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Lieutenant General Lew Allen, Jr., USAF

1973 - 1977

Lieutenant General Lew Allen, Jr. was born in Miami, Florida, on 30 September 1925. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as second lieutenant. He was awarded pilot's wings upon graduation

After completing multi-engine flight training at Enid, Oklahoma, in November 1946 he was assigned to Strategic Air Command (SAC) at Carswell Air Force Base (AFB) in Texas. There he flew B-29 and B-36 aircraft with the 7th Bombardment Group and also served in various positions related to nuclear weaponry. He attended the Air Tactical Course and returned to Carswell as an instructor and assistant special weapons officer for the 7th Bombardment Wing.

He was assigned to graduate training in nuclear physics at the University of Illinois in September 1950 and received a Master of Science degree two years later. After completing an experimental thesis on high-energy photonuclear reactions, he earned his doctorate degree in physics in 1954.

The Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico of the Atomic Energy Commission was his next duty post, where he served as a physicist in the test division. He conducted experiments at several of the nuclear test series. The experiments were related to the physics of thermonuclear weapons design and to the effects of high-altitude nuclear detonations for ballistic missile defense.

Lieutenant General Allen was science advisor to the Physics Division of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico, in June 1957. There he specialized in the military effects of high-altitude nuclear explosions and participated in several weapon test series. He was also the scientific director of a major experiment which employed a large series of high-altitude rockets to measure the characteristics of electrons trapped in the geomagnetic field after an exoatmospheric burst.

Lieutenant General Allen was assigned in December 1961 to the office of the Secretary of

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Defense in the Space Technology Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering. In June 1965 he was assigned as deputy director for Advanced Plans in the Directorate of Special Projects, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, with Los Angeles, California, as the duty station.

In June 1968 he was assigned as deputy director, Office of Space Systems, Washington, D.C., and in June 1969 he became director. Lieutenant General Allen became assistant to the director of special projects, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force in September 1970. Then in April 1971, he became director of special projects with additional duty as deputy commander for Satellite Programs, Space and Missile Systems Organization at Los Angeles. He became Air Force Systems Command chief of staff in February 1973, and deputy to the director of the Central Intelligence Agency for Intelligence Community in March 1973.

On 15 August 1973, Lieutenant General Allen became Director, NSA. He brought with him to the Agency a penchant for systems design, and put together an architectural planning staff to design the various components of the cryptologic system. One of his most important legacies was to institute a planning mentality where one had not existed. He was also the first director to have to deal with requests to declassify and release large volumes of NSA documents stemming from the Freedom of Information Act passed in 1974. He continued to deal with pressures to downsize the Agency, and relied on well-reasoned mission reductions, both at NSA and in the field, to accomplish the mandated cuts. In dealing with Congress in the wake of intelligence community abuses that came to light in the 1970s, he set standards for cooperation that enhanced NSA's reputation on Capitol Hill, and which continue to serve as models within NSA and the intelligence community.

Following his tour as Director, General Allen became the Air Force chief of staff in 1978. He retired from the Air Force in 1982. He then served as vice president of the California Institute of Technology and director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, until 1990. He subsequently served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board beginning in 1991.

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