GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY ON LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND

BY

MAJ PAUL K. CARLTON, III

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2010

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

_____

THOMAS HUGHES (Date)

_____

KEVIN HOLZIMMER (Date)

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Paul K Carlton, III is from a military family, having grown up the grandson of two career Air Force pilots and an Air Force physician. He was commissioned through the United States Air Force Academy in 1996. He attended pilot training at Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training and earned his wings in 1997. After pilot training, he went to Luke AFB, AZ to complete the F-16 Formal Training Unit. He flew the F-16 in Korea, Japan and South Carolina, including combat missions during Operation SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM I. In 2005, Major Carlton was selected to be the first American to fly the Eurofighter Typhoon with the Royal Air Force, United Kingdom. Returning to the United States, he attended Air Command and Staff College and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. Major Carlton has over 2,000 hours in fighter aircraft. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the Air Force Academy, a Masters of Aeronautical Science with Distinction from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, a Masters of Military Operational Art and Science (ACSC) and a Masters in Military Art and Science (SAASS) from Air University. In June 2010, Maj Carlton was assigned to Hill AFB, UT to return to fly the F-16.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my advisor's efforts to help me refine and codify my concepts and framework for this paper. I appreciated his mentoring and insights from his corner of the Air Force. His efforts were crucial to the success and added relevance to future relevance of this paper. I also wish to thank my reader for the suggestions he made to sharpen the focus of this paper and improve its application to the broader world.

Most importantly, I want to express my sincere appreciation to my family, including my wife, for their love, patience, and understanding during those times when I was physically absent or absent in spirit struggling with this paper. I also must thank my grandfather and father for the many insights and stories on not only General Curtis LeMay, but the Air Force as a whole, forming the basis for understanding General LeMay's contribution to the United States Air Force. Their presence was very important to my development as an officer and made the difference in conceptually framing this work.

ABSTRACT

This study takes key events from General Curtis LeMay's life and puts them into a context to learn leadership and command. LeMay is widely regarded as the best operational-level commander the U.S. Air Force has produced. General LeMay's life provides ample opportunity to glean insight to better understand leadership and command. The paper gives a brief biography of LeMay's life, then discusses leadership and command from an academic perspective, providing the context to understand the next two chapters that focus on LeMay's actions. LeMay on Command presents his key challenges in Europe and the Pacific in changing the tactics used in both to generate greater bombing effectiveness and efficiency. Following these examples, this paper discusses his decision to change the way maintenance was conducted and then how LeMay changed Strategic Air Command to a resolute and capable organization, capable of providing the nation's nuclear deterrence. LeMay on Leadership focuses on his development of Lead Crews, target folders, and his debrief. It then discusses how he addressed quality of life issues within SAC to help his people cope with the stress placed on them. Finally, the paper address his unsuccessful election bid for Vice-President and what he was attempting to accomplish by his involvement. The paper concludes with lessons gleaned from the vignettes presented and application for current and future military officers.

CONTENTS

Introduction

> *If a country is lucky, it will produce a Curtis LeMay in times of extreme danger. Nations need men like LeMay when survival is at stake. But once safe, these men are often rejected because they become walking reminders of events most people would rather forget.*
>
> Warren Kozak

Curtis Emerson LeMay. The name polarizes readers into different schools of thought. Some immediately reflect on Strategic Air Command and the nation's nuclear deterrent capability built in the 1950s under LeMay's hand, molded in his character. Some think back to his acumen at the operational level of war from World War II through the Berlin Airlift, SAC, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and his creation of United States Air Force Special Operations with Jungle Jim in Vietnam. Those who study politics reflect on his unsuccessful attempt to run as George Wallace's Vice-President in 1968. Others immediately think of the movie, *Dr Strangelove,* and associate him with the nuclear weapon-crazed general bent on the destruction of Russia. Some conjure up the image of the firebombing of Tokyo and classify him as a war-monger, heartlessly killing civilians in the name of ending a war in the Pacific. Regardless of the image conjured by his name, General Curtis LeMay made an impact in the world in the twentieth century. Today, his service remains instructive to anyone willing to learn.

LeMay accomplished much during his thirty-seven year career in the Air Force. He earned his pilot wings in a fifty percent washout environment, survived a hypoxic crew before the affects of altitude were known and understood, made navigation practical to the Army Air Corps as aircraft began to navigate over greater distances including water, led combat missions from the most dangerous position over the European Theater, introduced jet aircraft to the nuclear age, and built Strategic Air Command into the world's premiere nuclear deterrent force. At the age of 37, he became the youngest Major General not only in the Army Air

Forces but also the U.S. Army; topped only by becoming the youngest General since Ulysses S. Grant at the age of 44.[1] He spent the first twelve years of his military career with a rank no higher than First Lieutenant then spent the last twenty-two years as a general, including the last fourteen as a full General. He completed his service as the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, serving under both Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. After World War II, he was almost appointed a U.S. Senator but turned down the opportunity when he realized he would have to resign his commission. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses and four Air Medals and various other campaign medals and foreign accolades.[2]

He was not always known by his accolades and accomplishments. His men had other names for him, like "The Cigar," "Iron Ass," "The Old Man," or "Bombs Away LeMay"[3] The Japanese similarly bestowed on him a less than honored title for his destruction of their industrial cities, calling him "Kikhiku Rumei", loosely translated as monster or beast.[4] The Japanese later conferred the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, First Class on LeMay for his service in reconstructing post-war Japan. It is their second highest award for men and shows forgiveness and a change in heart from the war damages both nations inflicted.[5]

---

[1] Barrett Tillman, *LeMay: Great General Series*,(New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 115; by comparison, General Hoyt Vandeberg pinned on his fourth star at 49, Arnold, Spaatz, and Kenney were in their mid-fifties, Nathan Twinning and Thomas D. White – LeMay's predecessors as Chief of Staff - were 53 and 51 respectively.

[2] Air Force Biographies, "General Curtis Emerson LeMay," http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6178, (accessed 17 March 2010).

[3] The Cigar nickname came from constantly chewing on a cigar in an attempt to hide his Bell's Palsy that partially paralyzed the right side of his face; "Iron Ass" he earned from his men in Europe – he had them practicing and training more than other commands and frequently after poor showings during combat missions.

[4] Tillman, *LeMay*, 67; Japanese nickname after the firebombing of Tokyo and other cities.

[5] General Curtis LeMay and McKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 278; supported by Jonathon Delacour's commentary and further research, "Curtis LeMay's Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun," 10

As a man, Curtis LeMay was "about five-foot-ten, full-faced, and stocky, with a broad chest, black hair, and piercing olive-colored eyes. He gave the immediate impression of enormous self-confidence, but without arrogance." His looks communicated a "stern, unflappable strength and indomitability, which . . . never changed. He didn't look like a glamorous pilot. There was no vanity in his appearance. . . . It was not unusual for him to be silent, having little or no time for small talk of social amenities. He always seemed to be calm. Speech was for a purpose. He thought a man could learn more by listening than talking. He used just enough words to demonstrate his meaning and intentions."[6] He cared little for a man's politics or his personal views; he cared what a man did at work and how he performed his duties. While he accepted the fact that he would probably be killed in World War II and told the men closest to him to accept the same fate, he also cared passionately for his men, doing everything possible to end the war as quickly as possible so fewer Americans and their adversaries would die.

To save lives, LeMay recognized a need to make the war as painful as possible for the enemy to compel him to stop making war. To save lives, he knew some lives had to be sacrificed – that was the nation's decision, not his. His responsibility was to inflict as much pain on the adversary and provide as many tools to reduce his men's tactical risk and save as many American lives as he could. The other nuances of war were largely lost on him – he cared about efficiency and effectiveness in bombing the enemy to surrender. The enemy only cares "where you put your bombs, and how you fought your way in. And that's all I'm concerned with."[7]

March 2005, http://weblog.delacour.net/archives/2005/03/curtis_lemays_grand_cordon_of_the_order_of_the_rising_sun.php.

[6] Ralph H. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle: The Memoir of a Navigator's War over Germany and Japan* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 2002), 5-6.

[7] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 444.

LeMay remains one of the greatest operational commanders the United States Air Force has produced. Current generations serving the Air Force recognize the name of General Charles Horner, the air component commander of DESERT STORM, as one of the great air commanders; to previous generations, the familiar name was General Curtis LeMay, and it was spoken reverently and never without "General." LeMay spent the bulk of his entire military career at war; from 1941 until he retired in 1965, he was actively engaged against the Germans, Japanese or providing a nuclear deterrent against the Soviet Union.

This thesis is an attempt to capture some of LeMay's military genius, convey some of his lessons learned, and ultimately provide encouragement to modern and future officers willing to make the hard decisions, to prepare the men and women serving under their command, to become better officers, and to serve more wisely as counselors and subordinates. LeMay was a thinker. He thought through solutions to the problems presented. This paper will show those qualities, encouraging readers with a series of vignettes to hone their leadership and command abilities.

This paper will look at LeMay's life, and then filter it through the lenses of leadership and command. The first chapter will give a brief biography. It is followed by a discussion on leadership and command, using service definitions, experienced commanders, and academic research on the concept of leadership and command. The last two chapters will look at LeMay as a commander and then as a leader. It will look at how he made critical decisions as a commander and came to the conclusion that they were reasonable and correct courses of action. It will recount numerous principles and training he instituted for his commands as a leader in the 1940s and 50s, many of which are still evident today, foundational to the way the Air Force trains and prepares its men and women for combat. Finally, the conclusion will apply the

lessons and suggest applications from the Air Force's greatest operational commander.

Chapter 1

Biography

Early Life (1906-1928)

Curtis Emerson LeMay was born on November 16th, 1906 to Erving and Arizona LeMay in Columbus, Ohio[1]. He was the first of five children and bore the responsibilities of the oldest for much of his life. His father was frequently out of work and his mother often had to come up with meals to feed the family from seemingly nothing. Arizona would hire herself out as a domestic servant when Erving was between jobs, which happened with increased frequency after they were married in 1905.[2] Quickly, this responsibility would fall to Curtis as the eldest. This began a lifetime of responsibility that was not unshouldered until his retirement from the U.S. Air Force in 1965.

Young Curtis would work, hunt and fish at the various homes in which his family lived, simply to feed the family. While the family lived in California, Curtis sharpened his shooting skills by using a borrowed .22 caliber rifle to shoot sparrows for a woman's cat; she paid five cents a bird and it helped feed the family and his work ethic to contribute to the family.[3] After the family moved back to Columbus, Curtis jumped into the newspaper business, taking on a delivery route and growing it into several routes with several boys working under him distributing papers to two to three thousand customers.[4] At fourteen, LeMay "was proud to buy my own clothes and school things, and pay all my own expenses otherwise. Sometimes I was able to give money to Mom as well. I kept thinking about college, but didn't get far enough ahead financially to

---

[1] General Curtis LeMay and McKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 15.

[2] Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2008), 4.

[3] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay,* 24.

[4] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 27.

save up very much."[5] Later in high school, LeMay complemented his paper routes with package and candy story deliveries – to take advantage of the wasted hours before the newspaper came out at 4 p.m.[6]

LeMay did not have much time for play with the responsibilities at home and the imposed pressure to earn his own way. He allowed few indulgences. He had aspirations of becoming an Eagle Scout but never completed his Star Scout rank, two below Eagle Scout. Hunting was one of his few indulgences that remained one of a small handful throughout his life. He finally bought his own .22 rifle and later his father gave him a 30-caliber rifle, though it was too powerful for him at the time.[7] Another of his hobbies was building radios. He prided himself in how far away the radio stations were that the radios he built could reach. "I preferred the crystal set to going out and hanging around drug stores, or maybe chasing girls. The girl stuff cost money-sodas, sandwiches and all-and I thought my personal cash would be better expended in some other direction-something really valuable, say, like a crystal set. I got KDKA in Pittsburgh and WLW in Cincinnati. Those were the big things you really worked for."[8]

When he graduated high school in 1924, Curtis managed to scrape together enough cash to apply and be accepted to Ohio State. He decided to pursue a degree in engineering. While there, he joined Theta Tau, an engineering fraternity. "I felt rather bemused with the idea that I was now a fraternity man; but principally it was an engineering fraternity, not a social one. . . . I thought that belonging to Theta Tau would be a part of my education, and was worth the investment. Couldn't have been more correct. I got a great deal out of it. All the rest of the members were fledgling engineers, and we were able to study together. Some of the

---

[5] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 27.
[6] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 29.
[7] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay,* 28.
[8] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 29-30.

upperclassmen were especially generous with their advice and direction. They had a habit of bringing occasional lecturers to speak to us at our meetings. It was a real professional program."[9]

The second organization LeMay joined was the Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTC). LeMay respected the officer in charge and remembers one particular ROTC fervor when the cadets were ready to break up a pacifist meeting on campus. The instructor stopped them going over and taking matters into their own hands. "You may or may not be correct in this," the instructor told them, "but let me tell you something: History is a great leveler, and Time wields a pretty well-honed smoothing-plane. . . . If you go over there tonight and start a brawl, don't you see what you'll be doing to yourselves and to your cause? You'll merely be making martyrs out of those pacifists. The public who might support you conceivably in your attitude, will turn against you. Those other guys will be the heroes, not you. And you will have only yourselves to blame."[10]

College was no different for LeMay in terms of personal responsibility. He worked to pay his way for both living and education costs. He started college living at home but transitioned to the Theta Tau house when his father moved the family to Youngstown for potential long-term work. He found a job working from 5 p.m. to 2-3 a.m. at the Buckeye Steel casting Company, setting cores in the foundry.[11] He then headed home for a couple of hours of sleep and then go to class, where he promptly fell asleep. Though one particular class was taught by a fellow Theta Tau member, he failed the class twice.

At the end of four years of college, LeMay did not graduate – he lacked 15 credit hours of work from failed classes and a thesis to complete his degree. He graduated an Honor Graduate from ROTC and

---

[9] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 34.
[10] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 36-7.
[11] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 37.

was commissioned in the U.S. Army Reserves. He hoped this would be enough to get him an appointment to an Army Aviation Cadet. Later, he returned to Ohio State during his tour at Selfridge to complete his degree, using his access to airplanes to create the first aerial mosaic around Ohio State for his thesis.

LeMay's fascination with flying had begun at a young age. He saw his first airplane at four years old in Columbus, OH. "Suddenly, in the air above me, appeared a flying-machine. It came from nowhere. There it was, and I wanted to catch it. It would be a wonderful thing to possess- that mysterious fabrication which was chortling through the sky, its few cylinders popping in a way far different from any automobile or truck which went past our place."[12] Five years later, he saw a flying machine at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held in San Francisco, CA. Lincoln Beachy flew his Glenn Martin-built Taube over the amazed crowd, awing the spectators with his flashy flying. The Thursday of the Exposition, Beachy climbed to five thousand feet, then proceeded literally to rip the wings off the airplane passing three thousand feet. He plunged into the water, narrowly missing several naval ships, dead on impact. LeMay did not ponder his death or grow afraid of airplanes. Instead, "mostly I wondered how he felt when he was alive and flying."[13] A few years later, he and a friend pooled $2.50 each and talked a barnstormer into giving them a ride for a combined fare of $5.00. His quick five minute flight impressed on him the joy of flight. The switches, sights, sounds and views all impressed him greatly and he knew he found his calling. This flight propelled him to Ohio State and later to apply to the Army Air Corps. "Some day I'm going to go up in an airplane. . . . I'll be flying it. I'll just ride around wherever I want to go-fly wherever I please, stay up as long as I want to, and just have fun. Have a joyride in an

[12] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 13.
[13] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 24.

airplane."[14] After retirement, and "after more than thirty years flying countless planes, he admitted that he never had the chance for that 'joyride.' Not even once. Work always came first."[15]

Army Air Corps (1928-1941)

After several attempts and hurdles, Curtis LeMay was accepted to flying school at March Field, near Riverside, California. Travelling with him and in his class was an Ohio State alum and eventual long time friend and colleague, Francis "Butch" Grizwold. Grizwold became a lieutenant general and LeMay's deputy at the Strategic Air Command. LeMay did well at flying school, though it was not without its challenges. His primary instructor could fly but was not a good instructor. He failed to teach LeMay the approved answer to engine stalls at low altitude – fly straight ahead and try not to hurt the airplane. Instead, LeMay was taught to look for the nearest field and get to it – opposite the book answer. On his final PT-3 checkride with the toughest evaluator pilot at the field, he followed his instructor's guidance and nearly washed out. "'Well son. By Jesus Christ. I don't know whether to wash you out, or give you a chance and send you on.' He considered for a moment, while I sat there not able to breathe. 'I guess . . . that I will send you on, after all. But I'll keep my eye on you, and see how you do.'"[16]

After finishing their PT-3 training, his class flew de Havillands and the newer O-2-Hs. Half the class went to one, then to the other. LeMay drew an excellent instructor who taught him more in two weeks than he had learned from his previous instructor.[17] LeMay excelled under the new instruction and was the first in his class to check out in the more advanced airplanes. Finishing at March Field, LeMay continued his training at Kelly Field, outside San Antonio, TX.

---

[14] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 34.
[15] Kozak, *LeMay*, 11.
[16] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 58.
[17] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 62.

On October 12th, 1929, Flying Cadet LeMay earned his wings with forty-seven second lieutenants, sixty-nine flying cadets and one non-commissioned officer.[18] The graduation was a list of greats – past and future. Brigadier General Frank P. Lahm gave out the Reserve commissions;[19] Major Clarence "Indian Tink" Tinker presented the coveted wings.[20] Despite the 50% attrition, the officers and cadets that received their wings in his class would be instrumental as the U.S. Army Air Corps prepared for war several years later. LeMay's classmates would command in every theater and in every capacity, including as deputies to LeMay.

LeMay's first assignment out of flying training was pursuit aircraft at Selfridge Field, Michigan. Three things stand out from his time in Michigan. First, he completed his college education at Ohio State. Second, he met and eventually married Ms Helen Maitland and they had one child, Patricia Jane, affectionately known as "Janie." Third, after escaping duties with the Civilian Conservation Corps, a work project initiated by President Franklin Roosevelt, he attended Navigation School. His happenstance attendance there became one of the defining means of his pilotage and credibility as an officer, airman and later commander.

By 1932 aircraft had enough range to need navigation and the carrying capacity to carry extra-dutied people in the aircraft. Harold Gatty, an Australian officer, had adopted celestial navigation from ships

---

[18] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 67-8.

[19] Captain Don Kochanski, *Contrails: Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook, 1992-1993* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 39; Lahm was the second U.S. Army pilot, taught and soloed by the Wright brothers with just 3 hours of instruction; he was a co-world record holder with Orville Wight when they set a 2 man endurance record on 28 July, 1909; they remained aloft for 1 hour, 12 minutes and 40 seconds while Wrights competed for an Army contract for an airplane that could carry 2 men 125 miles at 40 mph.

[20] Major General Tinker would become the Commander of the U.S. Air Forces in Hawaii after the Pearl Harbor attack. He would become the first American Indian to be promoted to Major General and would also become the first American general officer to die in the war when his B-24 plunged out of control into the sea during the Battle of Midway. Tinker AFB, OK is named after him. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_L._Tinker.

and was teaching LeMay and others to apply it to aircraft.[21] When it began, it was a frustrating process because the 40 minutes required told you where you were, but not where you were now. Aboard a ship, that time difference did not matter. "But in an airplane, even at the speeds of those days, you were covering a lot of distance in forty minutes. Nice to know, *Where were we forty minutes ago?*- but a little nicer to know, *Where are we now?*"[22] Learning to navigate set Curtis LeMay to professional respect and competency as he first taught then later navigated several key missions proving airpower's range, effectiveness and relevancy.

After his tour at Selfridge, the LeMays were sent to Wheeler Field, Hawaii. At Wheeler, LeMay was again flying pursuit aircraft but asked to develop a course to teach navigation. He and John Egan, a classmate from flying training at Kelly Field, had both attended Gatty's training. In the composite group of which they were a part, LeMay represented the pursuit/observation pilots and Egan the bomber pilots. Together, they taught navigation to the group's pilots. Prior to their navigation school, pilots were only allowed to fly around a given island and always within sight of land. As they taught other pilots basic navigation and proficiency increased, LeMay and Egan convinced their superiors to start letting them take trips across bodies of water to increase their pilot's proficiency and confidence.

While at Wheeler, the navigation school and another element of combat aviation changed his outlook on the future or airpower. LeMay got to drop his first live bomb. At Selfridge, they didn't have the ranges to drop real weapons, so they simply practiced the procedures with dummy

---

[21] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 95-6; Harold Gatty was the navigator on the "Winnie Mae," an aircraft piloted by Wiley Post, in the summer of 1931. The Army Air Corps was looking forward to the B-10 that would give an extended range and bombing capability, necessitating navigation. As the most competent, the military hired him to teach at Langley, VA and Rockwell Field, CA. He was competent but not a great instructor.

[22] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 95.

warheads. But at Wheeler, he could still "remember the thrill in that moment when I dropped a live bomb."[23] Teaching navigation and now dropping live weapons changed his perspective on aviation and the role he wanted to play. "The fighter had evolved as a defensive weapon. How the hell were you going to win a war with it? It might have its innings in certain phases of warfare, just as the Attack people might have their innings. But who was it who'd go far beyond the enemy lines and attempt to destroy not only the armies in the field, not only supplies and fuel dumps and tank concentrations up near the front; but would go deep into the enemy's homeland, and thus try to eliminate his basic potential to wage war? Bombers, nothing but bombers."[24]

LeMay requested and received a transfer to bombers, leaving Hawaii as a First Lieutenant, a rank earned in 1934. Arriving at Langley Field, VA, the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Olds,[25] appointed him his executive officer and "really penetrated my thick skull with a sense of urgency in getting things done."[26] Olds "had that rare and wonderful talent, pure gold in any commander: the ability to transmit exuberance and enthusiasm for the work, and to keep a blaze hot in the hearts and minds of his subordinates. . . . From him, I absorbed a special wisdom then and there which accrued to my advantage in commanding SAC many years later. That was this notion of *keeping out of people's way after I had told them what I wanted to have done."*[27] Robert Olds was the mentor LeMay wanted and needed, the confidant to express troubles and teacher to encourage, motivate and

---

[23] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 118.

[24] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 124.

[25] Robert Olds died in 1943, a retired Major General who commanded Training Command during WW II. His son, Brigadier General Robin Olds, also rose to Air Force fame as the commander of the 8 FW "Wolfpack" during Vietnam and later as the Commandant of the Air Force Academy.

[26] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 131.

[27] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 132.

shape LeMay's thinking. The relationship continued during WW II until Olds' death in 1943.[28]

At Langley, the new B-17 captured LeMay's heart. Lieutenant pilots did not fly much as pilots. To be an aircraft commander, you had to be at least a captain.[29] And he could not escape the tangles of his navigation ability. He proved his skills daily and earned the right to be the lead navigator as the Air Corps found the USS *Utah*, a battleship off the California coast. He was also the lead navigator when the U.S. sent six B-17s to Argentina as a goodwill gesture to celebrate the inauguration of President Roberto Ortiz. LeMay had the only gyro-stabilized compass in the group of aircraft and they placed him in the middle to help the other five airplanes.[30] Later, another flight to South America followed, this time to Columbia. By 1938, he "was considered the best navigator in the Air Corps"[31] and proved it by finding the Italian liner *Rex* 600 miles off the Atlantic coast. LeMay demonstrated his acumen as a navigator over a broad range of navigational skills and weather to find the *Rex*, a feat that changed the nation's thinking about its vulnerability to coastal attack and the military's reliance on airpower verses naval power to defend itself.[32]

Proven over Germany: World War II in Europe

World War II in Europe started on 1 September, 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. The Army Air Corps began expanding from 11,000 officers to more than 300,000.[33] "The expanded Air Corps relied heavily upon experienced personnel, many of whom were given greater

---

[28] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 276.
[29] Kozak, *LeMay*, 60.
[30] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 154.
[31] Kozak, *LeMay*, 60.
[32] Hanson W. Baldwin, "Flying Fortresses Meet Liner at Sea," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1938, 3.
[33] Kozak, *LeMay*, 64.

authority and responsibility than their ranks ordinarily obtained."[34] LeMay was quickly promoted to captain in 1940, Major in 1941, and Lieutenant Colonel in 1942. The LeMays were sent to Westover Field and the 34th Bomb Group, an organization existing primarily on paper with few resources and even fewer aircraft. He was pulled from Westover to help ferry B-24s and passengers across the Atlantic. This experience offered further exposure to the heavy bombers used in the European theater and proved useful in LeMay's thinking when he later commanded in Europe.

When the U.S. was attacked by the Japanese, LeMay felt "a feeling of complete unreality. It was something like finding the *Rex* in 1938: going through a lot of clouds and turbulence, and then breaking out, and there she was, right in our path. . . . At least we did have some sense of relief. Now we knew where we were going. We were going to war."[35] For LeMay, it provided clarity and a purpose for his years of training, preparing both his mind and skills for the ultimate test.

After a brief time defending the Pacific coast, further flight testing in the B-24 at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, and then the Executive Officer of the 306th Bomb Group at Wendover, Utah, LeMay became the commander of the 305th Bomb Group, formed across the salt flat near Salt Lake City. This was LeMay's hallmark and signature command, the first time he was placed in command and the one he would remain the closest to throughout his Air Force career. LeMay skipped squadron command and went straight to group command in the pre-war buildup when the Air Corps had to rely on potential as much as experience for command. He also became a full colonel in the summer of 1942. After spending the first ten years of his career as an on-track first lieutenant, LeMay had become a colonel and a group commander within a span of

---

[34] Barrett Tillman, *LeMay: Great General Series*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007),19.
[35] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 208.

29 months. As confident and tough as LeMay's image became, this rapid movement did not come without some trepidation. A "feeling of inadequacy" settled upon him, and the "realization that I had just made bird colonel didn't help much."[36]

The 305th was hardly a unit ready for war. "I felt the vague resentment any commander feels when he looks at his people and his equipment, and realizes that personnel are coming into his organization who have never been trained for the jobs they must hold—that airplanes may or may not be ferried to him out of the skies, long after they have been needed desperately in the program. Still, *this is what I am going to take to war.* Made up my mind that I was going to do everything I could to get in all the practice and all the training which could be humanly accumulated, before we went to fight."[37]

Though he notionally had four squadrons under him, he rarely had more than three airplanes to use. And the men that continued to flood his unit had little or no time in the B-17, much less multi-engine time. Most of his pilots and crews were coming straight from flying school, not from a formal training course. After training stints at Muroc Dry Lake bed (now Edwards AFB) and then Tucson, Arizona, the 305th started its trek to war. A contemplated diversion to the Pacific theater nearly derailed the group, but it continued on to the United Kingdom and became a part of the 8th Air Force, striking German targets for the duration of the war. Enroute, LeMay developed Bells Palsy that manifested itself by a partial paralysis on the right side of his face. When he learned it was a grounding item from a flight doctor, he hid it by always having a cigar in his mouth and went to war.

Under LeMay's command and leadership, the 305th became one of the most talented and capable units of the war. LeMay developed the

---

[36] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 216.
[37] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 216.

"combat box" defensive formation to maximize his Flying Fortress's defensive firepower. He dramatically improved bombing performance by insisting on a straight and level initial point to target run, considered suicide at the time. LeMay also developed lead crews and target folders to help his men identify their target, and improve their bombing effectiveness. These became a hallmark of LeMay's service with SAC. At the end of his eleven months in command, the 305th had the second highest sortie count with fewer than average loses due to the constant training he demanded.[38] Command of the 305th was the last time LeMay was "one of the men" and lived, felt and breathed daily as they did. "It was my 305th, our 305th. You never get over anything like that. It was The Group . . . The thing would be with you forever; it would always be your memory and your pride."[39]

The remainder of LeMay's tour in Europe was spent as the 4th provisional wing commander that formed the nucleus of the 3rd Air Division when the latter absorbed the former with LeMay remaining as the commander. During his command, the weather forced a recall of his B-17s sent on a mission during 1944's Big Week. "It was one of the few occasions in which the rest of the Eighth Air Force inflicted more damage than LeMay's command."[40] The other major event was his division's participation on the combined attack on Schweinfurt and Regensburg. Most recognize the Schweinfurt raid as one of the costliest of the U.S. effort in Europe, but few know that it was part of an intended combined raid on both targets. The attack on Regensburg was intended to go first, drawing the fighters and Luftwaffe attention. The Schweinfurt bombers were to follow closely on their heels when the Luftwaffe's fighters were down refueling. Weather on the ground prevented the Schweinfurt raiders from taking off. LeMay drilled his crews in instrument

---

[38] Kozak, *LeMay*, 130.
[39] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 281.
[40] Tillman, *LeMay*, 38.

departures; the other commanders had not. The 3rd Air Division was airborne and First Division stayed on the ground. The decision was made for the Regensburg strike to go ahead while the Schweinfurt weather delayed a few hours to reevaluate their ability to takeoff.[41] The result was exceptionally high attrition on the now individual strike groups. LeMay's 3rd Division put 127 of 146 airplanes over the target; they lost 24.[42] First Division put 183 airplanes over the target but lost 36. The combined loss of 60 bombers (600 men to combat) was the worst experienced by the 8th Air Force; the previous highest loss was 26 when the 8th AF attacked Bremen on 13 June.[43] All told, it was an even higher attrition day as several more aircraft and crews diverted to Switzerland, ran out of fuel, crashed in North Africa, or were unflyable on the return leg to England. Of the 146 aircraft launched, LeMay estimated 80 made the return strike and back to England, a 45% attrition rate for the single raid against Regensburg.

By June 1944, LeMay was the youngest Major General in the Army. Two years earlier he had been a lieutenant colonel. He had grown as a commander and left his mark on the 8th Air Forces. His combat box formation and target runs had become the standard for the 8th AF. His units were consistently effective, and though his men were initially fearful of his tactics and procedures, they quickly realized his sound leadership and thinking were the best way to survive the war. "Old Iron Ass" proved himself and dispelled his own self-doubt. He proved to be a most able air commander. He left Europe in June 1944 with orders to return to the U.S. and then to command XX Air Force in the China, Burma, India theater.

---

[41] The 3rd Division had little loiter time because their final destination was North Africa instead of returning to base.

[42] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 293.

[43] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 293-4.

Different Challenges: WWII in the Pacific

General of the Air Forces Henry "Hap" Arnold gambled heavily on the B-29. Designed in 1939 when war planners feared British and Russian capitulation to Hitler's attacks, Arnold needed a bomber with greater payload, range and speed than the stalwart B-17s and B-24s used in Europe.[44] As a wartime purchase, the B-29 was funded before prototypes even got off the ground: six months before the prototype flew, 250 were already ordered and by the time one did fly, 1,600 were under contract.[45] The fast pace of innovation, without proper testing to work out the problems with the design, led to major problems for the B-29. "The B-29 program was the most complex joint production undertaking of the war. . . . There were, for example, 1,174 engineering changes introduced even before the first item was officially accepted by the Air Forces. Some 900 of these had to be rushed through at the last minute as a result of findings made during flight tests."[46] All this meant the aircraft was a maintenance nightmare, but LeMay helped solve some of the problems by changing maintenance procedures. By the end of the war, it was statistically safer to fly the B-29 in combat over Japan than to train with it in the States.[47]

After a brief stint back in the U.S. to get checked out in the B-29, LeMay headed to India and his new command. Indicative of the problems with the B-29, the aircraft he tried to take over to India broke in New York and after waiting a few days, he gave up on the airplane and commandeered a C-54 to take him to India.[48] Not only did LeMay face the inherent problems with the B-29 but he now faced a logistics

---

[44] Kozak, *LeMay*, 174.

[45] Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1987), 580.

[46] Irving Brinton Holley, *Buying Aircraft: Material Procurement for the Army Air* Forces, in *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Air Power in World War II*, General Curtis LeMay and Bill Yenne. (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2006), 48.

[47] Kozak, *LeMay*, 174

[48] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 324.

problem that could "only be dreamed up" in Washington.[49] "The B-29s *themselves* could be flown into such [Chinese and Indian] bases, but the problem was that the *bases* would have to be flown in as well."[50] They had a 7:1 logistics problem. It took seven B-29 ferry flights to get enough fuel and bombs for one combat mission. When Lieutenant Colonel Robert McNamara arrived, they found that some ferry flights did not offload fuel, but had to had to take it on![51] With time, LeMay solved many maintenance problems but could not overcome the logistics problems.

Arriving in India and at his command, LeMay brought many of the same concepts to XX Air Force that proved so successful in Europe: Lead Crews, target folders, formation integrity, and straight and level bombing runs. XX Air Force strike results dramatically improved and caught Arnold's eye. In the Pacific, XX and XXI Air Forces were unique in that Arnold did not give operational or tactical command to Admiral Chester Nimitz, General Douglas MacArthur or General Joseph Stilwell, the theater commanders. Instead, the B-29s remained a strategic asset under the direct control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Since they had Arnold's personal vested interest, he remained very aware of their performance and results.

In December, 1944, LeMay's logistically challenged XX Air Force outperformed Major General "Possum" Hansell's XXI Air Force despite Hansell's better logistics and bases. Arnold sent Major General Larry Norstad to replace Hansell with LeMay. Norstad charged LeMay with getting results. "You go ahead and get results with the B-29," LeMay recalled Norstad telling him. "If you don't get results, you'll be fired. If you don't get results, also, there'll never be any Strategic Air Forces of the Pacific—after the battle is finally won in Europe, and those ETO [European Theater of Operations] forces can be deployed here. If you

---

[49] Kozak, *LeMay*, 180.

[50] LeMay and Yenne, 66.

[51] Errol Morris, *The Fog of War*, Sony Pictures, 107 min., 2004, DVD.

don't get results it will mean eventually a mass amphibious invasion of Japan, to cost probably half a million more American lives."[52]

Norstad's statement contained two key points. First, if strategic bombing failed, it meant an invasion of Honshu, the Japanese home island. It meant many more American (and Allied) deaths to defeat Imperial Japan. Second, the long term potential of strategic airpower and an independent Air Force were at risk. These formed the basis for LeMay's thinking as he considered switching tactics and weapons to destroy Japan's war-making capability. The latter mattered little to LeMay, but the former he cared about passionately. "Years later, Robert McNamara summed up LeMay's focus. 'He cared about only two things,' McNamara remembered, 'hitting the target and saving the lives of his men.'"[53]

Things did not improve after LeMay took over in January, 1945. The same elements that had frustrated Hansell frustrated him, even after the B-29s were consolidated in the Mariana Islands. The unexplained and unaccounted jet stream made high altitude bombing erratic and inaccurate and maintenance problems plagued the aircraft. After some consideration, LeMay decided to change the tactics and weapons the B-29s were using. The aircraft flew at lower altitudes to mitigate the effects of the jet stream and switched to incendiary bombs instead of conventional iron bombs. The combination had an immediate effect and produced the results Arnold sought. Soon, the B-29s were outflying their supply lines and effectively destroying Japanese industry. LeMay believed his incendiary attacks were the key to defeating the Japanese and that the nuclear weapons dropped on 6 and 9 August had little effect. Japan's industrial capacity, shipping and certainly the will to continue to fight were already destroyed or broken. Japanese Prince Konoye commented,

---

[52] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 347.
[53] Kozak, *LeMay*, 204.

"Fundamentally the thing that brought about the determination to make peace was the prolonged bombing by the B-29s."[54] Admiral and later Prime Minister Baron Kantaro Suzuki, who played a hazardous part in bringing hostilities to a close, said, "Merely on the basis of the B-29s alone I was convinced that Japan should sue for peace."[55]

At the war's close, as LeMay stood on the deck of the *USS Missouri* on September 2nd, 1945, he felt little emotion. No sense of relief or great accomplishment, just tired. "I did think of the young men who died to bring about this moment of triumph and, as always, wondered just where I'd gone wrong in losing as many as we did. Seemed to me that if I had done a better job we might have saved a few more crews."[56] These melancholy thoughts were soon drowned out by the sight and sound that defeated Japan. Growing in crescendo and drawing everyone's attention away from the signed documents of surrender were 462 B-29s filling the sky, coming from every wing, group and squadron in the Pacific.[57] After five years at war, LeMay was ready to return home.

Post War

LeMay's return to the States was a demonstration of American strategic airpower and capability. Arnold wanted to make a statement to Russia as tensions were already mounting between the two allies, so he ordered LeMay, Brigadier General Rosie O'Donnell[58] and Lieutenant General Barney Giles[59] to fly B-29s non-stop from Japan to the United

---

[54] Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* 620.

[55] Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* 620.

[56] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 390.

[57] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 390.

[58] O'Donnell was a Westpoint graduate and flying school classmate with LeMay even though injuries prevented him from graduating with LeMay; he led the first attack on Japan on November 24th, 1944 since the Doolittle Raid in April 1942. He remained on active duty after the war and retired as a General, commanding the Pacific Air Forces from 1959-1963. Air Force Biographies, "General Emmett O'Donnell Jr." http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6638.

[59] Giles was a WW I veteran who rose to the commanding general of the Army Air Force in the Pacific in April 1945. Air Force Biographies, "Lieutenant General Barney McKinney Giles" http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5536.

States. After a brief stop for fuel in Chicago, they continued on to Washington, DC and a hero's welcome. After a parade in New York, they were sent on well-deserved leave.

After his leave, LeMay was posted as the Deputy Chief of Air Staff for Research and Development. He oversaw Project Paper Clip, the effort to get as much of the captured German technology and R&D to America instead of Russia. This program brought the Germans, specifically Werner Von Braun and Major General (Doctor) Walter Dornberger to the U.S. "My main concentration, during the two years that I was with R&D, was on that particular project. Got really embroiled in it . . . which explains again why I had little part in the fuss about establishing a separate Air Force."[60] As an aside, LeMay takes a great deal of criticism from General Bernard Schreiver over his lukewarm enthusiasm for the missile program at about this time, a vision Schreiver was given by Arnold before his retirement. But LeMay counts the early missile program as one of his most significant accomplishments during his two years on the Air Staff. He supported early exploration and the potential of rocket engines and touching space with satellites, but the budget did not allow much in the way of actual development in 1945-47.

Armed with two years staff experience, LeMay was ordered to take over the United States Air Forces in Europe in September, just after the Air Force's independence. He always considered himself a field commander rather than a staff officer, so the assignment was a welcome respite. It also came with a promotion and Helen pinned on his third star on October 1st, 1947.[61] His time at USAFE was short but marked by the first major confrontation between the democratic Allies and communist Russia. In June, 1948 the Soviet Union closed ground access to Berlin and forced a logistical supply problem to the city, then under the

---

[60] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 399.
[61] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 401.

protectorate of the U.S., Britain, France and the Soviet Union. LeMay and his staff cobbled together an airlift plan to start meeting the growing demand for food and supplies in Berlin. The Berlin Airlift became the first time in history that an entire city was supplied solely by air. Politically, it showed the U.S. and British commitment to the people of Berlin and that they would not be bullied by the Soviets.

Some have criticized LeMay's role during the airlift. Andrei Cherny, in *The Candy Bombers,* charged LeMay of disinterest and reluctance to hand the operation off to more capable airlifters, namely Major General William "Bill" Tunner, the commander and organizer of the World War II Hump airlift from China to India. Cherny accused LeMay of "soaking up accolades and swimming in positive clippings," inferring the airlift was not a priority other than the glory it could bring LeMay.[62] True, much of the contemporary credit went to LeMay and his replacement, General John Cannon, a privilege afforded to the commanders of organizations. Despite Cherny's attack on LeMay, neither LeMay nor Tunner record an adversarial relationship in their memoires. LeMay speaks of actively bringing Tunner over to help out as the expert. In his book, Tunner writes, "There was no question but that LeMay and Joe Smith were doing a marvelous job, and they were justifiably proud. Had I suddenly been placed in command of a bomber force in a hot war, I would certainly have been happy to have done as well."[63]

Strategic Air Command

Three and a half months into the Berlin Airlift LeMay was recalled to the U.S. and given command of the Strategic Air Command. He inherited an organization that could not perform the mission it was tasked to perform: conventional and nuclear bombardment. "We didn't have one crew, *not one crew* in the entire command who could do a

---

[62] Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers,* (New York, NY: Berkley Caliber, 2009), 335.
[63] William H. Tunner, *Over the Hump,* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. 1985), 162.

professional job. Not one of the outfits was up to strength—neither in airplanes nor in people nor in anything else."[64] The aircraft were flown at medium altitudes, not using oxygen, not tasking the airframes in their combat role, and always in fair weather, but his staff told him the crews and aircraft were performing superbly. He told them to prove it, "Have 'em attack Wright. The whole damn command. By radar."[65] Mechanical failure, weather and equipment all provided reasons to turn back, or miss the target. Not one aircraft hit the target from the ground station's assessment.[66] "I've been telling you we were in bad shape. We are in bad shape. Now let's get busy and get this fixed."[67]

When LeMay took over SAC in 1948, it had 51,965 people—5,562 officers, 40,038 airmen and 6,365 civilians.[68] He inherited 837 aircraft, including over 200 piston fighters.[69] Of these aircraft, he only had 35 B-50s, a similar number of the brand new B-36s,[70] and only 60 nuclear capable platforms. His challenge was to take this group, make it effective, and then over the next eight years, transform it into the most formidable air force in the world. In time, SAC would be capable of striking targets anywhere in Russia when called, eventually on fifteen minute alert. When he left SAC in 1957, SAC had 224,000 personnel and 2,700 aircraft, including nearly 100% jet bombers and recon aircraft and the KC-135 jet tanker replacing the piston engine KC-97.[71] SAC quadrupled in personnel and tripled in the number of aircraft, but its combat capability improved more than the mere numbers showed. During his nine years as Commander in Chief of SAC, the aircraft changed from WW

---

[64] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 429-30.
[65] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 432.
[66] Kozak, *LeMay*, 286.
[67] Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1986), 279.
[68] Kozak, *LeMay*, 291.
[69] Tillman, *LeMay*, 94.
[70] Tillman, *LeMay*, 94; The B-50 was an improved, longer range version of the B-29.
[71] Tillman, *LeMay*, 138.

II piston-engine bombers with fighter escorts to the jet age with the B-47 Stratojet and the B-52 Stratofortress. During his command, LeMay significantly dropped the mishap rate by emphasizing checklists and standard operating procedures. When he arrived in 1948, SAC averaged 65 major mishaps per 100,000 flying hours. When he left in 1957, it declined to three per 100,000 hours, a 95% drop.[72] In a final testament to the tone he set on safety, when SAC was called on to provide a visible and ready nuclear deterrent to the Russians during the Cuban Missile Crisis, SAC flew 2,088 missions, logged 47,000 flying hours, traveled 20 million miles, and conducted 4,076 air refuelings without a single accident.[73]

LeMay emphasized the same things he had in WWII that proved so successful. He instituted his Lead Crew concept and target folders. This focused his aircrews on their task and gave them a competitive focus – becoming the best and then maintaining that level of competency. To supplement that esprit, he added spot promotions and tied them to crew performance; if the crew performed well, they were all eligible for a spot promotion. But if one crew member injured himself and couldn't perform his duties, they all lost their temporary rank. LeMay did not just focus on his aircrews. He improved the messing facilities and dormitories. He encouraged his security forces by testing them constantly with partisan intruders, and building an esprit de corps that looked and sought to be the best.

LeMay built SAC into an incredible striking power, one that eventually could, if required, act alone with nuclear weapons. But SAC existed to serve its civilian masters. "Our job in SAC was not to promulgate a national policy or an international one. Our job was to

---

[72] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 439.

[73] Scott Douglas Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*, *Princeton Studies in International History and Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 67-8.

produce. . . . We put America in that situation of incipient power which she occupied at the time."[74] Even when LeMay thought the power of SAC should have been used to curtail the Soviet threat in Korea and later when the nation still had an advantage of nuclear weapons and capability, he never pushed the military or civilian leadership to use it. That was their policy job, not his at SAC. LeMay firmly believed the military belonged under civilian control and was a strong advocate for it. He and his command, "performed well so the president could deal with adversaries from a position of power, which was, LeMay believed, the only way of dealing with adversaries."[75]

LeMay's nine years at SAC were the longest time as a commander of a major command since Major General Winfield Scott served as "general in chief" of the army from 1841-61. LeMay left his mark on SAC. "From a force largely in name only, SAC became the premiere military organization on the planet. Its standards and professionalism—its pride in itself—were the doings of Curtis LeMay."[76] Years later, a Soviet official had a conversation with a State Department official about whether LeMay would have hesitated to use the atomic bomb. When asked, the State Department official replied, "You're goddamned right he would." The Soviet response, "We think so too."[77] LeMay's unhesitating commitment to SAC's mission formed the backbone of American deterrence – LeMay's personality was imprinted on SAC and the men serving were willing to perform their mission if called. It was an imprint visible on every SAC aircraft where "Peace is Our Profession" boldly communicated SAC's purpose and reminded their crews daily of their contribution to national security.

---

[74] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 482.
[75] Kozak, *LeMay*, 291.
[76] Tillman, *LeMay*, 138.
[77] Kozak, *LeMay*, 309. Conversation relayed by Ralph Nutter, LeMay's navigator in WW II and staff officer in the Pacific.

The Vice and Chief of Staff of the Air Force

In 1957, LeMay left Omaha and moved to Washington, DC. He was brought there to bolster the politically savvy but operationally weak-credentialed General Thomas D. White.[78] White had spent much time as an air attaché in various countries but little time in flying operations where LeMay excelled. The two were very different yet worked well professionally. White was very sophisticated, open to compromise and able to work well in the diplomatic environment of Washington; LeMay saw compromise as lack of moral fiber and capitulation.[79] Despite the very different approaches, they found a way to work effectively together, in part because LeMay recognized his role as a subordinate, even at the 4-star level. As the Vice, LeMay ran the Air Force and White worked with the Joint Chiefs. LeMay recognized his role and "whenever he was in doubt about White's preferences, [LeMay] awaited an opportunity to discuss matters in private. Such diplomacy did not go unnoticed."[80]

As the Vice, LeMay participated in many of the programs that still touch the current Air Force. During his tenure, the Navy's submarine-based nuclear missiles were integrated into SAC's targeting plan, the forerunner to the Single Integrated Operating Plan (SIOP), a product of target deconfliction initiated while he was at SAC. The Soviets launched Sputnik on October 4th, 1957 focusing America's attention on the role of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles. By the end of his Vice Chief of Staff tenure, the first solid-fueled Minuteman ICBM was launched.[81] LeMay also displayed some understanding of Washington politics by getting a pay raise for the Air Force and the rest of the military by extension after Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson communicated that he was

---

[78] Tillman, *LeMay*, 142.

[79] Tillman, *LeMay*, 142.

[80] Tillman, *LeMay*, 142.

[81] Tillman, *LeMay*, 148. The Minuteman was the first solid fueled ICBM, the previous liquid fueled ICBMs took considerable time to fuel and launch. The Minuteman could remain fueled and therefore ready to launch at any time.

sympathetic but rebuffed LeMay and General John McConnell's arguments. Undeterred, LeMay went to an old friend and popular radio personality, Arthur Godfrey, for help. Eisenhower signed the pay raise several months later.[82] Finally, he also oversaw and purchased the AR-15s, the machine gun that became the M-16 and remains in use today throughout the world.[83]

On June 30th, 1961, Curtis LeMay became the 5th Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force. At the time, he had been a general officer for eighteen years and a general for nearly ten. Only two of his fellow Joint Chiefs exceeded that time in grade, and he bested six of them by a decade or more.[84] Comparatively little is written about his time as the Chief, and even LeMay records little of his eight years in Washington. He was a war time commander – whether in the B-17 over Europe, the B-29 over Japan or putting SAC in an at-war mentality to provide the nation's nuclear deterrence. In his own memoires, he devotes far more time to his formative years, WW II experiences and time at SAC. His lack of commentary on his time as the Chief may be from security classifications that still applied to his time as the Chief – even his recollections that deal primarily with WW II were classified SECRET just before he retired.[85] Regardless, his time as the Chief was marked by five key events: the XB-70, full integration of ICBMs in SAC's arsenal, disputes with his former subordinate and now the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his two extensions in office for political reasons.

LeMay's biggest procurement project while serving as the Chief was the XB-70. The mach 3 bomber was designed to replace the B-52. Combined with its speed, the Valkyrie was to fly at 72,000 feet with a

---

[82] Tillman, *LeMay*, 143.
[83] Tillman, *LeMay*, 147.
[84] Tillman, *LeMay*, 152.
[85] General Curtis LeMay, Oral History Project, Recorded 12, 26, 27 January, 1965.

4,200 mile range.[86] LeMay had never been a proponent of the B-58, a bomber that had too little range to be useful to SAC and its mission to deliver a nuclear weapon from the U.S. The B-70 would give the speed and the range needed to fulfill its intended nuclear role. He lost this battle. McNamara reduced the aircraft to three prototypes, then cut it altogether while LeMay was the Chief.

The reason McNamara cancelled the B-70 was the influx of ICBMs during the same time as the Air Force pressed for a new bomber. The two men had a fundamental difference in how to conduct nuclear deterrence. Instead of vulnerable manned bombers, McNamara placed the nation's trust in its underground ICBMs, Submarine Service Ballistic Missiles, and better command and control capabilities.[87] LeMay always had great trust in the bombers, but did not place his faith in technology. He watched as the key U.S. ICBMs become operational during his time in Washington: the intermediate range Thor in 1957, the first truly intercontinental Atlas in 1959, the Titan - the first ICBM housed and protected underground in 1962, and finally the solid-fueled Minuteman the same year which still serves today.[88] McNamara and LeMay differed in just about everything, the dispute over the B-70 and the dependence on ICBMs was only the beginning.

McNamara was dependent on his Harvard Business School education and technology. He was refined and implicitly trusted by both President's Kennedy and Johnson. McNamara was determined to run the Department of Defense rather than let it run and dictate to him its desires. "Knowing that most of the chiefs disagreed with his philosophy and policies, he began representing his own opinions to Johnson as if they were shared by the chiefs."[89] LeMay was the polar opposite. Hard-

---

[86] Tillman, *LeMay*, 155.
[87] Tillman, *LeMay*, 155.
[88] Tillman, *LeMay*, 151.
[89] Tillman, *LeMay*, 153.

working, honest, and blunt to a fault, many were amazed when he was appointed Chief of Staff in 1961. Even more amazing was that it came with McNamara's advocacy.[90] From the start of McNamara's time in Washington, their relationship was strained and became even more so as McNamara implemented his own policies without regard to the Joint Chiefs. "It was like talking to a brick wall," LeMay recalled. "We got nowhere. Finally it was just a waste of time and effort."[91] The relationship was not helped by the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In the summer of 1962, Soviet Russia attempted to put nuclear weapons in Cuba. Throughout the crisis, LeMay remained a staunch advocate of an aggressive military approach. He believed the U.S. should take advantage of its nuclear superiority in ICBMs and manned delivery systems to curb the spread of Communism, especially in the western hemisphere. LeMay always believed the Cold War would become a shooting war with the Russians and he felt the U.S. should do it sooner rather than later, while America still had a strong advantage.[92] He was not alone, the other Joint Chiefs agreed with him though they found more diplomatic ways to communicate it to the President. General David M. Shoup, Commandant of the Marine Corps, agreed with LeMay, though he thought more tact and method of deliver was necessary. "You pulled the rug right out from under him [the President]. Goddamn. . . . I agree with that answer, agree a hundred percent, a hundred percent. He [President Kennedy] finally got around to the word 'escalation.' That's the only goddamn thing that's in the whole trick. Go in and get every goddamn one. Somebody's got to keep them from doing the goddamn

---

[90] Kozak, *LeMay*, 334; McNamara says LeMay was chosen for 2 reasons. "First, because he was such a fine commander and second, because we—the president and I—thought, I don't want to use the word control . . . reason . . . we thought we could reason with him." 335.

[91] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 372.

[92] Kozak, *LeMay*, 348.

thing piecemeal."[93] Ultimately, the crisis was resolved diplomatically, though LeMay and the other Joint Chiefs felt "a rare opportunity to reverse Communist expansion had been squandered."[94]

The politics and political wrangling LeMay so detested marked the twilight of LeMay's career. As his appointed time as the Chief drew to a close in 1963, he fully expected to retire. To his surprise, he was nominated to a second term, though only for a year. He was retained because Kennedy had already dismissed the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral George Anderson, an outspoken critic of the Administration's defense policies,[95] and cutting two service chiefs in the same year would highlight the discontent between the Administration and the military. After President Kennedy was assassinated, and Lyndon Johnson became President, LeMay's tenure as the Chief came due in the spring of 1964. Johnson extended his service once more, probably because the President feared a retired LeMay would highlight the Kennedy-Johnson failings, campaigning for Senator Barry Goldwater.[96] After Johnson won the election by a landslide, he had little use for LeMay, and LeMay was allowed to retire on February 1st, 1965.

Retirement

At his retirement, President Johnson reminded Americans that LeMay "devoted his life to teaching Americans that the price of peace is preparedness and vigilance."[97] During the air parade, the Air Force put on an impressive show of aircraft, parading the entire Air Force inventory in front of him, including a venerable old B-17 that touched him deeply. Afterwards, he and Helen moved into a small apartment in Washington until they formalized their retirement plans and moved to California.

---

[93] Ernest R. May and Philip D Zelikov, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (The Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997), 188.
[94] Tillman, *LeMay*, 159. Joint Chief sentiment echoed in Kozak, *LeMay*, 353.
[95] Tillman, *LeMay*, 159.
[96] Kozak, *LeMay*, 357-8.
[97] Kozak, *LeMay*, 359.

LeMay did not go to work for many of the companies he indirectly made wealthy, believing it was wrong to work for them. Instead, he worked briefly for Network Electronics before the relationship soured and he removed himself from their business dealings.

By 1968, he had grown increasingly frustrated with the civilian defense establishment under Johnson and McNamara. He remained firmly convinced of "the necessity of a strong military to protect the U.S. from the Soviet threat, criticizing Secretary of Defense McNamara and the 'defense intellectuals' who supported the flexible response strategy used in Vietnam, and against a general moral weakness that seemed to be growing in the 1960s."[98] In his earlier book, *America in Danger,* he expressed his discontent in the direction the country was going. He articulated his opposition to McNamara's flexible response, his views on the correct use of nuclear weapons, the failings of U.S. intelligence, and the growing pacifist movement. "Anyone who seeks an absolute end to the possibility of war might as well resign from the human race."[99] He felt he still had things to say that were relevant to the nation. For that reason, he decided later that year to run with Governor George Wallace as his Vice Presidential candidate. This was one of the defining moments of his life and soured his military legacy. After his brief foray into politics, LeMay was shunned for several years by the military, and only later invited back into its circles for advice and counsel.

General LeMay died at Air Force Village I near March Air Force Base, California. On October 1st, 1990, he had a massive heart attack that killed him instantly. He is buried at the Air Force Academy, in front of the flag pole. His wife, Helen, lies beside him and now several years later, many of his friends and subordinates join him in those hallowed grounds.

---

[98] Kozak, *LeMay*, 362.

[99] General Curtis E. LeMay with Major General Dale O. Smith, *America is in Danger* (New York, NY, Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), 69.

Chapter 2

What is Leadership, What is Command?

Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve.

Tom Landry

Leadership and command are difficult to define and challenging to separate. At the lowest levels, leadership is the ability to get people to accomplish a goal. At more senior levels, leadership includes setting organizational culture and climate to accomplish goals. Command is the responsibility to ensure objectives are accomplished. In civilian terms, management can replace command, but the military has as a unique role with the sanctioned use of force to accomplish governmental tasks. Leadership and command are frequently confused and grouped together out of habit rather than thinking of them as distinct concepts.

For the purposes of this paper, leadership means motivating subordinate men and women to accomplish a goal; it includes the training and equipping to make them effective at the organization's mission. Command is the authority that a military commander lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment; it includes the authority, responsibility, and accountability to use effectively available resources to organize, direct, control, and employ military forces to accomplish assigned missions.[1]

Leadership and Command provide a framework to choose useful vignettes from General Curtis LeMay's life. A brief review of leadership and command helps build a structure from which to glean insights into in his life.

---

[1] Derived from Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,* 31 October 2009, 101.

Academic Review of Leadership and Management

In 1989, Gary Yukl identified over 5,000 studies on leadership, and the number continues to grow yearly.[2] A 2010 Google search for "leadership" generated 159,000,000 hits, and a search for "leadership studies" generated 11,800,000 hits.[3] There is a plethora of material on leadership, and management. But as Yukl observed, "Most of the widely known theories are beset with conceptual weaknesses and lack strong empirical support. Several thousand empirical studies have been conducted on leader traits, behavior, power, and situational as predictors of leadership effectiveness, but most of the results are contradictory and inconclusive."[4] His observation was not new. In 1974, Ralph Stodgil commented, "Four decades of research on leadership have produced a bewildering mass of findings. . . . The endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding [or definition] of leadership."[5] This is still echoed today by current students. Dr. James Parco, a professor at the Air Force's Air Command and Staff College, agrees with Yukl and reiterates decades of research on the subjects of leadership and management have still failed to yield a common definition or uniform set of concepts.[6]

Even generating a widely accepted definition of leadership is difficult. Stodgil comments, "There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept."[7] As a concept, researchers have tried to define leadership as individual traits, behavior, influences over other people, interaction patterns, role relationships, occupation of an administrative position, or

---

[2] Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations,* 2nd Ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1989), 267.

[3] Search conducted by the author, 31 March 2010.

[4] Yukl, *Leadership,* 267.

[5] Ralph M. Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of the Literature* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1974), vii.

[6] Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) James E. Parco, interview by the author, 30 March 2010.

[7] Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership*, 259.

perception by others regarding legitimacy and influence.[8] Here are a few of their attempts to define it:

- The behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal. (1957)[9]
- A particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activity as a group member. (1960)[10]
- An interaction between persons in which one presents information of a sort and in such a manner that the other becomes convinced that his outcomes . . . will be improved if he behaves in the manner suggested or desired. (1970)[11]
- The initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction. (1974)[12]
- Influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization. (1978)[13]
- Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.[14]

These are just a few attempts to capture the concept of leadership. The University of Exeter Centre for Leadership Studies lists sixty-five different definitions, all attempts to capture the essence of leadership and spanning over fifty-five years. It is a difficult concept to articulate for a broad audience.[15]

---

[8] Yukl, *Leadership*, 2.

[9] John K. Hemphill and Alvin E. Coons, "Development of the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire," in *Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement,* ed Ralph M. Stogdill and Alvin E. Coons (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1957), 7.

[10] K. F. Janda, *Human Relations*, 1960, in Gary Yukl, *Leadership*, 3.

[11] T. O. Jacobs, *Leadership and Exchange in Formal Organizations* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, December 1970), 232.

[12] Stogdill, *Handbook,* 411.

[13] Daniel Katz, and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 528.

[14] President Dwight D. Eisenhower, quoted on the University of Oregon's Army ROTC webpage, accessed 2 April 2010, http://www.uoregon.edu/~army/CadetRequirements/CadetRequirements-Quotes-and-Songs.php.

[15] University of Exeter Centre for Leadership Studies, "Leadership Definitions," accessed 1 April 2010. http://www.leadership-studies.com/lsw/definitions.htm.

The lack of a single, unifying definition does not denigrate the usefulness of studying leadership or trying to define it. Rather, what it suggests is that it is contextual for people, place and time. General George S. Patton likely could not lead the peaceful struggle for independence in India. Likewise, Mahatma Gandhi likely could not lead the U.S. Third Army through France and Germany during WW II. This suggests that Curt LeMay was the right man to lead and affect strategic bombing in Europe and the Pacific, then to build SAC and mold it into the iron-mailed fist that so typified the culture. He was the right person, at the right time, in the right job, and in the right place to have the success he did leading and commanding his organizations. As an operational commander, the behaviors he used were effective for his outfits, and again, were the right ones for his time. Later in his political role as the Chief of Staff, some of those behaviors detracted from his ability to influence and led to criticism of his ability to work in the strategic role in the highly political job in Washington.

Military Conceptualization of Leadership and Command

Leadership in a military organization is similar save two areas. Civilian organizations do not have the concept of command to quantify accountability and responsibility, but they use the concept of management to articulate responsibility and the difficult decisions that typify leadership positions. The two areas that military command differs from civilian management are the powers of judicial punishment and responsibility to act on behalf of a government to spend and take life in a sanctioned manner. Military commanders wield the power to incarcerate subordinates, fine them monetarily from judicial proceedings, and take promotions and rank from them. Second, the power to spend or take life in military conflict is significant. It requires careful adjudication of the authority and to execute it in accordance within the guidance, principles of warfare the government has ascribed, and the rules of engagement created by higher commands and civilian leadership.

Admiral William "Bull" Halsey commented in his unpublished memoirs that the concepts of leadership and command were very different. Command, he believed, was bestowed from above. It implies a trust to accomplish the mission, but also a tremendous trust in the individual to exercise the military authority, described above, with discretion. When a Captain of a naval vessel went to sea, that individual held all the power to accomplish the mission, but also all the power to punish and reward to keep the ship functional. There was no higher authority at sea than the Captain of the ship. Leadership, Halsey continued, was bestowed from below. It implies that it is earned from the people under one's command rather than given as a task to be accomplished. If a commander looses the faith of his people, he can still exert command to influence mission accomplishment, but the command will not be as effective or produce as effectively as if they wanted to follow the commander under his leadership. Major General John M. Schofield summed it well with his address to the graduating class at West Point in 1879. "It is possible to impart instructions and give commands in such a manner and in such a tone of voice to inspire in the soldier no feeling, but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice cannot fail to excite strong resentment and a desire to disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect which is due to others cannot fail to inspire in them regard for himself while one who feels, and hence manifests disrespect towards others, especially his inferiors, cannot fail to inspire hatred against himself."[16]

Service Definitions

The military services are no different from civilian academe when attempting to define leadership. They differ in their definitions of

---

[16] Captain Don Kochanski, *Contrails: Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook, 1992-1993* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 143;

leadership though the concept of command is now consistent throughout the military services. Joint doctrine does not provide a definition of leadership in Joint Publication 1-02, leaving it up to the individual services to define for themselves. This allows each service to define it according to their needs rather than restricting the service to a particular method or concept. It does provide a common definition for command, unifying the services on the responsibilities of command. According to JP 1-02, command is, "The authority that a commander in the armed forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel."[17]

The Air Force defines leadership as, the "art and science of influencing and directing people to accomplish the assigned mission. Leadership does not equal command, but all commanders should be leaders. The abilities of a leader, which are derived from innate capabilities and built from experience, education, and training, can be improved upon through deliberate development."[18]

The Army has extensive research and experience on leadership and command. In Field Manual 6-22, the Army defines leadership as, "The process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."[19] Like other services, they recognize that every soldier is a leader in different places and times and each soldier must develop leadership as an attribute to be a member of the organization.

---

[17] JP 1-02, *DoD Dictionary,* 101.

[18] Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, vi.

[19] Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile,* October 2006, Glossary-3.

The Navy has no formal doctrinal definition of leadership.

The Marines define leadership as "the influencing of people to work toward the accomplishment of a common objective."[20]

The differences between the services reflect their different thinking and areas of emphasis. The Army and Marines have a very different relationship between their officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted members than the Air Force and Navy to some extent. It stems from their war-time role. They rely heavily on training, strict adherence to orders to subordinates, and commonality between force elements for integration when leadership is combat-removed. In contrast, the Air Force refers to leadership as an "art and science," and a quality to be developed. This stems from its culture where officers are the primary combatants.

Commander's Insights

General George S. Patton, in writing to his son after the Battle of the Bulge, commented that, "Leadership is what wins battles. 'I have it—but I'll be damned if I can define it.' Of Omar Bradley he would soon write: 'He is a good officer but utterly lacks "it." Too bad.'"[21] As noted above in the academic discussion on leadership, leadership is difficult to define. Patton could not, and he was one of the greatest war-time commanders the U.S. Army produced. The needed personal attributes vary with the groups of people one is trying to lead. Patton would have been stretched to lead India in Ghandi's peaceful overthrow of the British or even peace-time military operations; he hated his responsibility as the military governor of Germany after the war. As difficult as they are to define, current and past practitioners can provide insight to help illuminate the concepts for further study.

---

[20] Marine Corps Doctrine Publication (MCPD) 6, *Command and Control,* 4 October 1996, 82.

[21] Carlo D'este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995), 699.

For this thesis, current and former military commanders and leaders were asked the difference between the two concepts. Their responses are as varied as the academic distinctions. Leadership:

1. Involves a willingness to step out in front, to carry a burden of responsibility for an outcome that requires others to achieve, to convince those whom one leads that the cause is worthy of their efforts, at times for the military, as an ultimate sacrifice . . . does not have to be bestowed upon someone. Rather, each of us can exercise leadership in whatever context we find ourselves in by exercising the characteristics above.[22]
2. Is the ability to lead other people, either by aptitude, athletic ability, reasoning, physical courage, or motivational ability-regardless of rank or position in society. It is not claimed, but recognized by those who benefit from the leadership.[23]
3. Convincing others to follow or do some task that they may or may not want to do.[24]

Command was more similar and congruous in the definition from the respondents. Most emphasized authority, responsibility, and mission accomplishment. Command focuses the responsibility to get the tasked mission accomplished, on the commander as the single point of accountability. Lieutenant General Paul Carlton, Jr. commented, "Command is bestowed on someone for demonstrating leadership," and the potential to lead them to mission accomplishment. Colonel Scott Manning emphasized the individual's role or lack of role in the position and commented, "command is not about 'you.' . . . You were selected to Command in order to accomplish [your mission]. However, you will be judged by your ability to 'lead' others in order to accomplish the mission. Your leadership will be how you build that Team and encourage that

---

[22] Lieutenant General Mark Shackelford, Military Deputy to the Deputy Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, to the author, email, 28 February 2010.
[23] Lieutenant General (Ret) Paul K. Carlton, Jr, Surgeon General of the United States Air Force, to the author, email, 27 February 2010.
[24] Colonel Todd Phinney, Commander, Air Force Element-NATO Combined Air Operations Center 2, to the author, email, 9 March 2010.

team to execute your vision in order to accomplish the goals of your Command responsibility."[25]

The two concepts are clearly related but still distinct. Colonel Scott Manning noted, "Command is about the recognition of what must be done. . . . Leadership is about how you execute."[26] Lieutenant General Mark Shackelford noted, "Command involves leadership, but it is not leadership. Command is a role that one is given where he/she formally accepts the responsibility to carry out a vision, most often a vision that flows from above. Command is all about the mission and its accomplishment. A good commander knows how to lead, but simply being anointed 'commander' does not necessarily lead to good leadership."[27]

Good commanders frequently come from the ranks of good leaders. Colonel Tim Hale commented, "the best commanders were natural leaders—members of their squadrons/organizations never really thought much about the command authority of the leader, they followed more because they wanted to. In flying organizations, the best leaders in my experience were those that led from the front. They were among the best pilots and crewmembers. They were recognized for their technical expertise in flying a plane. That dedicated skill combined with natural leadership abilities meant that their squadron would follow them anywhere—including and especially into battle."[28] Leaders have to be competent. It follows that good commanders have to integrate leadership and command to have the respect of their men and women for their professional competence, not just their placed position. "If you take leadership and add the authority of command, you have the recipe for

---

[25] Colonel Scott Manning, Commander, USAFE Warrior Preparation Center, Einsiedlerhof Air Station, Germany, to the author, email, 1 March 2010.
[26] Manning, to the author, email, 1 March 2010.
[27] Shackelford, to the author, email, 28 February 2010.
[28] Colonel Tim Hale, Commander at the Wing, Group and Squadron level, to the author, email, 26 March 2010.

success. With command authority as the foundation, leadership gets a head start through initial loyalty and an assumption of credibility."[29] The corollary is similarly true – commanders who are not competent, and demonstrate it, are not respected by the unit and the unit may suffer from poor execution unless an informal leader shoulders the responsibility to accomplish the mission.

Good leaders do not necessarily make good commanders. Colonel Andy Morgan cited the movie, *Twelve O'clock High."* He pointed out that the outgoing commander was well respected and liked by his men, but he could not get the mission accomplished. He struggled to order his men into battle, some of them facing certain death given the condition of the combined bomber offensive at the time.[30]

Lieutenant General Bill Rew summed the interplay between leadership and command.

> All true leaders can effectively 'command' actions of their followers by motivating performance and inspiring belief in what they are doing. All commanders have the legal authority to direct their subordinates' actions, but they may or may not be an effective leader of their organization. . . . An effective commander who is also as inspirational leader is rare indeed, and those following such a commander can accomplish amazing, extraordinary things. The 'test' of command is rarely true/false or multiple choice. Command is more often a continuous essay test, with no one perfect right answer for every question or challenging situation.
>
> Command is not a popularity contest. It's making the tough call when you know it's the right thing to do. When your Airmen know your commander's intent and they make decisions and take actions in line with that intent, when they don't have to – you may be a commander AND a leader.[31]

---

[29] Colonel David Hathaway, Vice Commander 388th Fighter Wing, Hill AFB, UT, to the author, email, 17 March 2010.
[30] Colonel Andy Morgan, Commander and Wing, Group and Squadron levels, to the author, email, 16 March 2010.
[31] Lieutenant General William Rew, Vice Commander, Air Combat Command, to the author, email, 31 March 2010.

From service definitions and commander's insights, leadership is clearly about motivating people to accomplish the task. Command is about task accomplishment, the responsibility to get it done and the authority to hold people accountable when they do not. These thoughts are reflected in academic literature and articulated in the behaviors and characteristics singled out for examination.

Leadership Behaviors

Leadership behaviors are as difficult to capture as a definition of leadership. Qualities in one organization or group may not be valued or prized in another. In the Western world, job and financial integrity are respected and expected in formal leadership roles; those who take bribes or dole out unmerited favors are frowned upon and risk public accountability. In Africa, South America, and most parts of the Middle East bribes or unmerited favors are not as discouraged and are accepted as part of doing business. Nevertheless, broad concepts can be applied to gain a better understanding of effective leadership behaviors.

Gary Yukl identifies eleven key leadership behaviors for managers and leaders to exhibit. While all have broad applicability, four standout as a lens to examine key points in Curtis LeMay's life. One of these behaviors is recognizing and rewarding, a quality of providing praise, recognition, and tangible rewards for: effective performance, significant achievements, and special contributions; special contributions; expressing respect and appreciation for someone's accomplishments.[32] The military was already good at using promotions, medals, or special recognition, but LeMay made an art of it with his reward systems for excellence that included spot promotions.

Another attribute from Yukl is planning and organizing. He defines it as "determining long range objectives and strategies for adapting to environmental change, indentifying necessary action steps to carry out a

[32] Yukl, *Leadership,* 130.

project or activity . . . and determining how to improve efficiency, productivity, and coordination with other parts of the organization."[33] This will clearly be seen in LeMay's life in his passion to preserve his men's lives. He passionately wanted World War II to end with the minimal amount of life expended for the Allied, and to a limited extent, the Axis powers. He made them more effective, efficient and productive when they expose themselves to danger, preventing his command and others from having to come back and re-accomplish the task.

A third quality Yukl identifies is problem solving. Yukl defines it as, "identifying work-related problems, analyzing problems in a systematic but timely manner to determine causes and find solutions, and acting decisively to implement solutions and deal with crisis."[34] LeMay emphasized empirical data and solutions to problems. He personally modeled the flak threat presented to Allied bombers and found a solution. He remained open to anyone that had solutions to problems, encouraging creativity and well-thought out solutions.

Finally, LeMay exhibited Yukl's quality of monitoring operations and the environment. Yukl defines this quality as, "gathering information about the process and quality of work activities, the success or failure of activities or projects, and the performance of individual contributors, also, determining the needs of clients or users, and scanning the environment to detect threats and opportunities."[35] LeMay's interactive debriefs capture the very nature of this quality. Desiring constant improvement, LeMay created the post-mission debrief where anyone associated with the mission was encouraged to identify successes and failures while providing solutions on how to do it better.

Yukl's framework highlights some of the tools LeMay used to get the most from his people and commands. From an organizational

---

[33] Yukl, *Leadership,* 130.
[34] Yukl, *Leadership,* 130.
[35] Yukl, *Leadership,* 130.

perspective, LeMay was constantly looking to make the organization more effective – constant improvement, looking ahead to potential problem areas, and solving the problems that face his organization. To be sure, his problems were different than the business world's: how to destroy a target more effectively while sacrificing as few of his men's lives as possible to end the war. Nevertheless, Yukl's model can help current officers focus on certain key leadership traits from LeMay's career. From a people perspective, LeMay tried to encourage and use his men's ideas and thoughts effectively. Rather than demanding task accomplishment, LeMay actively looked for ways to promote excellence by recognizing strong performance through his lead crews and spot promotions. He did it by providing the environment to monitor the operations environment, debriefs, that bolster the aircrew, flight, squadron and command performance. The practices merge to form the collective culture LeMay seeks in his commands.

Traditional Leadership Versus Group-Centric Leadership

A second lens to understand LeMay is the type of leadership, or role of leadership, he uses in different situations. Leland Bradford groups leadership into two types of leaders, traditional and group-centered. The traditional role for leaders is focused on the commander's role in the military: commander focused, single point of accountability, all information funneled through the commander then doling responsibilities out to individuals to accomplish a task. Bradford's group-centered was new for its time in 1976. It focused on group participation, empowering the group and disbursement of conceptual creation to subordinates. LeMay used both throughout his career, though he certainly was more comfortable as a traditional leader, particularly in combat capability and nuclear weapons.

Bradford's traditional leader is "chosen from a selected few who have the initiative and power to direct, drive, instruct, and control those

who follow."[36] He follows his definition with the following significant traits of type of group leader. The leader should:

1. Focus on the task and ignore personal feelings and relationships
2. Should seek opinions and try to get group buy-in but never relinquish right to make final choices.
3. Stay in control of group discussion, keeping the group on task, ending irrelevant discussions.[37]

In contrast, group-centered leadership divests much of the responsibility to other group members, attempting to keep a light touch on the group. Instead of being the center of all group activities, Bradford's theory pushes nearly all levels of group processes to the members of the group, away from the designated leader. According to group-centered leadership, the leader should:

1. Act as a consultant, advisor, teacher, or facilitator rather than director, manager or commander.
2. Model appropriate leadership behaviors and encourage members to reflect the same behaviors.
3. Establish a climate of approval for feeling expression and ideas.[38]

There are certainly elements of group-centered leadership that would be difficult to practice in a military organization –command is inherently a single person job and the accountability from superiors is focused on a single person, the commander. But there are elements of group-centered leadership that LeMay used to push his organizations to greater effectiveness.

Bradford's model provides insight beyond how LeMay is often characterized. LeMay is often seen as the autocratic dictator who listens to no one, barks orders to scurrying subordinates, and enforces his decisions through intimidation or fear. This view epitomizes him as the iron fist on SAC's emblem: my way or no way. Historically though, this is

---

[36] Leland Bradford, *Making Meetings Work: A Guide for Leaders and Group Members* (La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1976), 8.

[37] Bradford, *Making Meetings Work,* 8-9.

[38] Bradford, *Making Meetings Work,* 10-13.

not LeMay. While LeMay was a man of few words that often led to the autocratic assumption by many, he truly did care what his subordinates thought when they could present a valid and cogent argument to him about a better way to do things. Through this, he actively sought to mentor and develop them. LeMay rarely, if ever, outright fired a subordinate; he was guilty of finding the individual another job, but rarely did he outright fire him. All Class A aircraft mishaps had to be briefed to LeMay as the Commander in Chief of SAC with the responsible wing commander in attendance.[39] LeMay did not outright fire the man. Rather he tried to educate himself, the subordinate commander, and all of SAC on how to avoid a future similar mishap; unless culpable by negligence, the commander often kept his job.[40] Bradford's two models of leadership draw out the stark contrast between the assumed LeMay and his leadership and command style. While he was not the full embodiment of pushing decisions and responsibilities down to the group, LeMay did use many of the techniques Bradford captures in his group-centric model to be more effective as a leader, mentor, and commander. Certainly, LeMay is the very embodiment of modeling the correct behavior and demonstrating excellence, a trait Bradford categorizes under group-centric leadership and emphasized by many of the commander's insights given above.

Summary

No clear, single definition of leadership exists. Not in academia, and clearly not in the military, despite joint, unifying doctrine. It is

---

[39] A Class A mishap is one that the destruction of an aircraft occurred, a death occurred or over $1 million in damage occurred.

[40] Dr Melvin G. Deaile, "The SAC Mentality: The Origins of Organizational Culture in Strategic Air Command, 1946-1962" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2007), 257; "'LeMay was a kind hearted man . . . always has been. He got a lot of credit for being mean as a result of General Power. General LeMay didn't go around firing people. General Power did.' Like LeMay, Power continued the practice of having wing commander's brief the SAC commander on flying accidents. Under LeMay, the wing commander typically left with a recommendation. With Power, however, nine times out of ten the wing commander got fired."

contextual and relates to a particular place and time, under a set of given conditions that enable a person or persons to shine in their ability to lead a group through a problem. There is no single element of leadership that guarantees success as each situation demands different capabilities and continual learning by the leader. Would LeMay survive in today's world? Was he just the right person to understand the calculus of total war? He understood that to end a total war, the nation had to be destroyed and he was willing to train his men as best he could then send them into battle to destroy the enemy as efficiently and effectively as his technology allowed.

Regardless of their inter-related nature, leadership and command are useful constructs to continue to explore and learn. This paper does not intend to recreate those definitions or contribute to the vast knowledge of either concept, but it does take vignettes from General Curtis LeMay's life and frame them in a way for the reader to learn and apply appropriately to his or her life and leadership and command styles.

Halsey's comments provide a context to understand LeMay's life. This paper will divide key vignettes from LeMay's life into these two categories and attempt to learn from them in this context. Command will look at tough decisions that only LeMay could make as the commander: his decision to fly straight and level in the B-17, to firebomb Tokyo, to change the maintenance organization for the B-29s, and putting SAC in a go-to-war now mentality. Leadership will look at what LeMay did to prepare his men, care for them and how his actions affected the groups he led. It will look at how he set the example of personal excellence, how he trained and prepared his crews to go to war, the quality of life issues he dealt with while demanding so much from his men and finally his decision to run as Governor George Wallace's running mate in the 1968 Presidential election.

This brief review of leadership and command helps build a structure from which to glean insights into both in LeMay's life.

Understanding the leadership traits and managerial/command traits provide a framework to understand LeMay's actions and then how to learn from them applying to students of leadership, command and organizations today.

Chapter 3

LeMay on Command

You must wring the greatest possible benefit out of every lesson. And you must train yourself grimly to adopt a philosophical attitude with regard to those losses. If you're going to fight you're going to have some people killed. But if you have done everything humanly possible to prepare for that mission and plan it properly, and you have observed that it was properly executed, and you have attained the results which you wished to attain—Then you can think, and feel in your heart, 'The losses were paid for.'

General Curtis E. LeMay

LeMay was practical. He rarely spoke without a direct application. His style and personality struggled in his eight years in Washington, DC as the Vice Chief of Staff and then the Chief of Staff because it required more diplomatic skills and compromise, something for which LeMay was not known. While he was not a diplomat, he did lead effectively and communicated those lessons through his personal life and rare spoken words. He was a great combat commander which suited his personality through World War II and then SAC, which he put on war-time footing as a means to prepare them mentally to be on alert twenty-four hours a day and ready to employ nuclear weapons if required.

LeMay was a learning commander. He continually strove to do better. Certainly a motive behind it was to improve his unit's effectiveness and efficiency at dropping bombs, but the ultimate objective was to preserve as many of his men's lives as possible. "They (the crews) are made up of human lives and irreplaceable."[1] He felt a powerful burden to be mindful of their sacrifice and strove to improve at every opportunity. "I was doing my best to learn how to be a commander. I kept reviewing my past and trying to determine where I had been correct and where I had been mistaken. Tried not to make the same mistakes

[1] General Curtis E. LeMay, USAF Oral History Project, 17 November 1976.

twice. Didn't like to see *that* in anyone who worked for me, and had no wish to be guilty myself."[2]

He strongly advocated seeking the thoughts and participation of those in his organizations, though he retained the ultimate decision, merging both of Bradford's models.

> My personal philosophy is that the best outfits are those wherein a procedure is developed whereby every man who has an idea on a particular subject may bring it forward at the time of the discussion, without the slightest criticism or hesitation. He argues for his point of view *when you're discussing* exactly how you're going to proceed. He shouldn't hang back because his idea may appear radical, or because the bulk of the crowd may not agree with it.
>
> Everyone steps forward and expresses an idea.
>
> Once the decisions is *made*, however—
>
> "*This* is the way we're going to do it."
>
> Bang. Everybody complies. If a man doesn't comply, his official head should roll. . . .
>
> A sagacious leader can develop this system very simply. But if he *doesn't* develop it, and if he doesn't get the advice he should get before going in—And if he doesn't listen to all the advice—he won't profit a mite. The whole outfit will go to hell in a handbasket, and so will that particular operation. Everything dies on the vine.
>
> And, if that commander has ignored the advice of others without saying *why*, the entire effort will disintegrate too. Morale will shrivel; the general loses the respect of his subordinates.[3]

He knew a commander had to focus on mission accomplishment. "No matter how well you apply the art of leadership, no matter how strong your unit, or how high the morale of your men, if your leadership

---

[2] General Curtis LeMay and McKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 310.

[3] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 311.

is not directed completely toward the mission, your leadership has failed."[4] People were certainly a part of his thinking, but as a commander, the military – and LeMay – focused on a single word, responsibility.[5]

LeMay faced the difficulties of ordering men to war and knew that command was lonely. He knew he had to train and equip his men, so that as the commander, he could send them off to war with a clear conscience.

> You find yourself encountering considerable tragedy, as well, in overcoming a natural grief concerning casualties among the people whom you've led. You possess a natural inborn repugnance against killing people; yet you know you're going to have to do it. It's rough. It used to be particularly vile when I realized that I'd lost someone, and felt that I shouldn't have lost him. That's when it really comes home to you. I lost them because I make a mistake or somebody else made a mistake. . . .
>
> . . . While you don't like to see people killed, if you're going to fight you're going to have those losses. And, if you keep flying under simulated combat conditions and in every sort of weather, you're going to have losses. But if you've done the best you can in the way of preparation, planning, and execution, then you feel that if those people who were sacrificed came up in front of your desk and looking you in the eye, you could look *them* in the eye and say, "I think it was a good operation."
>
> If you can't imagine yourself doing that, then you ought to start worrying.
>
> While it tortured me to lose people in the ETO [European Theater of Operations] and in the Pacific war, I think that in most cases I would be willing to meet them, and I would say, "Well, you were properly expended, Gus. It was part of the price."[6]

---

[4] Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 35-49, *Air Force Leadership,* 1 September 1985.

[5] AFP 35-49, *Air Force Leadership*.

[6] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 312-3.

Finally, LeMay knew command was lonesome. "There are multiple decisions which you have to make entirely by yourself. You can't lean on anybody else. And a good commander, once he issues an order, must receive complete compliance. An indecisive commander cannot achieve instant compliance. Or one who is unable to make up his own mind and tries to lean on his subordinates will never achieve instant compliance either. He cannot afford to be ambiguous."[7]

This chapter will focus on Bradford's traditional leader, emphasizing the role of the commander. The next chapter will explore elements of LeMay's use of group-centric leadership, training and equipping his men, and encouraging their involvement in the command's processes.

Straight and Level over the Target

When LeMay arrived in England, 8th Air Force had two major problems: it was losing airplanes too fast and its target destruction was woefully poor. LeMay set out to correct both problems the only way he knew how – hard work and looking at hard data. The real problem was he and others did not know they were not accomplishing the latter, and could only account for the former.

The German defenses were interfering with accurate bomb delivery. The first problem was the Luftwaffe's fighters. Second, the B-17s faced incredible amounts of flak fired over the cities where the industrial targets lay. The combination of enemy fighters and flak pushed the Americans to erratic bombing that few took time to analyze and fewer spent time and effort to correct. The latter is where LeMay made his first major contribution as a combat commander.

As LeMay trained the 305th, he looked for ways to infuse experience and knowledge into himself and his men. He looked for veterans with insight for himself as a new combat leader, and for his men

[7] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 310.

who were counting on him to infuse in them the confidence to face enemy fire, especially flying bombers that were already slow, plodding, and ungainly compared to the fighters that constantly harassed and attacked them. He found one, in an old classmate, Colonel Frank Armstrong. Armstrong had led the 97th Bomb Group in the first B-17 attack on Germany, a small collection of a dozen airplanes against Rouen on August 17th, 1942.[8] He had only flown three or four more combat missions since then but it was more than LeMay and the 305th and that gave him credibility. Armstrong had seen the flak, braved its dangers, and proved himself and his command under fire. LeMay and his group were all ears for what Armstrong and other experienced airmen could tell them about what combat would be like. After a short question and answer session with the 305th, LeMay's men took away two key bits of knowledge. "(A) *The flak is really terrific.* (B) *If you fly straight and level for as much as ten seconds, the enemy are bound to shoot you down."*[9] Armstrong's words were gospel. He "had been shot at. We hadn't been." He "was a veteran. We weren't."[10] The thoughts struck home in the men and reflected the pervasive thinking across 8th AF. But not LeMay. LeMay had nagging questions that he could not formulate at the time but was determined to flesh out in his own mind before taking his men into combat.

He started by finding out how 8th AF was performing and who did it well – which groups got the best bombs on target so he could emulate their tactics and procedures. He began "making a nuisance of myself, hunting for photographs of bomb damage."[11] He found precious little, indicating a lack of analysis as the 8th focused on building up an initial capability with limited time. What he did find showed little damage to

---

[8] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 229.
[9] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 230.
[10] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 230.
[11] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 231.

intended targets. “These people didn’t know where half their bombs fell. And most of the bombs didn’t hit the target anyway. So they just weren’t hitting the targets. So the bombing was stinko. It was SOP [Standard Operating Procedure] to use evasive action over the targets. Everybody was doing it. And everybody was throwing bombs every which way.”[12] 8th AF was throwing men and equipment at the problem but they were not getting the results they wanted – they weren’t hitting the target.

He knew from his own experience as a bomber in the B-10 and B-17 that target runs required time and a straight run up to the target. Pausing for 10 seconds did not give the airplane, bomber or formation enough time to settle and get accurate timing, delivery, or placement. Erratic aircraft movements may have saved men’s lives once, but it also meant coming back to the target again, exposing fliers to more risk to hit the same target they should have hit before. “Always in the end, there was only one answer to be found. It was apparent that we would have to go straight in on the target. It was also apparent that we would have to fly a much longer bomb run. There just weren’t any two ways about it. You couldn’t swing evasively all over the sky without throwing your bombs all over the lot too.”[13] He kept the idea of going straight and level over the target to himself as he continued to mull over other possible tactics.

LeMay’s second problem was formation. The evasive maneuvers to avoid flak drove lose formations. But LeMay knew that German fighters attacked wandering cripples first and sloppy formations second. The former provided little defense and had no mutual support from other aircraft nearby to attack the fighter. The latter provided little mutual support for close, overlapping firepower to attack the fighters. Both gave

---

[12] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 231.
[13] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 232.

the fighter pilot a much greater chance of a kill with less risk to himself. Consequently, LeMay drove his bomb group to tight formations.

Their first attempt at formation flying was a disaster, with airplanes all over the sky and LeMay without effective control over the placement of aircraft from his pilot's seat. He could not see the other airplanes or how the formation presented. He fixed the latter by handing over control of his aircraft to another pilot and moving to the top turret seat where he could see the group's formation and verbally direct the movement of the bombers to more advantageous positions. He insisted on formation integrity and made his pilots practice it incessantly. He developed the Lead-High-Low, a "wedge-shaped combat box." Later, "It was used by everybody in the Eighth Air Force throughout the war."[14] LeMay's ideas became the building block of the combat box, attributed to the 1st Bombardment Wing and its commander Brigadier General Larry Kuter, but developed in the 305th and expanded as LeMay proved its effectiveness. Thus "a formation composed of eighteen to twenty-one bombers, known as a combat box, became the standard minimum combat unit, and it was stacked in such a way as to uncover as many of the top and bottom turrets as possible in order to bring the maximum firepower to bear on the critical forward hemisphere. It was considered the smallest unit feasible for defensive purposes and the largest that could be handled readily on the bombing run."[15]

LeMay knew the problem with the dispersed bombs and was working on the fighter vulnerability with a tight, defensive formation. Now he had to convince himself and then his men that flying straight and level for seven minutes on the bomb run was not suicide. He had to resolve the vulnerability to flak. He suspected there was a mathematical

---

[14] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 234.

[15] Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II,* vol 2. *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 266-7.

way to model the problem. During ROTC, LeMay was trained on how to use 75mm guns effectively and knew the ranges and dispersion patterns well. He still had his old field artillery handbook that he now pulled out and used to equate to the German 88mm guns used against the B-17s. He calculated it took 372 rounds from a 88mm gun to shoot down a B-17 flying straight and level. Combining that number with their rate of fire and dispersion, he figured "they weren't shooting everybody down."[16] Just the opposite. Later analysis showed that LeMay was conservative in his timing assumption to get to altitude and it was much more difficult to hit a plane traveling at 250-300 miles per hour than he assumed. Donald Miller, in *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany*, states that it took 8,500 rounds to shoot down one bomber.[17] Edward B Westermann, in *Flak,* doubles the number to 16,000 in 1944 for 88mm batteries alone but cites the overall shots required as less than Miller. For the first twenty months of the war when the flak crews were still manned by properly trained and equipped soldiers, Westermann cites an average of 2,805 heavy and 5,354 light flak rounds per shoot down, and the average for the entire war at 3,343 heavy and 4,940 light flak rounds per shoot down.[18] While this AAA accounted for more aircraft shot down than fighters (5,400 vs 4,300), flak provided a statistically smaller threat to fliers than Armstrong and other early 8th Air Force leaders had assumed.[19] Anti-aircraft fire posed a psychological threat, but it was not as great as the 39.7 percent of bombing errors attributed to nerves, evasive action, reduced efficiency,

---

[16] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 238.

[17] Donald L. Miller, *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 316.

[18] Edward B. Westermann, *Flak* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 292-4. The altitude of the B-17s and B-24s accounts for the difference in Westermann's numbers; he claims the 88mm "light" AAA guns were out ranged with the bombers flying between 24 and 27,000'. Shoot downs are only part of the story. During the war over Europe, 8th AF estimates 54,539 aircraft were damaged by flak, 20% of all sorties dispatched. 287.

[19] Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 316.

and an additional 21.7 percent radial errors that were attributed to the higher altitudes flown to avoid German flak defenses.[20] A total of 61.4 percent of American radial bombing errors were attributed to flak at the end of the war.[21] While the threat was psychologically real and accounted for a great number of shoot downs, LeMay's calculations, and subsequent scholarship showed flak was not the certain death others thought. Armed with an argument, LeMay and his command set out to make straight and level bombing feasible.

On November 23rd, 1942, the 305th was ordered on its first combat mission. LeMay solidified his intentions, knew he had done the math and settled on his group's tactics: tight formation to get to the target, straight and level from the initial point to the target, then tight formation back to Chelveston, England. LeMay had previously run his ideas past his squadron commanders and some of his staff members to get their reactions, but he had not told the men en masse his intentions, though they heard the rumors. When the men heard their commander briefing the tactics, they let out a collective howl. "They were really howling. Say, at the *worst* howling; and at the best regarding me with raised eyebrows."[22] But this was the fifth such attack on their target at St Nazaire and LeMay's tactics aimed to make the attack count this time.[23]

His men were struggling with what to think. Their murmurs grew until finally a pilot stood up, about half way to the rear of the group. He suggested the mission was suicide, not a reasonable use of combat aviators.[24] Rather than castigate the young man, the young man had given LeMay a chance to walk them through the numbers he already

---

[20] Stephen L. McFarland and Wesley P. Newton, *To Command the Sky: The Battle for Air Superiority over Germany, 1942-1944* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 262-3, see note 89.

[21] McFarland and Newton, *To Command the Sky,* 262-3, see note 89.

[22] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 241.

[23] Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2008), 104.

[24] Kozak, *LeMay*, 105.

figured out. It also gave him a chance to play his final trump card: He would fly the lead aircraft, the most dangerous formation position, to command the formation in the air. This quieted his men; they would follow their commander.

The mission was a success. The group did not lose any aircraft to flak that day when, according to LeMay, the 305th "made the longest, straightest bomb run which had ever been made by B-17s over the continent of Europe."[25] They did lose two aircraft to fighters, but these coincided with a change in German tactics to a head on attack on the same day. More importantly, and the driving reason LeMay adopted such tactics, the 305th put twice as many bombs on the target as any group before. By the end of his tour, the 305th ranked second in the number of sorties but had fewer than average losses due to the tactics and constant training LeMay demanded.[26]

LeMay Doctrine

LeMay's experience in Europe and especially this example of drive to destroy his target were crucial in forming his theory of war. His theory of war was simple: "I think it's more immoral to use *less* force than necessary, than it is to use *more*. If you use less force, you kill off more of humanity in the long run, because you are merely protracting the struggle."[27] Warren Kozak summarized LeMay's thoughts another way. "A nation should think long and hard before it makes the fateful decision to go to war. But once that decision is made, then that nation should be willing to hit the enemy with every conceivable weapon at its disposal to end the conflict as quickly as possible. If a nation is not willing to do that, it should not go to war in the first place. . . . LeMay believed his job was to constantly think up newer, more ingenious ways of killing the enemy and undermining his potential to make war. In doing this as

---

[25] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 243.
[26] Kozak, *LeMay*, 130.
[27] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 382.

quickly as possible, he would ultimately save the most precious variable of his equation—the lives of young Americans. He took that responsibility very seriously."[28]

In practical terms over Europe, this meant LeMay was willing to risk heavier losses on one mission if it meant he did not have to go back and attack it again and risk more attrition of his forces. He cared passionately about every man in his command, and with every death he paused and wrote a condolence letter to the family of the man killed or captured. But he firmly believed that doing the job right the first time saved lives not only over time but also kept him from coming back to the same target over and over again.

The same line of thought would later be attributed in practice to both Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell. In "those cases where our national interests require us to commit combat force we must never let there be doubt of our resolution," Weinberger wrote. "When it is necessary for our troops to be committed to combat, we *must* commit them, in sufficient numbers and we *must* support them, as effectively and resolutely as our strength permits. When we commit our troops to combat we must do so with the sole object of winning."[29] General Powell concurred. "Military force, when used, should be overwhelming and disproportionate to the force used by the enemy during stability operations."[30] If and when the United States commits troops, "we should win and win decisively."[31]

---

[28] Kozak, *LeMay*, 96-7.

[29] Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," November 28, 1984, reprinted in Air Force Magazine, January 2004. Accessed online at http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Documents/2004/January%202004/0104keeperfull.pdf.

[30] Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 124.

[31] General Colin Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, vol 72, no. 5, Winter 1992 /93, 40.

The LeMay Doctrine was adopted by many to follow, both military and civilian alike. It was formed in Europe but it was fully tested over the skies over Japan.

Analysis

LeMay exhibited two key attributes from Yukl's leadership behaviors. He started by monitoring operations and the environment from other's command effort and then applied his own problem solving for his own group's performance. Looking at other commands, he found they were flying the missions and bombing, but they were not hitting anything. Few bombs were hitting the target and not enough were causing damage to have an appreciable effect on German war efforts. The result were targets that had to be revisited multiple times to have the effect desired from a single raid. It exposed his crews to more danger and needlessly risked their lives. Risking lives was a part of war but doing it smartly could save some of his men. While he strove for better bombing accuracy and mission success, he was even more passionate about saving the lives of his men. The one led to the other and perhaps enabled the war to end faster.

Bradford's leadership models shed some additional light on his decision. LeMay kept knowledge of his plans in a very small group prior to announcing it to his men, exhibiting Bradford's traditional leadership model. He sought a few, select opinions and kept the decision to himself though he sweetened it in delivery by announcing he would lead the mission. He knew it would be an unpopular decision, but it was one he had to make to increase their efficiency, effectiveness and ultimately save their lives. It was one of the strange equations of war whereby previous thinking assumed he was exposing his command to more danger, but he was actually reducing their exposure and saving their lives.

Low Altitude Fire Bombing over Japan

When LeMay took command of XX Bomb Command, he was told to get results or he would be fired. General Arnold was promising a great

deal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. His B-29 project, raced into production, was not delivering the results he needed to make the expenditure worthwhile, especially as the U.S. faced the daunting task of invading Japan. While LeMay did not care about being fired, he did care that American aircrews were under fire over Japan and not getting the results required to make their sacrifice worthwhile. American doctrine from Europe was not importing well to the Pacific theater. Adherence to daylight precision bombing was not working for XX and XXI Bomber Commands and the B-29s they flew. Something had to change for airpower to deliver the results promised in Washington. This was LeMay's challenge when he took over the combined XX and XXI Bomber Command on Guam.

Despite the efficiencies LeMay brought to the organization, his driving factor, target destruction, was not being met. Lieutenant Colonel, later Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara was a statistician for LeMay and noted that LeMay focused on one thing: target destruction. "Most Air Corps generals could tell you how many planes he had, how many tons of bombs they dropped. He was the only person I knew in the senior command of the Air Force to focus solely on the loss of crews per unit of target destruction."[32] Number of planes and tons dropped make interesting numbers but do not equate to job performance or effectiveness. How to destroy the target efficiently and save as many American lives as possible was LeMay's focus and driving force in his life and in his command.

Compared to Europe, two major factors hampered operations over Japan. The biggest were jet stream winds, unique to Japan and not found over continental Europe. They are most pronounced during the winter, further complicating LeMay's problem as he struggled through January and February 1945. The second problem was weather, which

---

[32] Robert McNamara quoted in Lesson 4 of Errol Morris' *The Fog of War*, Sony Picture Classics, 107 min., 2004, DVD.

typically allowed a maximum of seven days a month to bomb and usually only three to four.[33] The Americans had little weather information and the 1,500 miles that separated Japan from the Marianna's made it difficult to predict weather. Weather patterns originated west of Japan and the Chinese and Russians were little help getting information to LeMay's command to forecast weather. The European problems, day fighters and flak, were a challenge if the B-29s flew at lower altitudes but not nearly the threat faced in Europe. This left the weather and jet stream as the two significant factors to influence LeMay's success over Japan.

LeMay's initial results were as dismal as Possum Hansell had achieved. A month after LeMay took over XX from Hansell, he sent seventy-three B-29s against an aircraft engine plant in Nagoya. One crashed on takeoff, one was shot down by Japanese fighters (a rarity since the speed and altitude of the B-29 were its best defense against the Japanese Zero), and only twenty-three managed to drop their bomb load. Of those, just four bombs and a few incendiaries hit the target.[34] These were not the results LeMay needed.

LeMay, his staff, and subordinate commanders, particularly Brigadier General Thomas Power, commander of his 314th Wing, started thinking. They had plenty of incendiaries as Arnold and his staff had prepositioned them in the Pacific theater, postulating Japan's cottage industry could be attacked efficiently by burning it down. Hansell had insisted on the European model of trying to minimize civilian casualties on the ground by only going during the day and only using conventional iron bombs, but LeMay now wondered if going after the cottage industry via incendiaries might be worth the effort.

---

[33] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 344.
[34] Kozak, *LeMay*, 210.

Once LeMay considered breaking with conventional bombing theory, he also started looking at how to use his airplanes differently. The B-29 was built to deliver weapons higher and faster than the B-17 or B-24, defeating AAA and fighters by escaping their ranges. In Europe, this might have worked. Over Japan, it made bombing ineffective. What if they dropped the aircraft to lower altitudes, to 5-7,000 feet? Intelligence told LeMay that Japan did not have 20 or 40mm AAA that could easily tear the airplanes apart at that altitude.[35] The 80-90mm guns they normally used could not track a target moving as fast as the B-29 at the lower altitude so the AAA would be rendered ineffective. Lowering the altitude then exposed the bombers to enemy fighters, which meant night operations. Again, intelligence confirmed a lack of night-capable fighters in the Japanese defense force. Fighters aside, night complicated targeting, and forced the B-29s to radar bombing. Radar bombing had grown from its infancy in Europe to a much more effective and precise capability. At night, radar gave a means to identify accurately the target instead of visual area bombing like the RAF used in Europe. Intelligence indicated the Japanese had intentionally dispersed their war-making industry to minimize the effects of bombing. Instead of being in large factories like Europe, it was dispersed into cottages with small homes making individual parts, not large industrial complexes.[36] This complicated targeting for iron bombs, but made an easy target for incendiaries.

With a potential solution to the tactical problems, LeMay made the decision. His bombers would go in low, at night and use incendiaries against a vital target: Tokyo. LeMay kept this decision to himself and immediate staff. He did not seek the approval of his seniors, including Arnold. He knew the consequences of failure would be high and he

---

[35] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 346.
[36] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 384

wanted to protect them from responsibility. He tentatively asked Major General Larry Norstad if General Arnold ever went for a gamble?[37] Norstad, not knowing LeMay's true question, replied that Arnold was all for getting the war won, implying that Arnold was willing to accept unorthodoxy in his commanders to accomplish the mission.[38]

The firebombing of Tokyo and subsequent cities is often likened to the RAF's night area or carpet bombing in Europe. The RAF had little choice initially – the Lancaster bombers were extremely vulnerable to German fighters and their own accuracy was atrocious.[39] It was also the only means available to the British to attack Germany and German-held lands, as they had no Army to counter attack and the fighters were too limited in range to hit anything of value. In the Pacific, the Americans had a choice. Advances in radar accuracy and the land-water contrast showed prominently on radar, negating the darkness and enabled even the "least experienced radar operators to get to within a mile of the target area."[40] LeMay was willing to take the risk of broader aerial attacks with fire to coerce Japan into surrender, even in the face of civilian deaths.[41] In LeMay's mind, the quicker the war ended, the more lives he actually saved. No matter how you slice it, you're going to kill an awful lot of civilians. Thousands and thousands. But, if you don't destroy the Japanese industry, we're going to have to invade Japan. And how many Americans will be killed in an invasion of Japan? Five hundred thousand seems to be the lowest estimate. Some say a million."[42] "I know there will be some who will call it uncivilized warfare, but you simply can't fight

---

[37] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 347.

[38] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 349.

[39] When Sir Arthur Harris made the decision to switch to night area bombing, RAF crews were not getting their bombs within 5 miles of the target in daylight raids.

[40] Ralph H. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle: The Memoir of a Navigator's War Over Germany and Japan* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 2002), 237.

[41] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 349; "All the people living around that Hattori factory where they make shell fuzes. That's the way they disperse their industry: little kids helping out, working all day."

[42] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 352.

a [total] war without some civilian casualties. . . . We didn't start this war, but the quicker we finish it, the more lives we will save—and not just American. We want to avoid killing civilians if possible, but keep in mind that the Japanese workers who manufacture weapons are part and parcel of their military machine. My first duty is to protect and save as many of our crews as possible."[43]

Many years later, Larry Nutter, a retired California Supreme Court Justice, often described as liberal, found justification of LeMay's decision in an obscure opinion written by Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. Frankfurter wrote, "The language of the picket line is very different from the language of the drawing room." Nutter continued in his own thoughts. "I would say the problems facing a combat commander are very different from those of scholars and philosophers in the comfort of a library. . . . [The firebombing] was a good faith decision on LeMay's part when faced with one million American casualties."[44] Knowing he was protecting Arnold and Norstad by making the decision and his firm belief that the Japanese industry was intentionally scattered to cottages and that it held the key to forcing capitulation, LeMay ordered the firebombing knowing he alone would bear the consequences for success or failure.

He was not allowed to fly on the attack, a fact he greatly lamented. By this point in the war, he knew of the atomic bomb and the U.S. could not risk him being shot down and divulging that secret under interrogation. Instead, he sent Brigadier General Tommy Powers to lead the mission on 9 -10 March, 1945. LeMay paced his headquarters back at Guam and waited for words from Powers over the radio, who radioed back exuberantly about the fires and the destruction being caused on the ground, hitting the Japanese industrial base. Powers later commented,

---

[43] Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 237.

[44] Kozak, *LeMay*, 236; quoting a letting from Nutter to himself.

"It was the greatest single disaster incurred by an enemy in military history."[45] The Army Air Forces historians echoed the sentiment. "No other air attack of the war, either in Japan or Europe, was so destructive."[46] XX Bomber Command lost only fourteen airplanes that day, of the 323 launched – a figure well below the European average loss rate and unmatched in its destructive power.

Critique

Critics of this attack liken it to the combined attack on Dresden and the area bombing attacks used by the RAF over Europe. Tami Davis Biddle in *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare* characterized the attacks as a willingness to "cross the line and prosecute mass fire raids on a repeated and systematic basis" which "represented a descent to a new terrifying level in the hell of total warfare."[47] She and others failed to acknowledge the total war Japanese leaders were prepared to fight – and for which they were preparing their own people. On Tarawa, 99.7 percent of the Japanese defenders chose death over surrender. On the Marshall Islands, 98.5 percent. On Saipan, 97 percent of the military force chose death over surrender, but even more striking were the 10,000 women and children at Tinian who chose death by jumping off a cliff in a mass suicide rather than face "occupation" by the Americans.[48] Japanese intent to fight to the death was captured in The War Journal of the Japanese Imperial Headquarters in July 1944. "We can no longer direct the war with any hope of success. The only course left is for Japan's one hundred million people to sacrifice their lives by charging the enemy to

---

[45] Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1987), 613.

[46] Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II,* vol V. *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki. June 1944 to August 1945* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 617.

[47] Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 270.

[48] Kozak, *LeMay*, 226.

make them lose the will to fight."[49] The nation armed, schools closed to permit mobilization of males aged fifteen to sixty and females from seventeen to forty.[50] While contemporary estimates place the half a million American deaths estimated by the War Department as high, it was the best information LeMay had. He made the hard decision to fight a nation, not just a military force. His intent was still the Air Corps industrial web theory used in Europe, but he had to adapt it to a nation that intentionally dispersed its industry into its own populace and that populace showed all the signs of fighting to the death.

In a final note of irony, the Japanese attribute the attacks by the B-29s and the raid on Tokyo as the single event that started the end of the war. After this point, the Japanese knew the war was lost. Even Prince Konoye believed it the single cause that stopped the Japanese from continuing the war. "Fundamentally the thing that brought about the determination to make peace was the prolonged bombing by the B-29's."[51] A survey by the *Nippon Times* listed the attack of 9-10 March as the most significant event of 1945 to the Japanese people.[52] While the attacks are certainly not without criticism, in the environment of total war the U.S. and Japan found themselves, there were few other options to coerce the Japanese to surrender.

In aggregate, LeMay put the right pieces together at the right time – he was willing to take the risks to make the tough decision. Rather than fixing the weather, addressing the flak and changing to incendiaries one at a time, he addressed them in one decision. His "command genius lay in his decision to avoid including these methods piecemeal, to take the

---

[49] Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*, (New York, NY: Random House,1994), 89.
[50] Barrett Tillman, *LeMay: Great General Series*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 64.
[51] Tillman, *LeMay*, 64.
[52] Kozak, *LeMay*, 264.

parts and throw them together at once, producing a whole dwarfing the sum of the parts."[53]

Analysis

LeMay exhibits very similar behavior in this decision as he did in the B-17 target runs. He started by recognizing what his command was doing was not working – monitoring operations. Something had to change to improve results. He was under pressure to achieve results but his real motivation came from ending the war quickly, thereby saving his men's lives. He knew something had to change because the European tactics of daylight, high altitude bombing were not working over Japan. Dropping the bomber's altitude and using incendiaries proved a useful change that had the effect he sought. In as much as it hurt their cottage-based industry, it also communicated to the Japanese leadership the finality of the war they started. It began the recognition that the war may not continue forever and they may not be able to sustain it when the home islands are under attack.

Examining his actions from Bradford's lens gives similar insights to the decision in Europe. The change in B-29 tactics focuses narrowly on the traditional leadership model, command, because it was a decision LeMay alone had to make to make. He sought other's ideas and insight but confined it again to a small group. There was little room for group-centric leadership as the responsibility and accountability fell squarely on his shoulders to find a way to make bombing more effective.

Changing Maintenance Practices

As a group commander in England, LeMay was frustrated by maintenance practices. He commanded front line maintenance personnel, but not the heavy maintenance units. The Service Group had a different sense of urgency than LeMay did as the combatant commander and the one responsible for putting airplanes over the target.

---

[53] Michael S. Sherry, *Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 272.

They worked at their own pace, without regard, from LeMay's perspective, of the need to get the airplane back up in the air and do its wartime mission – bombing Germans. Fixing the divergence between maintenance and operations became another one of LeMay's trademarks in the outfits he commanded.

LeMay started with what he did command, flight line maintenance personnel, who were responsible for normal inspections and basic repairs to aircraft after missions. He watched as the men in one squadron worked all night to get aircraft repaired while the men in another relaxed because the flak and gun damage to their aircraft did not require as much effort. One squadron would be exhausted the next day while the other finished work early and relaxed. To fix it, LeMay "established one community sheet-metal shop where we could throw everybody on those needy airplanes, no matter which squadron they belonged to. This was a real pooling of effort at its best, and above all a pooling of skill; for there just wasn't enough skill to go around."[54]

He applied his model to his crew chiefs as well. In days past, each airplane had a dedicated crew and one crew chief. In wartime, with new personnel coming in to replace those lost in combat, it did not work. He did the same thing with the crew chiefs that he did with the sheet-metal shop – he "pooled what talent we *did* have and we got along better."[55]

The results were in the number of airplanes the 305th put up for every mission, which was more than any other group. "Where some groups averaged perhaps a dozen, Chelveston nearly always launched twenty-plus. That translated into more guns in the air, producing a denser pattern of fire. . . . [The] Luftwaffe fighters took note and sought

---

[54] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 272.
[55] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 272.

easier prey. Other groups claimed more shootdowns, but the 305th was subjected to fewer aggressive attacks, with fewer bombers lost."[56]

LeMay could not solve the deeper maintenance issues and always seemed to lose airplanes to the Service Group and never got them back. When airplanes came back with major structural damage, they had to be repaired by the Service Group which was not under LeMay's command and responsible to a different chain of command. LeMay did not have enough rank to correct this in England but he did in the Pacific. The results, with a more difficult aircraft, astounded the Army Air Force and left the Navy in disbelief when the B-29s overflew their Navy forecasted supply requirements and had to wait on the Navy to get more fuel, bombs and parts to continue operations.

In Europe, the maintenance system allowed the B-17s and B-24s to average thirty flying hours per month of flying.[57] The single highest month of any operations in Europe was eighty-one flying hours per airplane[58] When LeMay took over XX Bomber Command in India, maintenance was doing worse than its European counterparts. The older aircraft were mature and known. The B-29 was not. In November of 1944, just after he took over, the B-29 was averaging thirty-eight flying hours per month and only twenty-one percent of launched aircraft actually dropped ordinance on the target.[59] By changing the maintenance system to what he tried in England and making the Service Group commander subordinate to the Wing Commander, the efforts produced an impressive flying capability.

In stateside training with full access to Boeing's Wichita maintenance and expertise, the B-29 program averaged 102 flying hours per airplane. LeMay was able to meet or beat that average, in the field

---

[56] Tillman, *LeMay*, 31.
[57] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 271.
[58] Frank, *Downfall*, 57.
[59] Kenneth P. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers over Japan during World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 146.

and in combat conditions. By February, each airplane was flying sixty hours per month and then averaged over 100 hours per month for the remaining months of the war.[60] More importantly, especially for the target-focused LeMay, the number of bombers across the target increased dramatically. By January, forty-four percent reached the primary target and dropped their bombs; by March, over eighty percent; and by May through the end of the war, over ninety percent reached the target.[61] The quicker the bombs fell, the quicker the war ended, according to his thinking. The new maintenance organization was not the only factor in increasing the performance of the B-29. Better weather, aircraft modifications, and different mission types all contributed to better performance. The results were seen not just in hours flown and percentage of bombers across the target but even in routine inspections. 100 and 200 hour inspections that routinely took three to four days to accomplish were down to eight to ten hours and engine changes that used to take twenty-four hours were done in half that time.[62]

Not everybody liked the new procedures. Most of his aircrews liked having one man responsible for their airplane, one man they could go to with the problems with the airplane, one who knew their particular airplane. But "LeMay was not one for sentiment; he was interested in efficiency and this scheme provided it."[63] The increase in aircraft availability attested to the results he was looking for.

This system followed LeMay to SAC and become the model for the Air Force to follow. Finding a problem and thinking outside the conventional norm again served LeMay well. He was a fact-based problem solver with hard numbers to back up his thinking.

---

[60] Werrell, *Blankets of Fire,* 146; LeMay cites 120 hours in his memoires and in *Superfortress*; a report by statistician Robert McNamara put the number at 92 hours/month (Frank's, *Downfall, 57).*

[61] Werrell, *Blankets of Fire,* 146.

[62] Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 146.

[63] Werrell, *Blankets of Fire,* 146.

Analysis

Changing the maintenance structure falls squarely under Yukl's planning and organizing responsibility of leaders. LeMay is looking to improve efficiency, productivity and for better coordination with other parts of the organization. LeMay's focus was on the delivery of combat capability, not sequestering aircraft as he perceived in Europe. By placing the Support Group under the wing commander rather than a separate chain of command, he increased the efficiency by unifying both elements under a single commander. The wing commander knew the challenges facing both and could choose to place effort in combat or long term force sustainment based on forecast tasking. It prevented differing priorities so the wing could focus on the command's responsibility: destroying Japanese military industry by application of airpower.

LeMay again falls into Bradford's traditional leader model in this vignette. LeMay was very focused on aircraft that could perform their combat capability rather than concerns over who might be offended at re-structuring of their empire. He knew he needed aircraft and integrating the maintenance under a single commander was the only way he saw to do it. While he looked for others ideas, it was not a popular idea with his crews or his maintenance personnel. The crews liked having a single person responsible for their aircraft, and maintenance liked the entrenched way of doing business. But neither efficiently contributed to producing aircraft to bomb Japan.

SAC: Wartime Mentality

When LeMay arrived at Strategic Air Command in 1948, it was unprepared and incapable of executing its mission. First, LeMay had to show SAC personnel how miserably they were performing. He ordered the entire command to attack the radar range at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, under simulated war time conditions. Not one airplane hit the target and far too many had to turn back for maintenance problems.

The core of the problem lay in SACs understanding of their role in America's military. President Truman, who had originally ordered the release of the atomic weapon, was focused more on downsizing the military and the nation's military economy than pursuing the gains from its military capability. Airplanes and ideas were relics from WW II with few innovations, and even fewer acquisition projects were in the works for the military. What little money was coming to the new Department of Defense was funneled toward nuclear research and delivery. Later, President Eisenhower relied heavily on the threat of nuclear force as a means to further downsize the military.

With the threat of Soviet attack in Europe and especially after the Soviets detonated their own nuclear weapon in 1949, SAC had to be able to react accurately and immediately. SAC did not understand this when LeMay took over in October, 1948. LeMay changed this with one action.

He changed their thinking to put SAC in a wartime mentality. "My determination was to put everyone in SAC into this frame of mind: *We are at war now*. So that, if actually we did go to war the very next morning or even that night, we would stumble through no period in which preliminary motions would be wasted. We had to be ready to go *then*."[64]

This simple act had immediate repercussions. First, the organization took on LeMay's own personality. He was known as "Iron Ass" as far back as 1942 for making the 305th train when no one else was. SAC took on LeMay's adherence to repetitive training, checklists, and Standard Operating Procedures. Even the SAC patch reflected his iron will to accomplish the mission.

Second, SAC needed a focus, what were they going to hit if they were going to war tonight or tomorrow. When LeMay arrived, they had no preplanned targets or plans to implement their nuclear role if tasked.

---

[64] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 436.

Getting targets drove an enormous reconnaissance effort to find the targets, eventually leading to the RB-47, the RC-135, the U-2 and eventually the SR-71. Once found, the targets had to be verified then assigned to different wings, an immense planning project. Eventually, every SAC airman had a preplanned target. He had studied it intently, and practiced bombing similar places. All of these targets were eventually integrated into the SIOP and all had a role in the nation's targeting plan.

Third, LeMay restructured SAC to as closely as possible mirror a wartime command structure rather than a peacetime structure. If they were going to war tonight, why add a change in command structure to the confusion? Instead, he gave SAC the communications and network capability to run the entire war from Offutt AFB, NE, matching the command structure he already instituted.

Finally, LeMay made possible the President's reliance on SAC as the nation's nuclear deterrence. In 1948, ICBMs did not yet functionally exist even if men like Doctor Warner Von Braun and Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Schreiver were actively pursuing the capability. SLBMs were a distant dream of the Navy to take some of the budgetary dollars away from the Air Force and give itself a more active role in the defense of the nation. During the 1950s, Eisenhower's Massive Retaliation was the predominant American nuclear theory. It deterred the Soviets during the first Berlin crisis and became the backbone against the iron curtain. LeMay postured SAC to mirror his own nuclear theory of massive attack if the nation decided to go to war.

Putting SAC on a wartime footing changed the mentality and focus of those assigned to it. Over time, SAC became the elite of the Air Force. It had the highest morale despite working the longest, most grueling hours. Its pride and desire to give the nation a viable nuclear deterrent now drove the people of SAC to excellence and accepting nothing less than perfection.

Analysis

All four of Yukl's leadership behaviors are seen in LeMay's formation of SAC. It began with problem solving, included planning and organizing, forced a continual assessment of their performance and best way to improve. One of the hallmarks that stands out in this example is recognizing and rewarding performance. LeMay provided tangible rewards for outstanding performance by awarding Lead Crew status, best practices, and spot promotions. He actively went to the Air Staff to get more spot promotions to encourage the culture he wanted. He helped create the SOPs to help his crews consistently perform at their best, removing individuality and mistakes that caused mishaps. This led to fewer mishaps and improved SAC's overall maintenance, bombing accuracy, and crew performance.

Of all the vignettes in this chapter, this one includes elements of both of Bradford's styles of leadership. LeMay created an organizational culture that was mission oriented and task focused. SAC was focused on mission accomplishment and commander responsibility, but LeMay still modeled the characteristics he wanted in his commanders, officers and men. At times he forced his way but at other times, he sought group ideas and thoughts as he made his decisions. LeMay exemplified the traits of both of Bradford's leadership models. He frequently found himself as Bradford's traditional leader, placing himself as the single decision point and driver to setting organizational goals and culture. But he also found ways to push thoughts and ideas generated during the discussion and thinking portion, similar to Bradford's group-centric theory. LeMay's experience, then, demonstrates that a commander needs to be able to use each model at the appropriate time. There are times when the responsibility falls directly on the commander, while other times, a group process, encouraging participation and buy-in to the process, is more appropriate and even a more efficient use of resources

and people. LeMay knew how to use both types of leadership to move SAC in the direction he knew it had to go.

Summary

Command is lonely, perhaps a position that well-suited LeMay from his childhood. He was used to being responsible, thinking through problems, and finding solutions. It helped that he envisioned the bigger picture of total war early in his command. What started as a desire to be more effective putting bombs on target became a passion for effectiveness and efficiency to destroy the enemy war capability while minimizing exposure and risk to his own men. It was a methodology in the Pacific; it became a system in Strategic Air Command. As long as he had done the research, thought out the best way to accomplish his mission, and considered the alternatives, LeMay was willing to risk going against conventional wisdom to accomplish his mission.

LeMay became a lightning rod for the 1950s as nuclear weapons matured. People on both sides realized the long struggle that lay ahead in the Cold War. On one hand, those opposed to nuclear weapons denounced the military as both source and product of the conflict. On the other hand, those who saw that not all men had the same altruistic motives for humanity, believed that LeMay and the military were doing exactly what needed to be done.

In these vignettes, he clearly shows each of the managerial behaviors Gary Yukl describes. He uses each in varying degrees to focus himself and his organization on their mission. LeMay enjoyed thinking through problems and enjoyed anyone who could spar with him on an intellectual basis and challenge his thinking.[65] He effectively used planning and organizing to form the commands he was given, even forming the iron-mailed fist of SAC after his own personality. To do so, he

[65] General Paul K Carlton, Sr, and LeMay figured out how to execute the SAC warplan, integrating air-air refueling and polar routes while they flew on trips around the world to visit SAC bases; Carlton was LeMay's Aide de Camp and ran LeMay's crew.

effectively used and sought more ways to recognize and reward outstanding performers. Finally, he constantly monitored operations and the environment to make them better. Assessment was a hallmark of LeMay's commands as he infused in them a passion to continue to improve bomb scores, maintenance efficiency and base-wide mission support.

LeMay certainly typified Bradford's traditional leader, but he used elements of group-centered leadership. His debriefs where his men could say anything, including emotional outbursts, were certainly a part of his leadership style. Doubtless he was seeking target destruction efficiency rather than divest elements of his command authority to subordinates, but he still knew how to use elements of both styles. His men knew he was very much in charge but still had buy-in to how their lives were being spent. When presenting his Wing and Group commanders with the change in tactics on low altitude firebombing Tokyo at night, he relies on them to sell the concept to their people, after their acceptance of the change. "'You've convinced me,' said one of his wing commanders. 'But I don't know if we can convince our crews that this isn't a suicide mission.' 'I wouldn't be recommending this if I thought it were a suicide mission.' LeMay replied. 'It's your job to convince your crews. Go back to your groups and commence training for night missions.'"[66] LeMay cared little for group feelings, but he did care about the acceptance of his Wing and Group commanders to carry out his intentions. Their acceptance assured, he was able to press with his plan.

LeMay's dominant leadership trait was as a commander, Bradford's traditional leader, and this chapter focused on those qualities. Command places responsibility and accountability squarely upon one individual. There are minor elements of his group-centric model on the periphery but command decisions and changes are a traditional leader

---

[66] Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 237-8.

model. This chapter has highlighted this by drawing attention to key points where LeMay, through a variety of methods, had to make key decisions that only he was accountable; group-centric leadership will dominate the next chapter.

Chapter 4

LeMay on Leadership

> *LeMay, supposedly the meanest, toughest commander in the Eighth Air Force, actually allowed his men to say anything they damned pleased about anyone in the room, including himself. And he didn't argue with them. He sat there and listened until they were through.*
>
> Colonel Carl Norcross

Curtis LeMay led. He did what he asked his people to do and demanded that his subordinate commanders mirror his example to their commands. Lieutenant General Butch Griswold, one of LeMay's deputies at SAC, commented, "The most important thing they had to do was fly airplanes. People lose sight of that. What was the Air Force for? Flying airplanes."[1] LeMay wanted his commanders to lead, to be out in front of their people and be competent in their duties. Even on his own staff, he demanded his personal crew adhere to the strict guidelines he demanded of his combat crews. His crew had to run as effectively as the rest of the command.[2] To prove his point, he asked his staff to rank the best wing and group commanders in SAC in 1957. Then he compared their rankings to the number of flying hours each leader in SAC accumulated. The lists were almost exact matches. The best commanders in SAC where the ones who flew, who knew their job and demonstrated their competency daily to the younger pilots. "He wanted his generals to fly, and he wanted his kids that had to put their ass on the line to know that their bosses were aviators."[3]

Foremost in LeMay's mind was personal competency. You have to be good at your job if you want to lead and certainly command. He

---

[1] Lieutenant General Francis "Butch" Griswold, Oral History Project, Air Force Historical Research Agency, April 1970.

[2] General Paul K Carlton, Sr was LeMay's Aide de Camp and commanded his crew. Comments to author.

[3] Lieutenant General James V. Edmundson, Oral History Project, Air Force Historical Research Agency, July 1978.

demanded this of himself and his subordinate commanders. He emphasized flying, hands-on leaders because they knew their command better. They interacted with their people, saw the problems happening and earned their men's respect by leading from the front. Their men would follow them into battle, not just wave as they flew off, perhaps not to return. It meant competency at one's own job but may also mean it in competency in others as well. LeMay was not afraid to fly as a co-pilot, gunner, or radio operator during the war. Many times he flew as a gunner so he could direct his command to a better formation or observe their gunnery skills. He did not always have to be out in front, but he always had to participate in his unit's activities.

Loyalty was another quality LeMay stressed. It went up and down the chain of command to him. "You can't sit up here and expect everybody to be loyal to you, you've got to be loyal to them. They're your people by God, there ain't anybody going to take care of them except you. . . . If you're going to win wars and win battles and so forth, you've got to get more out of your people than your opponent does and the only way you're going to get that is by doing something for them. . . . You've got to take care of your people."[4]

LeMay stressed group ownership. "If you take care of the people, why they'll take care of you and if you're going, they'll work and get the job done. They've got to feel that they're participating in the fight, in the planning. That they're on the team, that they're not being used. For instance, I never said my Strategic Air Command, it's our Strategic Air Command [to] somebody corning out to visit, the Chief of the Air Force, my boss, or the Vice Chief, or a Congressman."[5] He always had the people doing the work, present the briefings or presentations so they received the recognition they deserved. "I wanted to make my staff and

---

[4] General Curtis E. LeMay, USAF Oral History Project, 17 November 1976.
[5] LeMay, USAF Oral History Project, 17 November 1976.

commanders feel that they were as much a part of a team as I was and I wasn't up there trying to get all the credit for what we were doing. They were in the act. Then I'd try and payoff for performance by the promotions, by the efficiency reports, by seeing that they got a better job, by seeing that they got promoted."[6]

LeMay's final note on leadership is to separate the work from the individual. "You must separate your personal feeling about an individual from your judgment as a commander. In that way only can you produce a good outfit."[7]

LeMay demonstrated these concepts to his command by leading them, by preparing them, and caring for them. He shows it in the stories and applications that follow.

Professional Competence

LeMay led by example. He never asked his men to do things he was not willing to do himself. When he changed the tactics over Europe, and was also trying to correct a twenty percent abort rate, he told his crews he would court-martial anyone who frivolously aborted an airplane. Then he followed it up by flying the lead airplane of his group's missions.[8] The lead plane was statistically the most dangerous position as the ground gunners and German fighters targeted this airplane. His competence did not stop at piloting; he also knew all the other jobs on the airplane and routinely flew in their positions. He knew how to navigate, bomb and even the enlisted jobs as the engineer and gunners. And he did them well. It was not a trait he took on as a commander; it was a character trait developed over his many years of training before the war, one which LeMay attributed to his Commanding Officer in the 2nd Bombardment Group at Langley, VA, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Olds. Olds "penetrated

---

[6] LeMay, USAF Oral History Project, 17 November 1976.

[7] General Curtis LeMay and McKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 312.

[8] Robert McNamara quoted in Lesson 4 of Errol Morris' *The Fog of War*, Sony Picture Classics, 107 min., 2004, DVD.

my thick skull with a sense of urgency in getting things done. . . . The whole purpose of the Air Corps was to fly and fight in a war, and to be ready to fly and fight in that war at any given moment, if the war should come. That capability was what Olds required of his equipment and his people. Any individual or any ideal which worked toward an increased state of efficiency in his organization was welcome. Anything which mitigated against that efficiency was not tolerated. Life was just as simple as that; and thus life was made inspiring."[9] LeMay reflected Olds' thinking – if you were not professionally competent and contributing to the success of the mission, LeMay would find another job for you. He "believed that a thorough professional should know all the aspects of his trade. He succeeded, being widely regarded as the best pilot, navigator, and bombardier in any unit he joined."[10]

When he made the transition from pursuit to bombers in 1936, only the older, experienced pilots flew the airplanes. The younger, less experienced flew in the different roles required throughout the B-10 and shortly the B-17. They did not have Navigators or Bombardiers, just pilots that rotated through each role, without developing great skills in any single position. Through this system, LeMay learned how to use the Norden bomb sight better than his bombardiers and navigate better than his navigators. Of the two additional pre-war pilot positions, LeMay was the best navigator in the Air Corps and proved it on two of the Air Corps most critical pre-war tests: finding the *Utah* and *Rex* in the open sea.[11]

Navigator: *Utah* and *Rex*

By chance, LeMay went to the Air Corps' earliest schools on navigation as aircraft range and endurance increased beyond which normal pilotage skills could manage. He continued to improve on that

---

[9] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 131.
[10] Barrett Tillman, *LeMay: Great General Series*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 18.
[11] Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2008), 61.

skill when he and his flying school classmate, John Egan, began teaching navigation to the pilots at Wheeler and Hickam fields during their tour at Hawaii. Thinking he needed to learn bombardment, he let Egan teach the course when he got to Langley Field, but the expertise developed from teaching in Hawaii already made him a top notch navigator. He proved it as the lead navigator during two trips to South America. One showed the American flag during the Argentine inauguration in 1938 and another to Columbia the same year. But the *Utah* and the *Rex* were LeMay hallmarks that impressed his superiors with his competency and capability for future leadership.

In August, 1937, the Air Corps was engaged in a fight to prove its existence and relevance to the nation. Brigadier General Billy Mitchell had bombed the *Ostfriesland* several years prior but still the nation did not believe in air power's ability to defend the nation's sea borders. Major General Frank Andrews committed the Air Corps to a test rigged by the Navy, where "not only the future fate of the B-17 but also the future of GHQ AF [General Headquarters Air Force] might hinge upon our success or failure."[12] The essence of the task was the Air Corps had to find the battleship *USS Utah,* then attack it using Navy practice water bombs. The Navy set the entire scenario in their favor. First, it was conducted off the coast of California in August – a time known for heavy fog that could run for three to five hundred miles off the coast.[13] Second, they mandated the B-17s and B-10s involved in the exercise use Mark VII water bombs, a bomb type unknown to the Air Corps. Due to "supply problems" they were unable to provide any prior to the exercise so the Airman could study the differences in performance from their normal bombs. [14] Finally, all reconnaissance was to be provided by the Navy. They would report the

---

[12] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 146.

[13] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 144.

[14] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 144. The Mark VII was made of stove-pipe metal and filled with water. When and if the Air Corps found and hit the *Utah* it would not physically damage the battleship.

position of the battleship to the Air Corps who would then send the B-17s long range and the B-10s short range to find the *Utah*. The exercise was conducted from 12 noon on August 12th through noon on the 13th, with no bombs allowed to fall after dark or after noon on the 13th, inside an exercise area of over one hundred thousand square miles of sea.

When the exercise began, it quickly became apparent the Navy would not be forthcoming with any position reports. Growing anxious, Lieutenant Colonel Olds ordered his aircraft out to sea to start searching. They had no direction or initial vector, only a reasoned location from Brigadier General Delos Emmons, the commander of the so-called Defending Forces. He reasoned the *Utah* would enter the exercise area from the southwest with a feint towards San Francisco, then during the night change course to simulate an attack on San Pedro bay, the southern boundary of the exercise area.[15] They took off on that assumption and searched for the reminder of the afternoon.

Just before dark, they received an alleged position report from the Navy. LeMay plotted it and found they were near the reported position and could make it before night. He quickly pointed the formation of B-17s towards the alleged position. They searched till dark and found nothing. LeMay gave Olds a vector and time to return to base after the fruitless search. Olds was furious that they did not find the *Utah* and questioned LeMay's ability to get them to the right location. In his defense, LeMay told Olds that if he was right about their location, he could expect to see San Francisco beneath the clouds in fifteen minutes. He was right about his location and time to San Francisco, forcing Olds to question the Navy about the position report they passed. During the night, Olds excitedly woke LeMay and told him he had been right. "The Navy now admits that they were one degree off in the position which they gave us. An unfortunate mistake, they said. One degree! They were sixty

---

[15] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 145.

miles off. No wonder we couldn't find that son of a bitch!"[16] It was obvious the Navy was not going to play fairly in the exercise.

The next morning, the Airmen were anxious to prove their capability. Fog covered the coast where the aircraft were based. The Navy did not launch their patrol aircraft to go find the *Utah*. Once again, the Airmen launched early in the hopes that they would be closer than still being on the ground when any position report was finally passed. At some point while they were out over the sea positioning themselves, the Navy passed a position report. LeMay plotted it and quickly realized they were not going to make the rendezvous by the noon deadline. The B-17s tried anyway and dropped down below the fog layer to start looking along the way.

"It was the greatest happenstance in the world that we ran over that damn vessel shortly before noon. It wasn't supposed to be there. We had been handed an erroneous position report for the second time. . . . They had given us the wrong latitude by one degree."[17] The *Utah* was there before them. It was flying the International Preparatory Flag, the pre-agreed sign to mark the *Utah* verses other ships in the area.[18] The B-17 formation dropped their bombs five minutes before the end of the exercise. The B-10s almost made it to the position as well – they showed up just three minutes after noon, but outside the agreed exercise time. The *Utah* never expected to be found. Men were laying on the top decks sunning themselves and scrambled below decks when the B-17s showed up, threatening their quiet morning. The Air Corps found the *Utah* by luck, but it was LeMay's competence the night prior that allowed the Air Corps to confront the Navy about their poor position report, even if the "mistake" was repeated the next day.

---

[16] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 147.
[17] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 148.
[18] LeMay had to dig this out as well as no other information came from the Navy.

A year later, LeMay found himself again in the practical aspects of proving air power to the nation. This time, Lieutenant Colonel Ira Eaker, Chief of Information, dreamed up an exercise to show air power's alacrity in range and endurance by promising to intercept a ship far out at sea. Ground work was accomplished for the B-17s to intercept the civilian liner *Rex* some 600 miles offshore. The Navy wanted nothing to do with the exercise as they were still smarting from their loss of prestige the year prior with the *Utah*. The lead navigator was again Curtis LeMay, the Air Corps best. Once again, the future of the Air Corps was on the shoulders of Lieutenant LeMay. Relayed privately, LeMay later commented that General Andrews and the Navy Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William D. Leahy, had a gentlemen's bet on the results of the exercise. If the Air Corps successfully intercepted the *Rex*, it would get the B-17 and the coastal defense of the nation. If they failed, the Navy would receive more battleships and the B-17 cut. The losing service would not object to the funding before Congress.[19]

The larger context were battles on going about service roles and missions. In 1933, General Douglas MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, and Admiral William Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, "had agreed that the Air Corps would defend the U.S. coast and that Navy aircraft would defend the sea. No one, however, specified how far from land Air Corps airplanes would operate. The agreement was useful for Pratt, who wanted to free up resources to develop the Navy as an offensive, rather than a defensive, force. After Pratt retired, the new CNO, Admiral William H. Standley, ignored the agreement, and the interservice struggle over the coastal defense mission resumed."[20]

---

[19] General LeMay to Lieutenant General (Ret) Paul K. Carlton, Jr, in 1968 (then Cadet Carlton) and relayed to the author.

[20] John T. Correll, "Rendezvous With the Rex," *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 91, No. 12 December 2008, 55.

On 12 May, the intercept was set up as part of Eaker's larger war game. LeMay had been working on the project for some time, learning the sea routes in the area, examining and increasing his knowledge on what routes might be taken and where the liner might be if they were given partial or bad information. The day before, the Italian cruise liner's offices called to report the *Rex's* position and give LeMay a calculation start of where they would need to go the next day.

The weather was terrible that day but the intercept could not be postponed. For an unknown reason, the *Rex's* offices failed to call with a position report to sharpen LeMay's calculations. Instead, he was pressed to go ahead with the information he had. Eaker and Andrews had another part of the plan they did not immediately reveal: the aircrews knew there would be reporters and photographers on board the aircraft to record the intercept, but did not know they would broadcast live from the belly of the aircraft – 600 miles out to sea. Just before takeoff, the aircraft commander, Capt C. V. Haynes, came up to LeMay and asked him if he had an idea when they would encounter the *Rex.* LeMay estimated 1225. He learned in a few hours that meant the National Broadcasting Corporation would be broadcasting live from his B-17 to millions of people when the intercept should be happening.

While the Navy did not participate in the exercise, they still had a hand in it and desperately tried to derail it before and after the intercept. Many years later, LeMay privately recounted their role. LeMay was suspicious after their experience with the Navy the year prior. He went to the radio room where the coordinates would be passed from the *Rex's* offices to the weather station, a function carried out by the Navy. He asked for print outs from all of their machines and noticed on one that was not used frequently that the 8s became 3s on copy three and below – the printer was not strong enough for reliable pressure to accurately give

the correct number, the reason the Navy normally did not use the machine.[21]

As they prepared to takeoff in the driving rain, a hatch opened and a last update was thrust down to LeMay. The initial position put the *Rex* well off any shipping routes.[22] When LeMay transposed the 8s for 3s, he found the liner still a distance away from where he expected to find them, reducing any margin of error they previously had.

The weather did not improve once airborne and the trip to the expected rendezvous point was both miserable and traumatic. They were going through a cold front with heavy turbulence and precipitation. Further complicating their mission were low ceilings forecast in the area they were supposed to find the steamship.[23] Enroute, LeMay found their groundspeed ten knots slower than planned and putting them further behind the expected rendezvous and radio broadcast time. They were bounced from 600 to 6,000 feet in altitude and went around countless thunderstorms, complicating LeMay's calculations and navigation to get the formation to where they thought the *Rex* would be at 12:25.

As the intercept time approached, the weather broke. The three B-17s put ten miles between each of them to increase their search grid. Just before 12:25 the squall they were in broke and they found themselves over open skies.

There, before them, was the steamship *Rex*. LeMay had kept them on track through the thunderstorms, turbulence and driving rain to put them right on the stern of the *Rex,* exactly at the time expected, a point NBC further emphasized during its live broadcast.

After declining an invitation to afternoon tea, the three Flying Fortresses turned back into the same miserable weather they just came through. LeMay remembers the trip home being more miserable than the

---

[21] LeMay to Lieutenant General Paul K Carlton, Jr, relayed to the author.
[22] LeMay to Lieutenant General Paul K Carlton, Jr, relayed to the author.
[23] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 187.

trip to the intercept. To cap it off, they nearly ran out of fuel, but all the airplanes landed safely back at Mitchell Field on Long Island, NY.

Commenting on the exercise, *The New York Times* reported, "It was an imaginary and bloodless conflict, but one from which valuable lessons about the aerial defense of the United States will be drawn, and one which already has furnished . . . a striking example of the mobility and range of modern aviation."[24]

The Navy complained bitterly about the rendezvous to the Army Chief of Staff, General Malin Craig. In response, Craig placed a 100 mile limit on the responsibility of the Army Air Corps in coastal defense and navigation exercises. Later, Major General Stanley G. Embick lamely suggested the restriction was for safety, but a year later, the War Department authorized several exceptions, provided there was no publicity.[25] Major General Andrews asked to see the order in writing. No one else ever saw it. Interestingly, Brigadier General Hap Arnold, Assistant Chief of the Air Corps, never saw the order though Andrews told Eaker he had a copy at his office in London.[26] The order was never found in writing after Andrews died in a plane crash in 1943, though it was certainly enforced prior to the war. Arnold had an interesting observation on the topic that he published in his memoirs in 1949. "As far as I know, however, that directive has never been rescinded. A literal-minded judge advocate might be able to find that every B-17, B-24 or B-29 that bombed Germany or Japan did so in technical violation of a standing order."[27]

LeMay proved his competency. Later, he was not afraid to demonstrate proficiency in all crew positions but he was also willing to

---

[24] Hanson W. Baldwin, "Flying Fortresses Meet Liner at Sea," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1938, 3.
[25] Correll, "Rendezvous" 57.
[26] Correll, "Rendezvous" 57.
[27] General of the Air Forces Henry "Hap" Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York, NY: Harper, 1949), 177.

take the same, if not greater, risks that he asked of his men. He flew the lead position of the bomber formations, he flew C-47s in the Berlin Airlift and later flew in his SAC airplanes wherever he went. It was hallmark LeMay to be competent in his pilot duties, no matter what rank or position he maintained in the command. It was a trait he demanded of his commanders and infused into his subordinates at all levels.

Analysis

LeMay's time at Langley flying B-10s and later B-17s is not a hallmark of leadership or command. He is not personally preparing the men under his command or responsibility for war time tasking. He is not attempting to train to be better or provide better tools as will be found in the next vignette from his life. But the story is foundational to building credibility and leveraging it to become an effective leader.

General LeMay and Col Tim Hale both commented earlier when they observed who made the best leaders and commanders. LeMay observed the same trait years prior as the commander as SAC. He knew the best division and wing commanders were those that flew and proved it with the staff assessments and hours each commander flew with their commands. Hale noted that the best leaders and later squadron commanders were those that were already respected for their personal competency and had credibility in their aircraft. Those that are not credible struggle for respect when they take command and struggle to lead their command.

LeMay strove for personal excellence in all he did, or as Bradford articulates it, modeling, a building block of his group-centric leader. He worked hard to be very good at what he did – a requirement from his very early childhood when he helped carry the provider role for his family. This quality built his credibility for the future. When he commanded the 305th, his men already knew he was professionally competent at his job. While he and his Executive Officer were the only two that had flown the B-17 and multi-engine aircraft, and he had the credibility of his past

accomplishments. His men knew he spoke with competent authority. This gave him the ability from his leadership attributes for his men to trust him when he told them they were going to fly straight and level from the initial point to the target to improve the accuracy of their bombing rather than jinking to avoid flak that posed more of a psychological threat than a real threat to shoot them down. Coupled with the moral courage to expose himself to as much and more danger as his men ensured his men would follow him as he exposed them to untried tactics on their first combat mission.

Relentless Pursuit of Execution

LeMay was about performance. He drove himself to be the best at whatever he did. Rather than enjoying the fruits of his labor during middle and high school, he kept working so he could help provide for his mother and siblings. Rather than enjoy sunset views on the beaches of Hawaii, he spent them with his wife holding his sextant as he perfected his navigation skills. Rather than enjoy dinner parties during the war in England and Guam, he felt uncomfortable and preferred to get back to work, caring about his two greatest passions: target destruction and his men. He did not care about politics, religion, or personal views; he cared about job performance. Ralph Nutter, LeMay's B-17 lead navigator in the 305th and later member of his staff in Guam, distinctly remembers this quality about him. Nutter and LeMay differed greatly in their political views: LeMay the mid-west conservative and Nutter a Harvard educated, left-leaning liberal. But they worked effectively together for many years in various capacities. He tells a story when LeMay wanted to change the barracks configuration from open bays to a two man to a room configuration while he was at SAC.

> When he had to go to Washington with his new dorm room plan, he ran into an obstacle. The first question that one Congressman put to him was: "Supposed you get two 'homos' in the same room?"

> LeMay sidestepped the question by saying: "I thought we weren't supposed to have any of them." And that put an end to the discussion. But it reinforced his long-standing perspective—the personal lives of the men serving under LeMay were simply not an issue. "All LeMay cared about was performance," remembers Ralph Nutter. "He never asked anyone their politics or religion or anything else. He just looked at their performance."[28]

He cared about keeping his people alive and equipping them so they could execute in combat with minimal risk. This was his passion.

Lead Crews and Target Folders

LeMay was not satisfied with his B-17 bombing performance. They solved part of the problem by steadying the aircraft on the IP to Target run but the navigators and bombardiers were not getting adequate study time to identify accurately their target. Usually a crew was woke at 4 A.M., rolled into a shower, had a sloppy breakfast and then into the briefing room.

> Then they pull the curtain apart (for Security reasons there was no unveiling until Briefing began) and there is a big map on the wall, with a string of red yard going from our Base all the way over to an Initial Point somewhere on the continent of Europe; and then breaking away from that IP in another direction, and leading to the Aiming Point. So that path of red yarn show our bombardier that he's going somewhere, and this is the first time he's ever seen the damn place on a map. Maybe the first time he's ever *heard* of it. . . . Following the regular Briefing we give the bombardiers and navigators a Specialized Briefing, hoping to make them recognize the target. We get out some pictures of the place—of at least one—and it's been blown up for a slide. And that's put up on the screen. Or maybe there's just a drawing of the target. So our Bold Bombardier Norden examines these pictures also. And that's all the target study he's had. That's what I mean when I say, "The trouble was, the bombardiers *never had a chance.*"[29]

---

[28] Kozak, *LeMay*, 296.

[29] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 255.

The result was that even if the intent was to bomb a specific target under the Air Corps "daylight precision" bombing theory, they were not getting the target prep and time to identify the target. LeMay set out to change it, and the rest of 8th Air Force with the performance of his crews.

He and his staff divided up the areas they thought they would eventually strike and started assigning different crews responsibility for the target areas, putting them together into target folders. When crews were familiar with a given area and the target they were responsible for flashed up behind the curtain, they became the lead aircraft and crew for the day with the rest of the formation relying on their navigation to the target, their IP-Target run and their weapons release to be as accurate as they could. "Previously there had always existed the benign assumption that any crew in the Command could fly to any target in the world, and bomb it; and it would be bombed, and stay bombed. . . . Anybody could go out in the California or Arizona desert, in picture-postcard weather when you could see for a hundred miles— Anybody could bomb a friendly distinct white circle. . . . No smog, no industrial haze, no seven-tenths cloud. The area wasn't built up. No floundering mass of rail lines, canals, bridges, factories, docks, civilian residential areas, hospitals, oil-tanks, prisoner-of-war concentrations— No mangled puzzle of things to be attacked and things to be missed at all hazards."[30]

That is exactly what LeMay intended to do with Target Folders for all the crews, to enhance their ability to get to the target. Then, he formalized the Lead Crew concept. Once a crew had ten to fifteen missions, his staff selected the best crews to attend Lead Crew school where they became experts in a given area. The crew studied target photos, maps and information about the target, making them more effective over the target area. It was a crew concept and therefore crew substitutions were not allowed on actual missions. They had to stay

---

[30] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 258-9.

together.[31] He remembers that this system got a lot of good, talented men killed – they had to lead from the front, the most dangerous position in the bomber formation. But it also meant more bombs got to the target and in LeMay's calculus, meant the war ended quicker and saved more lives in aggregate, the purpose of the Lead Crews.

> That is exactly where the skill in picking up routes came in. If you could find your IP, with a river running right into the target, and a road beside the railroad running into the target— You could get on that, and ride as if you were an escalator. You'd run down the river; the target *had* to show.
>
> And if you enjoyed enough time, you could get your bombsight leveled, you could get your drift killed, you could get your rate practically killed, before you ever got to the target. . . . You know what the wind velocity is, and you know what your drift is going to be when you turn on it. So you turn on the proper heading; you don't drift off, even if there's no river or road or canal or railroad to follow. . . .
>
> All this could be developed in Lead Crews by sheer concentrated study in advance. Not only was the bombardier on the ball: the navigator was on the ball and he took you to the right place at the right time. The crew was set, coordinated.
>
> That's what got more bombs on the targets for us.[32]

Though he developed it in Europe, Lead Crews became trademark LeMay in later years. He elevated the concept to the 3rd Division and later with the B-29s in the Pacific. He institutionalized the school when he took over SAC.

Lead Crews served SAC the same as they served LeMay in WW II, but also became a tool SAC used to improve Standardized Operating Procedures. Only the best crews became Lead Crews and those became standardized – a way to improve bombing scores when nuclear stockpiles were low and aircraft formations were shrinking. SAC started the Lead

---

[31] General Curtis LeMay, USAF Oral History Project, March 1965.
[32] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 259.

Crew school in 1949 at Walker Air Force Base, NM. Thirty-six of SAC's best went through a two and a half month course on best practices and techniques, particularly in radar bombing since that was not dependent on weather for consistent scores.[33] Graduates of Lead Crew school were expected to return to their units and train other crews, teaching them the same skill sets they learned. This improved standardization among SAC crews and eventually became SAC standard. The school eventually moved to a permanent location at McDill AFB, FL where it became the Combat Crew Standardization School.

The proof of the concept was the bomb scores. "The more crews that went through the school, the more it paid off in terms of units' better bomb scores."[34] When LeMay took over SAC, the average miss distance for all bombers was 3,679 feet. Partly as a result of the Lead Crews and partly out of emphasis, the scores improved in just one year. The medium bombers (B-29s and B-50s) were down to 2,928 feet and the heavy bombers (B-36s) down to 2,268 feet.[35] The principles can still be found today in the USAF's Weapons School that emphasizes the same best practices, techniques, and procedures, taught to unit's best aviators.

Debriefs

LeMay addressed all aspects of the mission to help his people. He set them up for success by making sure they had the best tools to succeed over the target area with Target Folders. He took the best crews and made them responsible for specific areas so they could effectively lead the formation to the target, bettering the unit's bombing. He had one more area: the debrief – learning from what just happened to prevent it

---

[33] Dr Melvin G. Deaile, "The SAC Mentality: The Origins of Organizational Culture in Strategic Air Command, 1946-1962" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2007), 139.

[34] Deaile, "The SAC Mentality," 140.

[35] Office of SAC History, *History of Strategic Air Command, 1949* (Offutt AFB, NE: Strategic Air Command, 1950), 141.

from happening again if it went poorly or capturing the lessons if it went well. "You must wring the greatest possible benefit out of every lesson. And you must train yourself grimly to adopt a philosophical attitude with regard to those losses. If you're going to fight you're going to have some people killed. But if you have done everything humanly possible to prepare for that mission and plan it properly, and you have observed that it was properly executed, and you have attained the results which you wished to attain—Then you can think, and feel in your heart, 'The losses were paid for.'"[36]

One of the 305th's first missions against Germany was a 27 January attack on the submarine building yard in Vegesack. The cloud cover forced them to their alternate target where broken skies allowed some visibility and fifty-eight of the sixty-four Flying Fortresses dropped their bomb loads with no fighter or flak defenses. On the way home, sixty Luftwaffe fighters appeared to challenge the Americans, shooting down three B-17s. The B-17s claimed twenty-two fighters shot down which LeMay knew to not be true.[37] The results were at best, "fair," and LeMay was not happy. When they got home, LeMay ordered his group back into the air to practice their formation and gunnery skills.

When they got back on the ground, he brought everyone with anything to do with the mission to the Enlisted Men's Mess Hall, the largest place on the base. The doors were closed, keeping everyone else out and more importantly, reminding those inside that anything said, stayed inside that room. He quickly established the rules: Anyone from a private to a colonel could say anything they pleased about the performance of anyone on the mission.[38] "'We've got a lot to learn' he told them at the beginning. 'We want to know what went right, what went

---

[36] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 313.

[37] Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1986), 47. Post-war examination of German documents showed seven fighters shot down.

[38] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 48.

wrong, and why it went wrong. And each of you is in the act. Everybody has his say. If you think your group commander is a stupid son-of-a-bitch, now is the time to say it. And why.'"[39] This came not only out of a desire to improve the performance of his crews, but also as an obligation to the men he was leading and potentially sending to die every time they flew.

Colonel Carl Norcross was an intelligence officer and flew some missions with the 305th. He attended some of the later mission debriefs and was amazed that the men could truly speak their minds.

> Norcross had known a lot of colonels and generals who talked as if they wanted their men to speak up to them, but quickly put the men down when they did so. With such commanders, the men soon learned they had better figure out what the boss was thinking and agree with him. But LeMay, supposedly the meanest, toughest commander in the Eighth Air Force, actually allowed his men to say anything they damned pleased about anyone in the room, including himself. And he didn't argue with them. He sat there and listened until they were through. Then he might say a few words. But he seldom said more than a few. . . .
>
> At his postmission briefings LeMay was usually the last person to speak. And he usually spoke succinctly. If somebody had made a bad suggestion he would ignore it. If somebody made a good one he would approve it. If it became apparent that some new policy of procedure was needed, he would say, "From now one we'll do it that way." If a question had arisen that took more thought, he would leave it hanging. Later, perhaps in bed that night, he would mull it over. He might even call his staff into his office and get their ideas. Ultimately he would make the decision, but in the meantime, he would have made his men realize they were part of that decision. He wanted his men to feel the outfit was not his but theirs. "I never said 'I,'" he later recalled. "I always said 'we.'"[40]

---

[39] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 48.

[40] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 48-50.

Open debriefs followed him to the Pacific and later to SAC. Early during his tenure with XX Bomber Command, he sent sixteen B-29s across Tokyo during the day and from east to west – into the heart of the jet stream, a phenomena they were still learning about at the time. They went across the target in trail formation which meant the first one was shot at, the second one got hit and the next fourteen were shot down after the gunners zeroed in on the first two. Capt Paul Carlton Sr. flew the second aircraft. During the debrief, LeMay challenged the leader of the formation why he lost so many men. Carlton, though not the leader, told him it was the poor tactics planned by the staff. LeMay looked at him coolly and said, "Alright Captain. You lead the next mission." Capt Carlton led the next day by taking the B-29s from west to east, with the jet stream, and in line abreast formation, tremendously reducing the exposure time for the B-29s. All the aircraft returned home.[41]

He also used debriefs to mentor his men. Robert McNamara tells a story in the post-mission debrief after the March 10th firebombing raid over Tokyo. During the debrief, one of his pilots got up and challenged LeMay, looking right at him. "God Dammit! . . . Who was the son-of-a-bitch who took this airplane down to 5,000 feet? I lost my wingman."[42] He felt LeMay was reckless taking the world's biggest bomber down to such altitudes, a different mission and role. Rather than his usual curt response, LeMay took the opportunity to remind the pilot, and the rest of the aircrews assembled of their larger purpose. "'Why are we here? . . . Why are we here? Yes, you lost your wingman and it hurts me as much as it does you. I was the one who sent him there. And I've been there. I know what this is. But we lost one wingman and we destroyed Tokyo.' LeMay understood that sacrifice was necessary in the short term for the greater goal of winning the war and ending the massive killing—on all

[41] Relayed to the author by General Paul K. Carlton, Sr.
[42] Kozak, *LeMay*, 231.

sides. That included U.S. airmen as well as Japanese civilian casualties."[43]

The debriefs formed a significant cornerstone of LeMay's aircrew improvement. They were critical for his men to buy into the process and continue to improve not only their own performance but also the Group's. "We began that [debriefs] in the 305th; nobody else had done it, over there in England. But I instituted a critique after each mission, to try and find out exactly what we'd done wrong. It worked. We carried out that idea in SAC later on. In every SAC outfit which was loaned to the Far East Air Force during the Korean War, they held thorough post-mission discussions. By that time it was just old hat in those well-trained SAC crews."[44]

Analysis

Three of Yukl's managerial qualities stand out from these vignettes. First, LeMay was problem solving. He was actively trying to figure out how to do his organization's job better. He was trying to get the most from his men be more effective destroying the German war-machine. His product was two-fold. First, he was trying to do a better job at hitting targets. He trained the crews and gave them the necessary tools to do a better job, giving them an enabling formation to help them survive – to be more reliable getting to the target, finding the target and get more bombs on target. Second, he was trying to increase efficiency and effectiveness at the same time. Making his crews more efficient and effective meant they would not have to come back to the target, reducing exposure to German defenses.

The second quality he displayed was planning and organizing. He was looking at what they did to self-assess continually and make it better. When LeMay arrived in theater, the bombers were actively

---

[43] Kozak, *LeMay*, 232.

[44] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 312-3.

bombing, but they were not hitting anything! Commanders were content knowing they were hitting something but not keeping the bigger vision in mind – ending the war by actually destroying the target. Targets continually had to be re-attacked because they were not being hit. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness meant the bombers would contribute to the war effort and actually disrupt and destroy German capability, reducing resistance for the ground forces and ending the war sooner.

Finally, LeMay monitored the operations and environment through his formal debriefs. He used them to gather information on the process, what other members of the formation saw, what was working well, what went poorly, what could be improved, and other ideas his men had. If his men saw something that was not right, they had the right and expectation to bring it up and propose a solution. This was unique for the time though the characteristic is ingrained in successful flying operations today.

It is also instructive to reflect on Bradford's leadership types in this analysis. LeMay was predominantly a traditional leader, retaining ultimate approval authority and keeping his command on track, but here LeMay exhibited some qualities of a group-centric leader. He not only sought the opinions of his command, but he set the tone by establishing a climate of approval to express ideas and observations. He cared about getting better, but he recognized he was not the sole possessor of brilliant ideas. He had to draw them out of his men and get them to think, not just rely on the chain of command to tell them how to do it better. Establishing the climate helped the command's performance and got group buy-in to the process and procedures used. Even though he retained ultimate approval authority, he still created the environment to encourage group participation and buy-in to the process.

Quality of Life

As a Lieutenant, LeMay noted quality of life issues, ways to make life better for his men. As a Lieutenant at Selfridge, he was the Mess Officer. He was not senior nor experienced enough in bringing mass meals to people but he noted it was an important way to take care of the men – feeding them properly with adequate fresh meat, fruits and vegetables. He carried this life lesson of caring for his people with him throughout his career and expanded on it, particularly during his time at SAC when he demanded so much of his crews.

Housing

Air Force bases in the 1950s were not near major metropolitan areas. Airplanes were still developing the safety practices known today. Trying to keep cities safe from airplane accidents, the Air Force put bases in rural areas rather than major metropolitan areas – making housing an issue for the men and their families. The work structure of SAC also made open-bay barracks life difficult for the enlisted men, disturbing the rest each man needed from different shifts. LeMay recognized this and worked to improve conditions for his people.

The Air Force kept most of the facilities and structure given them by the Army, including the open-bay barrack concept for enlisted men. As SAC moved to a war-time mentality and 24 hour operations capability, open-bay barracks became disruptive to the men's rest and affected on-duty performance. LeMay wanted to separate two men into rooms with two single beds, shared bath (with another two man room) and proper furniture – not as the metallic beds and foot lockers for private storage so associated with military life.

LeMay tried to work with the Army Corps of Engineers but their only solution was to provide more wooden, open-bay barracks. LeMay cut them out, figuring he could do it faster and cheaper, and build the quiet his men needed. He built the first three of the "SAC-style" barracks at Offutt without the Corps of Engineers, using material and men at Offutt.

Despite the usual non-diplomatic manner with which he is attributed, he went to local civic leaders for help furnishing the dorms so the men had more than cots to use. Arthur Storz, a World War I veteran, father of two sons who served in the Air Corps during WW II and then the wealthiest man in Omaha, helped him out. At a dinner at his brewery with many of the wealthiest men in Omaha, the master of ceremonies, informed the attendees after dinner that, "General LeMay has these three barracks built out at Offutt but not furnished. We're going to furnish them for him. The amount each of you is expected to give is on the envelope in front of you."[45] The barracks were furnished. Instead of cots, they had Simmons beds, dressers, desks, and table lamps each with chairs – a gift from the people of Omaha. The men took so much pride in their quarters they paid out of their own pockets to have them cleaned by civilian janitors.[46] Better yet, the Corps of Engineers saw what had been done, acquiesced, and started building them across SAC. Later, they became the model of the Army and Navy as they changed their enlisted living conditions.

LeMay did not stop there. He next tackled family housing. Early during his time, men housed their families in corners of garages, backrooms, even chicken coops.[47] Conditions were challenging for the families at best. LeMay sought to use the money his men were given to live off base and build base housing with it. His staff thought they could pay the bill for a house in four years. After legal roadblocks from the Air Force Comptroller, LeMay dusted off his political acumen and approached Senator Kenneth S. Wherry for Congressional help. With Wherry's help, he was able to get proper housing for SAC bases, not just in Omaha but around the country. It cost more than LeMay's original

---

[45] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 296.
[46] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 296.
[47] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 468.

proposal but his people and their families were housed in what became known around the Air Force as "Wherry Housing."[48]

Recreation

LeMay had few recreational activities. He simply did not have time. Even as a child, he only had two hobbies: ham radios and hunting. His interest in ham radios sparked his curiosity in airplane's electronics, and personal interest in electronics. As the Chief of Staff, one of his proudest moments was completing a color television set from scratch.[49] Hunting and his guns were the other. He loved to hunt with the limited time he afforded himself away from work. His guns were his pride. But he recognized others needed an avenue to relax on base. "In many ways recreation was more important to the men whom I commanded than it was to me. I would stay on in the Air Force; it was the only thing I knew how to do or wanted to do. But our reenlistment rate was pretty pitiful. It was a knotty problem—one which we had attacked from every conceivable standpoint. Suddenly it seemed to me that if we fired up a new form of off-duty recreation, that might help a bit." So, he started many of the programs that remain in the Air Force today. His contribution to his men and their families' recreation and self-improvement was significant enough that the Air Force's annual award for excellence in Morale, Welfare and Recreation is named after him.

Two areas are especially attributed to LeMay: Auto Hobby shops and Aero Clubs. He loved to fiddle with cars, starting with the old Ford Model T he owned in college then throughout his career up through his time in DC as the Chief of Staff. While at SAC, it occurred to him that others may enjoy this as well so he emptied an old warehouse that was not being used effectively and started pursuing tools and power equipment to fill it. The first time he called for volunteers, he and two

---

[48] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 471-2.

[49] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 31.

sergeants were the only three men to show up to start prepping the new building.[50] He found tools and equipment from local businesses that were getting rid of older ones or businesses that just wanted to contribute to the military out of the goodness of their heart. Then it started snowballing. "To begin with, it was a kind of do-it-yourself garage."[51] The men started replacing carburetors, fuel pumps, radiators or whatever else was wrong with their cars. Then the airmen started talking about it to their friends and they started getting excited about cheaper vehicle maintenance. "That was the way it went: people started building cars, making hot rods, sports cars, fiddling with engines, souping them up, so on."[52] LeMay's own passion for cars showed itself too. He built two hot rods while at SAC. Later, he allowed car races on the runways at SAC bases, provided they could be quickly cleared if an alert event happened. This was stopped for legal reasons but they were a tremendous success for his command.

Auto hobby shops were his first success; success number two was the Aero Club. While hunting around for a good place for the auto hobby shop, LeMay noticed an old, beat up Piper Cub-like aircraft hidden away in an obscure hanger. With a little inquiry, he discovered ten of his men chipped in the money to buy it and were in the process of restoring it after a hail storm. It became the genesis of SAC's and later the Air Force's Aero Clubs where many members and dependents learned how to fly. By the time LeMay left Offutt in 1957, the Offutt Aero Club had 12 airplanes, worth one hundred thousand dollars or more.[53]

---

[50] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 451.
[51] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay,* 451.
[52] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 451.
[53] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay,* 453.

Divorce Rates

By 1954, five years after LeMay took over SAC and changed its thinking, SAC had one of the highest divorce rates in the country.[54] But, "There was no way that General LeMay was going to reduce [SAC's] capability as if he were walking away from a commitment. The wives suffered. The crewmembers suffered. It's true that this brought on some divorces, but it was patched up within a period of time."[55] Some wives tried to join their husbands on alert by traveling with them overseas, others took to writing their Congressman.

This was one problem LeMay could not handle, but one he adeptly handed off to his wife, Helen. Consistent with his other programs, LeMay wanted SAC to take care of its own, to solve its problems without outside help. To address the situation, Helen LeMay created the Dependents Assistance Program. The program was volunteer-based and after basic training, wives could help other wives in need by finding homes, emergency babysitting, even grocery shopping for wives that could not get to the store.[56]

The results were synergistic. Helping the wives cope more effectively with the painful temporary duty away from home and high on-call alert posture enabled their husbands focus on their nuclear mission. The recreational activities and hobby shops helped the men use their money more effectively and honed their passion for faster cars. The Aero Clubs allowed them to pursue their interest in flying and even fly their families around the country instead of driving. The net result was increased morale and retention. From 1954 to 1955, re-enlistment in SAC alone went up five percent.[57] LeMay attributes many of the MWR

---

[54] Hanson W. Baldwin, "The Problem of Army Morale," *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 December 1954, 60.
[55] Horace M. Wade, General, USAF, Oral History Project, Air Force Historical Research Agency, October 1978.
[56] Deaile, "The SAC Mentality," 230.
[57] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 453.

programs put in place to increasing retention. SAC became the Air Force standard and morale soared as unit performance increased and the men saw a future in the Air Force within SAC.

Analysis

These illustrate several of Yukl's leadership behaviors. At the core, LeMay monitored operations and the environment, noting factors that influence his command's effectiveness. SAC's dogmatic work culture took its toll and his men needed recreation and care. Lack of housing and high operations tempo contributed to dropping retention and high divorce rates. For his organization to remain effective, he needed to retain the expertise generated with experience. Monitoring led to elements of recognizing and rewarding, planning and organization, and problem solving. While housing and recreation are not directly work-related functions, they contributed to an individual's productivity at work. Given that military bases are usually micro cities with all elements of society wrapped around a base, these elements are necessary and part of leadership responsibility.

A macro look at Bradford's categorization of leaders again shows elements of the group-centric leadership because LeMay pushed portions of the problems down to his people for the solution. He could not simply dictate that divorce rates should go down. Instead, he had to help his men find solutions for themselves. He also could not mandate what they did in their free time, but he could take their ideas and enable them so they could relax during the off-duty time they had. Bradford's traditional leader focuses on the task rather than taking into account the environmental factors affecting the group, LeMay's natural proclivity. Instead, LeMay looked at the factors that affected his command's performance, recognizing the role housing, hobbies, and family issues play in job performance.

Vice-Presidential Candidate LeMay

Few can fault LeMay's professional competence as a pilot or his military decisions and thinking as a commander. There are certainly many not explored in this thesis, such as his advice to President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis or his disagreements with Secretary of Defense McNamara that led to an ineffective relationship. Detractors point to his blunt, direct comments that never fit in a political realm as the Vice and later the Chief of Staff. But perhaps LeMay's most questioned decision was his 1968 decision to accept Alabama Governor George Wallace's invitation to be his Vice-Presidential running mate. That three week period of time shaped the nation's perceptions of Curtis LeMay more than any other single event and left his image tarnished in the public eye and even in the Air Force he so loved and gave all to serve.

After his retirement in 1965, LeMay remained quiet politically but grew increasingly concerned over the direction Democratic President Johnson was taking the country. Johnson's liberal social and military policies continued to concern LeMay. He saw Johnson's policies in Vietnam as detrimental to the nation and the Air Force. LeMay eventually grew concerned enough to co-author a book on the topic, *America is in Danger*.

As the election approached in 1968, LeMay was content that the Republican candidate, Richard M. Nixon, was conservative enough to stop the changes made by Johnson and McNamara during the previous years. However, as the race continued through the spring and summer, LeMay grew concerned that Nixon had made so many promises to liberal Republicans like New York's Nelson Rockefeller and Michigan's George Romney that his cabinet would not be sufficiently conservative.[58] LeMay was strongly against the gradualism of Vietnam and wanted Nixon to

[58] Tillman, *LeMay*, 172.

commit to the force necessary to ending the war;[59] he was not hearing that commitment and the liberal Republican influences concerned him. The rhetoric from Nixon's centrist speeches over the summer grew on LeMay and he began to reconsider Wallace's offer to join him as a running mate on the American Independent Party's Presidential bid.

LeMay's thinking on the topic was clear in his own mind, but hindsight questions it. LeMay considered Nixon the best candidate to stop America's military slide. He was concerned that Hubert Humphrey could not distance himself from Johnson, and LeMay distrusted him by association. His policies aside (which LeMay did not agree with), LeMay figured, "Johnson lied to me so God-damn many times I figured Humphrey would do the same thing. I just didn't want to see him in office."[60] In LeMay's mind, Wallace as a third-party Democrat would take votes away from Humphrey. But his thinking was misguided; Wallace was a conservative and actually took votes away from Nixon, particularly in the south there Wallace won five states.[61]

Three weeks before the election, LeMay decided to join the Wallace election bid. It was a struggle from the moment LeMay accepted the joint ticket. "Instead of explaining why he felt compelled to run, or why George Wallace was a good alternative to Richard Nixon or Hubert Humphrey, LeMay, inexplicably, chose to use this national platform, his first in years, to explain his philosophy of war and why every weapons system—including nuclear weapons—should be used to win wars rather than have prolonged and gradual conflicts like the one taking place in Vietnam."[62] Political courtesy and acumen call for this initial speech to be very plain and simple until LeMay and Wallace could join their political philosophies and present a united theme between them. Instead,

---

[59] Lieutenant General (ret) Paul Carlton, Jr, LeMay family friend, to the author, e-mail, 29 March 2010.
[60] Kozak, *LeMay*, 382. Quoting LeMay in a letter from Ralph Nutter to Warren Kozak.
[61] Kozak, *LeMay*, 381.
[62] Kozak, *LeMay*, 375-6.

LeMay chose to make his own personal reasons for joining the race known, airing his thoughts, which sent Wallace scrambling to clarify what LeMay did or did not say about the use of nuclear weapons. Wallace's numbers never recovered and the wave of enthusiasm surrounding him began to fall. What LeMay intended to communicate to the American public was the role of nuclear weapons in American foreign policy. LeMay was trying to communicate that "even if you don't intend to use nuclear weapons, you don't make any such promises to your enemy."[63] Even if Vietnam did not call for them, they still had use as a deterrent force, a contrast to Johnson's and McNamara's continued minimalization of nuclear weapons in their foreign policy. This was a consistent theme from LeMay and one of the points of *America Is in Danger*.

The Wallace-LeMay ticket polled 9.9 million people, just under thirteen percent of the 71 million votes cast. Nixon won the Electoral votes outright with 301 to Humphrey's 191 and Wallace' 46. Wallace and LeMay lost the election, but LeMay considered it a victory. He had forced Nixon to take a position on several key military issues that Nixon had not before LeMay entered the race.

The association with Wallace remained with LeMay for the rest of his life. Initially, he received several shots across the bow from Nixon as a reminder to stay away from third-party politics in the future. The day after Nixon's inauguration, LeMay's son-in-law's medical practice was audited by the Internal Revenue Service.[64] IRS agents later came to LeMay's own home asking to see his financial records. He allowed them in until one of the agents asked where he had purchased his medals. He threw them out.[65]

---

[63] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 446.
[64] Kozak, *LeMay*, 381.
[65] Kozak, *LeMay*, 381.

It is hard to judge LeMay's political adventures positively. On the one hand, LeMay felt very strongly about the moral decay of the nation in the 1960s and the military policies of Johnson and McNamara. He saw them as destructive forces for the nation and certainly for the U.S. Air Force in light of a continued and growing Soviet nuclear threat. He felt strongly enough about these that he was willing to enter a world of speeches, reporter's questions and public scrutiny, things he personally detested. He knew Wallace would not win but felt could impact the election enough to push Nixon back to the right and detract from Humphrey's Democratic effort.

On the other hand, LeMay lost a tremendous amount of respect in the eyes of the nation and the military he so loved. Many of his World War II contemporaries and commanders urged him not to join Wallace on both political and racial reasons. Letters and urgings from Spaatz, Eaker and the former Secretary of the Air Force W. Stuart Symington, all urged him to stay away from politics. Afterwards, the AF distanced itself from LeMay for several years. Not until 1986 was LeMay brought back into Air Force culture and his advice and input sought again.[66]

LeMay could have joined the ticket to make his point in an orchestrated, supervised manner that would have been more palatable to the American public. Instead of laying out all his main points initially, he could have made them as part of a combined platform with Wallace. While the message may have been diluted, LeMay still could have had an impact on Nixon's and Humphrey's political postures, which were his ultimate targets.

His speech had the effect he was looking to achieve and reflected his direct, blunt nature. He chose to make a point from this press conference rather than waiting for it to be diluted with time. He wanted a

---

[66] Lieutenant General Paul K. Carlton, Jr, LeMay family friend, to the author; CINC SAC, General John T. Chain, Jr., invited him back into SAC events, invited him along on Operational Readiness Inspections, and sought his counsel again.

direct impact on Nixon and Humphrey, but arguably it reduced his campaign's overall effect on the election. His point was heard loudly once rather than elements of it continually challenging the other candidates. This made it less effective in public perception because he and Wallace were minimized to insignificance rather than a continual engagement and constant reminder of valid concerns for the nation.

Analysis

This part of LeMay's life does not fit nicely into Yukl's or Bradford's filters to glean insights. LeMay is not directly in a leadership role during this time and is acting as a private citizen rather than an official capacity. He is attempting to influence the course of the country and push the expected leaders in a direction he sees best for the country. Yet, if one looks at the nation as the organization LeMay is attempting to lead and influence, he is modeling the behaviors he expects of the nation and drive a course of action that will keep the nation safe, and he is leading by example. He is making a concerted choice to lend his credibility as a war-fighter and visionary for the country, to make his point about nuclear weapons, Vietnam, and the negative moral choices he sees the nation making. In this sense then, this part of LeMay's life remains instructive today. He believed his cause was worthy of his sacrifice in time and credibility and was willing to stand for what he believed right. It certainly remains a challenge to today's leaders as the military faces challenges to its core capabilities and social issues that its moral integrity, ethics and foundations. At some point, all will face a challenge to their beliefs and must choose when and how to communicate their disagreement.

LeMay's mistake was in the presentation of his beliefs. He recognized before his death that his mechanism was poorly chosen, but he retained the belief in his actions and purpose. Presenting his case more articulately over time would have made it more palatable and perhaps enhanced the message rather than seven minutes that made his

candidacy dismissive rather than taken seriously by the audience he was looking to affect.

Summary

This chapter inherently focuses on LeMay as Bradford's group-centered leadership style – the training, equipping, care and building capability and the factors that influence it. It builds with personal competency as the bedrock for leadership, then expands as LeMay looked for ways to improve not just the performance of his commands but looked to keep them alive and to improve their quality of life under his command – leadership. The previous chapter looked at the difficult decisions and challenges he had in various settings. This chapter examined the way LeMay garnered the respect of his men, how he demonstrated it and how he molded the quality into future leaders. Many of his projects are still seen in the Air Force and military today. Personal competence remains a cornerstone to effective leadership. With it, a commander will be given a great deal more leeway from his subordinates and trust for unconventional ideas. Without it subordinates will quickly begin to undermine, undercut, and reduce the influence a leader or commander can wield.

Lead crews and target folders still exist as well. The name remained for many years until grouped into the Air Force's Weapons School. Direct, blunt and harsh critiques in debriefs remains a hallmark of USAF flying. It is an attempt to learn from mistakes, improve on performance and make the pilot, aircrew or team to make them more effective the next time a similar task is assigned. It captures what went wrong, what went right and what can be improved for future tasks. Finally, the welfare of men and women under command remains a trademark of military service. Support for families, activities on base and self-improvement projects remain throughout the Air Force and military service. Auto hobby shops are still on nearly every base though the aero clubs have all but died with increasing expenses and adding aeroclub

mishaps to the wing commander's accountability. LeMay's example remains a hallmark of command and leadership to continually look for ways to make people more effective at their job and consider the whole of their lives, not just job performance.

Conclusion

Few folks ever learn anything from previous experience of elders, whether elders in years or elders in familiarity with a given task or problem.

General Curtis LeMay

To a civilian, Curtis LeMay is remembered for two things. First, he is remembered for a comment from his personal memoirs on Vietnam. McKinlay Kantor, LeMay's biographer, put the comment in the manuscript and LeMay missed it, growing tired of the tedious process of editing.[1] They are not his direct words though he bears the responsibility for them as the author and the book is presented in first person from him. His words were, "My solution to the problem [speaking about Vietnam] would be to tell them frankly that they've got to draw in their horns and stop their aggression, or we're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age. And we would shove them back in the Stone Age with Air power or Naval power—not with ground forces."[2] Second, LeMay is remembered for the foray into politics where, in seven short minutes, he made untimely remarks about the nation's nuclear preparedness and the moral corruption, echoing his thoughts in *America is in Danger.*

To a military member, LeMay is remembered as one of the great operational commanders of World War II and the U.S. Air Force. His thinking, technical knowledge and tactical prowess enabled more accurate bombing in Europe, the destruction of the dispersed Japanese military industry and the iron fist that molded SAC in his own image.

LeMay judged people by their actions, not by their words. "The irony is that he's been judged all these years by what he said and not by what he did."[3] Time has faded the memory of his 1968 Vice-Presidential

---

[1] Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2008), 34; comments made to his daughter and Ralph Nutter, captured in Kozak's book.

[2] General Curtis LeMay and McKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 565.

[3] Kozak, *LeMay*, 387-88.

bid, but tarnished his legacy as perhaps the greatest operational commander in the U.S. Air Force. Release of classified presidential audio tapes on the Cuban Missile Crisis highlighted his dogmatic insistence to attack the Cuba. Further investigation since the fall of the Soviet Union shows his recommended course of action may have started nuclear war as the local Soviet commander had authority to employ tactical nuclear weapons if attacked. Critics abound, especially as men and women rise in notoriety. But what continues to filter through the discussions about Curtis LeMay are the contributions he made as a commander, leader and molder of organizations. He remains an example as a commander and leader and how to handle tough challenges, both positive and negative. His actions are worthy of study and instruction today. "No generation ever halts to turn around and examine the vast lore acquired by their predecessors who marched along the same route; and then to adjust a future plan (or a present crisis) accordingly. Instead they criticize the previous generations for making severe errors—such obvious errors, in the light of modern technocracy and modern emancipated philosophy! Then they turn around and make a whole new set of mistakes all by their lonesome."[4] Clearly, General LeMay calls us to look critically at history. This thesis is an attempt to do so; to learn from his life, to learn from its wisdom and follies, and to apply them to future problems.

LeMay considers two events paramount above all other public moments. First, bombing Japan to surrender without an invasion.[5] 1945 intelligence estimates put the cost of American lives approach one million men killed or wounded to conquer the Japanese home islands and this was proved in the island hopping campaign where consistently 99% of the army chose death over surrender. Second in importance was the

---

[4] LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay,* 306-7.

[5] Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1986), 447-8.

development of SAC.[6] LeMay saw SAC's role as the dominant factor in U.S. nuclear deterrence during the Cold War and continuing today. His role in the creation of SAC and the other vignettes presented here remain instructive to airmen today. These two and many others provide examples of tough decisions and leading/preparing men and women for mission success. Many of the practices and traits so common in today's Air Force are rooted in LeMay's example. Three key lessons can be distilled from his life.

First, making life and death choices in war is difficult at best and often muddy. LeMay understood war's strange calculus that to save lives, some lives may have to be sacrificed. He recognized that early Allied bombing in Europe was not hitting the target, and required re-attacks to actually affect the war's outcome. He was willing to change the practices and risk more casualties to have an appreciable effect on the war. In Japan, doctrinal high altitude, daylight precision bombing was not working but Hansell continued to use the tactic. Something had to change. In Europe, he addressed the problem by disproving the myth that flak costs were too great if you paused for longer than ten seconds. In the Pacific, LeMay recognized the intentional dispersed nature of Japanese industry and saw the only way to reduce war-supporting production was to destroy the cottage industry that contributed to production. The change in weapons and tactics were the only thing that could have allowed the B-29s to be effective – European tactics were not succeeding against a different adversary and environment.

The application to today's airmen is in how the decisions were made. LeMay was in a different type of war than the United States finds itself in today and for the foreseeable future. Total war for the U.S. is unlikely to happen in the near-term, muddying the decision matrix for moral choices. Instead, U.S. service members will have to exercise

---

[6] Coffey, *Iron Eagle,* 448.

restraint and constantly make value judgments, weighing the moral factors that apply to the situation they find themselves in. LeMay wanted to end war quickly and in World War II, the quickest way was to make the war more painful for the enemy. Today's U.S. service members are exposed to potentially greater danger by allowing situations to develop that previously called for a kinetic response much earlier. The result is a constant challenge to service member's moral decision making capability. LeMay's decisions encourage airmen to think it through carefully and understand as many of the ramifications as possible before acting. Then be willing to take action and face the moral consequences of success or failure.

Second, LeMay thought through conventional problems to find unconventional solutions. Every vignette presented shows a conventional thought process to find unconventional solutions. How does a commander of a two hundred thousand people organization figure out housing for his airmen who are living in back garages and chicken coops? LeMay did it by finding a cost-effective measure to create housing on base. When the Air Force comptroller declared it illegal, he found a Senator, well outside his comfort zone, to help sponsor housing for military families.

Today, when seemingly simple problems present themselves and solutions are blocked by bureaucratic red tape or regulations, military officers should appeal to higher authority to change the regulation or guidance. Seek to understand their response but when that is unsuccessful and the solution remains apparent, look for the unconventional solution.

Finally, leaders can retain in influence long after their tenure in any given position given is over. The Air Force turned away from General LeMay after his unsuccessful bid for the Vice-Presidency. His trips to the Pentagon were short and concise rather than continued involvement in the Air Force's business. The lessons here are two-fold. First, if you

believe strongly enough, be willing to make the stand over a well chosen topic. That topic comes at many levels and many make their choice too early in their military careers to have a real impact. Nearly everyone will have to take a fork in the road at some point in their lives to stand and be counted. When this occurs, it becomes the crucible of judgment. LeMay knew the costs of his choice and knew many of his friends and subordinates would shun him as a result, but it was important enough to him to risk rejection. He felt strongly enough about many of the battles he lost with McNamara over Vietnam that he needed to make one more effort to stop the war as he watched the nation being torn apart.

Second, influence over subordinates remains for a long time after direct responsibility for them ceases. They still look for guidance, instruction and wisdom in their careers. A leader is still influencing and subordinates seek great leader's wisdom and insights. Is the issue best won by direct confrontation or is a gradual change brought about by influencing key subordinates more effective for change?

Leadership and command are very similar, but they remain distinctly different. Leadership, as so many have stated more eloquently, prepares men and women for their roles in combat. Command requires mission accomplishment which may require physical danger. Leadership does not require putting one's responsibility at risk whereas command means the commander's will becomes the command's task, the commander's decisions the command's assumed risk and often their lives at risk over the commander's decisions. Leadership and command relate and complement each other but remain distinct. LeMay used both effectively during his life and remains instructive in the Air Force today.

Bibliography

Academic Papers

Deaile, Melvin G. "The SAC Mentality: The Origins of Organizational Culture in Strategic Air Command, 1946-1962." PhD Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007.

Articles

Baldwin, Hanson W. "Flying Fortresses Meet Liner at Sea." *The New York Times*, 13 May 1938, 3.

Baldwin, Hanson W. "The Problem of Army Morale," *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 December 1954.

Correll, John T. "Rendezvous With the Rex," *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 91, No. 12, December 2008, 54-57.

Powell, General Colin. "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, vol 72, no. 5, Winter 1992/93.

Books

Arnold, General of the Air Forces Henry H. *Global Mission.* New York, NY: Harper, 1949.

Biddle, Tami Davis. *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Bradford, Leland P. *Making Meetings Work: A Guide for Leaders and Group Members.* La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1976.

Cherney, Andrei. *The Candy Bombers.* New York, NY: Berkley Caliber, 2009

Coffey, Thomas M. *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay.* New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1986.

Craven, Wesley Frank, and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II,* vol 2. *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. 1949.

Craven, Wesley Frank, and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II,* vol V. *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki. June 1944 to August 1945.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1949.

D'este, Carlo. *Patton: A Genius for War.* New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995.

Frank, Richard B. *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire.* New York, NY: Random House,1994.

Hemphill, John K., and Alvin E. Coons. "Development of the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire." in *Leader Behavior: Its*

Description and Measurement, edited by Ralph M. Stogdill, and Alvin E. Coons, 6-38. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1957.
Holley, Irving Brinton. *Buying Aircraft: Material Procurement for the Army Air Forces.* In *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Air Power in World War II*, General Curtis LeMay, and Bill Yenne. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2006.
Jacobs, T. O. *Leadership and Exchange in Formal Organizations.* Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, December 1970.
Jones, Seth G. *In the Graveyard of Empires.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009.
Katz, Daniel, and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1978.
Kochanski, Captain Don. *Contrails: Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook, 1992-1993.* U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.
Kozak, Warren. *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay.* Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2009.
Larrabee, Eric, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1987),
LeMay, Curtis E., and MacKinlay Kantor. *Mission with LeMay: My Story.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965
LeMay, General Curtis E., and Major General Dale O. Smith, *America is in Danger.* New York, NY, Funk & Wagnalls, 1968.
May, Ernest R., and Philip D Zelikov, eds. *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1997.
McFarland, Stephen L. and Wesley P. Newton, *To Command the Sky: The Battle for Air Superiority over Germany, 1942-1944.* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
Miller, Donald L. *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2006.
Nutter, Ralph H. *With the Possum and the Eagle: The Memoir of a Navigator's War over Germany and Japan.* Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 2002.
Sagan, Scott Douglas. *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985.
Sherry, Michael S. *Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
Stodgill, Ralph M., *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of the Literature.* New York, NY: Free Press, 1974.
Tillman, Barrett. *LeMay: Great General Series.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Tunner, William H. *Over the Hump.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985.
Werrell, Kenneth P. *Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers over Japan during World War II.* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996.
Westerman, Edward B. *Flak.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. 2001.
Yukl, Gary. *Leadership in Organizations,* 2nd Ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1989.

Email Correspondence

Carlton, Lieutenant General (Ret) Paul K. Jr, Surgeon General of the United States Air Force. To the author. E-mail, 27 February 2010.
Carlton, Lieutenant General (Ret) Paul K. Jr, LeMay family friend. To the author, E-mail, 29 March 2010.
Hale, Col (Ret) Timothy, Commander at Wing and Squadron level. To the author. E-mail, 26 March 2010.
Hathaway, Col David, Vice Commander 388th Fighter Wing, Hill AFB, UT. To the author. E-mail, 17 March 2010.
Manning, Col Scott, Commander, USAFE Warrior Preparation Center, Einsiedlerhof Air Station, Germany. To the author. E-mail, 1 March 2010.
Morgan, Col Andy, Commander at Wing, Group, and Squadron level. To the author. E-mail, 16 March 2010.
Phinny, Col Todd, Commander, Air Force Element-NATO Combined Air Operations Center 2. To the author. E-mail, 9 March 2010.
Rew, Lieutenant Gen William, Vice Commander, Air Combat Command. To the author. E-mail, 31 March 2010.
Shackelford, Lt Gen Mark, Military Deputy to the Deputy Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition. To the author. E-mail, 28 February 2010.

Government Documents

Office of SAC History, *History of Strategic Air Command, 1949,* Vol 1. Offutt AFB, NE: Strategic Air Command, 1950.

Interviews

Parco, Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) James E. Interview by the author, 30 March 2010.

Manuals, Doctrine Documents

Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1. *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006.

Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 35-49, *Air Force Leadership,* 1 September 1985.

Field Manual (FM) 6-22. Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile, October 2006.

Joint Publication 1-02. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 31 October 2009.

Marine Corps Doctrine Publication (MCPD) 6. *Command and Control,* 4 October 1996.

Oral Histories

Edmundson, Lieutenant General James V. Oral History Project, Air Force Historical Research Agency, July 1978.

Griswold, Lieutenant General Francis. Oral History Project, Air Force Historical Research Agency, April 1970.

LeMay, General Curtis. Oral History, Air Force Oral History Project, 8 June 1972.

LeMay, General Curtis. Oral History, Air Force Oral History Project, Recorded 12, 26, 27 January, 1965.

LeMay, General Curtis. Oral History, Air Force Oral History Project, March 1965.

LeMay, General Curtis. Oral History, Air Force Oral History Project, 17 November 1976.

Wade, General Horace M. Oral History, Air Force Oral History Project, October 1978.

Speeches

Weinberger, Secretary of Defense Caspar. "The Uses of Military Power," November 28, 1984, reprinted in Air Force Magazine, January, 2004.

Websites

Air Force Biographies. "Lieutenant General Barney McKinney Giles." http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5536 (accessed 7 March 2010).

Air Force Biographies, "General Curtis Emerson LeMay," http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6178 (accessed 17 March 2010).

Air Force Biographies. “General Emmett O’Donnell Jr.” http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6638 (accessed 7 March 2010).

Delacour, Jonathon. “Curtis LeMay’s Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.” http://weblog.delacour.net/archives/2005/03/curtis_lemays_grand_cordon_of_the_order_of_the_rising_sun.php 10 March 2005.

Eisenhower, President Dwight D. “Cadet Requirements – Quotes and Songs.” http://www.uoregon.edu/~army/CadetRequirements/CadetRequirements-Quotes-and-Songs.php (accessed 2 April 2010).

University of Exeter Centre for Leadership Studies. “Leadership Definitions.” http://www.leadership-studies.com/lsw/definitions.htm (accessed 1 April 2010).

Wikipedia. “Clarence L. Tinker.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_L._Tinker (accessed 6 March 2010).

Video Recordings

Morris, Errol, *The Fog of War*. Sony Pictures, 107 min., 2004, DVD