

The CONTRIBUTING EDITORS' PAGE

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SECTION



Josephus Daniels

HIGH TIME FOR AN AIR NAVY

By Josephus Daniels
Secretary of the Navy



SO MUCH has been written concerning the need for a larger and more powerful navy — "sea navy," I mean — that the necessity for increasing our "air navy" has been almost entirely overlooked. The question of aviation, however, is one of the most important in connection with the military service of the United States today. Military experts predict that the next great war will be fought at least partially in the air. Therefore, Providence will probably be on the side which has the best aeroplanes and dirigibles.

Great Britain, Germany and France are the only world powers which outrank the United States in naval strength. But consider the comparative war strength in air craft. The latest available table of military statistics shows:

	Aero- planes.	Hydros.	Dirig- ibles.
France	408	20	14
Germany	400	14	17
Russia	250	12	12
Great Britain	168	10	7
Italy	50	7	10
Belgium	27	..	2
Austria	26	4	4
United States	18	5	1
Roumania	10	..	..
Spain	9	3	2

The United States, with a greater home coast and boundary line to be protected than any other world power, stands eighth in the list with regard to its air force.

NO MATTER what individuals think, no matter what opposition may appear against aviation, statistics show that the science of aeronautics has come to stay, particularly in the military world where it seems destined to prove the greatest factor to be dealt with in the future.

The mere fact that France in one year has appropriated \$7,400,000 to solve problems in aviation, while Germany and Russia have appropriated \$5,000,000 each and Great Britain has set aside \$3,500,000 for this object shows what attention is being paid the question abroad.

Our most recent congressional appropriation was \$125,000 for the navy and a like amount for the Army Aviation Corps.

The formation of an adequate air fleet is not the only problem to be solved. One must also consider the plight of the nation if it suddenly became necessary, in time of war, to expand the fighting arm of the military and naval force. One cannot go out into civil life and find many experienced aviators. But even if these were available their lack of military knowledge would be a serious drawback to successful reconnaissance work.

There are further invaluable uses of aeroplanes. A torpedo costs \$8,000 and torpedoes are frequently lost in practice through deflection in direction which makes it impossible to follow them from the conning tower of a ship. But an aerial scout in a flying machine can follow a torpedo's course unerringly by watching it from above. The price of one torpedo will pay for several aeroplanes.

Water, comparatively opaque from a point near its surface, becomes transparent to an observer in the air. Experts say that mines may be easily "picked up" or located by aerial scouts. One mine may wreck a \$10,000,000 battleship. An aeroplane, costing but a small fraction of this sum, would mean the ship's safety. In my opinion, the newly developed art of aviation will not only tend to limit the duration and scope of hostile operations, but will also aid in the control of the seas, one of the elements contributing materially to the power and prosperity of a nation.

It is true that the United States occupies a position differing materially from European nations bordering on each other or separated by narrow waters easily patrolled by air craft. And therefore we have not been forced by the pressure of an immediate danger to meet the progress of possible enemies. That is no doubt the reason we have lagged behind other nations in developing and utilizing our own gift to the world.

With the Panama Canal, as well as our coast fortifications to safeguard, not only from land and water, but from the air, steps must and should be taken to muster an air fleet absolutely second to none in either hemisphere.

POPULAR interest in aviation throughout the United States is not as intense as it has been. The days of golden harvest for the aviator in the fields of exhibitions and meets are passed and gone; the manufacturing industry lies prostrate through lack of adequate support and the field of aeronautical endeavor is limited to a few enthusiasts who have not lost their faith in the future or their belief that America, the birthplace of aviation, the home of the Wrights, the once proud mistress of the air, will come to her own and lead again. I am one of those who believe in this future and, with adequate assistance from Congress, will strive to bring aeronautics in the United States navy abreast of the important position it holds in the other navies of the world.

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