



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL  
DONAVON FRANCIS  
SMITH**

**Retired Nov. 1, 1973.**

**Died Sep. 10, 1974.**

Lt. Gen. Donavon Francis Smith was commander, Alaskan Air Command, with additional duties as vice commander, Alaskan North American Air Defense Command/Continental Air Defense Command Region, with headquarters at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

General Smith was born in Dowagiac, Mich., in 1922, and graduated from Niles High School, Niles, Mich., in 1940. He entered the aviation cadet program in January 1942 and upon completion of pilot training in October 1942 was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

During World War II in November 1942, he joined the 61st Fighter Squadron, 56th Fighter Group, in England, subsequently becoming the squadron commander. He remained with the 61st Fighter Squadron throughout his combat duty in the European Theater of Operations, March 1943 to February 1945, and flew 123 combat missions for a total of 385 flying hours in the P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft. He is a fighter pilot ace with eight enemy aircraft destroyed (six in aerial combat), and in addition, he is credited with one probably destroyed and three damaged aircraft. Three of these aircraft, two ME-110 and one FW-190, were shot down on a single mission over Emden, Germany, on Dec. 11, 1943. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for that mission.

General Smith returned to the United States in March 1945 and was assigned as project officer, Tactics Division, Army Air Forces Board, at Orlando Army Air Field, Fla. In November 1945 he was transferred to Headquarters Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C., as air staff officer, Intelligence. In May 1946 he was assigned to Strategic Air Command at Selfridge Field, Mich., where he rejoined the 56th Fighter Group as commander of the 61st Fighter Squadron. He next was operations officer for the 56th Fighter Group and then chief of supply, 56th Fighter Wing. In 1948 he participated as operations officer in the first overseas deployment of jet fighter aircraft, from Selfridge Air Force Base to Germany and return.

General Smith was U.S. Air Force/Royal Air Force exchange officer, from August 1949 to September 1950 and served as commander, Number 1 Fighter Squadron, Royal Air Force, at Tangmere, England. From October 1950 to July 1956, he served with Air Defense Command in various assignments including inspector general, 56th Fighter Interceptor Group, Selfridge Air Force Base; commander, 63d Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Mich.; commander, 518th Air Defense Group, Niagara Falls Air Force Base, N.Y.; and director of military personnel, Headquarters Air Defense Command, Ent Air Force Base, Colo.

In July 1956 General Smith returned to Europe and became commander of the 21st Fighter Bomber Group at Chambley, France. In December 1957 he was assigned to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Paris, France, as chief of the Atomic Operations Section, Air Atomic Operations Division (Joint Staff).



General Smith returned to the United States in July 1960 and was reassigned to Air Defense Command at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., as director, North American Air Defense Command Operations, Headquarters 25th NORAD Region, and later as commander, 325th Fighter Interceptor Wing. In August 1962 he entered the National War College at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., and graduated in June 1963.

He next was assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force as chief of the Air Defense Division, Directorate of Operational Requirements, Deputy Chief of Staff for Programs and Requirements. From February to May 1966, he attended the Advanced Management School at Harvard University, and then returned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force as deputy director of strategic and defense forces in the Directorate of Operational Requirements and Development Plans.

In October 1966 General Smith was named chief, Air Force Advisory Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. He served the next 18 months as chief adviser to the Republic of Vietnam Air Force. In May 1968 he returned to the United States and became vice commander, Ninth Air Force, Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. He assumed duties as commander of the Nineteenth, "Suitcase," Air Force at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., in August 1969.

General Smith returned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force in February 1970 and assumed duties as director of operational requirements and development plans, and in April 1971 became assistant deputy chief of staff, Plans and Operations.

In August 1972 General Smith was appointed commander, Alaskan Air Command, with additional duties as vice commander, Alaskan North American Air Defense Command and Continental Air Defense Command Region, with headquarters at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal (Air Force design), Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters, Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal, and Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem with oak leaf cluster. The Republic of Vietnam has awarded him the National Order of Vietnam, Fourth Class; Air Force Distinguished Service Order, First Class; Staff Service Medal, First Class; Flight Honor Certificate with wings; and the Chuong My Medal.

General Smith's hometown is Niles, Mich.

He was promoted to the grade of major general effective Aug. 1, 1969, with date of rank July 1, 1965.

(Current as of April 1, 1973)

Promotion to grade of lieutenant general effective July 1, 1973 with date of rank June 30, 1973.

Change in assignment to commander, Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force, Izmir, Turkey, effective July 1, 1973.

Lt. Gen. Donavon Francis Smith passed away on September 10, 1974.