



BIOGRAPHY

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

HEADQUARTERS STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION, OFFUTT AFB, NEB., 68113

(402) 294-2544/4433

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE REPRESENTATIVE TO
JOINT STRATEGIC TARGET PLANNING STAFF

BRIGADIER GENERAL RICHARD T. KIGHT

Brigadier General Richard T. Kight became Supreme Allied Commander Europe Senior Representative to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff on Sept. 1, 1965. The mission of this office is to coordinate the strategic target plans of Allied Command Europe with those of the other forces of the NATO alliance.

General Kight began his military career in 1933 when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He completed flying training as an aviation cadet at Kelly Field, Tex., in 1935, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in October 1936 while on active duty as a flying cadet assigned to the 7th Bomb Group at Hamilton Field, Calif.

General Kight reverted to inactive reserve status in December 1936 and flew for United Air Lines until his recall to active duty at Langley Field, Va., in March 1938, where he served until 1941.

He flew with the overseas wing of the Army Air Corps Ferry Command, Washington, D.C., from late 1941 until 1942. During this period he served as personal pilot to the late Wendell Willkie, 1942 presidential aspirant, then on a world goodwill tour for President Roosevelt.

In December 1942, he was transferred to the China-Burma-India wing of the Air Transport Command, where he served as chief of staff and director of operations of the "Hump" operations.



-more-

PEACE IS OUR PROFESSION

General Kight returned to the United States in February 1944 to take command of Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Fla. While at Morrison Field he was personal pilot for Vice President Henry Wallace on a trip through Siberia and China. From 1945 to 1946, he commanded transport operations on Guam.

In 1946, he was assigned as commander of the Air Rescue Service, then located at West Palm Beach, Fla. He held this command until 1952, directing its development and expansion and introducing present-day rescue techniques. He personally performed much of the testing of rescue equipment and employment techniques.

His next assignment was to the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, Ala. Upon graduation in 1953, he was assigned to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, as commander of the 1500th Air Base Wing.

In 1954, he transferred to Randolph AFB, Tex., and assumed duties as inspector general for headquarters, Combat Crew Training Air Force. He was named commander of Tyndall AFB, Fla., in June 1956, having attended and completed the F-86D All Weather Interceptor Course offered there prior to assuming command.

General Kight, a command pilot qualified to fly both jet and conventional aircraft, transferred to the 34th Air Division, Kirtland AFB, N.M., in July 1957 as vice commander. He moved up to command the 34th Air Division in July 1958, maintaining his jet proficiency by flying with the Air Defense fighter squadrons under his command.

He became vice commander of the Central Air Defense Force, Richards-Gebaur AFB, Mo., in November 1959. In April 1960, he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and transferred to Norton AFB, Calif., to command the Los Angeles Air Defense Sector. He guided the Los Angeles Air Defense Sector through its transition from manual operation to Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) operation.

-more-

In July 1961, General Kight transferred to Oslo, Norway, where he assumed duties as chief of staff, Allied Air Forces Northern Europe. During the two years he was assigned there he was instrumental in conceiving, planning, and effecting a reorganization of Allied Forces Northern Europe. As a result of this reorganization, he became principal air staff officer to the deputy commander/air deputy, Allied Forces Northern Europe, a post he held until June 1963.

General Kight then took up duties as deputy commander Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force with headquarters at Vicenza, Italy, and held this post until being reassigned to his present duties.

Headquarters
AIR RESCUE SERVICE
Military Air Transport Service
Washington 25, D.C.

MEMO TO THE PRESS:

Public Information Office
REpublic 7400 Ext 3640, 3046
10 June 1949

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
COL. RICHARD T. KIGHT,
Commanding Officer
Air Rescue Service

Colonel Richard T. Kight, the commanding officer of Air Rescue Service, has spent more than 5,000 hours in the air pioneering wartime military air routes, testing new transport and cargo aircraft and piloting VIPS (very important persons) to every part of the world.

He began his military career in October, 1932, when he enlisted as a private in the Texas National Guard, while a freshman at Texas Technological College, Lubbock, Texas. About a year later he began his flying career, entering Flying Cadet training at Randolph Field, Texas. He graduated in October 1935, and after spending a year on active duty as a Flying Cadet was commissioned a second lieutenant, Reserve, on October 15, 1936, and remained on active duty for two more months, after which he accepted a job with United Airlines, flying as co-pilot on their planes for 14 months.

He returned to active duty with the Air Corps March 28, 1938, and has been in uniform ever since. In less than a decade, Kight rose through each successive rank to full Colonel, filling jobs and special assignments of increasing importance.

He was awarded a regular army commission as a second lieutenant on August 15, 1939, and served as a pilot at Langley Field, Va., and as a group operations officer for the 34th Bomb Group (H) at Westover Field, Mass., prior to the war.

Early in September 1941, Kight was placed on temporary duty with the Air Corps Ferrying Command, piloting aircraft for diplomatic courier flights. His performance was so outstanding that his "temporary duty" became permanent. He remained as a special mission pilot for the Ferrying Command, and continued his assignment when its successor, the war-famous Air Transport Command was organized.

Kight flew one of the early war-time transport missions to England and in January and February of 1942, he flew a B-24 into Java, just before the Japanese arrived. For this flight, Kight and his crew each received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

As one of the pioneers of ATC, Kight had the honor of performing the first military service tests on the giant cargo and passenger Douglas C-54, then a new transport, now commonplace on all military and commercial air routes. He was at the controls when the first C-54 departed the shores of the United States for an overseas destination.

Because of his brilliant flying record and knowledge of world affairs and protocol, Kight was chosen from among the many veteran pilots of ATC to pilot the plane in which the late Mr. Wendell Willkie flew around the world late in 1942. For this trip he won an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross, the citation crediting him in part with: "outstanding initiativeness, resourcefulness superior manner."

During the 28,400 mile trip which touched 17 countries in five continents, Kight flew Mr. Willkie aboard the "Gulliver", as the aircraft was named, over much ill-charted and little known terrain. It was the ease and speed with which the Gulliver made the trip that played an important role in establishing the name "One World" for Mr. Willkie's subsequent book. Mr. Willkie was so favorably impressed by his military aircraft and crew, that he dedicated the book to Kight and the Gulliver's crew members.

Upon returning from the Willkie flight, he was assigned to command the first flight of C-87s (cargo version of the B-24) to the China-Burma-India Theater. After making the flight successfully, Kight remained at Chabua, the India-side terminus of the ATC "Hump" operations. He was named operations officer and later executive officer for the ATC India-China Wing at Chabua. During his year there, Kight made numerous flights across the Hump.

Upon returning to the United States, Kight was assigned as commanding officer at Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Fla., one of the largest ATC bases in the United States. After 19 months as head of this large field, he was re-assigned to the Pacific area, taking over the helm of the ATC base on Guam, Marianas. He remained there a year, and in the fall of 1946 returned Stateside.

His new job was as commanding officer of the Air Rescue Service, the search and rescue organization of the Air Force, assigned as a part of the ATC, and now one of the services of Military Air Transport Service.

Air Rescue Service had been organized early in 1946, to provide Air Force search and rescue facilities within the United States only. When Colonel Kight took the reins of the small, youthful service in December, 1946, he immediately instituted an intensive program of specialized training,

initiated development and procurement plans for new and improved equipment especially suited for search and rescue work; and generally "tightened up" the service so that all rescue activities were better coordinated.

With the expanded specialist training programs, and the drive for new equipment and better coordination, the efficiency of the organization increased, as did its fame among fliers, both military and civilian.

In 1948, Air Rescue Service made its first expansion to overseas areas.

In his job of overseeing Rescue flights widely scattered over the face of the globe, Colonel Kight has only limited time to get into the field, but he manages to keep a close check on all activities, particularly during an actual mission.

Each morning his operations personnel brief him on the progress of all missions in progress, using the latest teletyped daily reports and pertinent maps. With careful deliberation he studies each incident report. If all does not seem to be going well with a particular search and rescue effort, Kight picks up the phone and usually within a matter of minutes is in contact with the mission commander at an advance base, asking questions and offering suggestions in his slow Texas drawl. Sometimes, when an advance base is in isolated territory, he passes messages through the AACS radio network and ARS tactical stations which connect all operating activities.

The business of lifesaving is paramount to Colonel Kight. In a personal message to each man of Air Rescue Service recently, he said: "Air Rescue Service exists only to save lives x x x In each and every incident it must be presumed that there are survivors, and every possible effort must be made to find, aid and return these survivors to safety. The thoughts and efforts of every man in the Air Rescue Service must be directed x x x so that all will know that no life has been lost through a wasted minute or a misdirected effort."

Except for discussing Air Rescue Service at every opportunity, he has no hobbies, but does shoot golf, the score of which he'd rather not discuss, and goes in for swimming and archery occasionally.

Richard Thomas Kight was born in Collinsville, Texas, on October 13, 1913. The population of 653 bears out his statement that he's "just a country boy from Texas, lost in the big city." He graduated from Claude High School in the Texas Panhandle in 1931, and besides a year at Amarillo Junior College, attended Texas Technological College at Lubbock for another year, majoring in mechanical engineering. He was married to Miss June Sinclair of San Francisco, Calif., on June 2, 1937. They are the parents of two daughters, Carol Ann and Nancy; and one son, Richard Thomas, Jr. They live at 3840 North Chesterbrook Road, Arlington, Va.

"Dick" is five feet, ten inches tall and weighs 167 pounds. His brown hair bears a trace of gray. He has blue eyes, and a ruddy complexion, which he says started with the continual winds of West Texas, and is now more than skin deep.