

THE 'PHILLIPS' IN PHILLIPS RESEARCH SITE: WHO WAS GENERAL SAMUEL C. PHILLIPS

The origins and heritage of Air Force Research Laboratory's Phillips Research Site - second in a series



ABOVE: With lab commander Col. Peter J. Marchiando looking on, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Martin C. Faga and Betty Anne Phillips, widow of Gen. Samuel C. Phillips, unveil the emblem of the new Phillips Laboratory. The dedication ceremony took place on Dec. 19, 1990, at Kirtland AFB.

BELOW: Fighter pilot Sam Phillips during World War II.



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"The importance of space to defensive military effort can only increase in the future."
- General Samuel C. Phillips at his retirement, 1975

By 1990, the Air Force had decided to streamline its laboratory system. Its 13 labs and centers were consolidated into four "superlabs" that focused research into four key areas: avionics, electronics and sensors, aerospace medicine and space.

The question of an appropriate name needed to be resolved for the "space" superlab at Kirtland AFB. Among the possible names were a number of New Mexico-related symbols, as well as military officers or civilians whose accomplishments would lend an air of prestige to the new lab.

In early 1990, one of those persons under consideration passed away. General Samuel C. Phillips' contributions in the formative space and missiles era exemplified the cutting edge science and technology that the new laboratory would pursue.

Born in Springerville, Ariz., on Feb. 19, 1921, Sam Phillips grew up in Cheyenne, Wyo. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in nearby Laramie in 1942 with a degree in electrical engineering. He was the first graduate of the university's ROTC program to receive a regular commission. Initially serving in the infantry, Lieutenant Phillips quickly transferred to the Army Air Corps, attended flying school and earned his pilot wings.

During World War II, Phillips flew P-38s and P-51s in the Eighth Air Force's 384th Fighter Squadron. He completed two combat tours of duty in the European Theater of Op-

erations. For his service, Captain Phillips earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the French Croix de Guerre.

Immediately following the war, Major Phillips was assigned to the European Theater Headquarters at Frankfurt, Germany. Transferring stateside in 1947, he served as director of operations for the 1st Army Airways Communications System Wing at Langley Field, Va.

Phillips then completed another round of education.

First, he graduated with a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Michigan in 1950.

Then he went on to complete Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell AFB, Ala., in 1951.

For the next six years Colonel Phillips held a number of research and development positions with the Engineering Division at Wright-Patterson AFB. These included duty as an electronics officer observing nuclear weapon testing in the Pacific, and project officer assignments to the B-52 bomber, and Falcon and Bomarc missiles programs.

In 1956, General Phillips returned to England where he served as Director of Materiel with the 7th Air Division of Strategic Air Command. His instrumental participation in forward basing the Thor intermediate range ballistic missile in Great Britain earned him the Legion of Merit.

Returning stateside in 1959, he was assigned as the director of the Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic Missile program under the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division of Air Research and Development Command at Los Angeles AFB, Calif. During his tenure, he successfully completed and transitioned the Minuteman ICBM to operational use.

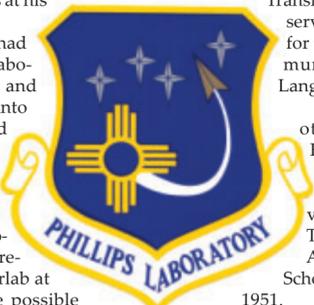
By 1964, General Phillips had earned the reputation as "the country's most prominent systems integration manager." NASA "borrowed" him for its most important mission of the 1960s - the Apollo Manned Lunar Landing program. General Phillips led a government-industry team totaling over 400,000 people through the Apollo 11 mission that put the first men on the moon on July 20, 1969.

For his efforts in directing the Apollo program, NASA awarded Phillips its Distinguished Service Medal, and the Smithsonian Institution awarded him its prestigious Langley Medal. As the 14th recipient of the Langley medal, General Phillips entered the select company of such aerospace greats as the Wright Brothers, Charles Lindbergh and Robert Goddard.

After Apollo, General Phillips went on to command the Space and Missile Systems Organization from 1969 to 1972. His service there won him the 1972 General Thomas D. White Space Trophy for the Air Force member making the most outstanding contribution to U.S. progress in aerospace.

After a brief tour as director of the National Security Agency, General Phillips became commander of Air Force Systems Command in 1973. There, he led the development of many current Air Force systems, such as the F-15 and F-16 fighters, the B-1 bomber, the E-4 airborne command post and the Peacekeeper ICBM.

General Phillips retired from the Air Force in August 1975 and went to work for private industry. He served as a management consultant to NASA during the Challenger investigation in 1986. At the time of his death on



January 31, 1990, he was a member of the National Research Council's Committee for the Human Exploration of Space. General Phillips, survived by his wife and three daughters, is buried at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The selection of Gen. Samuel C. Phillips as namesake of the new Phillips Laboratory, established on Dec. 13, 1990, reflected not only our heritage in space research and development and our emphasis on systems management, but also our commitment to the warfighter. Today, the Air Force Research Laboratory's Phillips Research Site continues to embody the values and drive exemplified by General Phillips.



ABOVE: A pensive Samuel C. Phillips monitors the launch of Apollo 9.

LEFT: Gen. Samuel C. Phillips, Feb. 19, 1921 - Jan. 31, 1990

**Next Week:
Phillips Lab and
AFRL's Phillips
Research Site**