

# Development of Maritime Patrol Aviation in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941

By **DON Innovation**

Lieutenant Commander Christopher Mergen was recognized with an Honorable Mention for the 2015 SECNAV Innovation Awards in the category of Innovation Scholarship (Professional Military Education) for his essay entitled, "Development of Maritime Patrol Aviation in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941."

The contributions of patrol aviation during World War II as the long-range patrol and reconnaissance arm of the U.S. Navy are well documented but the development of its origins remains historically under-examined. The goal of the thesis was to perform a historical investigation of the influential forces that shaped the development of patrol aviation during the interwar period, 1918 to 1941. In order to properly form a thorough and objective argument, the research approached these influential forces through an investigation from strategic, technological, and operational perspectives.



The thesis addressed innovation pursuant to the development of the U.S. naval patrol aviation force designed to support the strategic need for long range sea-based aerial reconnaissance during the Second World War in the Pacific Theater of Operations. In particular, the thesis highlighted the dynamic variables that shaped the way the U.S. Navy navigated the interwar period and, through its innovative leadership, built the fleet that wrenched naval supremacy from the hands of the Japanese in the Pacific. These variables include a generation of leadership that reshaped the force in order to meet strategic goals, the integration of newly developed technologies to support those goals, and the challenges to organizational reform present in a fiscally and politically constrained environment. At its core, the thesis is a study of the organizational processes that balanced these variables and synthesized an enduring military capability with innovation at a strategic, technological, and operational level. Additionally, it highlights "best practices" that could be studied by organizations to better understand the determinants of innovative change and can potentially lead to effective solutions to operational problems in the present and future.

The thesis can be found in its entirety at:  
<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA624038>