

= Alvin Luedecke =

Alvin Roubal Luedecke (10 October 1910 ? 9 August 1998) was a United States Army Air Forces general during World War II . He commanded the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project after the war . After retiring from the Air Force in 1958 , he was General Manager of the United States Atomic Energy Commission , Deputy Director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and President of Texas A & M University .

= = Early life and career = =

Alvin Roubal Luedecke was born in Eldorado , Texas , on 1 October 1910 , the oldest of eight children of John H. Luedecke , a rancher , and his wife Lizzie . He grew up on the family ranch . He earned a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering from the Texas A & M in 1932 .

Luedecke was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the field artillery reserve on 28 May 1932 , and was posted to Camp Bullis , Texas , on Reserve Officers ' Training Corps duty . He became a flying cadet on 21 February 1933 . After completing his flight training at the Primary Flying School at Randolph Field , Texas , and the Advanced Flying School Bomber course at March Field , California , and Hamilton Field , California , he received a reserve commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Air Corps on 20 February 1935 .

Luedecke was posted to the 11th Bombardment Squadron at Hamilton Field . The next year he became group operations and intelligence officer of the 7th Bombardment Group there . On 1 October 1938 he was commissioned as a regular second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps , and was posted to the 25th Bombardment Squadron at France Field in the Panama Canal Zone .

= = World War II = =

Luedecke was assistant military attaché for Air to Costa Rica , Guatemala , Honduras , El Salvador , Panama and Nicaragua from 23 January 1940 to 19 August 1942 . He then became executive air officer at the field office of the Military Intelligence Services , Quarry Heights in the Panama Canal Zone . There he was promoted to captain on 1 February 1942 , major on 19 November 1942 , and lieutenant colonel on 5 January 1943 . That month he returned to the United States as chief of the Operations Branch , Air Control Group , American Intelligence Command at Miami Beach , Florida . The next month he became chief of the Latin American Branch , American Intelligence Command . For his service in Central America , he was awarded the Colombian Order of Boyaca .

On 12 May 1943 he was appointed deputy commander of the 39th Bombardment Group , based at Davis @-@ Monthan Field , Arizona . He became executive officer of the 16th Bombardment Operations Training Wing there on 27 June , with a promotion to colonel on 22 July 1943 . In August 1943 he was appointed Chief of the Operations and Training Section of the Army Air Forces in the India @-@ Burma Sector of the China @-@ Burma @-@ India Theater . On 18 August 1944 he was promoted to brigadier general at the age of 33 . He became Deputy Chief of Staff in November 1944 . In July 1945 he was made Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Plans , Operations , Training and Intelligence in the China Theater . For his service in China , he was awarded the Chinese Order of the Cloud and Banner . He was also given a British mention in despatches and made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire . He was awarded the Legion of Merit on 8 January 1944 , with an oak leaf cluster on 25 October 1945 , the Bronze Star Medal on 19 November 1945 , and the Commendation Ribbon on 29 May 1946 . He was also awarded an honorary Legum Doctor (LLD) degree by Texas A & M in 1946 .

= = Cold War = =

Luedecke returned to the United States in February 1946 , and was assigned to the Joint War Plans Committee in Washington , D.C. , as the senior Army Air Force member . On 22 October 1947 he became Assistant Director of the Joint Strategic Plans Group . On 14 June 1949 he was posted

to the Military Liaison Committee of the United States Atomic Energy Commission as executive military secretary . On 16 March 1951 he became the Air Force Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project . After the Chief of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project , Major General Herbert B. Loper , had a heart attack and was forced to retire , Luedecke stepped up to become chief , with the rank of major general .

Starting with Operation Crossroads in 1946 , the practice had been to form a joint task force to plan and conduct each series of nuclear tests in the Pacific . When they became more frequent , the Joint Chiefs created Joint Task Force 7 as a permanent body . Luedecke assumed command of Joint Task Force 7 on 1 April 1957 . On 10 June he was succeeded as Chief of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project by Rear Admiral Edward N. Parker , but remained commander of Joint Task Force 7 . As such , he was responsible for the planning , preparation and conduct of Operation Hardtack I and Operation Hardtack II . For his services , he was awarded the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal .

= = Later life = =

Luedecke retired from the Air Force in 1958 to replace Kenneth D. Nichols as General Manager of the Atomic Energy Commission . In 1964 Luedecke was appointed Deputy Director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory . Over the next three years he worked on the unmanned Ranger , Mariner , Surveyor and Voyager space exploration programs . For his services to NASA , he was awarded the NASA Exceptional Service Medal in 1968 .

That year he returned to Texas A & M as an associate dean of engineering , engineering research coordinator and associate director of the Texas Engineering Experiment Station . He became acting president for seven months after the death of Earl Rudder in 1970 . He then served as executive vice president for six years . A science building on the campus was named in his honor in 1994 .

He died in San Antonio , Texas , on 8 August 1998 and was buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio . He was survived by his wife Isabelle , son , Alvin R. Luedecke Jr . , daughters Jan Lee Maynard and Miriam Luedecke , and six sisters . His papers are in the Cushing Library at Texas A & M.