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Lieutenant General Samuel C. Phillips, USAF

1972 - 1973

Lieutenant General Phillips was born in Springerville, Arizona, on 19 February 1921. He graduated from University of Wyoming in 1942 and received a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Michigan in 1950. He was commissioned an infantry second lieutenant after completing Reserve Officers Training Corps training at the University of Wyoming. He then entered active military service, transferred to the Army Air Corps and attended flying school, where he received his pilot's wings one year later.

During World War II, he served with the 364th Fighter Group, Eighth Air Force, in England and completed two combat tours in the European Theater of Operations. After the war, he was assigned to the European Theater Headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany. In July 1947 he was transferred to Langley Air Force Base (AFB), Virginia.

After 1950 his research and development assignments included six years with the Engineering Division at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; duty as electronics officer with the atomic energy experiments at Eniwetok Atoll during OPERATION GREENHOUSE; and project officer assignments with B-52 bomber aircraft, and Falcon and Bomarc missile programs.

Lieutenant General Phillips returned to England in 1956 as chief of Logistics for the 7th Air Division in Strategic Air Command. His participation in writing the international agreement with Great Britain for the deployment and use of the Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile earned him the Legion of Merit.

He returned to the U.S. in 1959 and was assigned to the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division of the Air Research and Development Command, Los Angeles, California, where he served as director of the Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile program.

In 1964 Lieutenant General Phillips was assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space

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Administration as director of the Apollo Manned Lunar Landing Program. He assumed command of the Space and Missile Systems Organization of the Air Force Systems Command in Los Angeles in September 1969.

In April 1971 Lieutenant General Phillips was elected a member of the National Academy of Engineering for his leadership and direction of the Minuteman weapon system and the Apollo programs. On 26 September 1971, he was awarded the Smithsonian Institution's Langley Medal for his contributions to the Apollo manned space program from 1964 to 1969. He was the fourteenth recipient of the Langley Medal since the award was first presented to the Wright brothers in 1909.

Lieutenant General Phillips was sent to NSA in 1972 with a very specific agenda in mind which had to do with reducing the size of the Agency, a move made necessary by government-wide retrenchment in light of the drawdown of U.S. forces in Vietnam. Lieutenant General Phillips oversaw a system of incentivized early retirements that met the goals given to him without resorting to reduction in force methods that could have involved firing civilian employees. He was told when he came to NSA that he was going to have only a year, and that he would then get his fourth star and move on back into the technical side of the Air Force. In August 1973 General Phillips received his fourth star and assignment as commander, Air Force Systems Command.

General Phillips died on 31 January 1990 at the age of 68.

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