

## THE INFORMATION PROGRAM THROUGH THE YEARS

The Air Force Information Program, like the United States Air Force, had its beginnings many years before the Department was formed in 1947.

The Air Force's first news release announced creation on 1 August 1907 of an Aeronautical Division in the Office of the Army Chief Signal Officer. The news item was written by Capt. Charles DeForest Chandler, Officer in Charge of the Division.

Neither the air arm nor its Information function was very active until World War I; but, from 1918 to date, the responsibility to inform the public has been recognized by Air Force leaders as vital to the needs of the organization and the Country.

Illustrious leaders in Air Force history served at times in key positions in the Information program. Among them: Maj. H. H. Arnold, Chief of Information Division in 1925, who headed the Air Force during World War II; Maj. Hubert R. Harmon, Jr., 1925-1926, who became first Superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy; Lt. Col. Ira C. Eaker, Assistant Chief and Acting Chief of Information Division from 1937 to 1940, who in 1944 was Air Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces; Col. F. Trubee Davison, Chief of Office of Technical Information in 1943 when it was under Air Intelligence, who had been Assistant Secretary of War for Air from 1926 to 1933; Lt. Gen. Harold L. George, Director of Information in 1946, who had headed the Air Transport Command in World War II; Maj. Gen. Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., Director of Information in 1946 and early 1947, who had led the first B-29 attack against Tokyo in World War II and was a postwar PACAF Commander.

Stephen F. Leo, a former Maine newspaperman, served as the first Director of Public Relations for the new Department of the Air Force. The Directorate

consisted of the Air Information Division, under Maj. Gen. Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., and the Legislative Liaison Division, under Brig. Gen. John K. Gerhart.

The Directorate of Public Relations was redesignated Office of Public Information on 2 June 1952. Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Thomas D. White, long an advocate of a strong Information program, signed a letter reorganizing Information activities on 12 November 1953. The new organization, called Office of Information Services, consolidated at all levels in the Air Force the internal information, public information and historical activities. For the first time, retention, motivation and morale became primary goals of the overall Information program.

The Office of Information Services became the Office of Information on 1 October 1959, and Information Services Officers (ISOs) became Information Officers (IOs).

From its beginning as an organized function in 1918, until 1947, the Air Force Information effort was influenced to varying degrees by the War Department's public relations requirements. But the importance of Information to the Air Service was evident in the reorganization of the air arm in 1919. The Air Service divided its functions into four groups: Supply, Training and Operations, Administration and Information.

The importance of Information to the modern Air Force is reflected in the observation by one Director of Information who said: "Truth, like water, seeks its own level -- and, in a democracy, that level is the people. It's our job in Information to speed that undeniable flow of truth to Americans inside and outside the Air Force."