



Biography

Office of External Affairs, Strategic Defense Initiative Organization
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Lieutenant General James A. Abrahamson, USAF
United States Air Force
Director, Strategic Defense Initiative Organization
March 27, 1984 - January 31, 1989

Lieutenant General James A. Abrahamson is Director of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. He is responsible to the President and the Secretary of Defense for managing, directing and selecting key research and development programs designed to eliminate the threat posed by strategic nuclear ballistic missiles and to increase the contribution of defensive systems to U.S. and allied security. In carrying out this mission, he provides overall policy direction and supervision for the conduct of research and development programs associated with the SDIO mission as well as oversight of the acquisition process for all SDI program requirements. In concert with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, he is also responsible for the review and development of strategy and policy implications of defensive capabilities.

General Abrahamson was born in Williston, North Dakota. He earned a bachelor of science degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, and a master of science degree in the same field through the Air Force Institute of Technology program at the University of Oklahoma. He has completed Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and the Air Force Research Pilot School (Test Pilot).

General Abrahamson was commissioned a Second Lieutenant through the Reserve Officer Training Corps in November 1955 and completed pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, in May 1957. His initial operational assignments in the Air Force were to the Air Training Command in various flight instruction, flight test, and aircraft maintenance positions. In August 1961, he was assigned as Spacecraft Project Officer on the VELA Nuclear Detection Satellite Program at Los Angeles Air Force Station, California.

In 1964, General Abrahamson was assigned to the 428th Tactical Flight Squadron, Tactical Air Command, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico. During this period he served two temporary tours of duty in Southeast Asia where he flew 49 combat missions. In 1966, the General attended the Aerospace Research Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, California, and upon graduation was selected as an astronaut with the Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory Program from August 1967 through June 1969, when this program was canceled.

General Abrahamson then served the staff of the National Aeronautics and Space Council in the Executive Office of the President of the United States through March 1971. His follow-on assignment was Program Manager for the TV-guided, air-to-ground Maverick missile program, at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. In June 1973, he took command of the 4950th Test Wing at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.



In March 1974, General Abrahamson was assigned to Air Force systems command as AFSC Inspector General, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. In 1976, he was assigned as Director for the F-16 Multinational Air Combat Fighter Program at Aeronautical Systems Division, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. In 1980, he assumed the duties of Deputy Chief of Staff for Systems, Air Force Systems Command Headquarters.

In November 1981, the General was assigned as Associate Administrator for the Space Transportation System, Headquarters National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C. He was responsible for the nation's space shuttle program, leading it safely and successfully through 10 developmental and early operational launches. During his tenure, NASA performed many firsts, including the first satellite retrieval and repair mission, which vividly demonstrated the operational capabilities of the space shuttle. He assumed his present duties in April 1984.

The General is a command pilot and has earned the space badge and command missile badge. He has more than 3000 flying hours. His military decorations and awards include the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with oak leaf cluster, NASA Distinguished Service Medal, Order of King Olaf of Norway, Order of the Orange from the Netherlands and the Order of King Leopold of Belgium. In addition, General Abrahamson holds three honorary doctorate degrees in Engineering from New York University, Utah State University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In 1984, he received the General Bernard A. Schriever Award for outstanding achievement in support of United States Air Force missile and space programs. In 1986, the General received the Doctor Robert H. Goddard Trophy for leadership and excellence in advancing space flight programs contributing to United States leadership in astronautics. In 1987, he was honored as Man of the Year in Science and Technology from the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists Foundation, Metropolitan Chapter, Washington, D.C.

He was promoted to Lieutenant General July 21, 1982, with the same date of rank.

(Current as of January 1989)

Update: Last Command:	Director, Strategic Defense Initiative Organization
Retired:	January 1989