

GENERAL MAXWELL R. THURMAN



Maxwell Reid Thurman (February 18, 1931 – December 1, 1995) was a U.S. Army general, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, and former commander of United States Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Early career

Thurman attended North Carolina State University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering (ceramics). While in college he was a member of the Professional Engineering Fraternity Theta Tau. He was commissioned a second lieutenant of Ordnance from NCSU's ROTC program in 1953 and branch transferred to Field Artillery. His first assignment was with the 11th Airborne Division, and in 1958 his Honest John Rocket platoon was deployed to Lebanon.

From 1961-63 he served in Vietnam as an Intelligence Officer for I Vietnamese Corps. Following his service in Vietnam, Thurman became one of the few non-Academy graduates ever assigned as a company tactical officer at the United States Military Academy. In 1966 he attended the Command and General Staff College, then returned to Vietnam in 1967, where he assumed command of the 2d Howitzer Battalion, 35th Artillery Regiment in 1968.

Later assignments

After completing the U.S. Army War College in 1970, Thurman held numerous troop and staff assignments before assuming command of U.S. Army Recruiting Command in 1979, where he initiated the highly successful "BE ALL YOU CAN BE" recruiting campaign. From 1981-83 he was Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, Personnel (DCSPER) and from 1983-87 he was the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA).

In 1989 Thurman applied for retirement while serving as Commanding General, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Instead, he was handpicked by President George H. Bush to be Commander-in-Chief, United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). In this position, he planned and executed OPERATION JUST CAUSE, the 1989 invasion of Panama.

Retirement and death

He was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia while still commander in chief of USSOUTHCOM, shortly after Operation JUST CAUSE. He retired in 1991 after more than thirty-seven years of service, and died in 1995 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, aged 64. A funeral service was held on December 7, 1995 at the Fort Myer, Virginia, chapel, followed by interment at Arlington National Cemetery (Section 30, Grave 416-A-LH).

Honors

Thurman's awards and decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star with "V" device.^[1] In August 2010 Thurman was posthumously inducted into the Theta Tau Alumni Hall of Fame for outstanding contribution to his profession.

An award is given every year by the United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (MRMC) in honor of General Thurman. The award is generally presented at the annual meeting of the American Telemedicine Association.