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## **Lieutenant General John A. Samford, USAF**

**1956 - 1960**

Lieutenant General John A. Samford was born in 1905 in Hagerman, New Mexico. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1928 and entered the Army Air Corps as a second lieutenant that same year. He served as a flight instructor at Fort Crockett and Kelly Field in Texas in 1934. During World War II, he became deputy chief of staff of the 8th Air Force and the 8th Bomber Command in Britain. In 1944 he was made chief of staff of the 8th Air Force. Shortly after that, he received his first major intelligence assignment as deputy assistant chief of staff, A-2, at Army Air Force Headquarters, a position he held until 1947. Lieutenant General Samford also served on the Joint Targeting Group, which identified possible targets for Air Force bombing. While on this group, he participated in placing Hiroshima and Nagasaki on a target list without, however, knowing anything about the atomic bomb or the fact that this was a list of possible targets for it.

In 1949 Lieutenant General Samford began a tour of duty as commandant of the Air Command and Staff School and of the Air War College at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama. He was appointed director of Air Force Intelligence in 1951 and held this position until his nomination to become Director of NSA in 1956. He served as Vice Director of NSA for five months before becoming DIRNSA on 24 November 1956.

As Director, Lieutenant General Samford continued the organization of NSA with the establishment of the Offices of Central Reference (CREF) and General Studies (GENS), the later establishment of the Advanced Weaponry and Astronautics Division (GENS 6), and the merger of NSA's Far Eastern Office (NSAFE) and Pacific Office (NSAPAC).

His tour of duty as Director was a period of mixed blessings. William Martin and Bernon Mitchell defected to the Soviet Union, Victor Hamilton went public in the pages of a *Tass* release, and four aerial reconnaissance flights were shot down by the Russians, including Gary Powers's U-2. On the other hand, there were a number of major technical advances during this

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period. The first Soviet missile data signal, FLIM FLAM; the first Soviet submarine LINDUM signal; the first COZY signal; and the first Soviet aircraft YOGA signal all were intercepted while he was Director; and the first U.S. signals intelligence satellite, GRAB/DYNO-1, was launched.

Lieutenant General Samford officially opened the new NSA Headquarters Building at Fort Meade in 1957 and presided over the first annual NSA Christmas Party in December 1958.

After his retirement from the Air Force in 1960, he lived in Washington, DC, until his death on 20 November 1968, at age 63.

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