



**The Wings of Democracy: The Influence of Air
Power on the Roosevelt Administration, 1933-1941
(Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military
History Series)**

Jeffery S. Underwood

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The air force made a huge impact on the events of World War II, but this new force of men and machines did not simply appear out of the blue. There was a long history leading up to the use of air power in military campaigns. When Franklin D. Roosevelt entered the White House in 1933, the leaders of the Army Air Corps wanted to force him, Congress, and the Army General Staff to create an independent air force. Using Billy Mitchell's tactics of public confrontation, exploitation of the air corps's poor condition, and unproven claims about air power, these officers only antagonized the people who could grant them independence.

After the air corps failed to carry the air mail in 1934, a number of air corps officers started a concerted effort to promote themselves as "team players" who had given up the caustic, separatist attitudes of Mitchell. By the beginning of World War II, they had convinced Roosevelt, Congress, and the General Staff of the air corps's efficiency, as evidenced by Roosevelt's air corps expansion programs and the army's war plans.

After the war in Europe substantiated many of the claims about air power, especially the ability of land-based airplanes to force unprotected naval forces to withdraw, Roosevelt and his military advisors placed increasing emphasis on the role of the air corps.

Jeffery S. Underwood's book moves away from the traditional studies of air power. By examining how the leading officers in the air corps developed political skills and used them to win the trust and support of their superiors, it shows that the political and military leaders of the United States were not suddenly forced to accept the importance of air power by the war in Europe. Rather, they had already been awakened to the potential of air power by the efforts of politically astute air corps officers.

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