

2nd report of the Commanding General

Notes from the editor: The success of the Gulf War was a result of lessons learned from all previous wars the United States has been engaged in. But the strongest lessons it seems were learned during WWII as documented by the accompanying 2nd report of the Commanding General, Army Air Forces. It was signed by Hap Arnold and dated February 1945.

This report is written at the end of the third year of a long and bitter struggle. We enter the fourth year with full realization that the end is not in sight and that unnumbered months of all-out effort throughout the world and of grim fighting on all fronts are necessary to final victory.

This report would not, however, be complete if, after 3 years of war, the AAF did not record now for the American people the lessons learned both before and during this period which have required and also made possible the air superiority which has been established. It is impossible to set forth all of these lessons in detail. New ones are being learned every day. But certain basic principles underlying our air power needs and on which our air superiority rests must be known and understood by every American. It is on these principles that the AAF's planning and operations have been conducted in this war and its responsibilities will be sustained until the day of Axis collapse. It is also in full recognition and application of these principles in a fast-changing world that the long-time security of our country and the peace of the world must rest.

1. Air power is the weapon with which the aggressor in this war first struck and with which future aggressors will strike. The range, speed, and destructive capacity of a powerful air force is such that given sufficient air superiority, the aggressor can by sudden action disrupt the life of the attacked nation and make difficult the taking of defense measures. Moreover, in this field which the present war has shown to be subject to revolutionary advances, we can only dimly visualize the possibilities of such sudden action in the future.

2. We must recognize that the only certain protection against such aggression is the ability to meet and overcome it before the aggressor can strike the first blow. In the past such blows were waterborne: traditional naval power was our first line of defense. From now on successful aggression must come by air. The defense lies in adequate air power with all its manifestations, and our first line of defense must be in the air.

3. The foregoing principles can mean only one thing to the United States. In two world wars, the aggressor has moved first against other peace-loving nations, hoping that the United States would remain aloof, or that other nations could be defeated before this country's power on land, sea, and air could be brought to bear against

him. Luckily, in each war there has been time for the mobilization of such power, and the United States has been the determining factor in the defense of civilization. The lesson is too plain for the next aggressor to miss: The United States will be his first target. There will be no opportunity for our gradual mobilization—no chance to rely on the efforts of others.

It is of the utmost importance that our first line of defense, in the air, must be ably manned and fully supplied with modern equipment. We must be able to provide time for other parts of the national defense machine to mobilize and go into high gear. The United States must be the world's first power in military aviation.

4. Air power and air supremacy are terms which require careful definition. Their full significance must be understood by the American people. The Nation must also understand that, due to the revolutionary developments of science and the world's inventive genius, they may have entirely different meanings for successive generations or within any short span of years. In 1918 air power was built around the Spad, the Handley Page, the Gotha, and the Caproni. In 1944 Allied air power was built around the Spitfire, the P-51, the P-47, the Hurricane, the P-38, the C-47, the B-17, the Lancaster, the B-24, the B-29, and others. In 1945 or 1946 it may mean other as yet undisclosed types. In 1952 it may mean far different equipment with destructive power and accuracy of which man has not dreamed.

5. Thus, the first essential of the air power necessary for our national security is preeminence in research. The imagination and inventive genius of our people in industry, in the universities, in the armed services, and throughout the nation—must have free play, incentive, and every encouragement. American air superiority in this war has resulted in large measure from the mobilization and constant application of our scientific resources.

Comprehensive research, both within and without the air services, must be expressed in inclusive and continuing programs. Only in this way can our air forces reflect at all times the rapid advances in aerodynamics, physics, chemistry, electronics, the sciences basic to rockets, jet propulsion, radar, and revolutionary developments as yet unconceived.

6. It must also be fully understood that scientific research and development will not of themselves keep the United States in the lead. Scientific and tactical advances must go forward hand in hand and be reflected in the aircraft, armament, equipment, and weapons actually being used by our air forces. All of our present aircraft, our power plants, and many items of essential equipment are in a sense "obsolete" in that they are or may shortly be

