

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

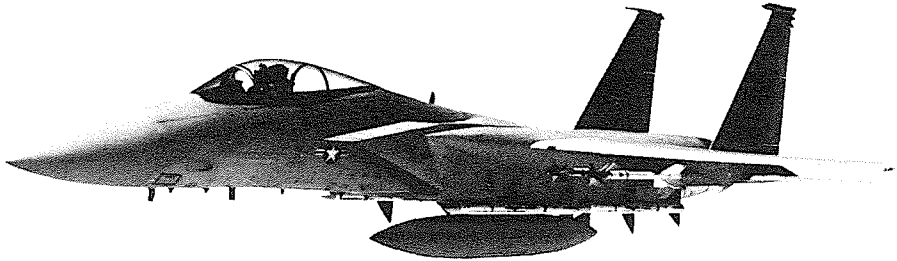


Photo courtesy: McDonnell Douglas Corporation.

In combat, could two fliers man this F-15 fighter better than one?

It Takes Two to Dogfight

“The Fighter Force: How Many Seats?”
by William A. Flanagan, in *Air University
Review* (May-June 1981), Superintendent
of Documents, Government Printing Of-
fice, Washington, D.C. 20402.

America's new jet fighters—the F-15, F-16, and A-10—have a lot in common: great speed, dazzling maneuverability, and a single-seat cockpit. Flanagan, an Air Force major, argues that such heavy reliance on one-man fighters is a big mistake.

In the first fighter planes of World War I, one man flew, and his partner fired a machine gun from the rear. But synchronized machine guns fired forward through the propeller's arc soon enabled one pilot to fly and shoot. Since the weight of an extra man cut down on speed and agility during dogfights, single-seaters ruled the skies in World War II.

During the 1950s, after the Korean conflict, military planners focused on the demands of nuclear war—in which jet fighters' main tasks would be to deliver tactical nuclear weapons and shoot down relatively slow enemy bombers. The new strategy obviated the need for maneuverability, and the early radar systems required an extra crewman.

But the conflicts of the '60s were nonnuclear, and U.S. Navy and Air Force pilots in twin-seat F-4 Phantoms found themselves locked into too many losing dogfights over North Vietnam. In 1968, planning for the next generation of fighters, Washington insisted on computer-aided single-seaters. Yet the Phantom's inadequate performance in Vietnam stemmed not from crew weight but from poor crew coordination, contends Flanagan. After the Navy introduced intensive crew coordination training in 1969, its “kill ratio” soared from 3:1 to 13:1.

Now the requirements of air war have changed again, writes Flanagan. Military planners are worrying about a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict in Central Europe, where American jets will be outnumbered 2 or 3 to 1. Though the F-15, for example, can defeat any fighter “one on one,”

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the numbers dictate replacing the classic maneuvering dogfight with surprise attacks and fast retreats. A second crewman is essential to spot swarming enemy planes because when radar "locks on" to a target, it cannot scan effectively. Unlike their lighter World War II predecessors, today's fighters can carry a second human without a fall-off in performance. What fighter pilots need most now, Flanagan concludes, is a second pair of eyes provided by a backseat partner.

*Before the
Spirit of '76*

"The New England Soldier" by John Ferling, in *American Quarterly* (Spring 1981), 303 College Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104; "Why Did Colonial New Englanders Make Bad Soldiers?" by F. W. Anderson, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1981), P.O. Box 220, Williamsburg, Va. 23185.

By the 1770s, many New England colonists were spoiling for a revolt that would rid Americans of the oppressive influence of England. According to Ferling, a West Georgia College historian, this sentiment signaled a dramatic change in New Englanders' attitudes on soldiering.

The Puritans of a century before had been fearsome in skirmishes with the Indians (whom they viewed as servants of Satan). But their mission was primarily spiritual. Their clerics interpreted the suffering brought by Indian battles as signs of God's displeasure. With every conflict's outcome predestined by the Lord, they regarded American warriors as "bees in a hive" who drew strength from God, not as heroes.

But by 1700, New Englanders were embroiled in a series of full-scale intercolonial conflicts with French and Indian armies. These wars seemed far from divine punishments to the merchants who made fortunes supplying the troops. Eighteenth-century leaders exhorted soldiers to "play the *Man*," emphasizing that human courage—not God's intervention—defeated England's rivals. Even churchmen began likening fallen warriors to biblical heroes. As their political conflicts with England intensified, New Englanders increasingly believed that only the rugged, austere American soldier could secure their liberty.

Nevertheless, frequent mutinies and desertions during the 18th-century wars convinced many British officers that colonists made pitiful soldiers. The Americans' unruly behavior stemmed from their unique view of soldiers as wage-earners, writes Anderson, a Harvard historian, in a separate article.

Until the Seven Years War (1756–63), New Englanders defended themselves against the French. Their militia reflected their egalitarian societies, based on covenants and contracts between legal equals. Colonial governments treated their troops as employees entitled to specified terms of enlistment, pay, and rations. But like all professional European armies, the British Army was founded on unquestioned authority. British generals sent to the New World in the 1750s insisted that the Americans serve under them for the war's duration.