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Number 108

RECORDS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT  
COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO OPERATIONS OF THE  
UNITED STATES AIR SERVICES

1924-25

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The National Archives  
National Archives and Records Service  
General Services Administration

Washington: 1958

National Archives Publication No. 59-6

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. A58-9669

## FOREWORD

To analyze and describe the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government preserved in the National Archives Building is one of the main tasks of the National Archives. Various kinds of finding aids are needed to facilitate the use of these records, and the first step in the records-description program is the compilation of preliminary inventories of the material in the 280-odd record groups to which the holdings of the National Archives are allocated.

These inventories are called "preliminary" because they are provisional in character. They are prepared as soon as possible after the records are received without waiting to screen out all disposable material or to perfect the arrangement of the records. They are compiled primarily for internal use, both as finding aids to help the staff render efficient reference service and as a means of establishing administrative control over the records.

Each preliminary inventory contains an introduction that briefly states the history and functions of the agency that accumulated the records. The records themselves are described series by series, that is, by units of records of the same form or that deal with the same subject or activity or that are arranged serially. Other significant information about the records may sometimes be given in appendixes.

When the record group has been studied sufficiently and the records have been placed in final order, the preliminary inventories will be revised and the word "preliminary" dropped from the title of the revision. Meanwhile, as occasion demands and time permits, special reports, indexes, calendars, and other finding aids to the record group will be prepared.

Several finding aids that give an overall picture of materials in the National Archives have been published. A comprehensive Guide to the Records in the National Archives (1948) and a brief guide, Your Government's Records in the National Archives (revised 1950), have been issued. Forty-four Reference Information Papers, which analyze records in the National Archives on such subjects as transportation, small business, and the Middle East, have so far been issued. Records of World War I have been described in the Handbook of Federal World War Agencies and Their Records, 1917-1921, and those of World War II in the two-volume guide, Federal Records of World War II (1950-51). Many bodies of records of high research value have been edited by the National Archives and reproduced on microfilm as a form of publication. Positive prints of some 7,000 rolls of this microfilm, most of which are described in the List of National Archives Microfilm Publications (1953), are now available for purchase.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Select Committee of Inquiry into Operations of the United States Air Services was created by House Resolution 192, 68th Congress, which was agreed to on March 24, 1924. The resolution provided that:

The Speaker of the House of Representatives be, and he is hereby, directed to appoint from the membership of the House a select committee of nine Members for the Sixty-eighth Congress, and which said committee is hereby authorized and directed to inquire into the operations of the United States Army Air Service, United States Naval Bureau of Aeronautics, the United States Mail Air Service, or any agency, branch, or subsidiary of either; said inquiry shall include investigation of contracts, settlements, or audits thereof, letters, expenditures, reports, receipts, or other documents in any way connected with any or all transactions of the said United States Army Air Service, the United States Naval Bureau of Aeronautics, the United States Mail Air Service, or any agency, branch, or subsidiary of either, and any corporations, firms, or individuals or agencies having any transactions with or being in any manner associated with or controlled or regulated by the said Air Service . . . .

On March 24, 1924, the Speaker appointed Representatives Florian Lampert, of Wisconsin (chairman); Albert H. Vestal, of Indiana; Randolph Perkins, of New Jersey; Charles L. Faust, of Missouri; Frank R. Reid, of Illinois; Clarence F. Lea, of California; Anning S. Prall, of New York; Patrick B. O'Sullivan, of Connecticut; and William N. Rogers, of New Hampshire, as members of the select committee. House Resolution 243, 68th Congress, agreed to shortly thereafter, authorized the committee to employ "such stenographic, legal, and clerical assistance, including accountants and statisticians, as . . . necessary . . . ." The resolution also provided that the expenses of the committee, not to exceed \$25,000 should be paid out of the contingent fund of the House. Staff members, appointed early in May, included J. Frederick Richardson, chief consulting investigator; Alexander M. Fisher, investigator and statistician; and C. Frank Creighton, auditor and clerk.

The creation of the committee was due to charges alleging that conditions in the Government air services tended to place the air defense of the United States "in peril." Among other things it was charged that Army and Navy contracting officers and members of the aircraft industry were guilty of corruption; that aircraft builders had been making excessive profits; that there existed an aircraft trust, or conspiracy; and that the "save-harmless" clause incorporated in Government aviation contracts, under which the United States agreed to protect contractors against patent claims, permitted certain aircraft builders to steal patents of inventors.

At the time when the committee began its work, four agencies of the Federal Government were directly concerned with aviation activities:

the United States Army Air Service; the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department; the Post Office Department, operating the Air Mail Service; and the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Other Federal agencies responsible for coordinating and avoiding duplication of the activities of the four agencies directly concerned with aviation were the Joint Army and Navy Board and the Joint Army and Navy Planning Committee; the Aeronautical Board, composed of representatives of the Army and Navy; and the Army and Navy Munitions Board.

The United States Army Air Service, established by the Army Reorganization Act of June 4, 1920 (41 Stat. 768), functioned under the authority of the Secretary of War as a coordinate combat branch of the Army, with its own production, supply, and other services. It was defined ". . . as an arm of the mobile army; . . . as an arm to be used against enemy aircraft in defense of all shore establishments; and . . . as an arm to be used in cooperation with other arms, or alone, against enemy vessels engaged in attacks on the coast."

The Naval Bureau of Aeronautics, established by an act of Congress approved July 12, 1921 (42 Stat. 1140), was charged with "all matters relating to the design, procurement, development, and maintenance of naval and Marine Corps aircraft, and the carrying into effect of the Navy Department's policies regarding naval aviation." The Navy had no separate combat aviation branches; naval aviation operated as an integral part of the fleet.

The Air Mail Service, composed of more than 500 persons (including pilots) and employing almost 100 airplanes, was operated by the Post Office Department under the immediate direction of the Second Assistant Postmaster General. Its activities included operating a regularly scheduled air mail service between New York and San Francisco, 15 transcontinental air mail stations, and an air mail general repair depot at Chicago for overhauling and rebuilding airplanes and for stocking spare parts of flying and ground equipment.

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, consisting of 12 members appointed by the President, including representatives of the Navy and the War Departments, was established by Congress in 1915 (38 Stat. 930). Its chief duty was "to supervise and direct the scientific study of the problems of flight, with a view to their practical solution, and to determine the problems which should be experimentally attacked, and to discuss their solution and their application to practical questions." It was also responsible for coordinating functions.

The select committee investigated the charges against the Government air services; it also made an extensive investigation of the administration of these services. The state of the aircraft industry, the development of commercial flying, and the promotion by the Post Office Department of commercial flying through the transportation of mail were additional matters that engaged the committee's attention. In the investi-

gation of the administration of the air services, the committee considered, among various matters, the Army and Navy policies on the organization of their respective air services and on the design and purchase of aircraft and aircraft engines; their efforts to coordinate their air activities by joint boards, by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, and by other agencies; the conflict of opinion between the Army and Navy with respect to the air defense of the coasts, the effectiveness of aircraft operating against surface vessels, and the effectiveness of anti-aircraft guns; the representation of air officers on the General Staff of the Army and on the General Board of the Navy; the establishment of a unified air force operating independently of the Army and Navy and detailing air units to these armed services as required; the establishment of a separate air force operating individually, with the Army and Navy retaining and operating such air units as were necessary for their peculiar tactical purposes; and the establishment of a single department of national defense under a civilian secretary.

The committee held intermittent public hearings from October 4, 1924, to March 2, 1925, in Washington, New York City, Pasadena, and San Diego. More than 150 witnesses testified, among whom were Rear Adm. William A. Moffett, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics; Maj. Gen. Mason M. Patrick and Brig. Gen. William Mitchell, Chief and Assistant Chief of the U. S. Army Air Service, respectively; and Paul Henderson, Second Assistant Postmaster General. For purposes of orientation, the committee or its representatives visited Bolling Field; the Anacostia Naval Air Station; the Bureau of Standards; Langley Field; the Langley Memorial Laboratories of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics; the Hampton Naval Air Station; the aircraft carrier Wright, then under construction; the international air races at Dayton, Ohio; the Army Air Service Engineering School at McCook Field; Wilbur Wright Field, Fairfield, Ohio; and the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Co. at Garden City, Long Island. J. Frederick Richardson visited Europe on a factfinding mission for the committee and obtained information and data for his report analyzing comparatively the air services of England, France, Italy, and the United States.

On December 14, 1925, the committee reported to the House its findings and recommendations (H. Rept. 1653, 68th Cong., 2d sess.) and thereupon concluded its task.

The records described in this inventory, amounting to approximately 24 cubic feet, are part of Record Group 233, Records of the United States House of Representatives. The transcript of the committee's hearings has been published in six parts (volumes).

No person may have access to the records of the committee or receive information from them without the express authorization of the House of Representatives.

RECORDS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY  
INTO OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AIR SERVICES

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS. Mar. 1924-June 1925. 3 ft.

The committee's minutes; payroll records; vouchers for disbursements for travel, stationery, and other expenses; carbon copies of subpoenas issued by the committee; stenographic transcripts of the committee's hearings; a register of books received from the Library of Congress for the use of a staff member; and a print of an address by Maj. Gen. Mason M. Patrick, Chief of the United States Army Air Service, titled "Military Aircraft and Their Use in Warfare," together with other informational materials. Arranged by subject. 1

"GENERAL FILE." Mar. 1924-Mar. 1925. 2 ft.

Records denominated "General File" by the committee's staff, comprising the general correspondence, some administrative records, and some informational materials of the committee. In this series are correspondence and other papers of Representatives Lampert, Lea, Perkins, O'Sullivan, Reid, and Vestal; correspondence and memoranda of J. Frederick Richardson, chief consulting investigator for the committee, and of Alexander M. Fisher, investigator and statistician for the committee; correspondence with Federal agencies and with aeronautical firms respecting the committee's agenda; personnel records of staff members of the committee; and correspondence from private persons commenting on the work of the committee, suggesting areas of investigation, or presenting recommendations for the improvement of aviation in the United States. The records are arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent or subject; for a list of folder headings, see appendix I. An index to the series is described in entry 7. 2

RECORDS RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONNAIRES. May 1924-Feb. 1925. 10 ft.

Correspondence respecting three successive questionnaires sent by the committee to the Navy, War, and Post Office Departments; and "evidence" furnished in reply to the questionnaires. The records are divided into three groups, respectively titled "N" (for the Navy Department), "P.O." (for the Post Office Department), and "W" (for the War Department); and the groups are arranged under a common numerical scheme which has categories numbered consecutively 1-24, corresponding to the numbers of the topics in the committee's three questionnaires. Thus, "evidence" received by the committee from the War Department with respect to topic No. 3 of the questionnaires ("Organization") is filed under W-3, and "evidence" on the same topic received from the Navy Department and the Post Office Department is filed under N-3 and P.O. -3 respectively. A register of the documents received from the three Federal departments in response to the questionnaires is included in this series. An index to this series is described in entry 7. Among other things, the questionnaires called upon the air services for information on the procurement of aircraft, on their personnel (uniformed and civilian), on their production and experimental facilities, on their operating facilities, 3

on their operations and activities (present and past), and on air accidents.

REFERENCE MATERIALS SUPPLIED BY THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS. June 1924-Aug. 1924. 2 ft.

Included among the materials furnished to the select committee for its information and use are annual reports of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, 1915-24; "Who's Who in American Aeronautics," published by Aviation (1922); "Nomenclature for Aeronautics," compiled by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (1923); and a "Bibliography of Aeronautics" (1909-19), similarly compiled. 4

"THE MILITARY AIRPLANE." Dec. 1924. 6 in. 5

Drafts of a report titled "The Military Airplane" (printed as part 5 of the committee's Hearings), made by the following technical advisers to the committee: W. S. Diehl, C. J. McCarthy, and C. L. Ofenstein of the Bureau of Aeronautics; and F. W. Caldwell, J. A. Roche, and A. V. Verville of the U. S. Army Air Service. Also prints of illustrations and drawings to accompany the report.

EXHIBITS. Dec. 1924-Feb. 1925. 1 ft. 6

Exhibits received in evidence by the committee, most of which were not printed in its Hearings. See appendix II for a list of the exhibits.

SUBJECT INDEX. Mar. 1924-Mar. 1925. 6 ft. 7

Alphabetical subject index, on 3" x 5" cards, to (1) the documents submitted by the Navy Department, the War Department, and the Post Office Department in response to the committee's questionnaires, (2) the "General File," and (3) information and data relevant to the committee's inquiry contained in the following publications: Hearings of the subcommittee of the House Select Committee on War Expenditures concerning aviation, 66th Congress; Hearings of the subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations concerning the War Department's appropriations bill for 1925, 68th Congress; Hearings of the subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations concerning the Navy Department's appropriations bill for 1925, 68th Congress; Annual Reports of the Director of the Bureau of Standards; Reports of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics; Aircraft Year Book; Simple Aeronautics and the Airplane, by Monteith; and Textbook of Applied Aeronautical Engineering.

APPENDIX I

Headings for the "General File" Described in Entry 2

Aero Club of Columbus, Ohio	House resolutions
"Aero Digest," Mar. 1924-Dec. 1924	Johnson, A. W.
Aero Supply Manufacturing Co., New York, N. Y.	Lampert, Hon. Florian
Air Service Handbook, Vol. 1 (Aviation Section, Signal Corps), 1918	Lea, Hon. Clarence F.
American Society of Civil Engineers	McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio
Applications for employment with the committee	Manufacturers Aircraft Association, Inc.
Barrett Motor Starter Manufacturing Co., Inc., New York, N. Y.	Martin, Capt. James V.
Bates Manufacturing Co., New York, N. Y.	Moffett, Rear Adm. W. A., U. S. N.
Brennan, Joseph V.	Nelson, Hon. John M.
Brooks, Charles D.	Notices to committee members
Bureau of Standards	O'Sullivan, Hon. Patrick B.
Carter, Samuel W.	Perkins, Hon. Randolph
Cartoon: "Our National Bird Walks and Swims, But He doesn't Fly Much"	Prall, Hon. Anning S.
Clerk of the House of Representatives	Propaganda
Comptroller General of the United States	Questionnaire
Credentials of staff members	Reid, Hon. Frank R.
Curry, Hon. Charles F.	Richardson, J. Frederick
Curtiss Aeroplane & Motor Co., Inc., Garden City, N. Y.	<u>Saturday Evening Post</u> , Dec. 20, 1924: "Aeronautical Era," by Brigadier General William Mitchell
Dayton International Air Races, Dayton, Ohio (Oct. 2-4, 1924)	<u>Scientific Age</u> , July 26, 1924 - Jan. 2, 1925
De Bothezat, Dr. George	Shorthand reporters
Economic Club, New York, N. Y.	Smithsonian Institution
Elias & Bro., Inc., G., Buffalo, N. Y.	Speaker of the House
Fairlamb, Lt. George R., U. S. N.	Spencer, Lorillard
Fauber, W. H.	Stationery
Fisher, Alexander M.	Technical advisors
Francis, Paul H.	Telegrams
Gibbons Co., Brooklyn, N. Y.	<u>The New York World</u> ; comprehensive survey of the aeronautical situation in the United States
Government Printing Office	Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corporation
Henri & Maurice Farman Aeroplanes, Billancourt (Seine), France	Travel authority
	Vestal, Hon. Albert H.
	Visit to Bolling and Langley Fields
	Wainwright, Hon. J. Mayhew
	Weeks, John W. (Secretary of War)
	Woodhouse, Henry

APPENDIX II

List of Exhibits Described in Entry 6

- (1) Gardner Exhibit No. 1, Jan. 17, 1925: article in the Jan. 5, 1925, issue of Aviation magazine titled "Army Air Service Costs Once More Aired." Referred to in Hearings, p. 1112.
- (2) Loening Exhibit No. 1, Jan. 15, 1925: Monoplanes and Biplanes, by Grover Cleveland Loening. (Munn & Co.; New York, 1911. 331 p.) Referred to in Hearings, p. 905.
- (3) Loening Exhibit No. 2, Jan. 15, 1925: Military Aeroplanes, by Grover Cleveland Loening. (W. S. Best Printing Co.; Boston, 1918. 202 p.) Referred to in Hearings, p. 908.
- (4) Loening Exhibit No. 3, Jan. 15, 1925: photograph of Army pursuit fighter designed and built by Grover Cleveland Loening. Referred to in Hearings, p. 908.
- (5) John H. Gose Exhibit No. 33, Jan. 19, 1925: tabulation showing the losses suffered from fire by the United States Army Air Service, the United States Naval Air Service, and the United States Postal Air Mail Service for the years 1923 and 1924. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1116.
- (6) John H. Gose Exhibit No. 34, Jan. 19, 1925: itemized statement showing fire losses suffered by the three governmental air services and by commercial aviation for the years 1919-22. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1116.
- (7) Fauber Exhibit No. 35, Jan. 21, 1925: prepared statement concerning letters of patent to Glen H. Curtiss for improvements in hydro-aeroplanes. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1193.
- (8) Captain Land Exhibit No. 36, Jan. 24, 1925: activities of the Naval Aircraft Factory, Jan. 2, 1925. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1342.
- (9) Keys Exhibit No. 37, Jan. 26, 1925, E. D.: list of patents licensed under the Cross License Agreement of the Manufacturers Aircraft Association, Inc. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1383.
- (10) Keys Exhibit No. 38, Jan. 26, 1925, E. D.: list and description of all planes and motors designed and built by the Curtiss organizations from 1916 to 1925. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1426.
- (11) Keys Exhibit No. 39, Jan. 26, 1925, E. D.: report of the Technical Section of the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Co., Inc., titled "Development of Airplane Characteristics with Predictions for 1928" (Nov. 26, 1924). Referred to in Hearings, p. 1427.

- (12) Doctor Burgess Exhibit No. 40, Jan. 28, 1925: paper entitled "Aviation: Publications, investigations, tests, and funds of the Bureau of Standards, 1917-1924." Referred to in Hearings, p. 1522.
- (13) Moffett Exhibit No. 45, Jan. 31, 1925: "Tenth Annual Report of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, 1924." Printed in part in Hearings, p. 1641-1656.
- (14) Jones Exhibit No. 48, Feb. 26, 1925: "Result of Development of Aviation on the Development of the Navy - Report of a Special Board Appointed by the Secretary of the Navy with Reference to Upkeep of the Navy in its Various Branches." Referred to in Hearings, p. 2915.
- (15) Cross-License Agreement and License of the Manufacturers' Aircraft Association, Inc., July 24, 1917. Printed in Hearings, p. 226-233.
- (16) Experimental and research engineering and development program of the War Department, Air Service, Engineering Division, McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio. Printed in Hearings, p. 555-558.
- (17) Letter of Arthur Brisbane, of the New York Evening Journal, to Representative Randolph Perkins, concerning the writer's views on "air power." Printed in Hearings, p. 901.
- (18) J. S. Ames Exhibit A: "Tenth Annual Report of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics for 1924." Printed in part in Hearings, p. 733-734.
- (19) Pictures of the Remington-Burnelli Airliner. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1034.
- (20) Notes on "Giant Boat" project. Printed in Hearings, p. 1374-1375.
- (21) Bureau of Standards' memorandum on "Fire Prevention Aboard Aircraft." Referred to in Hearings, p. 1525.
- (22) Tabulation of naval aircraft on hand as of Jan. 1, 1925. Referred to in Hearings, p. 1616.
- (23) Views of the Merchants' Association of New York relative to "the need for a proper air terminus for New York City." Printed in Hearings, p. 1713-1714.
- (24) Opinion of T. W. Gregory, Attorney General of the United States, rendered to the Secretary of War, dated Oct. 6, 1917, concerning the legal status of the Manufacturers' Aircraft Association and its cross-license agreement. Printed in Hearings, p. 1716-1719.

- (25) Civilian flying statistics. Printed in Hearings, p. 1719.
- (26) Statement of Mr. A. M. Herring. Printed in Hearings, p. 1834-1838.
- (27) Photostat of a letter from Gen. John Pershing to Col. William Mitchell, dated Sept. 16, 1918, extending "my sincere congratulations on the successful and very important part taken by the Air forces under your command in the first offensive of the First American Army." Printed in Hearings, p. 1906-1907.
- (28) Letters from Rear Adm. W. A. Moffett to Representative Lampert, dated Feb. 4, 1925, concerning "testimony . . . to the general effect that younger officers in the Naval Air Service have been intimidated in one way or another and are not allowed to express their views with regard to a single air service." Printed in Hearings, p. 1839-1840.
- (29) Letter from Curtis D. Wilbur, Secretary of the Navy, to Representative Lampert, dated Feb. 5, 1925, concerning "a statement in the public press that certain naval officers have come to a member of your committee requesting that they be not examined by your Committee because their views were not in accord with those of the Department and that they would be disciplined if they gave their testimony." Printed in Hearings, p. 1839.
- (30) An Explorer in the Air Service, by Hiram Bingham. (Yale University Press; New Haven, 1920. 260 p.) Referred to in Hearings, p. 2754 and 2756.