

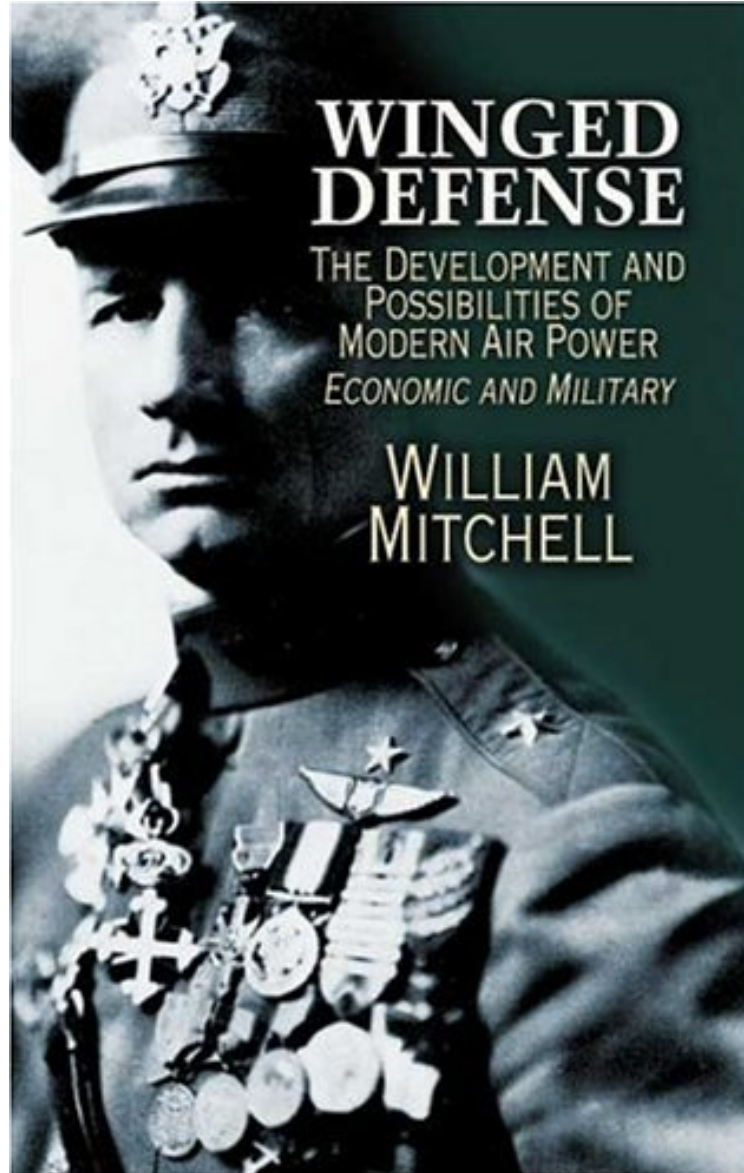
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*William Mitchell*

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## **Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military (Dover Books on History, Political and Social Science)**

**William Mitchell : *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military* (Dover Books on History, Political and Social Science)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or

not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military* (Dover Books on History, Political and Social Science):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Book Based On A Sense Of Urgency In 1925 By Gerry The foreword within this book is a warning for the era to which it was written. Persons that criticize this book in modern times lack the understanding to the times to which this book was written and the urgency that General Mitchell had placed to the need of an effective Air Service away from the choices of the Signal Corps and directional use from Naval Commanders. The book was originally compiled in 1923 and published in 1925 at the height of anger General Mitchell had caused within Department of War and the U.S. Congress. There is nearly a century now between the date of this book and the current era to which we live. I admit this can be easy to invite comparisons of policy to Douhet or any other effective developing Air Arm of the time, and this does no justice for the intended audience of the compilation that General Mitchell pieced together. This book was designed to incite action from the U.S. Government through urgency of need it wasn't intended to be an effective directive (directives and service departments would come later and General Mitchell was all too aware of this fact.) In theory, the strategy employed within these pages were visionary for the time, but very specific to the U.S.A. General Mitchell would in retirement take a more effective stance, write other articles, and take a more refined approach, though no less combative in nature. One also should consider that this is the book he wrote and had published before his Court Martial began in October of 1925 context to time and history must be an important consideration. A sense of urgency prevails within a political argument and breaking the mold of the Army and Navy wasn't easy and didn't work. He was also ill at the time and I can only speculate that this heightened his sense of urgency. He predicted Pearl Harbor and wouldn't live to see it occur. FDR realized the value of his friend and after Mitchell's death as a result he would be posthumously promoted to Major General and receive a Special Congressional Medal of Honor in 1946. I would recommend that persons interested in the development of the Air Service read first/also *A Few Good Captains* by Dewitt S. Copp. The book is out of print now but used copies can be found easily on-line.

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Airpower doctrine By David J. Wallace This book is the basis for airpower doctrine in the US. This book shows how forward looking Gen Mitchell was even though the technology for conducting air operations was in its infancy. Required reading for anyone who claims to want to study airpower / aerospace doctrine. USAF leaders today should return to these foundational roots and make sure they understand the difference between doctrine and dogma.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Stirring, Visionary, Inspiring By E. M. Van Court Just not very coherent. In a U.S. Army course, the main learning points about General Mitchell were that he campaigned for an independent air force and was court-martialed for insubordination and disrespect. Members of the U.S. Air Force speak of Mitchell as the first American prophet in the temple of Air Power. So I figured I'd read it for myself. As it turns out, the two perceptions are not mutually exclusive. If you're interested in early airpower theory, read *The Command of the Air* (USAF Warrior Studies) by Giulio Douhet. Douhet provides a coherent and internally sound conceptual structure where Mitchell just sounds like he's lobbying for a Congressional appropriation. In addition to this edition, "Winged Defense" appears in *Roots of Strategy Book: 4 Military Classics : The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy, Command of the Air, Winged Defense*. By Mitchell's own admission, this book was hastily assembled and published from other articles and notes from his Congressional presentations. And it shows. Sweeping statements and extensive lists of requirements for Mitchell's vision of an air force are great, but where Douhet had meticulously charted out his reasoning, Mitchell's underlying argument seems to be "I'm an Airman, you're not, now listen to me because you'll never really understand." Not an argument that carries the day, unless you're the boss, and not necessarily then. His use of hyperbole only accentuates this perception, like when he asserts that in 1921, the Army hadn't changed since the Civil War that ended in 1865. The only defense for the poor structure of Mitchell's arguments may be that he was trying to make them accessible to a broader audience, while preserving the spirit of airmen manifest in his prose. As a historical work, this is an important primary source for one of the first experiments (the first U.S. experiment) in the use of air craft to attack a naval vessel. Mitchell carefully records the experiment, the events surrounding it, and some of the political considerations of the time. This is gold for historians of the interwar period. There are constant reminders of his attitudes about aviation that grate on the nerves of non-flyers, like his assertion that majors, captains, and lieutenants in aviation carried greater responsibility than admirals and generals. He sure didn't understand the concept of a Joint military as Douhet seemed to. Mitchell wanted an Air Corps that was supported by the Army and Navy, rather than a triad of power, land, sea and air. Mitchell was also a fighter pilot, and had all the vices of modern fighter pilots. (Q: How do you know if there is a fighter pilot at your party? A: He'll tell you. Q: What's the difference between God and fighter pilots? A: God doesn't think he's a fighter pilot. Etc...) but because of this, envisioned a greater role for fighter aircraft than Douhet, which is an interesting contrast. To his credit, Mitchell understood and articulated a more balanced view of offence and defence than Douhet did, and he understood ground based defences a bit better than Douhet. I have heard officers from the U.S. Air Force's Space Operations community voice the opinion that space needs its Mitchell, someone willing to martyr their career for the goal of an independent Space Force (and when asked if they were volunteering, they change the subject). Be

careful what you ask for..."Winged Defense" was worth reading as history, but not very clear regarding air power theory, and I didn't enjoy it. It is interesting how many of the attitudes of aviators have changed so little over the entire history of their discipline. E. M. Van Court P.S. Should anyone try to do a film biography of Mitchell, they've GOT to get Mike Myers to play Mitchell. Look at the cover photo, and look at the actor's picture... Van

An outstanding U.S. air commander in World War I, General William Mitchell was the first serious proponent of an independent U.S. air force and a unified defense department. His staunch and relentless advocacy of air power, however, was accompanied by outspoken public attacks against the War and Navy departments, for which he was court-martialed in 1925. Mitchell's theories of American air power, nevertheless, were sound; and eventually many of his proposals and prophecies including strategic bombardment, mass airborne operations, and the eclipse of the battleship by the airplane were demonstrated in World War II. In this book, first published in 1925, Mitchell speaks of America's present and future role in the air. Compiled from Congressional records, articles in public journals, and personal experience, *Winged Defense* outlines the importance of air power in military and commercial terms, discusses U.S. aeronautical leadership, the dominance of aircraft over naval vessels and the organization of an air force, the importance of establishing an air defense system, the effect of air power on modifying and limiting international armaments, defensive measures against aircraft, and many other topics. Supplemented with rare vintage photographs, the book is a clearly written testament by one of the twentieth century's most farsighted and influential military leaders.

Arguably no American was more instrumental in promoting the development and use of airpower than Billy Mitchell.

*Winged Defense* remains a premier aviation classic and a must-read for all service and commercial aviators. Logisticians, military historians, entrepreneurs, economists, leaders of all types, and those interested in the power of ideas will find this book valuable. --Air and Space Power Journal