

LIEUTENANT GENERAL PHILLIP B. DAVIDSON, Jr.
US Army, Retired (Deceased)



LTG Phillip Davidson graduated from West Point in 1935 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Cavalry. His first unit was a horse cavalry unit at Fort Riley, Kansas. In 1942, LTG Davidson served as the Assistant G2, 96th Infantry Division. Later in World War II, he served as Squadron Commander and Regimental Executive Officer in the 3rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Group (Mechanized) in GEN George Patton's Third Army. After the war, Davidson attended the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and was held over as an instructor in the School of Intelligence.

During this time as an instructor, Davidson and a fellow instructor, Robert Glass, wrote a book entitled *Intelligence is for Commanders*, named for a lesson learned in the war they had just fought. In the introduction of the book, the authors wrote, "Intelligence is not an academic exercise nor is it an end in itself. The prime purpose of intelligence is to help the commander make a decision, and thereby to proceed more accurately and more confidently with the accomplishment of his mission. This thought is the keynote of tactical intelligence." Davidson believed intensely in the criticality of the relationship between commander and intelligence officer.

In 1948, Davidson became Chief, Plans and Estimates Branch, in GEN Douglas MacArthur's G2 section, Far East Command, and held this position throughout the Korean War. He briefed GEN MacArthur every night at 6 p.m. on what the enemy had been up to during the previous 24 hours. As he explained in an interview published in

the March-April 1995 issue of the *INSCOM Journal*, “He wasn’t interested particularly in our interpretation of intelligence, although he was quite willing to read it. Once you gave him the facts of the enemy situation, MacArthur was his own intelligence officer.”

In 1963, after a series of assignments unrelated to intelligence, he became commandant of the Army Security Agency School and Training Center at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Two years later, he was detailed as G2, US Army Pacific at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, and from 1967-1969 he served as J2 Military Assistance Command Vietnam working for both GENs William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams.

GEN Westmoreland initiated a Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update, held every Saturday morning and attended by multiple general officers. At this meeting, the intelligence on the enemy for the previous week was presented by regional experts. Of the venue for briefing the commander, Davidson said, “It was an open and free discussion. People certainly disagreed, and this was a good thing. All the principal actors in the theater saw the intelligence. They got interested in intelligence. It was an excellent way to disseminate intelligence to a small leadership group.” When the command shifted to GEN Abrams, Davidson found himself with a new command relationship. Of Abrams he said, “Abe was an intelligence officer’s dream. Abe thought intelligence was the most important factor in the conduct of his operations.”

LTG Davidson was the first officer from the Military Intelligence Branch to be promoted to general. In 1971 he became the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, in the Department of the Army and, in 1972, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. He retired from the military on 31 July 1974.

LTG Davidson received the Distinguished Service Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit (3 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the French Croix de Guerre plus other foreign decorations.

LTG Davidson was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1988 and served as the Honorary Colonel of the Corps from 1994 to 1995. He passed away on 7 February 1996.

In addition to *Intelligence is for Commanders*, Davidson also wrote *Secrets of the Vietnam War* (1990), which focused on his assignment as J2 of MACV.

Parts of this article were taken from Ruth Quinn’s article, “LTG Phillip Davidson Presides Over First MI Officer Advanced Course Graduation at USAICS,” published in the Fort Huachuca Scout, 28 March 2014.