

BIOGRAPHY

United States Air Force

COLONEL RALPH C. ERCHINGER

Colonel Ralph C. Erchinger is Director of Disaster Preparedness for Tenth Air Force (Reserve) at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, responsible for coordinating all Air Force participation, both active and Reserve, in disaster relief operations throughout central United States.

As an extension of the Air Force Chief of Staff, he executes Air Force commitments under the National Plan for Emergency Preparedness and exercises operational control over all Air Force participation in natural disaster relief operations in 13 central states.

His directorate provides representation and guidance to thirteen state military headquarters, three Federal Preparedness Regions and two Defense Civil Preparedness Agency Regions. The directorate also supervises and evaluates disaster preparedness programs at AFRES base level and performs staff assistance to AFRES units including all those gained by Tactical Air Command and Strategic Air Command.

Colonel Erchinger was born in Hammond, Indiana on 14 December 1930. He earned a bachelor of science degree in Business Administration at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, in 1953. He earned an MBA in Personnel Management from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas in 1968. He completed the Air Command and Staff College curriculum in 1967 and Industrial College of the Armed Forces studies in 1973. Colonel Erchinger entered active military service in January 1954, having been commissioned a 2nd Lt through AFROTC. He has completed resident Air Force teaching courses for technical, pilot, and academic instructors, as well as an Army course, "Personnel Management for Executives" conducted in Berlin, Germany.

After completing an Air Electronics Officer Course at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, Colonel Erchinger was assigned as Communications and Electronics Officer in the 58th Air Rescue Squadron at Wheelus Field, Libya until December 1955. He then entered primary pilot training at Malden Air Base, Missouri and won his wings at Vance AFB, Oklahoma after flying B-25s in advanced training. At Palm Beach Air Force Base, Florida, he completed amphibious training and was assigned as an SA-16 pilot with the 31st Air Rescue Squadron at Clark Air Base in the Republic of the Phillipines from 1957 to 1960.

In September 1960 he returned to Keesler Air Force Base where his assignments included School Squadron Commander, Chief Electronic Detection Systems Branch, and Instructor Supervisor of various computer and control systems courses. From August 1963 until August 1966 he served at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas as a C-47 instructor pilot and flight commander with the 3512th Pilot Training Squadron, teaching foreign pilots in the Military Assistance Program to fly the C-47 in all-weather conditions.

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In August 1966 he was among the initial cadre of USAF pilots selected to fly the CV-2 later C-7A Caribou with the Army. After transition training at Fort Benning, Georgia, he was attached to the 61st Aviation Company (and later the 536th Tactical Airlift Squadron) at Vung Tau Airport, Vietnam, as C-7A Aircraft Commander, Flight Commander, Flight Examiner, and Chief of Training. By both air drops and assault landings, he completed 139 combat missions while flying 773 hours of combat support, primarily to small special forces camps.

After completing his graduate studies and C-130 transition training, he journeyed to Athens, Greece in June 1968 where he commanded Detachment 3, 7406th Support Squadron, a special mission unit. He returned to the United States to establish AFROTC Detachment 867 at Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont, where he commanded the unit and was Professor of Aerospace Studies from August 1971 until July 1975.

As Deputy Commander of the 4th Combat Communications Group at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma from August 1975 until March 1977, Colonel Erchinger was responsible for providing mobile communications services, aids to navigation, and air traffic control services for use in any area of the world, primarily in support of the Tactical Air Command. He was assigned to Tenth Air Force (Reserve) on 1 March 1977.

Colonel Erchinger is a command pilot with over 5,000 hours of flying time in both conventional and jet aircraft. His military decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal with six oak leaf clusters, Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation with two "V" devices and five oak leaf clusters, among others.

He is married to the former Eleanor Louise Maynard of Columbus, Ohio. They have four sons: Robert, David, Thomas, and Paul. His hometown is Calumet City, Illinois. The Erchingers currently reside at