

## American Air Power Born in 1921 When Mitchell Won Test

Washington—UPI—American air power was born on July 21, 1921. That was the day a brash, blunt-talking Air Corps general named William Mitchell pitted the bomber against the battleship — and won.

It was a World Series of experimental warfare. On one side, Billy Mitchell and 16 ancient Martin bombers made of wood and canvas. On the other, the captured German battleship Ostfriesland, seared by the rust of neglect but still a tough old steel bulldog.

Four separate layers of bulky armor plate protected her hide. Not even a telephone wire pierced her watertight compartments. There was nothing on board . . . no explosives, no ballast. She drew only 28 feet of water, and an unloaded ship is harder to sink than one with munitions and fuel aboard.

**Agreed To Test**  
The Navy had agreed to let Mitchell test his controversial theory that planes could sink the strongest battleship built. The attacks were to take two days, starting with small bombs and progressing to one-tonners which Mitchell had Army Ordnance produce just for the occasion. After each attack, experts were to board the Ostfriesland and report the damage — if any.

The stage was set. Units of the Atlantic fleet converged off the Virginia capes. Feeling was running so high that Mitchell's pilots wanted the Navy to man the battleship with anti-aircraft gunners so the bombing could be made under actual battle conditions. Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels offered to stand on the Ostfriesland's bridge during the attacks — he was that confident the bombers would flop.

**Navy Jubilant**  
On July 20, a windy, overcast day, the planes dropped their smallest bombs. They might as well have dropped ping pong balls. No damage. The Navy was jubilant.

The next day, eight bombers, each carrying two 1,000-pound bombs, swept over the old battleship and unloaded three hits. Naval observers boarded the Ostfriesland and again happily reported no significant damage.

Then came a second flight of airborne killers, this time with the new 2,000-pound bombs. The first ton of explosives landed 100 feet from the ship. The effect was like a giant hammer swung through the water. Witnesses thousands of feet away could

feel the concussion. The second bomb went wide. The third hit the battleship and glanced off into the water to explode. The Ostfriesland seemed to lift itself in the air.

The fourth bomb landed on the other side of the ship. She rocked like a giant sea monster trying to shake off pain. A fifth bomb landed only 25 feet from the hull. The dreadnought rose almost completely out of the water. Then she settled back, obviously hurt.

Bomb number six. It landed just behind the stern. It literally broke the battleship's back.

Aboard the observing warships, Navy men looked at each other in disbelief.

The Ostfriesland's nose lifted in the air. A jagged hole was plainly visible. She rolled to port and the watchers saw the gaping, ugly wounds in her underbelly. Slowly, almost majestically, the 27,000-ton warship sank, stern first.

Exactly 21 minutes and 30 seconds after the first one-ton bomb had been dropped, \$40 million worth of supposedly indestructible seapower had been destroyed by a handful of planes costing 1/40th as much.

Aboard the great gray ships of the Atlantic fleet, standing like pallbearers around a watery grave, Navy officers sobbed like babies.

**One Actual Hit**  
What made it even more stunning was that only one big bomb scored an actual hit — and that a glancing one. The killing damage was done by bombs hitting the water close to the ship, crushing the steel hull like an eggshell.

That was 37 years ago. In World War II, American warplanes were to drop more than two million tons of bombs. But they didn't make as much noise as the six Billy Mitchell dropped on July 21, 1921 — the day air power and strategic bombing were really born.

**RELIEVED OF DUTIES**  
Vienna—UPI—The provincial Communist government of Slovakia has relieved Ernest Sykora of his duties as education minister, Radio Prague said today. Sykora has held the post since 1953.

**SMOKERS ANONYMOUS**  
London—UPI—"Smokers Anonymous," a society patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous to help people stop smoking, will begin its work Jan. 1, it was announced today.



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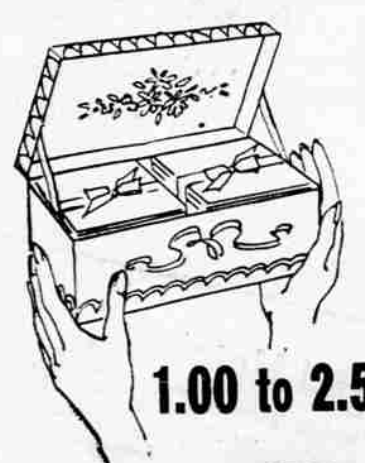
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