

General Bernard A. Schriever
Inducted 1989



General Bernard A. Schriever was born in Bremen, Germany, on 14 September 1910. His family migrated to the United States in 1917 and settled in Texas. He graduated from Texas A&M in 1931, earning a B.S. in architectural engineering. In June 1932 he entered Army Air Corps Flying School which he graduated from in June 1933. He served on active duty from July 1933 until April 1935. On 1 October 1938 he passed the Air Corps examination for commission as a Regular second lieutenant and took an assignment in the Air Corps as a B-18 instrument-flying instructor with the 7th Bombardment Group at Hamilton Field, California. In June 1942 he earned a Master's in aeronautical engineering from Stanford University. By the end of World War II, he had advanced to colonel and was commander of the Advanced Headquarters, Far East Air Service Command.

In January 1946 he was assigned to the Pentagon as Chief of the Scientific Liaison Branch in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel. From July 1950 until May 1954 he served in various development and planning offices. In March 1953 Schriever learned of a scientific breakthrough that appeared to make the ICBM technically feasible much sooner than previously thought possible. At a meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), Dr. Edward Teller, who championed the development of hydrogen weapons, reported on the successful test of a hydrogen device in November 1952. The U.S. could now build less powerful missiles because of the lighter warheads and could relax the accuracy of missiles because of the warhead's greater destructive power.

In early 1954 President Dwight David Eisenhower assigned the nation's highest priority to the development of an ICBM. Trevor Gardner, Special Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development, asked Schriever, now a brigadier general, to manage the ICBM program. Defense Department officials accorded his office extraordinary authority to streamline review and approval procedures, thus eliminating cumbersome red tape. In June 1954 General Schriever became the commander of the Air Research and Development Command's Western Development Division in Inglewood, California and the Assistant to the Commander of ARDC. The progression of the Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, from program approval to the Initial Operational Capability, had taken only three and one-half years. Atlas's development time was little more than five years, better than the 1954 prediction of six to eight years, which, at the time, was thought to be optimistic. Titan took less than six years to reach operational status. Moreover, even as the first Titan lifted off from Cape Canaveral, the Air Force was developing the more advanced Titan II. The Minuteman, whose development Schriever began, from start to finish took only four years and eight months to deploy. The first ten were combat alert in their underground silos in October 1962.

On the space side, the Air Force launched Discoverer 1 on 28 February 1959, though it tumbled in orbit. However, Discoverer 2, launched 13 April 1959, performed well. On 26 February 1960, Midas 1, an infrared satellite, blew up during stage separation, but in late May 1960, Midas 2 lifted successfully into orbit. Samos 2, a photoreconnaissance satellite, began a fully successful mission on 31 January 1961.

In February 1958 he became Deputy Commander for Ballistic Missiles at Air Research and Development Command (ARDC) for three short months. In April 1959, he became commander of ARDC. When ARDC became Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) in April 1961, he assumed command of AFSC, where he remained until his retirement on 1 August 1966. As commander of AFSC, General Schriever was responsible for the development of all Air Force weapons. In partnership with NASA, he began transforming his missiles into reliable manned launch systems. He supported NASA's manned space programs by providing modified Atlas and Titan boosters and launch services at Cape Canaveral.

After his retirement, on 1 August 1966, Schriever established a consortium called Urban Systems Associates Inc. to mount an interdisciplinary attack on urban problems. Since his retirement, He has consulted with civilian organizations and frequently has served as an advisor to the Air Force and the Department of Defense. General Schriever died in June 2005.