

Distinguished Bomber and Aerial Gunner Badges



In the latter 1920s and early 1930s the U.S. Army Air Corps (the Air Service before July 2, 1926) held the national annual bombing and gunnery matches at Langley Field, Virginia. Navy pilots also competed although no navy pilot ever won the competitions. The three gunnery matches were for pursuit pilots; observation and attack pilots; and an observer's match. Initially there were two bombing matches, one for heavier than air craft and one for balloons, but after the initial 1926 match the Air Corps eliminated the lighter than air match. Air Corps chief Major General Benjamin J. Foulois suspended the matches after the 1932 meet and they never restarted.

Match winners received distinguished aerial gunner or distinguished aerial bomber badges. On the right is the reverse of the badge given to 2d Lieutenant Louis M. Merrick of the Air Service for his 1926 win. Subsequent badges would all be engraved A.C. for Air Corps. More information on these badges and the matches is in *Marksmanship in the U. S. Army*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, pages 174-177.