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War Machines: Transforming Technologies in the U.S. Military, 1920-1940 (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)

Timothy Moy

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The American military establishment is intimately tied to its technology, although the nature of those ties has varied enormously from service to service. The air force evokes images of pilots operating hightech weapons systems, striking precisely from out of the blue to lay waste to enemy installations. The fundamental icon for the Marine Corps is a wave of riflemen hitting the beaches from rugged landing craft and slogging their way ashore under enemy fire. How did these very different relationships with technology develop?

During the interwar years, from 1920 to 1940, leaders from the Army Air Corps and the Marine Corps recreated their agencies based on visions of new military technologies. In War Machines, Timothy Moy examines these recreations and explores how factors such as bureaucratic pressure, institutional culture, and America's technological enthusiasm shaped these leaders' choices.

The very existence of the Army Air Corps was based on a new technology, the airplane. As the Air Corps was forced to compete for money and other resources during the years after World War I, Air Corps leaders carved out a military niche based on hightech precision bombing. The Marine Corps focused on amphibious, firstwave assault using sturdy, graceless, and easytoproduce landing craft.

Moy's astute analysis makes it clear that studying the processes that shaped the Army Air Corps and Marine Corps is fundamental to our understanding of technology and the military at the beginning of the twentyfirst century.

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