

A PART of the Five Year Program for the expansion of the U.S. Army Air Corps, by order of the War Department inactive units at Langley Field, Va., were rendered active on June 25th to compose what is now known as the Eighth Pursuit Group, and which has been placed under the command of Major Byron Q. Jones, Air Corps, until recently on duty with the War Department General Staff.

The organizations included in this Group will include Headquarters, 33rd, 35th and 36th Pursuit Squadrons, and the 58th Service Squadron. The approximate commissioned and enlisted personnel of the entire Eighth Pursuit Group is figured at 33 officers and 475 enlisted men.

Headquarters Detachment, with approximately 25 enlisted men, will be under the command of Captain C.H. Welch, who will also continue his duties as Commanding Officer of the 58th Service Squadron, which arrived at Langley Field on June 15th with three officers and 130 enlisted men.

The 33rd Pursuit Squadron will form a combat unit with Captain H.H. George in command. The organization stands at its full strength at the present time in commissioned personnel with 18 officers. Enlisted strength is approximately 120 men. Pilots of the 33rd Squadron are equipped with 18 planes of the P-12, C and D Series.

The 35th Pursuit Squadron has at present 7 officers and 100 enlisted men, and will be strengthened in the near future.

The 36th Pursuit Squadron, with 1st Lieut. J. C. Hodgson in command, has a personnel of 5 commissioned officers and 100 enlisted men.

These units are carrying out regular Pursuit tactics and training.

Two new Air Corps stations are making their appearance on the West Coast in the San Francisco Bay region. They are Hamilton Field, the new flying field in Marin County, and Benton Field, the new Supply and Repair Depot at Alameda, to serve West Coast activities. Provisions are now being made at Hamilton Field for one squadron thereat, contracts having been awarded June 20th for the construction of a 200-men barracks, warehouse, shop, radio building, one large hangar and several officers' and noncommissioned officers' quarters.

The field was named in memory of 1st Lieut. Lloyd Andrews Hamilton, killed in action near Lagnicourt, France, Aug. 26, 1918. He was born in Troy, N.Y., on June 13, 1894, and after graduation from Syracuse University he entered the School of Business Administration at Harvard University. Enlisting in August, 1917, he was commissioned on March 2nd and received his pilot's wings on August 13, 1918. From June 21st (even before his official recognition as a pilot) until his death, two months later, he gained nine official aerial victories while serving with the 17th Aero Squadron, and was awarded the American Distinguished Service Cross and the British Distinguished Flying Cross. The above awards were for leading a low Pursuit-bombing attack on an enemy airdrome 30 miles behind the lines, setting fire to three airplanes and firing through the window of a chateau where some enemy pilots were quartered, killing a number of them.

Benton Field, at Alameda, will be the home of a Supply and Repair Depot, which will serve Air Corps activities on the West Coast and in the United States possessions in the Pacific. The fill of the site is under way and the railroad spur into the field is almost completed. This field was named after a native son, the late 1st Lieut. John W. Benton, who was born at Manton, Calif., Nov. 27, 1896. During the War he entered the Aviation Section, Signal Corps, and after graduation from the School of Military Aeronautics at Berkeley, was commissioned a second lieutenant and rated a pilot, May 14, 1918, serving at Rockwell Field, Calif.; Wilbur Wright Field, Ohio; Gerstner Field, Ia., and again at Rockwell Field until the War ended. Appointed 2nd Lieutenant, Regular Army Air Service, July 1, 1920, he later served at various fields in California and in the Canal Zone. He was a member of the Pan-American Good Will Flight, when he met his death in an aerial collision at Buenos Aires, Feb. 26, 1927, receiving the posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in this flight.