

## **Maj. Gen. William L. Nicholson III, U.S. Air Force**

Director  
Defense Mapping Agency  
July 1979 – June 1981



Maj. Gen. William L. Nicholson III graduated from high school in May 1944, entered the U.S. Army Air Corps, and returned to civilian life in November 1945 to resume his studies. He graduated in June 1950 from St. Louis University with a BS in aeronautical engineering and meteorology.

He graduated from the Air Command and Staff College in 1960 and from the National War College in 1970, concurrently earning a MS in international relations from The George Washington University.

He completed Reserve Officers Training Corps requirements, was commissioned in the U.S. Air Force, and returned to active duty in September 1950. He received his pilot wings in October 1951. On a combat mission over North Korea in October 1952, he was shot down, evaded capture, and returned to the 58th Fighter-Bomber Wing to complete his combat tour of duty. He trained pilots at McCoy Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, was Director of Materiel for the 3520th Tactical Fighter Group at McConnell AFB, Kansas, and served with Headquarters Air Training Command at Randolph AFB, Texas. After serving as air operations advisor to the 1st Fighter Squadron of the Vietnamese Air Force, he served in the Directorate of Plans, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and in the Directorate of Plans, Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, Headquarters U.S. Air Force. In June 1966 he was assigned to the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS). Beginning March 1971 he was assigned to Grissom AFB, Indiana, as the vice commander, 305th Air Refueling Wing. He then assumed the position of commander, 301st Air Refueling Wing, and transferred with the wing and its KC-135 aircraft to Thailand. He rejoined the 301st Air Refueling Wing as commander and moved with elements of the wing to the Philippines to organize the 4102d Air Refueling Squadron. He participated in “Linebacker 11” air operation over North Vietnam. After April 1973 he commanded the 97th Bombardment Wing, Blytheville AFB, Arkansas, then transferred to the OJCS, J-5 Directorate, as assistant deputy director for Force Development and Strategic Plans, followed by a tour as deputy director for Operations (Strategic and General Operations), OJCS. In September 1975 he assumed duty as commandant of the Air Command and Staff College. After three years he assumed duty as vice commander, Fifteenth Air Force.

As director of the Defense Mapping Agency, Major General Nicholson expanded the digital geographic data production for the new weapon Strategic Air Command/Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (SAC/JSTPS) requirements to respond to the Joint Strategic Operational Plan (JSOP) for defense of the nation during the cold war. He retired on July 1, 1981.

Major General Nicholson flew two hundred combat missions in Vietnam. His military decorations and awards include the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with oak leaf cluster, Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, and the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.