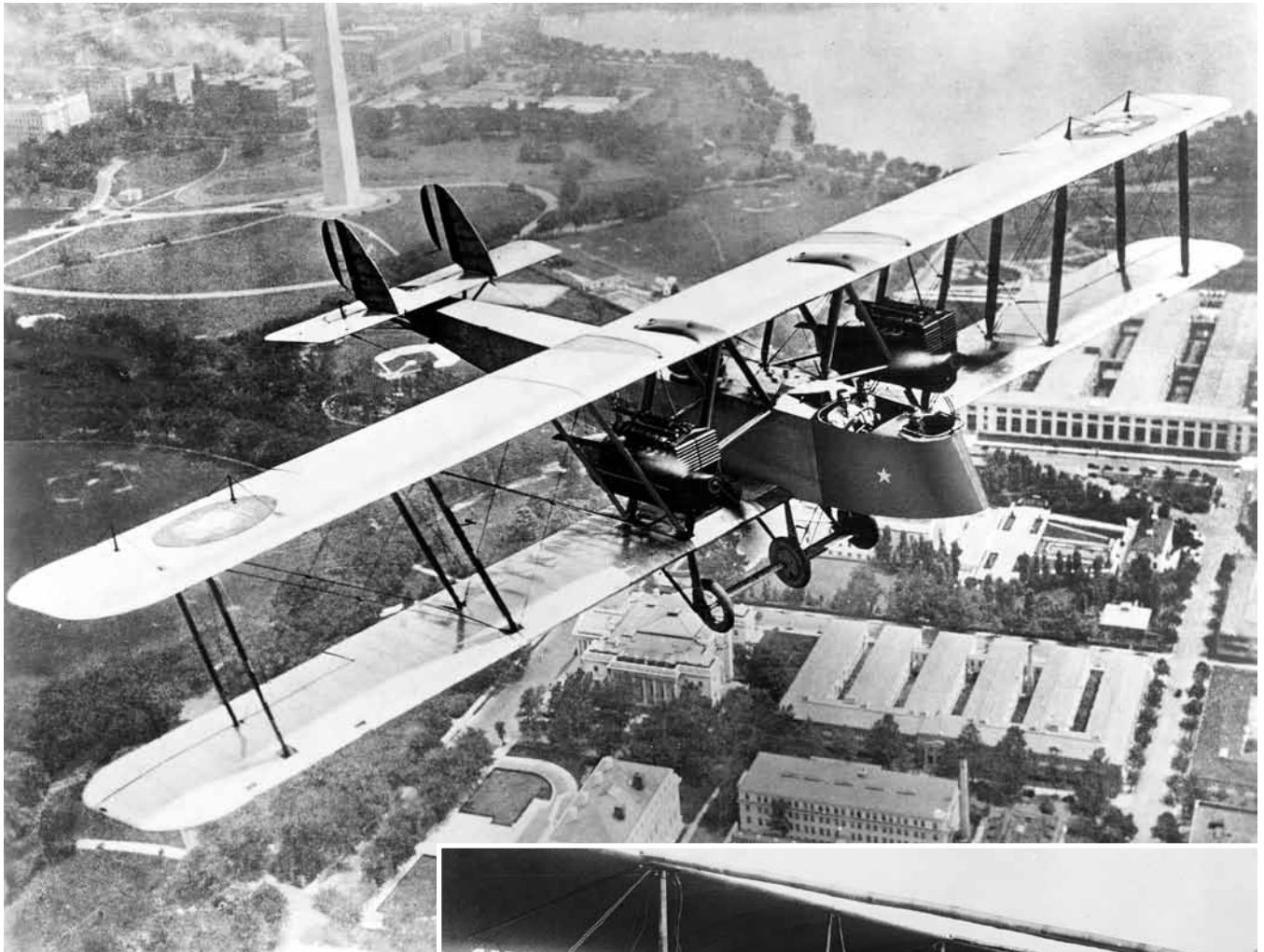


The First US Bombers

Photo via National Museum of the US Air Force



When America entered World War I in 1917, the US Army had no bombers. It had to make do with British Handley Pages and Italian Capronis. In January 1918, however, the Army contracted with the Glenn L. Martin Co. for the first true US bombers. These biplanes (an early version is shown above, over Washington, D.C., in 1919) were called the Glenn Martin Bombers and later renamed MB-1. Designed by the legendary Donald Douglas (founder of Douglas Aircraft), the GMB first flew on Aug. 15, 1918. It could carry a 1,040-pound bomb load for 390 miles at 105 mph. War's end in November 1918 truncated production at 10 aircraft, but the foundation had been laid.



Glenn Martin, circa 1911, prepares to take off in a pusher biplane on a newspaper delivery flight from Fresno, Calif., to Madera, Calif., made as a promotional ploy to raise money for his aircraft production plant.