

COLONEL JOHN LANSDALE, JR. US Army (Deceased)



Jack Lansdale at VMI, 1933

COL John Lansdale was commissioned from Virginia Military Institute as an Artillery Second Lieutenant in 1933 while serving as a member of the Army Reserves. After commissioning, 2LT Lansdale attended Harvard Law School and was later promoted to First Lieutenant in 1937. In May 1941, 1LT Lansdale received a letter from former roommate, and future secretary to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Frank McCarthy, who warned him of the upcoming war and suggested he request a call to active duty to serve in the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff. On 10 June 1941, 1LT Lansdale reported for active duty to the Investigation Branch of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, War Department General Staff.

In February 1942, CPT Lansdale reported to Dr. James B. Conant, who was at the time President of Harvard and Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee. It was at this assignment that CPT Lansdale learned of the efforts being made in a race to develop the atomic bomb. He was charged with securing the intelligence behind these efforts at

the Radiation Laboratory at the University of California, Berkley, California. In September of the same year GEN Leslie Groves recruited CPT Lansdale to aid in the atomic bomb project, renamed the Manhattan Project under new responsibility of the US Army. CPT Lansdale established a unit of Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) personnel who were charged with maintaining the secrecy and security of the Manhattan Project, under the auspices of the US Engineer Office, Manhattan District. Following his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, Lansdale's official title became Director of Intelligence and Security, Manhattan Project.

During his time as Director, Lansdale completed several other missions vital to the project's success. In June and July of 1945, COL Lansdale headed a small mission to Brazil to negotiate the purchase of monazite sands. He led a subsequent mission to London and Sweden to obtain kolm deposits, a substance reportedly rich in uranium. COL Lansdale also led the Alsos Mission, which actively participated in the recovery of uranium ore in Germany as well as several prominent German scientists including Werner Heisenberg and Otto Hahn.



By January 1946, approximately 325 CIC personnel still remained in the Manhattan Project Security and Intelligence Group commanded by COL Lansdale. It is reported that during COL Lansdale's five years of active service, from 1941 to 1946, he rarely took a single day of leave, showing his austere devotion to the project, the mission, and his country.

COL Lansdale's post-war duties included the establishment a London-based liaison office with

British Intelligence, before he returned to his civilian career as a lawyer at Squire, Sanders and Dempsey, LLP in Cleveland, Ohio.

In the mid-1950s, COL Lansdale served as a defense witness for Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the Scientific Director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, Manhattan Project. Dr. Oppenheimer was accused of participation in communist party activities, therefore making him a traitor and a spy. Years earlier, COL Lansdale, along with GEN Groves, had made the call to award Dr. Oppenheimer his clearance. Later, many would recount COL Lansdale's testimony as a witness for the defense as the most famous moment in the courtroom. His testimony was so compelling that he became the hero of the Broadway play, "In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer."

COL Lansdale's awards and badges include the Legion of Merit by the US and the Order of the British Empire, Degree of Commander (CBE) from England.

COL Lansdale died on 22 August 2003. The National Counter Intelligence Corps Association established the Department of Defense Counter Intelligence Colonel John Lansdale, Jr. Award in 2008 in his honor.

COL Lansdale was posthumously inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 2010.



COL Lansdale receiving the Legion of Merit from GEN Leslie Groves