

**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**  
**Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs**  
**Washington D.C. 20330**

**OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY**

**COLONEL HAROLD J. SMARKOLA, JR.**

Colonel Harold J. Smarkola, Jr., retired from the Air Force on May 1, 2001, from the position of Commander, Air Force News Agency (AFNEWS), Kelly AFB TX, after 29 years, 1 month of service.

Colonel Smarkola was born in Philadelphia, PA on Dec 25, 1949. He graduated from Woodrow Wilson H.S., Levittown, PA in 1967 and received a Bachelor of Science degree from Pennsylvania State University in 1971. He went to graduate school at the University of Oklahoma, Norman OK and Chapman College, Orange CA receiving a Master of Arts degree from Chapman College in 1978.

Colonel Smarkola was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant through the Air Force ROTC program and entered active duty in March 1972. His first assignment was to Craig AFB AL for pilot training where he remained until November 1972. With the Vietnam conflict winding down he was reassigned to the "Flying Tigers" of the 23d Tactical Fighter Wing, England AFB LA, where he served as an Information Officer.

From November 1974 to November 1975, Colonel Smarkola completed a short tour at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, where he functioned as an Information Officer for the 13<sup>th</sup> Air Force Advanced Echelon (ADVON) and later the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Division. With his aviation background, he also flew on several F-4D missions in a mission observer status.

In Dec 1975, he was assigned to Castle AFB CA , Merced CA, as an Information Officer until Jan 1977. From Jan 25, 1977 to Feb 14, 1979,

Colonel Smarkola served as the 93d Bombardment Wing Chief of Information. In Mar 1979, he was reassigned as an action officer in the Civil Affairs Branch, Community Relations Division, Secretary Air Force Office of Public Affairs, the Pentagon, Washington DC. He then moved to the position of Special Assistant to the Director of Public Affairs in Mar 1982. Colonel Smarkola attended Air Command and Staff College in residence at Maxwell AFB AL, from Aug 84 to June 1985. Following graduation, Colonel Smarkola served as the Chief, Public Affairs Officer Assignments, Headquarters, Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC), Randolph AFB TX from July 1985 to June 1988, and as Chief of Public Affairs, Headquarters, AFMPC, Randolph AFB TX from August 1988 to June 1990. From July 1990 to June 1991, he served as U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) Chief of Media Relations, Ramstein AB Germany, and as Deputy Director, USAFE Public Affairs, Ramstein AB Germany from June 20, 1991 to August 9, 1993.

Colonel Smarkola served as the Special Assistant for Public Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition (SAF/AQ), the Pentagon, Washington D.C. From Aug 10, 1993 to Sep 13, 1994. He assumed the position of Deputy Director, Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, the Pentagon, Washington D.C. On Sep 14, 1994

On Apr 16, 1997, he became the Commander, Air Force News Agency (AFNEWS), an Air Force Field Operating Agency, Kelly AFB TX. He served in this position, AFNEWS Commander, until his retirement on May 1, 2001.

Colonel Smarkola graduated from the Defense Information School (DINFOS) Fort Benjamin Harrison IN; the Air Force Institute of Technology Environmental Protection Committee Member Course, Wright-Patterson AFB OH; and the Air Force Short Course in Communications at the University of Oklahoma, where students received eight credits towards their graduate degree. He was selected as the top Air Force student in the class. Colonel Smarkola completed Squadron Officers School (SOS) by correspondence and

in-residence where he earned recognition as a Distinguished Graduate. He completed Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) by seminar and in-residence where he graduated top third of his class. In addition, he completed Air War College (AWC) by correspondence. He was selected for a Regular Commission in the United States Air Force in 1978.

His decorations include the Legion of Merit with one oak leaf cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

He was presented with the Order of the Sword, and honor awarded within the Air Force whereby the enlisted members of a field operating agency or major air command (MAJCOM) recognize an individual they hold in high esteem, by that agency's entire enlisted force. This honor was bestowed upon Colonel Smarkola by the enlisted force of AFNEWS. No other Air Force public affairs officer has received this honor. It is the highest award/recognition that can be presented upon an individual by the enlisted force of a FOA/MAJCOM.

Colonel Smarkola was married to the late former Margaret A. Raybuck of Lansdowne PA. They were married 47 years before her passing.

Current as of 5 Mar 2025