to the problem.”²² Bowles continued,

The Admirals of whom you speak, even though some of the older ones failed to understand the applications of air power, had lurking in the backs of their minds an appreciation of the evolutionary significance of aviation. Despite current arguments they could not help but interpret trends. They appreciated that just as the battleship had been our great emissary of good will and strength, epitomized in the epithetical reference to the Navy as the country’s first line of defense, the long range land-based aircraft was in the ascendancy and bound to assume an even more embracing symbolization of strength now that three-dimensional war had come to full stature. The Navy has good reason to fear the consequences of long range land-based air if naval supremacy in the form of traditional aristocracy was to be preserved.²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Bowles, like many of his War Department colleagues, betrays his anti-Navy bias through his assertion that air power would naturally surpass the Navy as the nation's first line of defense.

The remainder of Bowles letter is taken up with a somewhat bitter complaint to McGeorge Bundy that he had not been given any recognition by Stimson or the War Department for all the technical and scientific work he had done on Stimson's behalf. Bowles mentioned a number of instances where he worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as with the British to solve certain technological problems, but in the end, was unceremoniously dropped by the War Department when his services were no longer needed. "The climax came when I was excluded from the Secretary's 80th birthday visitation," Bowles wrote. However, leaving Stimson an out, Bowles preferred to place the blame on other, unnamed people within Stimson's War Department circle.²⁴ Bowles continued,

Had the Secretary full knowledge of what was achieved in his name and for him out of my office he never would have permitted my name to have been left off the list of those who formed the group that honored him on that day. Considering my position on his staff the omission could only have been deliberate.²⁵

Furthermore, Bowles indicated that Bundy's work had omitted many important details of his contribution to the antisubmarine war, and served as yet another slight to his dignity. He concluded that, although he felt personally wronged, he hoped his cooperation with Bundy would help bring the full story of the contribution made by him and his staff of scientists and technicians to assisting the War Department in its effort to achieve ultimate

²⁴ There is no clear evidence in Bowles' letter as to whom he blamed for his alienation from Stimson, but the context of McGeorge Bundy's reply indicates that he harbored some animosity for Harvey Bundy.

²⁵ Edward L. Bowles, Letter to McGeorge Bundy, December 4, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

victory. Bowles even sent a brief note to Stimson the following day expressing his hurt at being slighted, but confirming his desire to cooperate with Bundy by offering constructive criticism.²⁶

Bundy's first reaction was to offer a somewhat testy letter in reply. Writing on December 7, 1947 he opened with an acknowledgement of his reception of Bowles' lengthy letter of December 4. The reason for his curt tone becomes immediately apparent. Referring to Bowles' letter, Bundy wrote,

Since part of it is clearly not addressed to me but to Colonel Stimson, I have no answer to that part. It seems especially undesirable to discuss that part of it which implies bad faith on the part of my father, since clearly you cannot expect me to agree with you. In any event this is my first experience with complaints of the character you make, and I do not readily find a suitable comment.²⁷

Bundy addressed Bowles' criticism point by point. Regarding the flaws inherent in the Joint Chiefs of Staff command structure, Bundy remarked that he believed he had made his point about the weakness of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sufficiently and fairly. "On the other hand," he wrote, "I think you are altogether right about future dangers, and I'll advise a suitable comment on this point."²⁸ Bundy next indicated that it was both his and Stimson's desire not to needlessly provoke the Navy to anger in the revised chapter which Bowles had been critiquing. With specific reference to Bowles' comments about

²⁶ Edward L. Bowles, Letter to Henry L. Stimson, December 5, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

²⁷ McGeorge Bundy, Letter to Edward Bowles, December 7, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA. The exact nature of the rift between Bowles and the elder Bundy is unclear. In *Turmoil and Tradition*, Elting Morison states that Harvey Bundy "became the moving spirit in the development of scientific information" in the War Department, and that he acted as Stimson's intermediary "in matters not quite big enough to engage the immediate concern of the Secretary." Given the elder Bundy's position, it is possible that Bowles harbored a grudge against him for limiting his access to Stimson during the war. See: Elting E. Morison, *Turmoil and Tradition: A Study of the Life and Times of Henry L. Stimson*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 493.

²⁸ McGeorge Bundy, Letter to Edward Bowles, December 7, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

the top Navy leadership fearing the ascendancy of land-based air power as the preeminent means of national defense, Bundy replied,

This point is probably psychologically sound, but it is my feeling that for Col. Stimson to make it would produce such an outburst of anger from the Navy as to nullify the effect of what he says. I should perhaps point out too that it is a point he has never raised, which accounts amply for its omission. The book in question is a record of his views, not of mine.²⁹

Finally, remarking on Bowles' criticism of the paragraphs regarding military unification, Bundy wrote,

Perhaps Col. Stimson is wrong in having high hopes of the Unification Bill. But it is a fact that he does. As for the structure of the paragraph, I shall certainly try to improve it.³⁰

Having addressed all of Bowles' critical remarks regarding chapter 20 of *On Active Service*, Bundy wrote at length of why he believed Bowles' hurt feelings were misplaced and unwarranted. Furthermore, he advised Bowles that the chapter in question was not intended to serve as a history of the War Department, but was intended rather as a biographical work. "[T]he point is," he wrote, "as I cannot too strongly emphasize, that we are at work on a life of Mr. Stimson, not a record of the achievements of his subordinates."³¹ Bundy elaborated on this point at length, ultimately writing,

I fear too that you will feel that I have been somewhat cavalier in my dismissal or rejection of some of the points you make in criticism of the chapter on the Army and the Navy. I should perhaps make two general points in explanation. Most of your comments suggest either a longer or a more forceful statement of points already made in the manuscript. I have had a running debate with Colonel Stimson since this chapter was drafted, in which his two main criticisms have been that the chapter might seem too harsh to the Navy and that it was too long. We have reached a compromise result on both these points after long discussion, and it is not up to me to reopen my side of the argument. He will of course see your criticisms, and any changes he desires will be made.³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Bundy closed with a lengthy note of sympathy for Bowles in that his feeling had been hurt, but protested that neither he, nor his father, nor Henry Stimson for that matter, ever intended to do him harm or slight his dignity in any way. However, this letter was never sent, and the following day Bundy sent Bowles a shortened, toned-down, and more conciliatory reply.³³ Nevertheless, Bundy's unsent letter offers valuable insight into Bundy and Stimson's thinking at the time chapter 20 of *On Active Service* was being redacted for publication.

By prior arrangement, chapter 20 of *On Active Service* was slated to be published in the February, 1948 issue of the popular magazine, *Ladies' Home Journal*, two months before the full book's release in April. By mid-December, 1947, the copy editors at the magazine were making the final changes to Bundy's manuscript which would be published under the title "A Time of Peril." Although the magazine was committed to publishing the article, certain changes by the copy editors caused McGeorge Bundy serious concern. In a letter to one of the senior copy editors, Bundy wrote,

I have your note enclosing the copies of the first revise of the Army-Navy chapter. In general it seems quite O.K. to me, but with one or two small errors marked on the proof. I have, however, two rather more important points to make, first on the heading, and second, on this matter of the place of cutting.³⁴

The second issue was related to the material in the article on unification and Bundy chose to address this concern first. He continued,

I quite understand that you do not wish to get into the details of a settled issue like unification, but I feel also that it would be a serious distortion of Mr. Stimson's

³³ McGeorge Bundy, Letter to Edward Bowles, December 8, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

³⁴ McGeorge Bundy, Letter to Miss Conling, December 12, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (2 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

view to end the chapter as it now stands in the hanger. In our agreement with Mr. Gould, he has the right to cut all the unification section, if he wishes, but I hope he will give serious consideration to my point; I know the Journal does not want to put Mr. Stimson in a false light, and I hope he will agree with us that some short addition is needed.³⁵

Allowing the *Ladies' Home Journal* article to go to press without tying the unification issue to the Army-Navy dispute over jurisdiction in the antisubmarine air war denuded it of its value as a work of pro-unification propaganda. This had been, after all, the very reason Stimson wanted the chapter published as a stand-alone article in a popular magazine. It is true that the unification legislation had already been signed into law, and that the article was thus no longer needed as a way of bringing public pressure to bear on Congress. Nevertheless, the unification legislation was far from universally popular, and Stimson's article, though it missed the opportunity to influence the outcome of the unification debate in Congress, might still serve to shape the opinions of those who remained undecided as to whether the new law was necessary and beneficial to the national defense. Although the editors of the *Ladies' Home Journal* wanted to cut all the unification material, Bundy proposed the insertion of a shortened, truncated paragraph to sum up how unification tied in to the story of the Battle of the Atlantic. Bundy proposed the following insertion:

His wartime experience with the difficulties of Army-Navy relations made Stimson an early and ardent advocate of the unification of the services which was finally achieved in 1947. He hoped that unification would reduce waste and conflict to a minimum; he hoped still more that it might lead to a gradual ending of the inter-service rivalry which was so deeply rooted in the tradition of the armed forces. The Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, he believed, must now learn, or be taught, to live together in genuine friendship.³⁶

Regarding this insertion Bundy wrote,

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

This short addition would meet my present main fear, and I think it would also leave the piece unweakened and would keep the snap ending which I believe, from what Mr. Kehler told me, you all rather liked.³⁷

Bundy was also concerned about the bold-faced heading for the article proposed by the magazine copy editors, since he believed it gave the impression that the Navy was opposed to all use of airborne radar. He suggested the following heading as a more accurate introduction to the article:

During the 1942-43 Battle of the Atlantic, while millions of tons of United States Shipping were being lost, the Navy argued that convoy “escort” was the only way to defeat German submarines; Secretary of War Stimson and General Marshall favored the use of radar-equipped aircraft in an aggressive effort to seek out and destroy submarines wherever they might be found.³⁸

When the article was published in the February 1948 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, it carried Bundy's suggested heading. In fact, it was identical in almost every way to the published chapter in *On Active Service*. Aside from an occasional pronoun replacing a proper name, the only major difference in the article was the supplement of Bundy's abovementioned truncated ending which tied military unification in to the story of the Battle of the Atlantic. A final, minor change involved the moving of a humorous anecdote about the Army-Navy football game to the last paragraph of the magazine article.³⁹

On December 15, Edward Bowles wrote to Bundy, thanking him for his letter of December 8. “I was very much astonished,” he wrote, “that you should interpret my letter as being critical of you, either directly or by implication.”⁴⁰ Bowles protested that

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, “Time of Peril,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, (February, 1948), 211.

⁴⁰ Edward L. Bowles, Letter to McGeorge Bundy, December 15, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (3 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

he never meant to impugn Bundy's character or ability, and that he only intended forthright criticism of Bundy's work. Bundy must have replied in a gracious tone, since Bowles wrote again on December 22, expressing his gladness to have received Bundy's note. He further suggested that the two arrange to meet for lunch the next time Bowles was in New York.⁴¹ Along with this friendly note Bowles sent a copy of a lengthy letter he had written on December 17 to Samuel Eliot Morison critiquing his recently published history, *The Battle of the Atlantic*.⁴² Although quite interesting as to the technical details of antisubmarine warfare, a full examination of this letter is not presently warranted.

On December 20, Bundy wrote to Robert Patterson to solicit his feedback regarding chapters 19 and 20 of *On Active Service*. With a heightened sensitivity arising from his correspondence with Bowles, Bundy warned Patterson that the chapters were intended as a biography of Stimson, and not a full treatment of the work of Stimson's subordinates. For this reason, Bundy hoped that Patterson would overlook any apparent slight at his not figuring prominently in the story. Bundy concluded,

Both the publisher and Mr. Stimson are very eager to have the book come out as soon as possible, which means that we are absurdly pressed for time. Would it be possible for you to give us any urgent comments before the first of the year? It is an outrage to ask it, I know, but after that time changes will be very hard to make.⁴³

Patterson replied on December 26, saying that he read the proof with the "keenest interest." He opined, "You will have a book of unusual power, as well as one of lasting

⁴¹ Edward L. Bowles, Letter to McGeorge Bundy, December 22, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (3 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

⁴² Edward L. Bowles, Letter to Samuel E. Morrison, December 17, 1947, *McGeorge Bundy Papers, Series 2. Henry L. Stimson, Book Criticisms and Critiques: (3 of 3)*, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

⁴³ McGeorge Bundy, Letter to Robert Patterson, December 20, 1947, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 46, General Correspondence, 1947-1952, Stimson, Henry L.*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

value as a source of information. Its worth as part of the history of World War II will be felt as soon as it is published.”⁴⁴ Patterson further commented,

As to the transactions and activities that I have personal knowledge of, the story is accurate in every detail. I examined chapters 14, 19 and 20 with more than usual care and am satisfied that no one will find a flaw in the statements of fact. In regard to conclusions there is of course room for differences of opinion. I am not referring to differences of opinion on my part; the conclusions in the text coincide closely with my own views in almost every case. But there will be those who take issue with some of Stimson’s conclusions. With a book as forthright as this one it is bound to turn out that way.⁴⁵

Patterson offered a few observations on material outside the scope of chapter 20 and concluded by drawing Bundy’s attention to a handful of typographical errors.

III. Publication of “Time Of Peril” and *On Active Service In Peace and War*: A Mixed Reception

The February 1948 issue of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* became available to the public in January, and it was not long before the Navy reacted to the negative press it perceived in Bundy’s “Time of Peril.” On January 30, 1948, Captain C. E. Weakley, commanding officer of the Navy’s Surface Anti-Submarine Development Detachment, prepared a memorandum for Navy Secretary John L. Sullivan on the “questions raised by Mr. Stimson’s remarks on the Anti-Submarine Campaign in the early part of the War.”⁴⁶ Weakley noted that it was impossible to comment on every paragraph of the article since they were not factual, but “impressionistic.” Nevertheless, Weakley wrote, “certain items

⁴⁴ Robert P. Patterson, Letter to McGeorge Bundy, December 26, 1947, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 46, General Correspondence, 1947-1952, Stimson, Henry L.*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ C. E. Weakley, Memorandum for Secretary of Navy, January 30, 1948, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C.

can be specifically discussed... and certain of the general statements are sufficiently definite to bear examination.”⁴⁷ He addressed a number of these points in detail.

With reference to the British concept of offensively hunting submarines “wherever they might be,” Weakley noted that aircraft of the RAF Coastal Command were only offensively employed in the Bay of Biscay, “where a highly specialized set of circumstances allowed nearly every U/Boat to be located and attacked as it departed for or returned from patrol.”⁴⁸ He noted that these conditions did not obtain elsewhere and therefore, that “over-simplifications such as are made in the article are most dangerous to an adequate Anti-Submarine defense.”⁴⁹ Weakley here betrays his ignorance of the facts surrounding Stimson’s desire to launch an Army Air Forces antisubmarine offensive in the Bay of Biscay in 1943. Although Stimson had initially hoped to employ Army air units for a much broader offensive in the Atlantic, by early 1943 Stimson and his War Department subordinates saw the Bay of Biscay as the most promising area in which to launch a concerted Anglo-American antisubmarine offensive. Weakley seems to imply the inherent logic of such an operation, but at the same time seems unaware that such an operation was exactly the War Department’s intent. Instead, Weakley seems to be laboring under the misconception that Stimson planned to “hunt hornets all over the farm,” as Admiral Adolphus Andrews quipped early in the war.⁵⁰

Weakley next raised the point that from a reading of the correspondence which passed between General Marshall, Admiral King and Secretaries Knox and Stimson during 1942-43, all were “most open-mindedly seeking an acceptable and effective

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ War Diary, Eastern Sea Frontier, April, 1942, Chapter 2, pages 2-3.

method of controlling the U/Boats,” and that “General Arnold appears to have been the victim of a divided loyalty.”⁵¹ Weakley further advised the Secretary of the Navy that,

Publication, or release to historians, of the relevant correspondence would, it is certain, serve to correct many of the errors of inference which must follow from Mr. Stimson’s article as it now stands. If this is considered advisable, a research team might be formed to assemble all the correspondence bearing on the issue.⁵²

Weakley briefly noted what he considered to be flaws in Bundy’s “Time of Peril.”

Certain of the statements made need no external correction. For example, it is evident from the text alone that the Navy’s proposals were those of “unity of command”, and that the proposal for Air Force autonomy was in the opposite directions. The controversy over who first discovered, or most loved, airborne radar, is an obviously empty one. The real difficulty was shortage of material, and no amount of enthusiasm could have overcome this shortage instantaneously.⁵³

Weakley closes by commenting that the *Ladies’ Home Journal* was hardly the place one would expect to find serious analysis bearing upon the “gravest questions of national defense,” but that Stimson’s stature as an ex-Cabinet officer gave the article a certain unwarranted credibility. He concluded, “It seems, therefore, desirable that some concrete action be undertaken to elevate public understanding of these matters, in both the long and short term.”⁵⁴ There followed a four-page synopsis of the communications between the Admiral King and Generals Marshall and Arnold which led to the implementation of the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement in the autumn of 1943.

On February 4, 1948, Robert Patterson wrote a friendly note to Henry Stimson in which he mentioned that he reviewed the proof of *On Active Service* at the request of McGeorge Bundy. “I regard it,” he wrote, “as the best piece of writing that has come out

⁵¹ C. E. Weakley, Memorandum for Secretary of Navy, January 30, 1948, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

of the war. I am sure that it will be most useful from the viewpoint of history.”⁵⁵ He further noted that he had advised Bundy that he could discern no factual errors in it. That same day, Captain Weakley’s January 30 memorandum to the Secretary of the Navy was followed up by an even more detailed analysis of the correspondence between the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the subject heading, “Review of the Marshall-Arnold-King correspondence on anti-submarine warfare in light of the present Air Force position that it provides the basis for restricting the employment of naval land-based aircraft.”⁵⁶ A full examination of the document would merely recount the subject of chapters two and three of this present study and is not warranted here. What is important to note is that the subject heading of the memorandum betrays the insecurity felt by the Navy leadership at the highest echelons concerning the survival of naval land-based aviation even after passage of the 1947 National Security Act and its attendant Executive order which purportedly outlined the roles and missions of the respective services. The battle over control of naval land-based antisubmarine aviation did not end here, but would soon become subsumed within the larger controversy surrounding Defense Secretary Louis A. Johnson’s cancellation of the super-carrier *United States* and the subsequent “Revolt of the Admirals” in 1949. That story, however, is beyond the scope of this present study.

IV. Conclusion

Although *On Active Service In Peace and War* was not published in time to affect the outcome of the unification vote in Congress, it must be remembered that the writing

⁵⁵ Robert P. Patterson, Letter to Henry Stimson, February 4, 1948, *Robert P. Patterson Papers, Box 46, General Correspondence, 1947-1952, Stimson, Henry L.*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ L. A. Thackrey, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, February 4, 1948, *The Official Papers of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D. C.

of it was begun and largely completed while the unification debate in Congress was at its most contentious stage. Neither Stimson nor McGeorge Bundy knew what the outcome of the unification debate would be, and for all intents and purposes, publication of chapter 20, whether as part of a larger book or digested in a popular article, might well have occurred while the legislation was still being debated in Congress. Therefore, it must be concluded that this work was deliberately intended to serve as propaganda in support of military unification.

If we can believe Edward Bowles that there were indeed about fifteen examples of when disagreement between the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a deleterious effect on the war effort, it is telling that Stimson, with Bundy's assistance, chose to highlight the interservice contest for control of antisubmarine air operations during the Battle of the Atlantic and tie it in with an argument for service unification. He could have chosen to tell the story of procurement redundancy or of the Army Air Forces-Navy dispute over the Navy's use of land-based aviation for strategic bombing in the Pacific. However, he chose to tell the story of the Battle of the Atlantic and of the War Department's frustrated efforts to organize an Army Air Forces antisubmarine offensive on account Navy obstinacy. It is probable that Stimson chose to tell this story rather than any other because it was an episode in the war where he had invested so much personal time and effort. Stimson believed that his effort to create an American version of the RAF Coastal Command failed not so much because of the Navy's lack of cooperation, but because of its outright obstructionism. What was all the more galling was that there was no mechanism for Stimson to reach across department lines and force the Navy to comply with his wishes. Navy Secretary Knox's reluctance to interfere in purely military matters

left Stimson virtually powerless to force the issue, and his last ditch effort to secure President Roosevelt's intercession in the matter proved unsuccessful. The only recourse was temporary capitulation to the Navy's program of defensive air protection for escorted convoys. But Stimson's acquiescence to this wartime expediency was not the end of the matter. The long-term solution, Stimson believed, was to remove the impediment which blocked an enlightened Secretary of War from forcing the Navy leadership into submission. The only way to do this, however, was to either subsume the Navy Department into the War Department or to create a new Defense Department wherein the Army, Navy and Air Forces would all be subject to the direction of the same overarching Secretary of Defense. More than anything else, Stimson saw military unification as a way of bringing the Navy to heel. Although he would be out of office if ever unification were effected, he hoped that conditions would prevail whereby some future successor—at least in spirit as Secretary of Defense if not actually as Secretary of War—could have the authority to force a Chief of Naval Operations in the mold of Admiral King to toe the line. Stimson had high hopes that the unification legislation before Congress in 1947 would make this hope a reality. From retirement, the best way to press for passage of unification legislation was by trying to influence Congress and the public at large of its need. *On Active Service* and "Time of Peril" were meant to serve that purpose. Stimson's choosing to tell the story of the Battle of the Atlantic was therefore a conscious and deliberate effort at crafting propaganda for the purpose of furthering the cause of service unification.

Summary

With the 1948 publication of “A Time of Peril” in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and the release of the full text of *On Active Service in Peace and War*, Henry Stimson had the last word in the in the unification debate regarding which military service should control land-based antisubmarine aviation. As this study has shown, in Stimson’s mind, the issues of military unification and the control of land-based antisubmarine aviation were inextricably linked. Clearly, Stimson believed that military unification would prevent stubborn Navy leaders from defying civilian leadership in the future as Admiral King had done by obstructing the War Department’s plans to launch an Army-led aerial antisubmarine offensive during the Battle of the Atlantic. However, in spite of the merits of Stimson’s argument, this did not become the central issue cited by the other proponents of military unification in their appeal to Congress for military unification. One is forced to consider the question as to why. During World War II, the inter-service conflict over which service would control land-based antisubmarine aviation engendered powerful feelings of antipathy and distrust between the military and civilian leaders of the War and Navy Departments and for a time threatened to cripple the American war effort in Europe. Stimson’s anger towards Admiral King over this did not abate even though the war had ended, and he believed that the story of Navy obstructionism in the antisubmarine war was strong and compelling evidence of the need for military unification. Why, then, did the other proponents of military unification not trumpet the issues surrounding the wartime Army-Navy contest for control of land-based antisubmarine aviation as loudly as Stimson?

There were many and varied arguments put forward by the proponents of military unification to support their positions. For men such as Harry Truman, whose ideas regarding unification were shaped during his chairmanship of the wartime Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, unification was considered as a means towards eliminating duplication and waste in military expenditures. For men such as Congressman James Wadsworth of New York, support for military unification became conflated with his long-standing support for Universal Military Training. For Generals Marshall and Eisenhower, unification was looked upon as closely associated with the creation of a single military Chief of Staff, which they believed would make the military command structure more streamline and efficient. For Generals Arnold and Spaatz, military unification, although seemingly paradoxical, was considered as a way of obtaining independence from the Army and thereby achieve the longtime dream of the air power advocates of the creation of a truly strategic Air Force. To be sure, there were many other reasons for supporting military unification which could be added to those mentioned here. It is important to note, however, that the varied arguments advanced by the supporters of military unification were not mutually exclusive. It was possible for one to sympathize with any or all of these issues while championing one specific argument supporting unification. For this reason, it was not necessary for every proponent of military unification to be speaking with a single voice on the subject. The movement towards military unification took shape over a long period of time and was not born of an isolated event. Like any political movement, its success relied on gathering pressure brought to bear on policymakers by concerned individuals who, in support of a common effort, hoped to effect change in an area that were of specific personal concern.

For the many proponents of military unification during the late 1940's, Henry Stimson's arguments were seen as valid, but not necessarily as the most compelling or timely arguments supporting unification. They thought it proper for his voice to be added to the chorus calling for military reorganization. However, they thought it neither necessary nor desirable that his argument stand out as the prime reason justifying unification.

Of the many voices calling for military unification, Henry Stimson's seems to stand out most prominently in the historical sources owing to his rare position of power and influence as a two-term Secretary of War. His admiration for his mentor, Elihu Root, caused Stimson to romanticize the military reform movement of the early twentieth century which resulted in the creation of the Army General Staff and the strengthening of the office of Secretary of War vis-à-vis the uniformed Army leadership. Stimson believed that the mantle of Elihu Root fell to him, and in order to measure up to the stature of his mentor, it was incumbent upon him to further the cause of military reform. In 1912, during his first term as Secretary of War, Stimson strengthened Root's reforms by ordering the court marshaling of recalcitrant Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth on charges of insubordination to the civilian leadership. During his second term, Stimson sought to enact additional reforms by strengthening the office of Army Chief of Staff at the expense of the Army bureau chiefs. In Stimson's mind, any uniformed officer who opposed the will of the civilian leadership in the executive branch was considered an enemy of reform, and by implication, such officers besmirched the honor of his revered predecessor, Elihu Root. Put simply, uniformed opposition to civilian leadership was opposition to reform, and opposition to reform was very bad. Within his own department, Stimson had the authority to reprimand and remove such officers. However,

for all his power as Secretary of War, Stimson was virtually powerless when opposed by a uniformed officer outside his department. In Stimson's mind, Admiral King's obstinate refusal to bend to his will regarding the Army-led antisubmarine offensive was the most egregious example of bureaucratic backwardness and military malfeasance of World War II. As evidenced by his diary entries, King's obstinance more than any other event during the war caused Stimson to reflect on the venerable Elihu Root and bemoan the fact that the Navy had never undergone reforms such as those the great man forced upon the Army. The textual evidence suggests that Stimson looked upon his imbroglio with King as something of a personal failure—where his inability to force King's compliance proved that he failed to measure up to the stature of the great Elihu Root. This was something that Stimson could not let go. Even after the Arnold-McNarney-McCain agreement ended the impasse over the control of land-based antisubmarine aviation in 1943, Stimson's papers indicate that he intended to revive the issue when making the case before the Woodrum Committee in 1944 of the need to unify the armed forces so that Root-like reforms could be forced upon the Navy. Nevertheless, for a variety of political reasons, the Woodrum Committee failed to bring about military unification, and as a consequence the Navy's unpunished defiance of the War Department over the abortive Army-led antisubmarine offensive would haunt Stimson even into his retirement. As the post-war movement toward military unification unfolded, it is likely that Stimson would have continued to make his case for unification with reference to King and the antisubmarine war. However, during most of this period, Stimson was out of the fray due to declining health brought on by a heart attack. It was only in 1947 after

a period of convalescence that Stimson jumped back into the fight for military unification.

Robert Patterson, Stimson's successor as Secretary of War, was a strong supporter of military unification and was personally responsible for much of the interdepartmental haggling and bureaucratic compromise which resulted in the ultimate passage of unification legislation. The primary sources attesting to Patterson's direct involvement in the post-war military unification movement are voluminous, and indicate that Patterson was far more influential at effecting unification than Stimson ever was. However, for all of Patterson's involvement, his papers betray no deep passion or personal animus on the subject of military unification or the Navy's control of land-based antisubmarine aviation. No doubt, as Under Secretary of War, Patterson shared Stimson's disappointment and anger over the Navy's failure to cooperate with the War Department's plans for an Army-led antisubmarine offensive. However, for Patterson, as well as the post-war generation of War Department and Army leaders, support for military unification was inspired by different priorities. Although aware of Stimson's failure to sway the Navy in the antisubmarine war, the next generation of War Department and Army leaders did not share Stimson's feelings of disappointment and personal bitterness towards Admiral King. Furthermore, unlike Stimson, the next generation did not sense the haunting specter of Elihu Root accusing them for failing to measure up to his stature as a reformer. Whatever the case, Patterson and the next generation did not present Navy recalcitrance in the antisubmarine war as "Exhibit A" in the court of public opinion of the need for military unification.

Of the variety of concerns raised during the post-war military unification debates, the Navy's control of land-based antisubmarine aviation remained a paramount and contentious issue. However, land-based naval aviation was raised with specific reference to future budgetary concerns and as an issue affecting the validity of arguments justifying Air Force independence. The next generation of War Department and Army leaders knew of Stimson's fight with the Navy for control of land-based antisubmarine aviation, but for next generation it was a past event, serving to highlight the hazards of what might happen when two military branches were working at cross purposes. There is no indication that anyone among the next generation of War Department or Army leaders connected the question of which military service should control land-based antisubmarine aviation with the bygone reform movement of Elihu Root. This connection was only made by Stimson. Instead, the next generation focused on questions concerning the disposition of land-based antisubmarine aviation as an issue affecting the *future*. To them, the question had more to do with proposed Air Force independence and budgetary concerns. When any reference to the Battle of the Atlantic was raised during the post-war unification debates, it was usually brought up by the Navy to warn against the consequences of stripping the Navy of its air arm as the British had done when creating the RAF. However, as the record shows, such references were not only infrequent, but they were raised by the Navy to oppose unification rather than by the War Department to support it.

It is impossible to say if the unification debate would have been framed any differently had Stimson stayed actively involved in the argument immediately following his retirement as Secretary of War. It is likely that he would have produced a memoir

such as *On Active Service* much earlier than 1948 and it is probable that he would have made the argument in such a work of the need to bring about military unification so as to force Root-like reforms on the Navy. However, due to his ailing health, such was not the case. Stimson did not lend his voice to the post-war unification debate until fairly late, after a lengthy convalescence. It is clear that Stimson's memoir, written with Patterson's encouragement albeit at the eleventh hour, was intended to serve an active role as pro-unification propaganda at a time when unification was still a hotly contested issue.

Stimson believed he had a winning issue and trotted out the old story of his fight with Admiral King over control of land-based antisubmarine aviation as evidence of the need to force Root-like reforms on the Navy. Given the opportunity to comment on the work, Patterson praised *On Active Service* as excellent and factually correct. However, as circumstances would have it, its publication was too late to affect the outcome of the unification debate. The National Security Act of 1947 was passed half a year earlier and *On Active Service* played no role in swaying public opinion at the time of the congressional vote.

By the time *On Active Service* was published in 1948, the contentious issues surrounding naval land-based aviation had become passé. The compromise unification legislation and its attendant Executive order had settled these issues. However, in spite of this, evidence from the unification debate before the House Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments in 1947 indicates that the emerging hot-button issue that would affect interservice relations in the near future was which branch of the military would control delivery of strategic nuclear weapons. In this next wave of interservice rivalry, carrier aviation came under assault by a covetous Air Force which feared that carrier-

based planes would soon be capable of delivering a nuclear payload. As early as 1947, the first rumblings of the B-36 controversy can be heard in the House debate on unification. As is well known, this issue would erupt as a major contentious issue in 1949 after Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson cancelled construction of the nuclear capable super-carrier *United States*. The issue further migrated during the Korean War, at which time the proponents of strategic air power realized that nuclear weapons were no panacea for national defense after President Truman ruled out their use and committed the United States to a conventional war in the peninsula. Stimson died shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War and by that time, the control of antisubmarine aviation during the Battle of the Atlantic had long since faded from view as an issue pressing upon the nation's proper military organization.

For these reasons, most historical studies of the unification debates were made from a Cold War perspective—during a time when national security issues were seen as the prime motivating factor underlying the need for military unification. Many historians of the post-war unification movement were active at a time when fears of American nuclear vulnerability were genuine. It is perhaps for this reason that studies of the unification movement tend to emphasize the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as a major motivating factor underlying calls for unification. Such studies tend to emphasize the perceived need to create a national security state with powerful intelligence organizations such as the Central Intelligence Agency as well as a with a streamlined and efficient military administrative structure such as the Department of Defense so as to prevent a future Pear Harbor-like nuclear attack. In the mind of many historians, the consequence of such nascent Cold War thinking was the passage of the 1947 National Security Act.

The majority of historical studies tend to promote this Cold War-centric perspective of the motives underlying military unification.

This present study has attempted to restore a pre-Cold War perspective from which to consider the military unification debates, when issues of service parochialism mattered as much as issues of overall national security. By consistently returning to Stimson as a central figure in the story of military unification one may gain a clearer perspective on the overlooked issues at play in the unification debates—when the disposition of land-based antisubmarine aviation mattered as much as which service would control nuclear weapons in the post-war period.

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