

LeMay Never a Neutral

By Don Oberdorfer

Washington Post Staff Writer

In January of last year, the conservative weekly, "Human Events," asked retired Gen. Curtis E. LeMay about his availability for President in 1968 — and re-

ceived a reply that surprised almost everybody.

"I certainly haven't made any commitments to run for public office," said the most celebrated Air Force officer of the nuclear age "but it seems to me that with the world situation being what

it is, the trouble in Asia and the problems there and the Middle East about to flare up, perhaps a President with some military background might be helpful."

By March, LeMay had em-
See PROFILE, A8, Col. 7

PROFILE, From A1

barked on an extensive speaking tour in the West, informing a political reporter, "I would not turn my back on a call to further duty from Uncle Sam."

In June, a "LeMay for President" committee was formed in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Last September, the general said he would give running for President "serious consideration, depending on the circumstances."

Yesterday in Pittsburgh, after a series of telephone chats and private conferences, the cigar-chomping, former Strategic Air Command chief signed up as George Wallace's running mate to the delight of some people and the dismay of others.

There is nothing neutral and little that is diplomatic about Curtis E. LeMay, as Wallace himself quickly discovered when the introductory news conference turned into a shouting match about LeMay's views on nuclear weapons.

In a conversation with former Gov. A. B. (Happy) Chandler of Kentucky about the vice presidential nomination a few weeks ago, a Wallace political agent predicted that this bluntness would prevent LeMay from being selected. According to Chandler, the Wallace agent said of LeMay, "He'd cost us a million votes."

Plain Talk to Foe

Now LeMay has been selected, with Wallace praising "his willingness to speak his mind," and Washington researchers are poring over the speeches, statements and two books by the vice presidential nominee in search of his views.

In "Mission with LeMay,"

published in 1965, he wrote that "my solution to the problem (of North Vietnam) would be to tell them frankly that they've got to draw in their horns and stop their aggression, or we're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age." (Two years later, however, LeMay told an interviewer, "I never said we should bomb them back to the Stone Age. I said we had the capability to do it. I want to save lives on both sides.")

In "How to End the War in Vietnam," his stock speech political and civic clubs in 1967, LeMay said the U.S. should bomb Haiphong harbor, North Vietnam's power and transportation system, every factory and industrial installation

"never ending so long as there are two bricks still stuck together," and the irrigation system on which food depends.

"We must be willing to continue our bombing until we have destroyed every work of man in North Vietnam if this is what it takes to win the war," said LeMay.

In "America Is In Danger," published this year, LeMay advocated the use of "tactical" nuclear weapons in limited wars as more "cost-effective," "less provocative" and "less difficult to control" than equivalent conventional bombs. "By crossing the threshold of nuclear warfare through the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons in limited war," he wrote, "we would demonstrate the grave risks to the enemy of his continuing the conflict."

Opposed to Treaty

LeMay opposed a treaty banning the spread of nuclear weapons as dangerous

and unworkable, and declared that "as for deterring nuclear blackmail in Asia, I see no recourse other than helping free Asian nations gain their own nuclear deterrents."

These and other opinions from a man whose pride in his honesty and bluntness appear to be the basis of a major new issue in the 1968 campaign. It may or may not be advantageous to George Wallace.

"Old Ironpants" (as the Air Force nicknamed him) won his greatest glory flattening Tokyo with three bombs in World War II, supervising the first atomic raids on Japan, and building the Strategic Air Command to a mighty force.

Less Happy at Pentagon

He was less happy and less effective in the semi-political world of the Pentagon, for reasons set down by Gen. Thomas D. White, who brought LeMay to Washington.

"He suffered tortures," wrote White, "because as a long-time field commander he had acquired the simple virtue of being able to resolve the pros and cons of a problem into black and white . . . (In Washington) political considerations, public relations, budget planning and philosophies had an important bearing . . . What seemed to LeMay like a black-and-white affair often ended up as a shade of gray which was unpalatable to his practical and initially uncomplicated views."