

**Brigadier General Maurice A. Cristadoro**  
**Inducted 2006**



Brigadier General Maurice A. Cristadoro, Jr., was born on 8 February 1920 in New Orleans, Louisiana. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Loyola University in New Orleans. General Cristadoro joined the Army Air Corps in March 1941 and, after receiving his pilot wings and commission in November 1941, was assigned to Ellington Field, Texas, where he became a flying instructor, advanced flight trainer and, eventually, director of flying. From August 1944 to October 1945, he served in Europe as a P-51 “Mustang” flight leader and commander of the 55th Fighter Squadron.

In June 1947, after completing a Master of Science degree in physical chemistry at Ohio State University, General Cristadoro was assigned to the Deputy for Operations at Wright Air Development Center. He rose to become chief of the Special Weapons Branch, where he focused on the compatibility of designs for eight-ton nuclear warheads with aircraft delivery systems.

Moving to Headquarters U.S. Air Force (USAF) in 1952, he worked for then Colonel Bernard A. Schriever on advanced systems planning in the Office of the Deputy for Research and Development. In addition to the supersonic B-58 “Hustler” project, General Cristadoro handled site surveys for future deployment of the Atlas ICBM in three different configurations: unprotected, above-ground horizontal launchers; semi-hardened, horizontal launchers; and hardened, vertical silos. Because of his involvement with those site selections, others in the office began calling him “Mr. Atlas.”

In August 1956, General Cristadoro went to Western Development Division, where he served as deputy director of the Atlas ICBM program under General Otto Glasser until March 1958, then became program director until July 1961. He was responsible for all aspects of Atlas acquisition,

which had the highest national priority. He was among a very small group of individuals intimately involved with the highly secretive preparations for using an Atlas booster to launch SCORE (Signal Communications by Orbiting Relay Equipment), the world's first communications satellite, in December 1958. Years later, General Cristadoro would identify the SCORE mission, which resulted in the worldwide broadcast from space of President Eisenhower's message of peace and goodwill, as the highlight of his military career. It was an amazing jump, he recalled, from launching a small thermonuclear warhead to sending a full-size Atlas canister into orbit.

Assigned to Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) headquarters in July 1961 as project director for ballistic missiles, General Cristadoro oversaw all matters associated with that command's role in ballistic-missile acquisition. He especially shouldered responsibility for shifting resources from Atlas to the Titan and Minuteman ICBM programs. At Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, during 1963-66, he engaged in advanced planning for weapon systems based on General Schriever's Project Forecast. From September 1967 until his retirement from active duty in February 1970, General Cristadoro campaigned vigorously, based a white paper he wrote, to reorganize systems analysis and development planning within AFSC along mission-related lines.