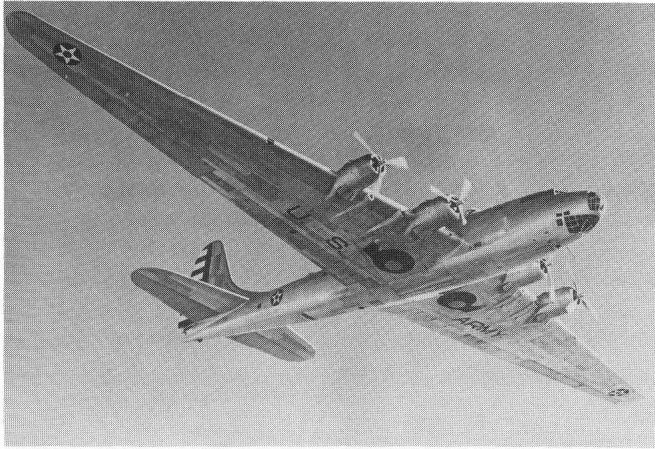


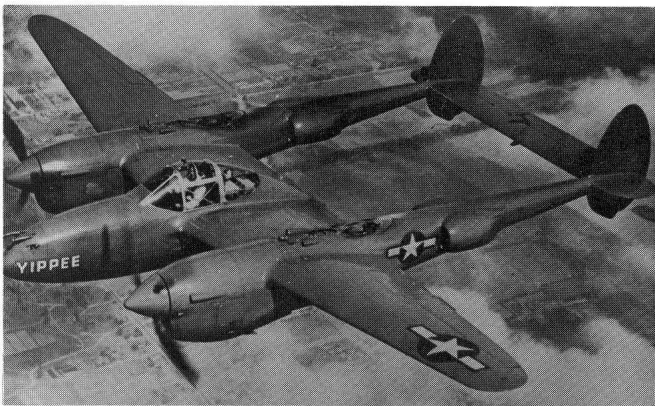
development in air ships, since it featured a "sub gondola" which dangled at the end of a 1000 foot cable underneath the ship. An observer stationed in the lowered gondola could lower himself beneath an overcast and direct movements of the ship above the clouds.

In 1939 the Air Corps paid another visit to South America, this time to Chile on a mercy mission. A serious earthquake had ruined certain sections of Chile and medical supplies from the United States were sorely needed. The giant Boeing B-15, experimental prototype of the Flying Fortress, took off from Langley Field on February 4, 1939, carrying 3,250 pounds of necessary medical equipment. The B-15 made the trip of almost 10,000 miles in less than 30 hours.



The Douglas B-19 bomber. Only one was built

On March 1, 1939, GHQ was placed subordinate to the Office of Chief of the Air Corps, in order to avoid duplication of work, but the following year, on November 19, 1940, it was again returned to co-equal status. However the need for an overall administrative command was apparent, and on June 20, 1941, the Army Air Force came into being. Major General H H Arnold, who had been Chief of the Air Corps, was placed in command. This new organization was created in an attempt to reconcile the differences which had existed between GHQ and the Office of the Chief of Air Corps, the combat and administrative branches of our air arm.

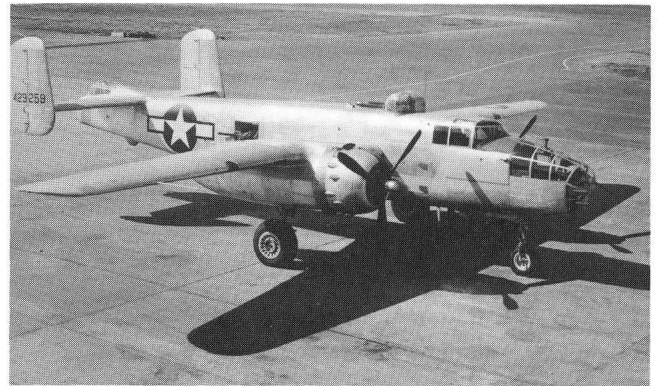


Lockheed P-38

In 1941 with war on the horizon the AAF began a great expansion program. The quota of pilots was raised to 33,000 for the year. The Gulf Coast Training Center would train

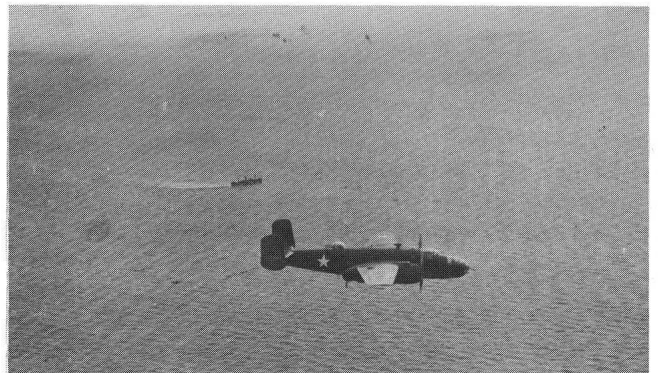
approximately 12,000 of these, the greatest single allotment going to Randolph Field, where a new class of about 400 began training every five weeks. To meet the demand for technical specialists, the technical schools at Chanute, Scott, and Lowry fields were expanded to the bursting point, while the overflow was diverted into civilian mechanic schools.

Then on December 7, 1941, the Japanese struck the blow at Pearl Harbor that was to result in the greatest expansion the Army Air Forces had ever seen, and ultimately to produce the world's greatest aerial striking force. At the time of our entry in the war, the AAF consisted of 275,000 enlisted men, 23,000 officers and 16,000 cadets, with some 12,000 planes to operate. There were eight air forces, four within the continental limits and one each in the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, and the Caribbean. The Hawaiian Air Force which consisted of less than 200 combat planes, was half wiped out by the Pearl Harbor raid. But even in defeat, AAF pilots proved their worth, as the 14 pursuit pilots who managed to get air borne from Wheeler Field, shot down ten attacking Japanese.



North American B-25J

The AAF swung quickly into action. Its early combat was mostly defensive work, but before the war was six months old, the AAF struck a major defensive blow, when Lt/Col "Jimmy" Doolittle led a groups of carrier based B-25s against the Japanese mainland. On April 18, at about 7:30 in the morning 16 planes left the carrier "Hornet" and headed for Japan. Eight of the planes struck Tokyo itself, the rest striking at Yokohama, Yokosuka, Nagoya and Kobe. The raid, although a small one by comparison with the tremendous blows which later were struck at Japan, proved to the complacent Japanese that no part of the Empire was safe from American air attack.



A B-25 Attacks Japanese Shipping