

**Lieutenant General Otto J. Glasser  
Inducted 1989**



Lieutenant General Otto J. Glasser was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on 2 October 1918. He graduated from Cornell University in 1940 with a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. In May 1940, he earned a commission as a second lieutenant and began active duty in February 1941. He entered flying training in September 1943, graduated the following June, and then received transition training in the B-17, B-24, and B-29. After World War II, he attended Ohio State University where he earned his Master's degree in electronic physics in 1947. General Glasser served as the director of the Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) program, the nation's highest priority military project in the mid-1950s. An original member of General Bernard A. Schriever's "Schoolhouse Gang" of four at the Western Development Division, his leadership provided the nation with its first deployed ICBM.

In February 1956, General Glasser became the Director of the Atlas program. The Atlas program was distinctive and its urgency deterred the Air Force from undertaking a testing program similar to the one the Germans had used in their V-2 program. They had performed 3,000 flight tests to produce an operational missile. During the Cold War, using so large a number of flight tests was impracticable. The constraints of time, energy, money, and resources militated against it.

Instead, Glasser engineered a program that tested individual parts, then components and assemblies, subsystems and stages, eliminating all possible sources of error before committing the subsystem to a completely integrated missile. Next, personnel tested the integrated missile, firing it up, checking it out, while a captive stand held it down; eliminating, so far as possible in this artificial environment, sources of error. However,

captive testing carried with it the advantage of rigor. In this atmosphere, the Air Force used sophisticated monitoring instrumentation that it could not use while the Atlas was in flight. After static evaluation, the organization flight-tested missiles, carrying out a specific list of tests on each flight. However, as General Glasser anticipated, the Atlas program encountered difficulties and he included leeway for mishaps resulting in lost time.

At the same time, he was alert to new possibilities. In early 1957, he deemed that the time was ripe for the inauguration of a solid-propellant missile program. Accordingly, Schriever sent the personable and persuasive Glasser as his emissary to Washington to sell the idea to Air Force Secretary Donald A. Quarles. General Glasser persuaded him to permit the start of a solid-propellant missile "technology program." A year later, the Air Force was able to initiate the solid-propellant Minuteman ICBM program.

In October 1959, General Glasser became Chief, Ballistic Missiles and Space Systems Division, and later the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Research and Engineering at ARDC. In February 1961, he became the Special Assistant to the Commander, ARDC, with the additional duty as the Chief of the Command Special Projects Office. When Robert S. McNamara became Secretary of Defense, he urged the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Thomas D. White, to reorganize the Air Force's systems management immediately so that McNamara could assign the military space program to the Air Force. After consultation with General Schriever, General White chose General Glasser, to study and recommend a method for reorganizing the Air Force's systems management. As a result of Glasser's work, the Air Force established Air Force Systems Command and Air Force Logistics Command.

In July 1962, General Glasser became Vice Commander of the Electronic Systems Division, Air Force Systems Command. In July 1965, he moved to Headquarters United States Air Force; first as Deputy Director of Operational Requirements and Development Plans, and then Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Research and Development. In February 1970, General Glasser became the Deputy Chief of Staff for Research and Development, and the Military Director of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board. Here, he supervised the systems integration and testing, and guidance and control support, and oversaw post-boost propulsion system testing, and in-place and in-flight hardness testing for the Minuteman III.

General Glasser retired from active duty on 1 August 1973. From 1973 to 1986, he served in several positions with General Dynamics Corporation culminating as Vice President for Government Relations. He retired in 1986 to Sarasota, Florida, where he passed away 26 February 1996.