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Draft of Top Secret Personal Letter from General Vandenberg to Gen Lemay.

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AF/IGSPB Ltr., 13 Dec 1978  
By AFSHRC  
Date: 15 JUN 1979

Dear Curt:

At the moment, when you are taking over the Strategic Air Command, I think it desirable and necessary to indicate to you my views as to your most immediate and most pressing responsibilities. You fully realize that all Air Force plans and programs are built around the primary consideration that we shall at the outset of any future war be required, as a first charge upon our resources, to deliver within the minimum period of time the most crushing atomic offensive we can possibly mount. I personally feel that the successful accomplishment of this task is not only our best hope for early victory but also essential in the long run to avert eventual defeat. I believe it is also generally accepted, at least by our most farsighted statesmen, that our capability to deliver such an offensive is likewise the greatest deterrent to aggression that exists today.

The responsibility for developing and perfecting this assured capability is now yours. It is not a job which you can do except with the full support of the entire Air Force. It is my responsibility to see that you get that necessary support.

Your first and greatest responsibility as I see it is to achieve within the Strategic Air Command a complete state of readiness which would permit it to carry out an early and sustained powerful offensive in any emergency. Since this offensive must be initiated as soon after

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D-Day as possible, it must be accomplished prior to any significant wasting of the enemy's defenses, despite his most determined opposition, and from whatever secure bases may be available. I am sure you agree that this is an extremely difficult task which can only be done by attaining a degree of combat efficiency to the last detail, a standard of performance that must be considerably higher than any we have ever set before. In the last year the Strategic Air Command has made considerable progress but I believe you will find, as has been reported to me by competent observers, that right now the Strategic Air Command falls far short of the degree of readiness that is required.

Your second responsibility is to prepare the detailed plans for the conduct of the strategic air offensive. You must assume there will be no warning. Your plans must be kept at all times current, based upon your realistic appraisal of current capabilities. This type of planning will naturally require you to take into account the command arrangements which you will require in order to carry out such an offensive. However, until you have satisfied yourself as to the readiness of your Command, I do not feel it would be desirable for you to disperse or divide your planning and staff resources. The problem is further complicated by the diplomatic and political nature of the deployment of the three B-29 wings in the U.K. For this reason, matters affecting those units as well as all matters pertaining to overseas foreign bases must remain the responsibility of this Headquarters. For a similar reason it is also necessary that your relations with other agencies and command outside the Air Force in the Zone of the

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Interior be conducted through this Headquarters. It is my hope that the diplomatic and political situation will permit before too long your complete control and command of all of your own units at all times, regardless of their location. Meanwhile, I feel sure that the arrangements I have indicated will not hamper you in the discharge of your two major and most immediate responsibilities. I do not need to assure you that I have complete confidence in your ability to carry out these heavy responsibilities with complete success.

Sincerely,

*Handwritten notes:*  
The major responsibilities  
of the...  
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