

*New York Tribune*  
May 25, 1914

***Mexicans Fire Volley At U.S. Naval Airship Soaring At Vera Cruz***

***Huerta Cavalrymen Attempt to Kill Pat Bellinger and Ensign Stoltz  
Scouting for Cruiser Birmingham Before She Arrived.***

***Infantry Shoots On Second Flight***

***Incident Cited as Proof That Federals Regard Mediation as Binding on Americans, but  
Leaving Them Free To Act As If War Existed.***

This morning troops of Federal cavalry facing our outposts at Vergara attempted to take the lives of Lieutenant Pat Bellinger and Ensign Stoltz by repeatedly firing on their airship. By this it was again proved that Mexican forces outside of Vera Cruz regard mediation as an arrangement that upon our forces is binding, but which leaves them free.

Bellinger and Stoltz (who is trying for license as an air pilot) left the aviation beach at 8:30 o'clock in hydro-aeroplane No. A3, and steered northeast. The cruiser *Birmingham* was expected to arrive today, and they were scouting for her. They picked the *Birmingham* up about twenty miles from Vera Cruz and returned, making a slide to the flagship, and by voice reported her approach to the officer on deck.

Ascending to an altitude of 2,200 feet, they passed over Vergara, which is a little fishing village three miles north of Vera Cruz and on the American's right. The extreme outpost, it consists of three squads of marines and an officer. The next post inland is at the pumping station on the Interoceanic Railroad, which supplies the railroad with water and is not to be confused with the pumping station at Tejar that furnished water for the city.

When over Vergara Bellinger saw at Punta Gorda village, on the shore a mile further up the coast, one hundred cavalrymen in blue uniforms, washing their ponies in the surf. He continued, passing over these men, and by them was repeatedly fired on. Of this neither Stoltz nor himself, owing to the height of the airship and the noise of the engines, was conscious, but outguards, both at Vergara and the pumping station, counted twenty—some say thirty—shots.

The airship returned to Vera Cruz, and Bellinger reported to the commander of the marine brigade the presence of Federals on the coast, and was informed that Captain Hill, from the pumping station, had reported the firing on the airship. In order to follow further the movements of the Federal cavalry the airship returned to Punta Gorda, keeping out of range at 3,000 feet.

In this second flight Bellinger tells me he located the cavalry in troop formation in a clearing, and closer to our lines a smaller body of infantry. This time as the aviators passed over the infantry both Captain Hill and the officer at Vergara heard three rifle shots fired from directly below them. As no state of war exists the aviators have received no orders restricting their movements. They are in uniform and the airship always flies two American flags.

In contrast with the attempt to destroy the airship is the case of Alberto Ocano, an officer of artillery in the Federal army, found yesterday in the city. He stated that in view of peace existing he had the right to be here and to protection from the American forces. When asked to explain why he was out of uniform, he said if he had worn it he would have been mobbed by rebel sympathizers. Nothing was done to him.

I am told Ocano is only one of half a dozen Federal officers now in the city. Their presence is known to the American authorities and the reason for their being inside the American lines is obvious, but as no war exists they cannot be treated as spies.

Bellinger is the aviator with whom I made an ascension yesterday, and, as stated, is one of the most popular youths in the navy. Had he been hit this morning, the difficulty of explaining that the Mexicans are not at war with the United States would have been greatly increased.

(Source: *Chronicling America*: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1914-05-25/ed-1/seq-1/>)