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Lieutenant General William E. Odom, USA

1985 - 1988

Lieutenant General William E. Odom, was born in Cookeville, Tennessee, in 1932. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1954 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He also received a master's degree in Russian area studies and a Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University.

Lieutenant General Odom served as assistant Army attaché, Moscow; associate Professor and research officer, Department of Social Sciences, West Point; military assistant to the assistant to the president for national security affairs; and deputy assistant chief of staff for Intelligence, U.S. Army. His last assignment before coming to NSA was Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, U.S. Army.

Lieutenant General Odom became the Director of NSA in 1985. He sought to enhance the independence of the office of the director by building a staff that could allow him to manage actions and verify information independent of his deputy directors. He issued "Ten Thrusts," designed to maintain NSA's edge in various technical disciplines, to sharpen the Agency's focus on customer support, and to enhance its capabilities in providing information assurance. He also launched initiatives to decentralize the cryptologic system in the interests of ensuring its survivability. He encouraged the expansion of NSA's traditional role in communications security to include computer security within the national security community.

Lieutenant General Odom, a specialist in Soviet affairs, speaks Russian and reads German. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Political Science Association, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. In addition, Lieutenant General Odom has attended the Infantry School (Basic Course), the Armor School (advanced course), and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

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Following his retirement in 1988, Lieutenant General Odom has remained active in academe and is an active commentator on U.S. foreign policy in general and U.S. relations with Russia in particular.

Lieutenant General Odom died on 30 May 2008 in Lincoln, Vermont, at age 75.

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