

SECOND ARMY AIR SERVICE

LINEAGE

Headquarters, Second Army Air Service constituted, 15 Oct 1921
Inactivated, 5 Sep 1928

STATIONS

Not initiated 1921-22
Dayton, OH, 1922-28
Inactive 1928-41

ASSIGNMENTS

Dayton, OH

COMMANDERS

Col F. P. Lahm

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

OPERATIONS

Constituted in the Organized Reserve 15 October 1921 as Headquarters, Second Army Air Service, assigned to the Second Army and allotted to the Fifth Corps Area. Headquarters initiated in April 1922 at Dayton, OH. Withdrawn from the Organized Reserve on 5 September 1928 and inactivated at Dayton.

Subordinate units: 9th Attack Wing 1923-28, 319th Attack Group 1923-28; 306th Pursuit Group 1923-28; 317th Observation Group 1923-28; 413th Headquarters Squadron 1923-28; 405th Airdrome Company; 415th Airdrome Company; 402nd Ordnance Company (M)

EVER since the flow of American troops started back in a westerly direction, people at home have demonstrated a tremendous curiosity about the exact nature of the job each member of this man's army did in the Big War. When Private Buck, the prop swinger, or Lieut. Goldbar, the famous ace, gets off the train at the old home depot, he runs into a barrage of questions that would make a Boche artillery general jealous.

Sooner or later even the Second Army Air Service is going home. And when it does, its members will have a varied story to tell the questioners who are waiting. Some of them are veterans who can talk of their many campaigns. Others can tell of a short but hectic period of fighting that terminated with the Armistice, and still others will relate the sad story of how the blankety-blank enemy insisted on slipping away to parts unknown just when they appeared on the scene.

Among the organizations that were gathered to make up the Second Army Air Service were some that had become veterans in the service of other Armies, and some that were coming to the front for the first time. Despite the difficulties of organizing and equipping them for action, they were setting a good pace when November 11th wrote "Finis" to the combat. It has never been proved definitely that the Hun quit because of the rapidly growing strength of the Second Army Air Service, but the fact is that the Armistice came only a month after our first units reached the front, and before some of our squadrons had even crossed the lines.

The Boche's final bow left behind him on our particular sector a sadly disgruntled lot of fliers, many of whom had played the game for a year and a half to get their chance at the Hun and then found him slipping away too soon after their arrival on the scene of action.

The roster of the Second Army Air Service on the morning of November 11th shows a considerable concentration of aerial forces, some of them operating actively against the enemy, some of them just getting under way. In all there were 19 aero squadrons in the command, (three of them French) beside three park squadrons, five photo sections, four American balloon companies, and two French balloon companies.

Soon after the Armistice, changes in this roster became frequent, the French escadrilles going back to their own Army, and some of the American squadrons being released from time to time to start their homeward trip. None of the Second Army squadrons were sent to the Army of Occupation, but it was understood that those left on the old front line were being held in reserve for service in Germany. At the same time new organizations were, from time to time, attached to the Second Army.

A summary of the Second Army operations reports shows that our squadrons made a total of 1324 sorties, and secured results of a considerable nature. In general, it may be noted that most of the flights were made by observation planes. The observation squadrons carried on work of a varied nature. In addition to their ordinary duties, they dropped large quantities of bombs and also did some low "strafing" of the kind ordinarily done by chasse planes.

The Fourth Observation Group, with 498th sorties, was most often over the lines; The Sixth Corps Observation Group had 359 sorties, the Fourth Pursuit Group 241, and the Second Colonial Corps Group, consisting of French Escadrilles, had 142. The Fifth Pursuit Group, failing to receive its complement of planes and pilots, did not cross the lines before the Armistice.

Ten German planes shot down were officially confirmed, as was one balloon. All except two of these were downed by observation planes.

A large amount of propaganda was dropped on the Hun lines, and considerable bombing was also done, all of it by observation planes. The bombs coming from observation planes evidently puzzled the Hun, for after a few experiences, he developed the habit of seeking cover from all observation planes on the chance that they might be coming to bomb him.

The losses of the Second Army units were light. The Fourth Corps group, in twenty four combats, lost one man killed and five wounded, getting in exchange five enemy planes and one balloon. The Sixth Corps Group had two of its planes forced to land in German territory, but without casualties, and one of the two crews immediately escaped and returned to its own lines.

For most of the Second Army units, peace time flying has proved more dangerous, fatalities from accidents since the Armistice exceeding losses in combat.

What were its actual achievements out on the front—not back in the S. O. S., or in the pages of the popular magazines—but out where the Fokkers and the Archies and the Pom-poms made life interesting.

We know that the dream fleets of the early days of the war. the "aerial armadas" that were going to blacken the sky with their thousands of planes, never materialized. In their place came the American Air Service of fact, the flesh-and-blood squadrons that met the Hun, and played their part in the battles of the American front.

For obvious reasons, the complete record of these squadrons could not be told until after hostilities ceased. But today the plain facts of the case are available. Reports of the Information Section of the Air Service reveal the exact status of every phase of American aerial activity in the war.

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.