

## Dr. Strangelove Part Duex

By Mary Beaudoin

part duex: a superficial, unnecessary or overly bad sequel to a classic film  
—from the Urban Dictionary

In 2013, the nuclear security of the country came to sound like something out of director Stanley Kubrick's brilliant 1964 Cold War satire, *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

In May, The Associated Press revealed that 17 Minuteman-3 launch control officers at the Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota were "taken off duty"; Congress was informed that it was because they lacked "proper attitude." In August a colonel in charge of security forces was fired after the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) base in Montana failed a safety and security inspection.

More recently—at the end of September and beginning of October—two top ranking military brass in charge of U.S. nuclear weapons were relieved of their commands.

Media reports announced that Major General Michael Carey who was responsible for 450 intercontinental ballistic missiles at three different locations was fired for "personal misbehavior" that took place at "an unspecified location." According to NBC News, the Air Force said that the firing was "due to a loss of trust and confidence in his leadership and judgment." The Los Angeles Times reported that a U.S. official told them that the misbehavior involved alcohol. The AP reported hearing this from senior defense officials, as well.



General Buck, played by actor George C. Scott, at the table in the War Room. Scene from 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove*.

The second high-ranking military officer relieved of his duties was Vice Admirable Timothy M. Giardina, whose title, in his particular case, gives added meaning to the word "vice." Mainstream media reported the fact that he was under criminal

investigation for using fake poker chips, but the most detailed reporting came from the staff at PokerWorks, an online poker publication: “According to Pottawattamie County Attorney Matt Wilbur, the vice admiral ‘put at least \$1,500 in counterfeit poker chips into play at the Horseshoe Council Bluffs [a casino in Council Bluffs, Iowa], which is just across the river from Omaha, Nebraska.” The online periodical omaha.com, working together with World-Herald, followed up on the story reporting that the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation [passing fake poker chips is a felony in Iowa] decided not to press charges due to the fact that the accused had no previous record; the case was turned over to the U.S. Defense Department.

What’s a naval officer doing in the Great Plains so far from sea in the first place? The U.S. Navy’s ballistic missile submarine force is part of U.S. Strategic Command. Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, where Giardina was the deputy commander, is the headquarters of U.S. Strategic Command, which has responsibility for U.S. global strike and nuclear deterrence.

So these two high-ranking officers were relieved of duty, in quick succession, for conduct unbecoming? The firings have given rise to speculation from both the right and the left as to whether there is more to the story, whether Deep Government could be concealing something. It’s hard to accept that life and death in the U.S.—and the world—may, in a big way, been in the hands of a problem drinker and a gambler who cheats.

The story points to the absurdity of maintaining a nuclear arsenal in the first place in the same way that Dr. Strangelove does. Integral to this “defense” strategy is a set of mind-boggling beliefs: blind faith in technology, disregard for the existence of Murphy’s Law, acceptance of the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction, and trust that those in charge are infallible human beings capable only of rational, stable behavior.

Amazingly, the similarities of recent incidents to Dr. Strangelove go beyond generalities. The cast of characters in the black comedy includes an unhinged Air Force General. And poker is used as a metaphor for gambling with the fate of the world.

The set for Strangelove is described this way: “In the middle of the room there was a large circular table lit from above by a circle of lamps, suggesting a poker table. Kubrick insisted that the table be covered with green baize (although this could not be seen in the black and white film) to reinforce the actors’ impression that they are playing a game of poker for the fate of the world.”