

= George Kenney =

George Churchill Kenney ( 6 August 1889 ? 9 August 1977 ) was a United States Army Air Forces general during World War II . He is best known as the commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area ( SWPA ) , a position he held from August 1942 until 1945 .

Kenney enlisted as a flying cadet in the Aviation Section , U.S. Signal Corps in 1917 , and served on the Western Front with the 91st Aero Squadron . He was awarded a Silver Star and the Distinguished Service Cross for actions in which he fought off German fighters and shot two down . After hostilities ended he participated in the Occupation of the Rhineland . Returning to the United States , he flew reconnaissance missions along the border between the US and Mexico during the Mexican Revolution . Commissioned into the Regular Army in 1920 , he attended the Air Corps Tactical School , and later became an instructor there . He was responsible for the acceptance of Martin NBS @-@ 1 bombers built by Curtis , and test flew them . He also developed techniques for mounting .30 caliber machine guns on the wings of an Airco DH.4 aircraft .

In early 1940 , Kenney became Assistant Military Attaché for Air in France . As a result of his observations of German and Allied air operations during the early stages of World War II , he recommended significant changes to Air Corps equipment and tactics . In July 1942 , he assumed command of the Allied Air Forces and Fifth Air Force in General Douglas MacArthur 's Southwest Pacific Area . Under Kenney 's command , the Allied Air Forces developed innovative command structures , weapons , and tactics that reflected Kenney 's orientation towards attack aviation . The new weapons and tactics won perhaps his greatest victory , the Battle of the Bismarck Sea , in March 1943 . In June 1944 he was appointed commander of the Far East Air Forces ( FEAF ) , which came to include the Fifth , Thirteenth , and Seventh Air Forces .

In April 1946 , Kenney became the first commander of the newly formed Strategic Air Command ( SAC ) , but his performance in the role was criticized , and he was shifted to become commander of the Air University , a position he held from October 1948 until his retirement from the Air Force in September 1951 .

= = Early life = =

George Churchill Kenney was born in Yarmouth , Nova Scotia , Canada , on 6 August 1889 , during a summer vacation taken by his parents to avoid the humidity of the Boston area . The oldest of four children of carpenter Joseph Atwood Kenney and his wife Anne Louise Kenney , née Churchill , Kenney grew up in Brookline , Massachusetts . He graduated from Brookline High School in 1907 and later that year he entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ( MIT ) , where he pursued a course in civil engineering . After his father left his family , Kenney quit MIT and took various jobs before becoming a surveyor for the Quebec Saguenay Railroad .

His mother died in 1913 and Kenney returned to Boston , where he took a job with Stone & Webster . In 1914 he joined the New York , New Haven and Hartford Railroad as a civil engineer , building a bridge in New London , Connecticut . After this was completed , he formed a partnership , the Beaver Contracting and Engineering Corporation , with a high school classmate , Gordon Glazier . The firm became involved in a number of projects , including the construction of a seawall at Winthrop , Massachusetts , and a bridge over the Squannacook River .

= = World War I = =

The United States entered World War I in April 1917 , and Kenney enlisted as a flying cadet in the Aviation Section , U.S. Signal Corps on 2 June 1917 . He attended ground school at MIT in June and July , and received primary flight training at Hazelhurst Field in Mineola , New York , from Bert Acosta . He was commissioned as a first lieutenant on 5 November 1917 , and departed for France soon after . There , he received further flight training at Issoudun . This ended in February 1918 , when he was assigned to the 91st Aero Squadron .

The 91st Aero Squadron flew the Salmson 2A2 , a reconnaissance biplane . Kenney crashed one

on takeoff on 22 March 1918 . He broke an ankle and a hand , and earned himself the nickname " Bust ' em up George " . His injuries soon healed , and he recorded his first mission on 3 June . Kenney flew one of four aircraft on a mission near Gorze on 15 September 1918 that was attacked by six German Pfalz D.III scouts . His observer shot one of them down , and Kenney was credited with his first aerial victory . For this he was awarded a Silver Star . A second victory followed in similar circumstances on 9 October while he was flying near Jametz in support of the Meuse @-@ Argonne Offensive . Once again , the formation he was flying with was attacked by German fighters . This time he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross , which was presented by Brigadier General Billy Mitchell on 10 January 1919 . Kenney 's citation read :

For extraordinary heroism in action near Jametz , France , October 9 , 1918 . This officer gave proof of his bravery and devotion to duty when he was attacked by a superior number of aircraft . He accepted combat , destroyed one plane and drove the others off . Notwithstanding that the enemy returned and attacked again in strong numbers , he continued his mission and enabled his observer to secure information of great military value .

Kenney remained for a time with the Allied occupation forces in Germany , and was promoted to captain on 18 March 1919 . He returned to the United States in June 1919 . He was sent to Kelly Field , near San Antonio , Texas , and then to McAllen , Texas . As commander of the 8th Aero Squadron , he flew reconnaissance missions along the border with Mexico during the Mexican Revolution . Poor aircraft maintenance , rough landing strips and bad weather led to the squadron losing 22 of its 24 Airco DH.4 aircraft in just one year .

= = Between the wars = =

Kenney applied for one of a number of Regular Army commissions offered to reservists after the war , and was commissioned as a captain in the Air Service on 1 July 1920 . While he was in hospital in Texas recovering from an aviation accident , he met a nurse , Helen " Hazel " Dell Richardson , the daughter of a Mobile , Alabama , contractor , George W. Richardson . They were married in Mobile on 6 October 1920 . Hazel miscarried twins , and was warned by her doctor of the danger of another pregnancy , but she strongly wished to have a child . In 1922 , while the couple was living on Long Island , New York , a son , William Richardson Kenney , was born to them , but Hazel died soon afterward from complications . Kenney arranged to have the infant cared for by his neighbor , Alice Steward Maxey , another nurse . On 5 June 1923 Kenney married Maxey in her home town of Gardiner , Maine .

From July to November 1920 , Kenney was air detachment commander at Camp Knox , Kentucky . He then became a student at the Air Service Engineering School at McCook Field , near Dayton Ohio . He was the Air Service Inspector at the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company in Garden City , New York , where he was responsible for the acceptance of the fifty Martin NBS @-@ 1 bombers that the Air Service had ordered from Curtis between 1921 and 1923 . Kenney inspected the aircraft , and test flew them . While there , he was reduced in rank from captain to first lieutenant on 18 November 1922 , a common occurrence in the aftermath of World War I when the wartime army was demobilized . He returned to McCook in 1923 , and developed techniques for mounting .30 caliber machine guns on the wings of a DH.4. He was promoted to captain again on 3 November 1923 . His daughter , Julia Churchill Kenney , was born in Dayton in June 1926 .

In 1926 , Kenney became a student at the Air Corps Tactical School , at Langley Field , Virginia , the Air Corps ' advanced training school . He then attended the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth , Kansas , the Army 's advanced school where officers were taught how to handle large formations as commanders or staff officers . Most Air Corps officers , including Kenney , considered the course largely irrelevant to them , and therefore a waste of time , but nonetheless a prerequisite for promotion in a ground @-@ oriented Army . Afterwards , he returned to the Air Corps Tactical School as an instructor . He taught classes of attack aviation . He was particularly interested in low @-@ level attacks , as a means of improving accuracy . There were tactical problems with this , as low @-@ flying aircraft were vulnerable to ground fire . There were also technical problems to be solved , as an aircraft could be struck by its own bomb fragments . His

interest in attack aviation would ultimately set him apart in an Air Corps where strategic bombardment came to dominate thinking .

Kenney reached the pinnacle of his professional education in September 1932 , when he entered the Army War College in Washington , D.C . . At the war college , committees of students studied a number of World War I battles ; Kenney 's committee examined the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes . They updated actual war plans , Kenney 's study group working on War Plan Orange . They also had to write an individual paper ; Kenney wrote his on " The Proper Composition of the Air Force " . One benefit of the Army War College was that it brought Air Corps officers into contact with ground officers that they would later have to work closely with . Members of Kenney 's class included Richard Sutherland and Stephen Chamberlain , both of whom worked with him on committees .

Graduation from the Army War College was normally followed by a staff posting , and on graduation in June 1933 Kenney became an assistant to Major James E. Chaney in the Plans Division of the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps , Major General Benjamin Foulois . He performed various duties , including translating an article by the Italian air power theorist Giulio Douhet into English . In 1934 , he was involved with drafting legislation that granted the Air Corps a greater degree of independence . This legislation prompted the Army to create GHQ Air Force , a centralized , air force @-@ level command headed by an aviator answering directly to the Army Chief of Staff . Lieutenant Colonel Frank M. Andrews was chosen to command it , and selected Kenney as his Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Training .

In this role , Kenney was promoted to the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel on 2 March 1935 , skipping that of major . He became involved in an acrimonious debate with the Army General Staff over the Air Corps ' desire to purchase more Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress bombers . He also became caught up in a bureaucratic battle between Andrews and Major General Oscar Westover over whether the Chief of the Air Corps should control GHQ Air Force . As a result , Kenney was transferred to the Infantry School at Fort Benning , Georgia , on 16 June 1936 , with the temporary rank of major , to teach tactics to young infantry officers . He was promoted to the substantive rank of major on 1 October 1937 , but the assignment was hardly a choice one for an Air Corps officer . In September 1938 he accepted an offer to command the 97th Observation Squadron at Mitchell Field , New York .

= = World War II = =

In 1939 , Kenney was made Chief of the Production Engineering Section at Wright Field , Ohio . He was sent to France in early 1940 , once again with the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel , as Assistant Military Attaché for Air . His mission was to observe Allied air operations during the early stages of World War II . As a result of his observations , he recommended many important changes to Air Corps equipment and tactics , including upgrading armament from .30 caliber to .50 caliber machine guns , and installing leak @-@ proof fuel tanks , but his scathing comparisons of the German Luftwaffe with the Air Corps upset many officers . This resulted in his being sent back to Wright Field . In January 1941 , he became commander of the Air Corps Experimental Depot and Engineering School there , with the rank of brigadier general . He was promoted to major general on 26 March 1942 , when he became commander of the Fourth Air Force , an air defense and training organization based in San Francisco . Kenney personally instructed pilots on how to handle the Lockheed P @-@ 38 Lightning and A @-@ 29 Hudson .

= = Southwest Pacific Area = =

In July 1942 , Kenney received orders to take over the Allied Air Forces and Fifth Air Force in General Douglas MacArthur 's Southwest Pacific Area . MacArthur had been dissatisfied with the performance of his air commander , Lieutenant General George Brett . Andrews , by then a major general , turned down the job , and , offered a choice between Kenney and Major General James Doolittle , MacArthur chose Kenney . Kenney reported to MacArthur in Brisbane on 28 July 1942 ,

and was treated to " a lecture for approximately an hour on the shortcomings of the Air Force in general , and the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific in particular . " Kenney felt that MacArthur did not understand air operations , but recognized that he somehow needed to establish a good working relationship with him . When he asked MacArthur for authority to send people he considered " deadwood " home , something that his superiors in Washington , D.C. had refused to give , MacArthur enthusiastically approved .

Building a good relationship with MacArthur meant getting past Sutherland , MacArthur 's chief of staff . Brett advised Kenney that " a showdown early in the game with Sutherland might clarify the entire atmosphere . " Sutherland , who had a civil pilot 's license , had taken to issuing detailed instructions to the Allied Air Forces . This was more than simply a turf battle ; to many airmen , it was a part of the ongoing battle for an independent air force that they had long been advocating . At one point , Kenney drew a dot on a plain page of paper and told Sutherland , " the dot represents what you know about air operations , the entire rest of the paper what I know . " Sutherland backed down , and would henceforth let Kenney run the Allied Air Forces without interference . It did not follow , however , that MacArthur would invariably accept Kenney 's advice .

Kenney sent home Major General Ralph Royce , Brigadier Generals Edwin S. Perrin , Albert Sneed and Martin Scanlon , and about forty colonels . In Australia , he found two talented , recently arrived brigadier generals , Ennis Whitehead and Kenneth Walker . Kenney reorganized his command in August , appointed Whitehead as commander of the V Fighter Command and Walker as commander of the V Bomber Command . The Allied Air Forces was composed of both United States Army Air Forces ( USAAF ) and Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) personnel . Kenney moved to separate them . Brigadier General Donald Wilson arrived in September and replaced Air Vice Marshal William Bostock as Kenney 's chief of staff . Bostock took over the newly created RAAF Command .

This brought Kenney into conflict with the Chief of the Air Staff of the RAAF , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , who felt that an opportunity had been lost to simplify the administration of the RAAF . Kenney preferred to have Bostock in command , and while he regarded the antipathy between Jones and Bostock as a nuisance , was happy to leave arrangements the way they were . However , Kenney deviated from the normal structure of an air force by creating the Advanced Echelon ( ADVON ) under Whitehead . The new headquarters had the authority to change the assignments of aircraft in the forward area , where fast @-@ changing weather and enemy action could overtake orders drawn up in Australia . Kenney was promoted to lieutenant general on 21 October 1942 .

Perhaps because of his experience in World War I , Kenney had a great deal of respect for Japanese fighters . He decided to conserve his bombers , and concentrate on attaining air superiority over New Guinea . Kenney switched the bombers to attacking by night unless fighter escorts could be provided . SWPA had a low priority , and simply could not afford to replace losses from costly daylight missions . What he needed was an effective long @-@ range fighter , and Kenney hoped that the Lockheed P @-@ 38 Lightning would fit the bill , but the first ones delivered to SWPA were plagued with technical problems . Kenney had Charles Lindbergh teach his P @-@ 38 pilots how to extend the range of their aircraft .

The Southwest Pacific was not a promising theater of war for the strategic bomber . The bombers of the day did not have the range to reach Japan from Australia , and there were no typical strategic targets in the theater other than a few oil refineries . This set up a doctrinal clash between Kenney , an attack aviator , and Walker , the bomber advocate . The long @-@ standing Air Corps tactic for attacking shipping called for large formations of high @-@ altitude bombers . With sufficient mass , so the theory went , bombers could bracket any ship with walls of bombs , and do so from above the effective range of the ship 's anti @-@ aircraft fire . However the theoretical mass required was two orders of magnitude greater than what was available in the Southwest Pacific . A dozen or so bombers was the most that could be put together , owing to the small number of aircraft in the theater and the difficulties of keeping them serviceable . The results were therefore generally ineffective , and operations incurred heavy casualties .

Walker resisted Kenney 's proposals that the bombers conduct attacks from low level using bombs armed with instantaneous fuses . Kenney ordered Walker to try the fuses for a couple of months , so

that data could be gained about their effectiveness ; a few weeks later Kenney discovered that Walker had discontinued their use . In November , Kenney arranged for a demonstration attack on the SS Pruth , a ship that had sunk off Port Moresby in 1924 and was often used for target practice . After the attack Walker and Kenney took a boat out to the wreck to inspect the damage . As expected , none of the four bombs dropped had hit the stationary wreck , but the instantaneous fuses had detonated the bombs when they struck the water , so bomb fragments had torn holes in the sides of the ship . Walker reluctantly conceded the point . A few weeks later , Walker was shot down leading a daylight raid over Rabaul , an attack that Kenney had ordered to be conducted at night .

In addition to trying different types of ordnance , the Allied Air Forces experimented with modifications to the aircraft themselves. the Major Paul I. " Pappy " Gunn modified some USAAF Douglas A @-@ 20 Havoc light bombers by installing four .50 in ( 12 @.@ 7 mm ) machine guns in their noses , and two 450 @-@ US @-@ gallon ( 1 @,@ 700 l ; 370 imp gal ) fuel tanks were added to give the aircraft more range . This was successful , and an attempt was then made to create a longer range attack aircraft by doing the same thing to a B @-@ 25 Mitchell medium bomber , to operate as a " commerce destroyer " . This proved to be somewhat more difficult . The resulting aircraft was obviously nose heavy despite adding lead ballast to the tail , and the vibrations caused by firing the machine guns were enough to make rivets pop out of the skin of the aircraft . The tail guns and belly turrets were removed , the latter being of little use if the aircraft was flying low .

The Allied Air Forces also adopted innovative tactics . In February 1942 , the RAAF began experimenting with skip bombing , an anti @-@ shipping technique used by the British and Germans . Flying only a few dozen feet above the sea toward their targets , aircraft would release their bombs , which would then , ideally , ricochet across the surface of the water and explode at the side of the target ship , under it , or just over it . A similar technique was mast @-@ height bombing , in which bombers would approach the target at low altitude , 200 to 500 feet ( 61 to 152 m ) , at about 265 to 275 miles per hour ( 426 to 443 km / h ) , and then drop down to mast height , 10 to 15 feet ( 3 @.@ 0 to 4 @.@ 6 m ) about 600 yards ( 550 m ) from the target . They would release their bombs at around 300 yards ( 270 m ) , aiming directly at the side of the ship . The two techniques were not mutually exclusive . A bomber could drop two bombs , skipping the first and launching the second at mast height . The Battle of the Bismarck Sea demonstrated the effectiveness of low @-@ level attacks on shipping .

Another form of airpower employed by Kenney was air transport . This started in September 1942 when troops of the 32nd Infantry Division were airlifted from Australia to Port Moresby . Later in the campaign , C @-@ 47 Dakotas landed Australian troops at Wanigela . A year later , American paratroops landed at Nadzab , enabling the Australian 7th Division to be flown in .

The ultimate challenge was to integrate air power with MacArthur 's strategy . Kenney described the process this way in 1944 :

The first step in this advancement of the bomber line is to gain and maintain air control as far into enemy territory as our longest range fighters can reach . Then we put an air blockade around the Jap positions or section of the coast which we want in order to stop him from getting supplies or reinforcements . The bombers then go to work and pulverize his defensive system , methodically taking out artillery positions , stores , bivouac areas and so on . Finally comes the air cover escorting the amphibious expedition to the landing beach , a last minute blasting and smoking of the enemy beach defenses and the maintenance of strafers and fighters overhead , on call from the surface forces until their beachhead is secured . If emergency supplies are needed we drop them by parachute . The ground troops get a transport field ready as fast as possible so that we can supplement boat supply by cargo carrying airplanes . When necessary , we evacuate the wounded and sick and bring in reinforcements in a hurry . The transport field becomes a fighter field , the strafers and finally the heavies arrive and it is time to move forward again .

= = = Far East Air Forces = = =

In June 1944 , Kenney was appointed commander of the Far East Air Forces ( FEAF ) , which came

to include the Fifth , Thirteenth , and Seventh Air Forces . He created the 1st , 2nd and 3rd Air Task Forces to control air operations in forward areas , each for a specific mission , another departure from doctrine . While Kenney was enthusiastic about this innovation , Washington did not like it and , over Kenney 's objections , converted the three air task forces into the 308th , 309th and 310th Bombardment Wings . He was promoted to general on 9 March 1945 .

Kenney hoped to get Boeing B @-@ 29 Superfortresses assigned to the Far East Air Forces so that , based from airfields near Darwin , they could destroy the Japanese oilfields at Balikpapan . His agitation for the B @-@ 29s did not endear him to the USAAF staff in Washington , D.C. After the war , the Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that this would have been far more productive than Operation Matterhorn , which saw B @-@ 29s based in China to bomb steel plants in Japan , as oil was more critical to the Japanese war effort than steel .

= = = War crimes accusation = = =

On 4 March 1943 , during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea , General George Kenney ordered Allied patrol boats and aircraft to attack Japanese rescue vessels , as well as the survivors from the sunken vessels on life rafts and swimming or floating in the sea . This was later justified on the grounds that rescued servicemen would have been rapidly landed at their military destination and promptly returned to active service . These orders violated the Hague Convention of 1907 , which banned the killing of shipwreck survivors under any circumstances .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

In April 1946 , Kenney became the first commander of the newly formed Strategic Air Command ( SAC ) . He was encouraged by Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington to join him in the political battle surrounding the establishment of an independent United States Air Force . Separately , the two men gave promotional speeches around the country . As a result , SAC 's efficiency suffered . On 8 May 1946 , Kenney publicly presented the Medal of Honor to the family of Thomas B. McGuire , Jr , the second @-@ highest scoring US fighter pilot , who had been killed in action .

Kenney left day @-@ to @-@ day operations at SAC in the hands of his deputy commander , Major General St. Clair Streett . Part of the reason for Kenney 's lack of focus on SAC was also his assignment as U.S. representative to the United Nations Military Staff Committee , which appeared at that time to be potentially an important assignment . In January 1947 , Streett was replaced by Major General Clements McMullen . With McMullen serving officially as Kenney 's deputy but actually in command , a cross @-@ training program was implemented in early 1948 to teach bomber crew members each other 's tasks , the goal being to reduce each bomber 's contingent of officers from five to three . Morale suffered as a result . Major General Lauris Norstad , responsible for reporting the readiness of American airpower to the U.S. Secretary of Defense , James Forrestal , heard from unhappy airmen that the SAC was in a poor state of readiness , and he initiated an investigation . He selected Charles Lindbergh and Paul Tibbets to perform the inquiry . Tibbets told Norstad that he found nobody at SAC knew their job . Lindbergh said that McMullen 's cross @-@ training program " seriously interfered with training the primary mission . "

On 6 May 1948 , Kenney spoke to a crowd in Bangor , Maine , telling them that the US was likely to be attacked by the Soviet Union as soon as the latter had enough atomic bombs . In Washington , D.C. , a group of senators including Henry Cabot Lodge , Jr. complained of Kenney 's " belligerent " speech , and previous ones in the same vein by Symington , saying that matters of foreign policy should be left to the president and the secretary of state , not to leaders of the United States Air Force ( USAF ) . Another controversy that Kenney became embroiled in concerned the Convair B @-@ 36 Peacemaker . He was less than impressed with this expensive and under @-@ performing aircraft , preferring the Boeing B @-@ 50 Superfortress , an upgraded version of the B @-@ 29 instead . The USAF , however , had staked much of its credibility on the B @-@ 36 , something that Kenney did not seem to appreciate .

In the context of the Berlin Blockade in June 1948 , the Air Force Chief of Staff , General Hoyt S.

Vandenberg met with Forrestal to report the poor state of SAC . Following this meeting , Norstad recommended that Vandenberg replace Kenney , and Vandenberg quickly agreed , choosing Lieutenant General Curtis LeMay as the man he would prefer to lead the strategic bombing arm in case of war with the USSR . LeMay was made leader of SAC , and Kenney became commander of the Air University , a position he held from October 1948 until his retirement from the Air Force in September 1951 .

= = Retirement = =

After his retirement , he lived in Bay Harbor Islands , Florida . In 1958 he appeared as the host of the TV anthology series Flight . He died on 9 August 1977 .

= = Books = =

Kenney wrote three books about the SWPA air campaigns he led during World War II . His major work was General Kenney Reports ( 1949 ) , a personal history of the air war he led from 1942 to 1945 . He also wrote The Saga of Pappy Gunn ( 1959 ) and Dick Bong : Ace of Aces ( 1960 ) , which described the careers of Paul Gunn and Richard Bong , two of the most prominent airmen under his command .

= = Family = =

He was survived by his two children , five grandsons and one granddaughter . His stepson , William " Bill " R. Kenney , rose to the rank of colonel in the USAF . His daughter , Julia , earned a B.A. in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1947 . In 1948 she married Edward C. Hoagland Jr . , a fighter pilot in World War II and later in Korea , who eventually retired from the USAF at the rank of lieutenant colonel .

= = Awards = =

During a career that spanned over 30 years , Kenney was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross with one oak leaf cluster , the Distinguished Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster , the Silver Star Medal , the Distinguished Flying Cross , the Bronze Star Medal , the Purple Heart and several foreign decorations .