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## **MAJOR GENERAL W. PRESTON CORDERMAN** **US Army, Retired (Deceased)**



After graduating from West Point in 1926, MG William Preston Corderman received his Masters degree from Yale. In 1929, he graduated from the Signal School Officer Course, and in 1932, he was the second student to enter the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) School. After graduating, he remained as an Instructor at the school.

Corderman was posted in Manila, Philippines, in 1938, but returned to the US the following year to attend the Command and General Staff College. In 1940, he served in the Office of the Chief of Staff, G2, and the following year, he returned to teaching, this time a course on postal censorship during wartime.

At the beginning of World War II, Corderman, then a Colonel, was assigned the job of implementing and managing wartime postal censorship in the United States. His next post carried with it even greater responsibilities. From February 1943 to August 1945, he served as Chief of the Signal Security Agency (SSA, forerunner of the Army Security Agency) at Arlington Hall Station, Virginia. As head of SSA, Corderman directed the activities of approximately 10,000 Soldiers and Civilians who carried out the mission of safeguarding Army communications. Working under the tightest secrecy, the SSA operated a worldwide chain of intercept stations that monitored enemy communications. At SSA's Arlington Hall Station headquarters, teams of cryptanalysts and linguists, supported by IBM machines, analyzed intercepted messages. Even before Pearl Harbor, expert Army cryptanalysts had cracked the secrets of the Japanese PURPLE cipher machine. Under Corderman's administration, SSA was greatly expanded and eventually was able to exploit the elaborate codes used by the Japanese Army. This, in turn, paved the way for the island-hopping campaigns of the American Army in the Pacific. GEN Douglas MacArthur's operations officer thought the exploits of Corderman's organization shortened the war in the Pacific by two years.

Corderman's SSA not only deciphered the codes of the Japanese Army, but also achieved breakthroughs in other intelligence and security areas. The SSA provided codes and cipher machines for the entire US Army; messages sent using the Army's high-level machine cipher devices were completely unreadable by the enemy. Additionally, although the bulk of SSA activities were directed against Japan, it also conducted research on prototype computers that could be used to exploit the German Enigma machine. As a result of these accomplishments, Corderman was promoted to

the rank of Brigadier General and became the first Chief of the Army Security Agency when the Army centralized all signals intelligence and signal security operations just after World War II ended.



**BG Preston Corderman, center, with Army Chief of Staff General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, Assistant Chief of Staff G2 MG Hoyt Vandenberg, COL Frank Bullock, and Mr. William Friedman, at Arlington Hall Station, 1946.**

His last assignment was as Commander of Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Corderman's distinguished military career came to an end when he retired from the Army in 1958 with the rank of Major General. Some of his awards include the Distinguished Service Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster) and the Legion of Merit

MG Corderman was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1988. He passed away on 4 March 1998.

*Note: Much of this biography was taken from an article written by John P. Finnegan, "Corderman led intelligence effort in World War II," published in the INSCOM Journal, April-June 1998, pp. 32-33.*