

Information Division  
Air Service

July 12, 1922

Munitions Building  
Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this letter is to keep the personnel of the Air Service, both in Washington and in the field, informed as to the activities of the Air Service in general, and for release to the public press.

FOR RELEASE July 13, 1922.

THE CONQUEST OF ELLINGTON FIELD

## A Resume of the Spring Maneuvers of the First Group (Pursuit).

War having been declared on The United States (BLUE) by an enemy (RED), the oft-predicted result of our unpreparedness policy came to pass: The Panama Canal was blown up simultaneously with the Declaration of War, and the RED Navy, acting in force and unheralded, encountered the scattered ships of the BLUE Navy off the Atlantic seaboard and forced their retirement on June 8th. Early during the night of June 8th a strong detachment of the RED Navy was reported in the Gulf of Mexico, about a hundred miles out of Galveston, accompanied by a fleet of Transports and two Airplane-Carriers, - the HANNIBAL, carrying 100 pursuit planes, and capable of launching a maximum of 4 planes per minute; and the FABIUS, carrying 25 heavy and 25 light bombing planes, and capable of launching 4 light or 2 heavy planes per minute.

All available BLUE aircraft had been hastily concentrated at Ellington Field to form the 2nd Provisional Air Brigade, composed of the following Units: First Group (Pursuit), Second Group (Bombardment, heavy), Third Group (Bombardment, light), Fourth Group (Observation), Fifth Group (Attack). Extraordinarily heavy rains continuing throughout June 9th frustrated the attempts of the Air Brigade to dispose of the enemy, who, overcoming the scant Coast Defenses of Galveston Harbor and the opposition of the undermanned and incompletely trained Division hurriedly brought from the interior, effected a landing at Galveston and consolidated a strong position with nearly two Divisions of Marines on a line about 25 miles in extent and 10 miles inland from Galveston, with the evident intent of seizing the great oil resources found within a radius of 100 miles.

(A serious foot-note: Suppose this, or anything like it, or even half of it, came to pass, what would we do about it?)

Such was the situation on the morning - early morning - of Sunday, June 10th, except that the 27th Squadron, who admit being a rattling good outfit, had the job of representing the entire RED Navy, Air Force, Marines, and all; and the rest - one is tempted to say residue - of Ellington Field acted in the capacity of 2nd Provisional Air Brigade, The Commanding Officer, Major Carl Spatz, who knew the pilots of the 27th, having played enemy for them during the tactical training this spring, very thoughtfully declared himself Umpire, i.e. Neutral, and gave daily caution that his SE-5 and Lieutenant Auby C. Strickland's Jenny - official courier ship - were not to be mistaken for BLUE ships. Fourteen SPAD XIII's and two DH-4-B's to a side made up the fighting forces.

On the morning of the 10th Reconnaissance with Pursuit protection was the problem, all work being restricted to the air between 2000 and 8000 feet. The 27th took off with a formation of twelve ships in units of three, with the top unit sticking at maximum altitude, while the two DH's made their way separately to the lines, one at 8000 feet, piloted by Sergeant Mitchell, and the other at 2000 feet, piloted by Lieutenant Denny Lunt. Now it happens that "Denny", at post hops and other festivities, has practiced the gentle art of being conspicuously the life of the party, wherefor, when he arrived at the lines to serve as decoy, all the world, even the 94th Squadron, knew he was there, with the result that they gave him all of their attention, while Sergeant Mitchell undisturbedly flew his patrol and gathered up all the information there was within the area of operations. Where the Pursuit patrols met, things were a bit too lively for detailed description, but the 27th Squadron carried off the day by reporting all troops and activities, both simulated and actual, and obtaining the greater number of confirmations on ships shot down.

At the critique and Vortrag following immediately upon the landing of the combatants, the C. O. demonstrated the power and importance of a Group Commander by forthwith resurrecting all the dead in preparation for the subsequent maneuvers. Being, thus, very much alive, the Squadron felt that it could ill afford to let the captured city think that the pilots were dead ones, and made their arrangement for the evening accordingly. As some of them are married, we remain diplomatically non-committal as to details.

At daybreak on Monday, both sides took off on an Infantry-contact mission, the BLUE forces essaying an attack on the RED Marines. For this flight the 27th used the standard Pursuit formation of twelve ships in three-ship V's, but added two SPAD's as free lances, and proceeded merrily to the complete defeat of the BLUE attack, and having generally a first rate time of it.

In the afternoon the same formation took off for protection of a bombing attack upon the BLUE Airdrome (Ellington Field). Our Bombers, represented by Lunt and Mitchell again in their DH-4's, eluded the enemy observation, and the Pursuit formation traveled in undisturbed peace at the maximum altitude permitted. Bombers and Pursuiters met at the appointed rendezvous and descended upon Ellington Field where the BLUE ships were still waiting for word from their observation. Nothing whatever happened to interfere with the peaceful and orderly dropping of our bombs, which, because live ones were obviously impracticable and dummies of tile or concrete are not to be sneezed at, were represented by the conventional substitute currently packed in rolls; so, having won the third successive battle, the 27th returned to their base at Galveston.

Soon after they landed, Ellington's genial Executive, Captain H.M. Elmendorf arrived to protest that it wasn't fair, that the war was all wrong, etc., wherefor he was promptly made Prisoner of War and his ship confiscated. A Kangaroo Court was assembled to try him on charges of spying, damaging our airdrome by poor landing, using propaganda against us by letting the citizens of Galveston believe that his poor flying had been done by one of their conquerors - the 27th Squadron - and sundry other high crimes and misdemeanors. Counsel was appointed for him in the person of Lieutenant Roberson, who, displaying commendable loyalty to his own organization, governed his defense accordingly, and brought to the attention of the Court much pertinent evidence against the Prisoner. The Accused was, therefore, properly found guilty, the water cure was thoroughly administered, and, since neither the Prisoner nor his ship were of sufficiently high standard to be useful to the 27th Squadron, they were sent back to Ellington to serve as a fitting bad example.

It should be mentioned here in passing that the moral effect on Ellington Field was great, except in the case of Captain Frank O'Day Hunter, Operations Officer. Now Frank O'D. had been very much in it in France, coming back an Ace, and owning a Croix de Guerre, a D. S. C., and a mustache he prized above both his other decorations, so it was only natural that he should take umbrage at the ungentle handling his brother in arms had received at the hands of the enemy. He vowed vengeance and swore that no RED pilots could fox him. Thus put upon their mettle, and disdaining anything so unoriginal as repetition, the 27th invited him to his own pet kind of a party at Galveston that night. He arrived in full regalia about nine o'clock, bearing upon his person indisputable evidence of our prowess: His wonderful mustache, the product of a life-time of patient care and cultivation, the pride and delight of his existence, if not it's object, and his principal outward glory, had been lost in the day's battle, a tribute to the superiority of the RED pilots' marksmanship. Shorn like Samson of old, he must, like that worthy, have lost his wits: Having fasted for a day and saved a tremendous thirst to be slaked at the wine-casks of his friends, the enemy, he trod the streets of Galveston in lonely state looking for the festivities at which he was to be hero and guest of honor - - he is still looking.

On Tuesday, the 11th, all operations were called off and all flying suspended out of respect for Sergeant L.I. Wright, of the 94th Squadron, who died in a crash the afternoon before.

The critiques, by Wednesday morning, had established that to carry out the one remaining mission on the schedule, the contest for the supremacy of the air, would be unnecessary and inept, since in previous operations the 27th Squadron had already obtained it beyond the shadow of a doubt; so the C.O., directed the return of the 27th to Ellington Field. Word of the thoroughness with which the 27th had accomplished their mission and the completeness of the defeat of Ellington Field must have reached the ears of the powers that be in Washington, for, simultaneously with the order for the return of the 27th Squadron from Galveston, came advance information from the War Department that Ellington Field would be evacuated, the troops retiring as far North as Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Mich.