

General Nathan Farragut Twining, USAF

(1897–1982)

Chief of Staff of the Air Force
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

VITA

Born in Monroe, Wisconsin. Graduated from U.S. Military Academy (1918). Attended Infantry School and served as company commander, 29th Infantry (1919–22). Instructor, Air Corps Primary Flying School (1924–30). Pilot and squadron commander (1930–35). Attended Air Corps Tactical School and Command and General Staff School (1935–37). Air Corps technical supervisor (1937–40). Technical Inspection Section, Office Chief of Air Corps, and assistant executive officer to Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force (1940–42). Chief of Staff, Army Air Forces, South Pacific. Commanded 13th Air Force; 15th Air Force, Mediterranean Theater; and 20th Air Force (1942–45). Commanding General, Air Materiel Command (1945–47). Commander in Chief, Alaskan Command (1947–50). Vice Chief of Staff (1950–53) and Chief of Staff of the Air Force (1953–57). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1957–60). Worked for development of aircraft, missiles, and weapons. Advocated Eisenhower's policy of extensive but not exclusive reliance on nuclear weapons. Term as Chairman marked by crises in Lebanon and on Quemoy and Matsu. Played leading role in DOD Reorganization Act of 1958. Died at Lackland Air Force Base.



Courtesy of USAF Art Collection

In 1948 the Nation's first Secretary of Defense, James D. Forrestal, ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to take a sabbatical at Key West, Florida, for an intellectual reassessment of roles and missions of the Armed Forces. He hoped for a solution to the increasingly ugly internal struggle for resources. Unfortunately, no such solution came from the meeting. When reduced to the actual meaning of the many words of the document, the mission of the Army was only restated to be the defeat of enemy ground forces; the Navy's was to be control of the seas; and the Air Force was charged with securing and controlling the air. These missions and their service assignments were, of course, precisely the same prior to Key West.

This redefinition of the roles and missions apparently failed to consider, or to strike at, the real core of interservice rivalry. It would seem, from agreements reached, that some fears had been expressed that one service might cannibalize another. But I don't believe that any responsible military chief of service ever actually entertained such an intention except, perhaps, as a "paper exercise." The complexities of modern war would absolutely prohibit a one-service or two-service system.

—From *Neither Liberty Nor Safety: A Hard Look at U.S. Military Policy and Strategy*
by Nathan F. Twining

Portrait of General
Nathan F. Twining by
Robert Brackman.