



Official Newsletter of the Michigan Company of Military Historians & Collectors  
**April 13, 2015**

*“The Swiss will never part with his gun, symbol and protection of his freedom and independence.”* **Swiss President Phillip Etter, June 22, 1939**

*“Whatever I say to you, whatever you read, whatever you think, always ask yourself the reason WHY. It is the most potent word in the world. If you do not do so, however much you strive to learn you will be mentally standing at ease”* **Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, lecture, 1933.**

*“Nine times out of ten an army has been destroyed because its supply lines have been severed.”* **General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, 23 August 1950, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.** Considering his history and future actions, a warning he never heeded or followed.

*“People get the history they deserve.”* **General Charles de Gaulle, 1920, at St. Cyr.**

*“You’ve never lived until you’ve almost died. For those who fight for it, life has a meaning the protected will never know.”* **Popular saying in Special Operations Group**

Our speaker will be Hans Moederzoon Van Kuilenberg, author of **Silent Heroes**. She will be speaking about her experiences as a 10-year-old girl living in Amsterdam, when German soldiers invaded Holland in the spring of 1940 and what the ensuing years were like. She will also touch on her new career as a photographer. 25 copies of her book will be available for purchase, \$18.00.

**MEETINGS** take place the second Monday of every month at the **Riverfront Hotel Grand Rapids** 270 Ann St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 363-9001. Socializing begins at 6:00 (1800), dinner at 7:00 (1900), business meeting 7:15 (1915), and program at 8:00 (2000).

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**Company Notes**

- ◆ There is a Master Arts Theater play about Diet Eman. There is a discount for veterans. Called “*Things We Couldn’t Say*.” Go to <http://www.masterarts.org/plays-and-events.html>.
- ◆ The Air Force again concluded it should phase out the A-10. Plus the Army still can’t have it. Army fly planes, ridiculous, no way, never. The USAF flies planes.
- ◆ This film is believed to have never been seen before General Mc Arthur's voice is a rarity in these old film clips. Japanese Surrender- This is a 'must This is an actual film made of the surrender ceremony of the Japanese to Mc Arthur in Tokyo Bay in September 1945. Click here: [Japanese Surrender](#)

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# Squadron 303

Before America's entry into WWII Great Britain was in the midst of two great battles historians refer to as the Battle of the Atlantic and the Battle of Britain. The first battle was of a longer duration and employed a far greater number of resources for it was fought on the seas. Supplies to England were constantly threatened by German submarines and aviation units. The use of the convoy system, where ships traveled in large groups protected by naval escorts, wasn't reintroduced until early 1941 (a lesson learned during WWI but forgotten in the interwar years). A great many assets were employed not only to keep England fed but to supply her with the matériel needed to defend herself. But all that effort would have been for naught if England could not prevent the Nazis from invading her homeland.

After the debacle at Dunkirk in May of 1940 the aircraft losses from both sides were high. The English sent sixteen squadrons (192 planes) to protect the evacuation and lost 145. During this period the Luftwaffe lost 156 planes. When Dunkirk was finally captured the German army went on a six week hiatus. Hitler toured the battlefields he roamed as a younger man in WWI while the German High Command (OKW) under General Alfred Jodl made preliminary plans for the invasion of England (Operation Sea Lion). His efforts weren't serious for many believed that England would soon sue for peace. Besides, Jodl considered that breaching the English Channel "would represent nothing more than a large river crossing." By early July, 1940 the Germans realized that Churchill was not going to capitulate and so plans moved ahead in earnest for an invasion. But first, the Germans needed to control the air space over England. The Luftwaffe's commander in chief, Herman Göring, estimated that it would take four days to knock out the English Fighter Command and four weeks to destroy the rest of the RAF and the factories that produced her aircraft. This would ensure that a cross-Channel invasion could take place unimpeded by August or September at the latest. Instead the actual air battle over Britain lasted a more than three months.

Phase one of the German plan was to draw the English fighters out by attacking shipping along England's southeast coast beginning in early July. During this period both sides suffered heavy losses which forced Fighter Command to pull back from defending coastal shipping. The Germans believed that Fighter Command had no more than 450 planes still available; in reality they had 460 Hawker Hurricanes and 296 Supermarine Spitfires. Fortunately the Germans consistently underestimated their opponents, a proclivity reinforced by their ideological beliefs in their superiority. A feeling of superiority the English also shared when it came to the use of other allied forces in defense of her country. One of the aspects of air combat over your own country was if you survived the initial encounter an English pilot could bail out and return to duty if not seriously injured. The German pilot, if he survived, was lost to further combat for he would most likely become a POW. There were other benefits from phase one that greatly aided the Brits. Until the Germans starting bombing the RAF airfields in August, Fighter Command was able to fine-tune the procedures needed to coordinate more efficiently radar reports with the allocation of fighter squadrons to meet any incoming threat. Also, pilots were gaining valuable experience in air to air combat by flying as many as five sorties a day.

Phase Two began on August 13, "Eagle Day." It was the code name for an all-out assault on the British Isles. Fighters and bombers from France, Belgium, Denmark and Norway attacked airfields and radar sites multiple times. In the north Fighter Command was very successful because the German bombers were defended by the Bf 110, a two engine fighter with the range but not the mobility to completely repel the Hurricanes and Spitfires sent to bring them down. However, in the south, it was a brutal fight for survival. The Bf 109 was a superior fighter to any British plane at the time but it had a serious weakness which the Germans failed to correct in the early stages of the war.

The Bf 109's time on target was limited by its short range. In defending the bombers it could only spend a number of minutes before it had to return to the continent to refuel. Auxiliary fuel tanks were not used until 1943! Consequently when 88 Do 17 Dornier light bombers attacked Portsmouth, 130 Bf 109's accompanied them. They were met by three squadrons of 24 Hurricanes and 12 Spitfires. The Germans lost 73 aircraft (not all due to air combat) while Fighter Command lost 30 aircraft with 17 pilots surviving. On a daily basis the English flew 1000 sorties and the Germans over 2000. The last two weeks of August was a massive battle of attrition. English pilots were exhausted. Fighter Command had to survive only until the end of September. Where the normal pattern of British weather would make the continuance of the daylight air campaign against the RAF impossible, while simultaneously thwarting any effort to carry out a cross-Channel invasion of southeast England.

It now became a matter of who would blink first. By the first week of September Fighter Command appeared to be on the ropes. Leadership positions were proving difficult to fill. The command had lost one in five of its squadron commanders and one in three of its flight commanders. There were no more fresh squadrons to move into battle and individuals were sent in piecemeal as replacements. The ground crews, the armorers and those responsible for repairing runways and hangers were exhausted. Less than 250 airmen were left to protect England. Enter the Poles. Since 1939 141 Polish and 87 Czech pilots were in England. A number of them had previously shot down German airplanes in defense of their own country and several were aces with more than five kills. But the typical English reluctance to acknowledge the superiority of an *untermenschen* was almost her downfall. Repeatedly Polish pilots had tried to join various English squadrons on an individual basis but were repeatedly denied with no reason given other than "it wouldn't work." Therefore most of the pilots flew submarine patrols over the North Atlantic, the North Sea or the Bay of Biscay with complete Polish crews.

Arkady Fiedler writes in his book Squadron 303: "in some circles of the RAF Fighter Command it was believed that after two defeats the Poles lack the morale necessary for fighting. They are mad dare-devils, heedless of their own life." Polish pilots were among the most experienced in combat; most had hundreds of hours of pre-war flying experience and had fought in the 1939 Defensive War and/or the Battle of France. The Polish pilots had been well trained in formation flying and had learned from combat experience to fire from close range. There continued to be a perception that "fanatical" Polish pilots, inspired by hatred caused by the German invasion of Poland, often rammed enemy aircraft. However, with their combat experience, Polish pilots would have known that the quickest and most efficient way to destroy an enemy aircraft was to fire from close range. After firing a brief opening burst at 150 to 200 yards, just to get on the enemy's nerves, the Poles would close almost to point-blank range. That was where they did their real work. When they went tearing into enemy bombers and fighters they got so close one would think they were going to collide. During the training flights prior to becoming operational the Polish pilots could not understand why the English started their attacks on the Germans from so far away. The Poles would close at over 300 mph (or 146 yds/sec) before they opened fire and what the English called recklessness was just a desire to conserve ammunition due to better accuracy and the ability to unnerve the German pilots with their superior flying skills. The close range tactics used by the Poles led to the suggestions of recklessness, but there was little evidence for this view. For example, the death rate in 303 Squadron was almost 70 percent lower than the rate for other RAF squadrons, despite the squadron having been the highest-scoring Allied squadron during the Battle. Much like the Negro in the American Civil War the Polish pilot was segregated until he was the last choice. Only then was he given an opportunity to demonstrate his skills, and only then under the direct command of an Englishman.

Squadron 303 was formed and went into action August 31, 1940. Flying 12 Hurricanes they were sent into the thick of battle defending London and the southeast English coast. Within a month

Squadron 303 shot down more enemy planes than any other RAF squadron and had the two highest aces in the entire RAF during the Battle of Britain. On the night of August 24-25 the British bombed Berlin and the Führer wanted a massive aerial assault on London as revenge. The German high command believed that the British Fighter Command was virtually finished while others expressed doubts and wanted to continue the attacks on the RAF airfields. On the afternoon of September 7, Göring and Adolf stood on the beach at Pas-de-Calais and watched a massive swarm of over 400 bombers with an escort of over 600 fighters fly overhead to attack London. Fighter Command assumed they were attacking the southeast airfields and were caught completely by surprise and their response was largely ineffective. This reinforced the German notion that English resistance had played out. London took a pounding and the bombing continued overnight. Ironically, this great raid gave Fighter Command a much needed respite and the Germans, who also needed a rest, did not launch another attack until September 15. German aircrews were told in pre-raid briefings that fighter resistance had collapsed and they would encounter little difficulty over London.

They were wrong. This time Fighter Command was ready. Over 100 Do 17s attacked London in the morning and met fierce resistance. That afternoon 200 bombers escorted by 400 fighters attacked again. Fighter Command sent up 12 squadrons, 303 included, from Fighter Group No. 11 to meet the Germans as they crossed the coast. The fighting was fierce. Just as the low-on-fuel Bf 109s began to withdraw squadrons from Fighter Group No. 12, north of London attacked the bombers while Fighter Group No. 11 refueled and rearmed. The mass assault caught the Germans completely by surprise and the bomber crews broke. Those that weren't shot down dropped their loads and fled for the coast, only to meet up with Squadron 303 again, and losing 15 more planes. Czechoslovak Air Force pilot Sgt. Josef František, was a very ill-disciplined pilot assigned to 303. He was seen by his commanding officers as a danger to his colleagues when flying in formation. His British CO offered to arrange for František's transfer to a Czech squadron, but František preferred to stay and fight alongside his Polish colleagues. As all pilots were valuable, a compromise was created whereby František was allotted a "spare" aircraft so he could fly as a "guest" of the Squadron as and when he saw fit. Thus, František fought his own private war - accompanying the squadron into the air, but peeling off to fly a lone patrol over Kent, patrolling in the area which he knew the German aircraft being intercepted would fly on their way back to base, possibly damaged and low on fuel and ammo. He called this trolling for Adolfs. In September he shot down 17 German aircraft and 1 probable, of which nine were Bf 109s. He became the top scoring Allied fighter pilot of the Battle of Britain. His last victory was on 30 September 1940 and he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. On October 8, 1940, František's Hurricane crashed in Ewell, Surrey during a landing approach after a patrol. His body lies in the Polish Military Cemetery. During the Battle of Britain Squadron 303 shot down 126 German aircraft.

For all intents the German daylight offensive was over. The German army in France began dismantling the equipment marked for Operation Sea Lion and started to prepare for what the German Chief of Staff, General Hans Jeschonnek would exclaim, "At last a proper war," the invasion of Russia. The Luftwaffe would enter the Eastern campaign less prepared for sustained combat that it had been in May, 1940. It possessed 200 fewer bombers and the constant pressure of combat against the British Isles exhausted its crews; to the extent that they would never recover from their exertions in the Battle for Britain. England would continue to be attacked, but only at night. She would survive to become the base for the invasion of Europe in almost four years.

Of the 145 Polish pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain, 31 died in action. Having more than demonstrated their mettle the British formed 15 more Polish squadrons. Because the Allies won the Battle of Britain by a narrow margin, some historians believe the outcome would have been different without the Polish aviators' involvement.

# Switzerland Under Siege 1939-1945

In some quarters it has been assumed that the neutral nation of Switzerland had profited greatly from the war that devastated Europe and millions of people. Her population of 4.3 million, hunkered down, safe in their mountain redoubts and living an Eden-like life in the midst of Nazi horrors are false. Swiss neutrality meant that she would not willingly engage in the conflict on either side in any military or nonmilitary endeavor. It did mean that she would not defend herself if attacked. From the onset it was clear that the Swiss had nothing to fear from the Western Allies and everything to fear from Nazi Germany.

Switzerland was established as a constitutional democracy in 1848. It was 70% ethnic German (Alemannic -- other ethnic groups included 19% French, 10% Italian, and 1% Rhaeto-Romansch) and was determined to remain neutral during the war with a long history of neutrality. The country had several distinct defensive advantages that could help make any incursions into its territory very difficult. It is shaped like a bowl, with high mountains surrounding and making up its borders with neighboring countries. There are only four passes by which an army can make an entrance, and the Swiss had already mined every railway tunnel with explosives. Any incursions by the Germans or Italians would be met by a sealed border. After Hitler came to power in 1933, the racism and imperialism of the National Socialists began to threaten Switzerland's existence as an independent, democratic state. When the Rhineland was invaded in 1936 the Swiss General Staff believed a general war would break out early in 1940. Soon this landlocked country would find itself between two fascist dictatorships, Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

In 1939 Poland fell to the Russians and the Germans, staunch Finnish resistance to the Winter War of 1939-40 gave the Swiss an encouraging example. April, 1940 Denmark and Norway were attacked and soon afterwards Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands surrendered. By early June the Brits had left the continent and 43,000 French and Polish troops retreated into Switzerland and were interned in accordance with international law. With the signing of the the armistice between the Axis Powers and France on June 25, 1940 German and Italian troops were available for further campaigns. Both countries had invasion plans to eliminate Switzerland as a nation. Hitler wanted to attack for three reasons. First, Swiss pilots had downed eleven German planes who had violated her airspace by returning over Swiss soil after bombing missions in France. Secondly, the Swiss press did not agree to a "neutrality of conscience" and continued to critically attack the Nazi war efforts. And lastly, Switzerland, as a country, was a roadblock between southern Germany and Italy that had to be eliminated.

On June 23, 1940 Hitler ordered preparations to be made for an invasion, the Italians would attack the southwest corner near Geneva while the Germans came down from the north. On July 7, 1940 the 12th German Army marched up to the Swiss border between Berne and Zurich awaiting Hitler's order to proceed. Adolf was flush with success. The Balkan campaign was completed, England would soon sue for peace, and Russia was soon to be in the sights of the *Wehrmacht*. Adolf wavered and several reasons have been given by historians. The Italians could not be trusted to defeat the Swiss in the French Alps. Her previous ventures did not instill confidence in her ability to win any sort of contest. A German attack on the Swiss lowlands in the north would bring favorable results but a secondary campaign into the mountains might pin down the German divisions needed for the cross Channel invasion. Furthermore, future plans might become endangered in pursuit of *Lebensraum* in the East while defeating the Soviet Union. Lastly, given Switzerland's almost complete encirclement it was believed possible to pressure her into joining the Axis by political and economic means rather than invasion.

Events soon unfolded that saved Switzerland. German reconnaissance revealed a build up of Swiss forces on her northwest frontier. Tank traps, fortified redoubts, and protected supply depots made it evident that the Swiss were not going to yield ground easily. If they were beaten back into the Alps, a minimum number of Swiss troops could prevent any further movement into the interior through the few passes available. Thus keeping many German divisions engaged in maintaining control of ground already seized. A situation with no positive results. Hitler dallied before making any decision and unfolding events over England gave the Führer further pause. Large German air losses against the RAF finally forced the Germans to forget the Swiss for the moment. As their losses mounted and summer turned to fall the planned invasion of England along with Switzerland was postponed so the *Wehrmacht* could prepare for the invasion of Russia the following June.

Meanwhile the Swiss took steps to prepare more adequate defenses. 450,000 combat troops were activated supported by 250,000 auxiliary troops. At its peak over 850,000 men between 18 and 45 were mobilized into all branches of military service. This represented over 40% of the total male population of the country. The build-up in the supply of arms proceeded at an astounding pace. The number of machine guns doubled to reach 30,000, supplemented by 27,000 automatic rifles. 3,000 anti-aircraft guns were sited along with 1,000 anti-tank weapons backed by 2,000 flame-throwers. The number of mortars tripled and 360 10.5cm (4.1") motorized cannons were made available. She also had 50 Messerschmitts in her inventory. Despite the prevailing public and political attitudes in Switzerland, some high-ranking officers within the Swiss Army had pro-Nazi sympathies. An attempt by Switzerland's small Nazi party to effect an accommodation with Germany failed miserably, largely as a result of Switzerland's multicultural heritage, strong sense of national identity, and long tradition of direct democracy and civil liberties.

Still Switzerland was able to remain independent through a combination of military deterrence and economic concessions made to Germany. Switzerland relied on trade for half of its food and essentially all of its fuel, but controlled the vital trans-alpine rail tunnels between Germany and Italy. Switzerland's trade was blockaded by both the Allies and by the Axis. Each side openly exerted pressure on Switzerland not to trade with the other. Economic cooperation and extension of credit to the Third Reich varied according to the perceived likelihood of invasion, and the availability of other trading partners. Concessions reached their zenith after a crucial rail link through Vichy France was severed in 1942, leaving Switzerland completely surrounded by the Axis. Switzerland relied on trade for half of its food and essentially all of its fuel, but controlled vital trans-alpine rail. Switzerland's most important exports during the war were precision machine tools, watches, jewel bearings (used in bombsights), electricity, and dairy products.

Under pressure from the Allies, in December 1943 quotas were imposed on the importation and exportation of certain goods and foodstuffs and in October 1944 the sale of munitions were halted. However the transit of goods by railway between Germany, Italy and occupied France continued. North-South transit trade across Switzerland increased from 2.5 million tons prior to the war to nearly 6 millions tons per year. No troops or "war goods" were supposed to be transshipped. Switzerland was concerned that Germany would cease the supply of the coal it required if it blocked coal shipments to Italy while the Allies, despite some plans to do so, took no action as they were concerned to maintain good relations with Switzerland. Between 1939 and 1945 Germany exported 10,267,000 tons of coal to Switzerland. In 1943 these imports supplied 41% of Swiss energy requirements. In the same period Switzerland sold electric power to Germany equivalent to 6,077,000 tons of coal.

As a neutral state bordering Germany, Switzerland was easy to reach for refugees from the Nazis. However, Switzerland's refugee laws, especially with respect to Jews fleeing Germany, were strict and have caused controversy since the end of World War II. From 1933 until 1944 asylum for refugees could only be granted to those who were under personal threat owing to their political

activities only; it did not include those who were under threat due to race, religion or ethnicity. . Over the course of the war, Switzerland interned 300,000 refugees. Of these, 104,000 were foreign troops interned according to the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers outlined in the Hague Conventions. The rest were foreign civilians and were either interned or granted tolerance or residence permits by the cantonal authorities. It is often stated that the Swiss could have done more to accept refugees but her resources were limited and severely strained. She could barely provide for her own population let alone for an additional 400,000. Any curtailment of needed food and fuel supplies would have serious consequences for her ability to survive.

Switzerland also acted as a refuge for Allied prisoners of war who escaped, including those from *Oflag IV-C* (Colditz). Allied aircraft intruded on Swiss airspace during the war, mostly Allied bombers returning from raids over Italy and Germany that had been damaged and whose crews preferred internment by the Swiss to becoming prisoners of war. Over a hundred Allied aircraft and their crews were interned. They were subsequently put up in various ski resorts that had been emptied from lack of tourists due to the war and held until it ended. At least 940 American airmen attempted to escape into France after the invasion of Normandy, but Swiss authorities intercepted 183 internees. Over 160 of these airmen were incarcerated in a prison camp called Wauwilermoos, which was located near Lucerne and commanded by a pro-Nazi Swiss officer. The American internees remained in Wauwilermoos until November 1944, when the U.S. State Department lodged protests against the Swiss government and secured their release.

There did exist a mutual friendship between the Allies and several Swiss anti-aircraft batteries. The following is a conversation purported by *Time* magazine, March 6, 1944 between a trespassing formation of U.S. bombers and a Swiss AA battery. Swiss Ground Commander: "*You are over Switzerland.*" Bomber Pilot: "*We know.*" Swiss: "*If you don't turn back we will shoot.*" Pilot: "*We know.*" The conversation paused during a furious ack-ack barrage, then resumed. Pilot: "*Your fire is 1000 feet low.*" Swiss: "*We know.*" Despite seemingly cordial relationships the Swiss did suffer from several errant bombing attacks. Swiss air space was violated by both sides. The Swiss Air Force was not in a position in terms of size of force or modern equipment to defend Swiss air space effectively. Thus, during the war, over 7,000 air raid alarms were sounded in Switzerland. Some Allied bombers took advantage of this situation by using Swiss air space as a safer route than enemy air space on their bombing runs to and from targets in Germany, but more often, bombers in distress preferred to descend to neutral Switzerland for asylum rather than in German territory. As a result Switzerland ultimately interned 1,700 American airmen. From 1941 to 1942, allied bombers very rarely flew over Switzerland, because the Swiss authorities, under German pressure, prescribed black-outs in order to complicate navigation for the U.S. and British air crews. Germany also pressured the Swiss into forcing the allied air crews to land in Switzerland, instead of letting them continue bombing runs.

The daylight bombing of Schaffhausen on 1 April 1944 by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) was the most serious of all incidents. Approximately 50 B-24 Liberators of a larger force misidentified Schaffhausen as their target Ludwigshafen am Rhein near Mannheim (about 150 miles north of Schaffhausen), and dropped bombs that led to 40 fatalities, numerous injuries, and property damage. At the insistence of the Swiss government for an explanation, Allied investigations into the incident found that bad weather broke up the American formation over France, and that high winds that nearly doubled the ground speed of the bombers confused the navigators. Two other widely scattered cities in Germany and France were also mistakenly bombed during the same mission. As Schaffhausen is situated on the right bank (north side) of the Rhine river, it was apparently assumed to be the German city. By October 1944, 4 million dollars had been paid in restitution.

*Ed Note: Much of this information was taken from Switzerland Under Seize 1939-1945. Edited by Leo Schelbert, Picton Press 2000.*

# Relieved of Command

Admiral John Byng (baptized 29 October 1704 – 14 March 1757) was a Royal Navy officer. After joining the navy at the age of thirteen, he participated at the Battle of Cape Passaro in 1718. Over the next thirty years he built up a reputation as a solid naval officer and received promotion to vice-admiral in 1747.

Byng is best known for the loss of Minorca in 1756 at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. His ships badly needed repair and he was relieved of his command before he could see to his ships or secure the extra forces he required. He was court martialed and found guilty of failing to "do his utmost" to prevent Minorca falling to the French following the Battle of Minorca. He was sentenced to death and shot by firing squad on 14 March 1757.

The loss of Minorca initially caused public outrage among fellow officers and the country at large. Byng was brought home to be tried by court-martial for breach of the Articles of War, which had recently been revised to mandate capital punishment for officers who did not do their utmost against the enemy, either in battle or pursuit. The revision to the Articles followed an event in 1745 during the War of the Austrian Succession, when a young lieutenant named Baker Phillips was court-martialed and shot after his ship was captured by the French. His captain, who had done nothing to prepare the vessel for action, was killed almost immediately by a broadside. Taking command, the inexperienced junior officer was forced to surrender the ship when she could no longer be defended. Although the negligent behavior of Phillips's captain was noted by the subsequent court martial and a recommendation for mercy entered, Phillips' sentence was approved by the Lords Justices of Appeal. This sentence angered some of parliament, who felt that an officer of higher rank would likely have been spared or else given a light punishment, and that Phillips had been executed because he was a powerless junior officer and thus a useful scapegoat. The Articles of War were amended to become one law for all: the death penalty for any officer of any rank who did not do his utmost against the enemy in battle or pursuit.

The court martial sitting in judgement on Byng acquitted him of personal cowardice and disaffection, and convicted him only for not having done his utmost, since he chose not to pursue the superior French fleet, instead deciding to protect his own. Once the court determined that Byng had "failed to do his utmost", it had no discretion over punishment under the Articles of War, and therefore condemned Byng to death. However, its members recommended that the Lords of the Admiralty ask King George II to exercise his royal prerogative of mercy. The Prime Minister, William Pitt the Elder, was aware that the Admiralty was at least partly to blame for the loss at Minorca due to the poor manning and repair of the fleet. Lord Newcastle, the politician responsible, had by now joined the Prime Minister in an uneasy political coalition and this made it difficult for Pitt to contest the court martial verdict as strongly as he would have liked. He did, however, petition the King to commute the death sentence. The appeal was refused: Pitt and King George II were political opponents, with Pitt having pressed for George to relinquish his hereditary position of Elector of Hanover as being a conflict of interest with the government's policies in Europe.

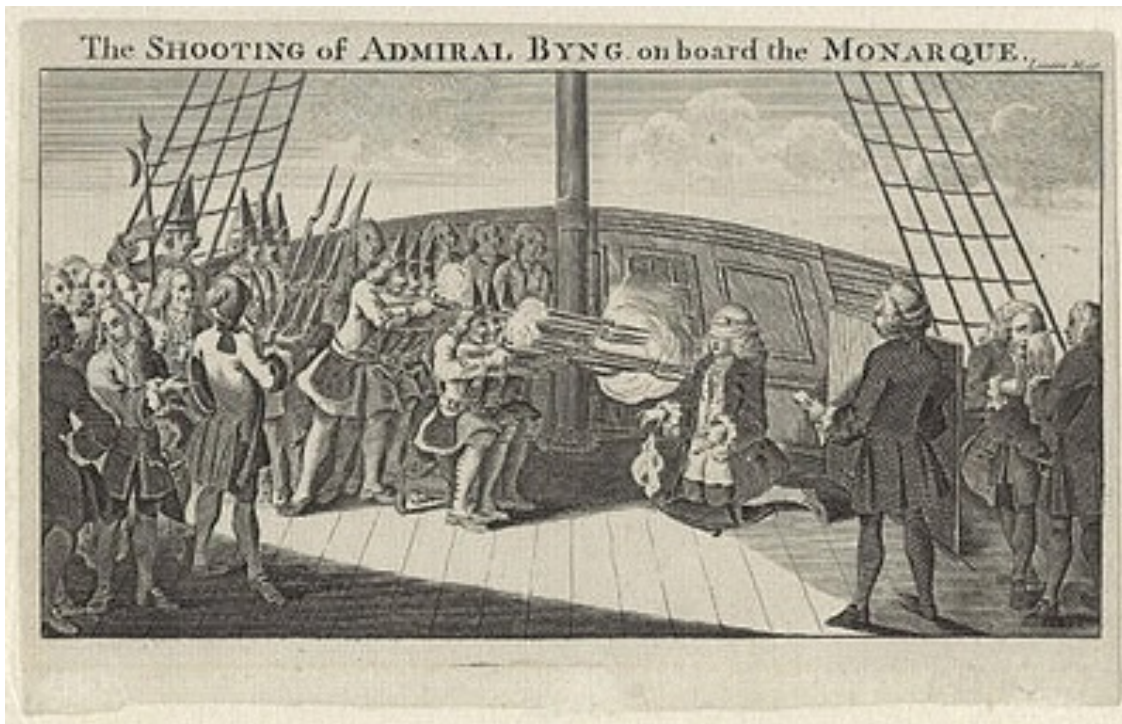
The severity of the penalty, combined with suspicion that the Admiralty sought to protect themselves from public anger over the defeat by throwing all the blame on the admiral, led to a reaction in favor of Byng in both the Navy and the country, which had previously demanded retribution. Pitt, then Leader of the House of Commons, told the King: "the House of Commons, Sir, is inclined to mercy", to which George responded: "You have taught me to look for the sense of my people elsewhere than in the House of Commons. The King did not exercise his prerogative to grant clemency. Following the court martial and pronouncement of sentence, Admiral Byng had been



detained aboard HMS Monarch in the Solent, and on 14 March 1757, he was taken to the quarterdeck for execution. In the presence of all hands and men from other ships of the fleet in boats surrounding Monarch, the admiral knelt on a cushion and signified his readiness by dropping his handkerchief, whereupon a platoon of Royal Marines shot John Byng dead.

Byng's execution was satirized by Voltaire in his novel Candide. In Portsmouth, Candide witnesses the execution of an officer by firing squad; and is told that "in this country, it is good to kill an admiral from time to time, in order to encourage the others." Byng was the last of his rank to be executed in this fashion, and 22 years after the event the Articles of War were amended to allow "such other punishment as the nature and degree of the offense shall be found to deserve" as an alternative to capital punishment. In 2007, some of Byng's relatives petitioned the government for a posthumous pardon. The Ministry of Defence refused.

Byng's execution has been called "the worst legalistic crime in the nation's annals". The naval historian N. A. M. Rodger believes it may have influenced the behavior of later naval officers by helping inculcate: *"a culture of aggressive determination which set British officers apart from their foreign contemporaries, and which in time gave them a steadily mounting psychological ascendancy. More and more in the course of the century, and for long afterwards, British officers encountered opponents who expected to be attacked, and more than half expected to be beaten, so that [the latter] went into action with an invisible disadvantage which no amount of personal courage or numerical strength could entirely make up for."* Such policy considerations were no comfort to the family of their victim. In the words of one historian of the Royal Navy, that "far from encouraging anyone at all, this judicial murder had the opposite effect." Admiral Byng's epitaph at the family vault in All Saints Church, in Southill, Bedfordshire, expresses their view and the view of much of the country.



To the perpetual disgrace  
of PUBLICK JUSTICE  
The Honble JOHN  
BYNG Esqr  
Admiral of the Blue  
Fell a MARTYR to  
POLITICAL  
PERSECUTION  
March 14, 1757 when  
BRAVERY and  
LOYALTY  
were insufficient  
Securities For the Life  
and Honour of a  
NAVAL OFFICER  
Today such  
practices seem  
inappropriate for the  
times but in light of

recent disclosures concerning the officers of all the services who have used their positions both in and out of the military to unlawfully benefit themselves, reduction in rank hardly seems appropriate. The message sent is get what you can while you can then let private industry make up any shortfall. The Military-industrial consortium needs to be seriously questioned by our elected representatives about the need for weapon systems that cost too much and provide little benefit over current items in use.

# Military News

Once again defense contractors are telling the military what they need. The Air Force again concluded it should phase out the A-10, after an oddly brief reconsideration period (a week). The plan is to move the close air support mission to F-16s and F-15s until such time as the F-35A can take on the role, which is not expected to be soon. General Herbert Carlisle, head of Air Combat Command mused that at some point after the A-10 budget has been shunted to the F-35 program, the Air Force could conceivably replace it, and even named a potential contender, the Textron Airland Scorpion.

The Air Force is stating openly that the F-35 will not be prepared to take on the close air support (CAS) role for which it is, in small part, slated. This has not slowed down the Air Force's ardor for retiring the current CAS airframe, the A-10. It is certainly handy for the Air Force to shift a few billion dollars over to the needful F-35 project in the interim. However, the Senate Armed Services Committee Chair John McCain is promising to reverse what he sees as dunderheaded Air Force move to mothball the A-10s. He has vocal congressional support, including that from fellow Arizonan Martha McSally (R-AZ) who herself was a warthog pilot supporting Operation Southern Watch over Iraq and Kuwait.

Meanwhile, more and more it seems that the Navy may need to hedge its bets on the F-35, keeping the F/A-18 production lines open (scheduled to finish current orders in 2017) in order to retain adequate protection for its other aircraft. It also is not lost on the Navy that it can purchase three or four Super Hornets for the cost of an F-35, which matters in times of sequestration. In the meantime the U.S. Navy is pumping out newly refurbished F/A-18s at a much faster clip than Lockheed is producing the F-35s, guaranteeing the Navy's primary strike capacity will be its F-18s for the next decade at least. Plans are to extend the Super Hornet's hours capacity from 6,000 to 10,000. The Navy hasn't been terribly gung-ho on F-35 procurement, averaging about four per year for first seven years, and planning to order four more for 2016. The Navy intends to refurbish another 50 F-18s in the coming year, up from 40 the year before.

To counter any military effort to derail the F-35 Lockheed-Martin and her 96 lobbyists have been busy co-opting congressional support. Alaska's congressional delegation is welcoming a move by the Air Force that could pave the way for 48 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to be stationed in their state. The Air Force recently issued a notice saying it would hold three "scoping" meetings in Alaska later this month to help prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The study will assess whether the service can locate the first two squadrons of the pricey jets at Eielson Air Force Base. The Air Force tapped the base as its preferred site to host the squadrons last year. The Defense Department has not confirmed that the planes would be based at Eielson but that didn't stop the state's three-member delegation from applauding the latest move.

"There may never have been a time when America needed Alaska and our military might more than it does right now, with rogue and unpredictable threats emerging to our west -- and I have welcomed all the indications that they are moving forward with their F-35s to Eielson Air Force Base," Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R), chairwoman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said in a statement. "Over the last few weeks, I have spoken with several senior Air Force leaders, including the Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Welsh, and they all have assured me that Alaska is home to the nation's largest training ranges, the best airspace, and some of the very best airmen in the Air Force," said Sen. Dan Sullivan (R), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. (*Arizona's loss is Alaska's gain -ed. note*)

James Fallows noted in a recent cover story in *The Atlantic*, the \$80 billion in projected cost overruns and waste associated with the F-35 is over 100 times the amount of taxpayer losses associated with the Solyndra solar energy project, Republican lawmakers' example of choice when they decry the inefficiencies of "big government."