

= James McCormack =

James McCormack , Jr . (8 November 1910 ? 3 January 1975) was a United States Army officer who served in World War II , and was later the first Director of Military Applications of the United States Atomic Energy Commission .

A 1932 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point , McCormack also studied at Hertford College , Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar , and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) , where he earned a Master of Science degree in civil engineering . In 1942 , he was assigned to the War Department General Staff . On 1 July 1944 , he became the Chief of the Movements Branch of Twelfth United States Army Group , remaining in this role until 28 May 1945 . He then returned to the War Department General Staff , where he served in the Operations and Plans Division .

In 1947 McCormack was chosen as the Director of Military Applications of the United States Atomic Energy Commission with the rank of brigadier general . He took a pragmatic approach to handling the issue of the proper agency to hold custody of the nuclear weapons stockpile , and encouraged and supported Edward Teller 's development of thermonuclear weapons . He transferred to the United States Air Force on 25 July 1950 , and was appointed Director of Nuclear Applications at the Air Research and Development Center in Baltimore , Maryland , in 1952 . He was subsequently promoted to major general , and became Deputy Commander of the Air Research and Development Command .

After retiring from the Air Force in 1955 , McCormack became the first head of the Institute for Defense Analysis , a non - profit research organization created to provide advice and support to the Department of Defense 's scientific and technological research efforts formed by ten universities . In 1958 he became vice president for industrial and governmental relations at MIT , in which capacity he originated the proposal that the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics be used as the basis for a new space agency , which eventually became the National Aeronautics and Space Administration . He was Chairman of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority , and from 1965 to 1970 was chairman of the Communications Satellite Corporation .

= = Early life and career = =

James McCormack , Jr . , was born in Chatham , Louisiana , on 8 November 1910 . He attended the Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville , Georgia , before entering the United States Military Academy at West Point on 2 July 1928 . He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Corps of Engineers on graduation on 14 August 1932 , ranking 19th in his class . He departed for England where he studied at Hertford College , Oxford , as a Rhodes Scholar . He was promoted to first lieutenant in August 1935 , and awarded his Bachelor of Arts degree from Oxford . On returning to the United States , he was posted to the 8th Engineers at Fort McIntosh , Texas , as a troop commander .

In June 1936 he became a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology , from which he graduated with a Master of Science degree in civil engineering in August 1937 . He then became a student officer at the Engineering School at Fort Belvoir , Virginia . In June 1938 , he reported to Vicksburg , Mississippi , as Assistant Project Engineer on the Sardis Reservoir Project .

= = World War II = =

McCormack reported to Fort Benning , Georgia , as a company commander in the 21st Engineers in October 1939 . He was promoted to captain on 9 September 1940 , and after serving as adjutant of the 20th Engineers at Fort Benning , he temporarily commanded one of the regiment 's battalions before assuming command of the 76th Engineer Company at Fort McClellan , Alabama , in mid - 1941 . Later that year he attended the United States Army Command and General Staff College , after which he was promoted to major on 1 February 1942 , and posted to the War Department General Staff . He was Assistant Chief of the Types and Allowances Branch of G - 2 .

4 from March 1942 to March 1943 , with a promotion to lieutenant colonel on 9 October 1942 , and then Chief of the Construction Branch of G @-@ 4 from March 1943 to September 1943 .

In October 1943 , McCormack became Chief of the Transportation Branch of the First United States Army Group , and was promoted to colonel on 1 December 1943 . On 1 July 1944 , he became the Chief of the Movements Branch of Twelfth United States Army Group , remaining in this role until 28 May 1945 . For his services in the European Theater of Operations , he was awarded the Legion of Merit on 30 December 1944 , and the Bronze Star Medal in May 1945 . The British government made him an honorary Commander of the Order of the British Empire on 24 March 1945 , while the French government awarded him the Croix de guerre with the silver star on 29 January 1945 , and made him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor on 3 October 1945 .

On 4 June 1945 , McCormack returned to duty with the War Department General Staff as a member of the Policy Section of the Strategy and Policy Group , becoming the assistant section chief on 16 September 1945 . He was then a staff officer with the Strategy and Policy Group from 16 February until 16 August 1946 , when he became chief of the Politico @-@ Military Survey Section of the Operations and Plans Division . For his service with the War Department General Staff , he was awarded an oak leaf cluster to his Legion of Merit on 8 April 1947 .

= = Cold War = =

At this point , McCormack had become apprehensive about his career , but in early 1947 a new and exciting opportunity opened up . The Atomic Energy Act of 1946 had created the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) to oversee research and development of nuclear power and nuclear weapons . The Act had created a statutory position inside the AEC called the Director of Military Applications , which the AEC commissioners envisaged as a staff post responsible for military planning and policy formulation . By law , the Director of Military Applications had to be a serving armed forces officer .

The frontrunner for the post was the wartime commander of the Manhattan District , Brigadier General Kenneth Nichols . Indeed , Nichols was the War Department 's only nominee . However , the AEC commissioners had different ideas . Nichols was seen as too closely identified with the wartime Manhattan Project ; he had opinions at variance with the commissioners on whether the Director of Military Applications was a staff or a line position ; and he had a strong disagreement with the commissioners over the vexing issue of which agency should hold custody of the nuclear weapons stockpile . Accordingly , the AEC commissioners decided to find another candidate .

The AEC commissioners asked for Major General Lauris Norstad , the head of the Operations and Plans Division , but neither the Chief of Staff of the Army , General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower , nor the Secretary of War , Robert P. Patterson , was willing to release him . The commissioners then selected McCormack . The job came with a promotion to brigadier general . The commissioners got the kind of officer that they wanted . McCormack was willing to accept the post as a staff job , and took a pragmatic approach to the custody issue . Like most military officers , he was convinced that the men who had to use the nuclear weapons in battle needed to have experience in their proper maintenance , storage and handling . However , he was also aware of the sensitivity of the issue of custody , which Congress had assigned to the AEC . Rather than continue to press for changes in the law , he accepted the situation as it was , and strove to make the best of it , working within the existing framework .

McCormack became involved in discussions with Edward Teller over the possibility of developing thermonuclear weapons , then known as the " Super " . McCormack became an early advocate of the Super , which promised yields in the megaton range , and directed Norris Bradbury at the Los Alamos National Laboratory to proceed with its development even at the detriment of other weapons . The debate over the merits of the Super pitted the United States Air Force against the other services , which wanted more small , tactical weapons . Concurrently , there was a technical debate between Teller and other scientists like Robert Oppenheimer over the feasibility of the Super , because there was no guarantee that it would work , and even after Operation Greenhouse , the processes involved in thermonuclear reactions were not fully understood . It ultimately became

apparent that the Super design would not work , but the development of the Teller @-@ Ulam design provided a new path to high yield thermonuclear weapons . For his services as Director of Military Applications , McCormack was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Medal .

= = Later life = =

McCormack transferred to the United States Air Force on 25 July 1950 . After leaving the AEC in August 1951 , he became Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Development . In January 1952 he was appointed Director of Nuclear Applications at the Air Research and Development Center in Baltimore , Maryland . He was subsequently promoted to major general , and became Deputy Commander of the Air Research and Development Command . He was called to testify at the Oppenheimer security hearing . Like other witnesses , McCormack testified that Oppenheimer was loyal , and that while the two men had disagreed over the merits of the Super , that he saw nothing dishonest or disloyal in Oppenheimer 's opposition to it .

McCormack retired from the Air Force in 1955 , and became the first head of the Institute for Defense Analysis , a non @-@ profit research organization to provide advice and support to the Department of Defense 's scientific and technological research efforts formed by ten universities . In 1958 he became vice president for industrial and governmental relations at MIT . He originated the proposal that the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics be used as the basis for a new space agency , which eventually became the National Aeronautics and Space Administration .

In 1964 , the Governor of Massachusetts , Endicott Peabody , appointed McCormack as Chairman of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority . In October 1965 , he was appointed chairman of the Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT) , with a \$ 125 @,@ 000 salary . To allow himself to concentrate on his new position , he resigned all his company directorships , along with his post at MIT . He attended his first board meeting in Washington , DC , in his dinner jacket , having flown from Los Angeles after a speaking engagement . As head of a quasi @-@ government organization , McCormack strove to employ the company 's resources to carry out the policies of Congress and the President , and was able to persuade Congress to declassify plans for a domestic satellite network so he could consult with the television networks . He retired as chairman due to ill health in 1970 , although he remained a director .

McCormack died at his winter home in Hilton Head Island , South Carolina , on 3 January 1975 , and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery . He was survived by his wife , Eleanor née Morrow ; his son , Major James R. McCormack , who was stationed at Fort Rucker , Alabama ; and his daughter , Anne M. Stanton , who was living at Fort Campbell , Kentucky .