



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



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LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATIONS  
DIVISION

MAY 11, 1979

B-163074



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The Honorable Harold Brown  
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As part of our review of selected weather activities, we examined the Air Force efforts to obtain increased host nation weather support in Europe. We are concerned that the Air Force has not sufficiently explored the availability and use of such support as part of the Department of Defense's overall program to rely more on host nation support services.

As you know, during the 1950s and 1960s, U.S. Forces in Europe relied primarily on themselves to provide needed rear area support in case of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conflict. In the late 1960s the United States started to rely more on host countries for assistance in supporting its forces to reduce duplicate support structures and overall cost.

Although the Air Force appears to selectively use host nation support in rear areas, the concept is generally applied to base maintenance and not weather support functions. Weather support is for the most part provided by Air Weather Service personnel on U.S. bases. Nonetheless, we believe the expanded use of host nation weather support should be explored because the Air Force already relies on such support at some joint or host country operated airfields.

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A summary of our observations together with our recommendations are presented below. We discussed the issues addressed in this report with responsible Air Force officials in Europe and at the Air Weather Service. Their comments are included below with their principal concerns presented on page 6.

*Letter Report*

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PROVIDERS OF WEATHER SUPPORT IN EUROPE

The Air Weather Service is responsible for providing operational weather support services to the U.S. European Command, the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, the U.S. Army in Europe, the European Communications Area, and elements of various commands assigned to the European theater. Such support is provided by the 2d Weather Wing whose support network consists of 2 squadrons and 51 weather detachments 1/ located at 18 different installations in 8 countries. The 31st Weather Squadron provides most support to the Air Force and the 7th Weather Squadron provides most support to the Army. The following chart shows the staffing and number of detachments by major unit as of March 1979.

<u>Major unit</u>	<u>Detachments</u>	<u>Staff onhand</u>
2d Weather Wing	6	146
31st Weather Squadron	21	244
7th Weather Squadron	<u>22</u>	<u>180</u>
Total	<u>49</u>	<u>570</u>

In peacetime, weather detachments routinely take observations and provide terminal aviation forecasts, pilot briefings, and severe weather warnings. However, in wartime, detachments supporting the Army accompany units into combat, while detachments supporting the Air Force continue to operate from their peacetime locations. Since most of these locations are airfields located in rear areas, detachments supporting the Air Force can be categorized as providing rear area support.

FEASIBILITY OF INCREASING  
REAR AREA HOST NATION SUPPORT

Host nation weather support can be divided into weather products and services. Products are basic weather data, analyses, and charts produced by the host country. Services include observing and forecasting in support of U.S. activities.

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1/Weather detachments include weather support units and operating locations.

Although the Air Force uses host nation support in rear areas, the concept is generally applied to base maintenance functions, not weather support. The expanded use of host nation support appears feasible because the Air Force uses

- host nation weather support on jointly and host nation operated airfields,
- host nation weather support on U.S.-operated airfields, and
- some host nations' basic environmental products.

Weather services at joint and host nation operated airfields

The Air Force uses host nation support at nine airfields in six countries. Host nation personnel take observations on all bases and provide forecast services at seven of the nine bases. The following chart shows the number of foreign civilian and military air bases used by the Air Force and the total number of U.S. weather personnel assigned to the bases.

<u>Type of base</u>	<u>Number of bases</u>	<u>U.S. personnel</u>	<u>Foreign personnel</u>
Civilian	4	34	a/
Military	<u>5</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>2</u>

a/Foreign civilian personnel figures were not available to us.

Air Force officials stated that some U.S. personnel were needed at the joint bases for functions unique to U.S. needs, such as providing severe storm warnings, pilot briefings, staff weather support to local commanders, and support for classified missions. For example, Air Force regulations require that, in the interest of flying safety, all pilots receive face-to-face weather briefings. U.S. personnel at Rhein Main Air Base, which is colocated with Frankfurt International Airport, must provide such briefings because the service is not available from Frankfurt International.

Additionally, the Air Force uses available host nation support when U.S. aircraft deploy to allied bases.

We believe the above illustrates the feasibility of using host nation support augmented as necessary by U.S. personnel.

Weather services at  
U.S.-operated airfields

As previously stated, weather support functions are generally provided by Air Force personnel on U.S.-operated air bases. However, the Air Force has made exceptions to this rule. For instance, the Air Force is contracting with the Danish Arctic Contractor, Copenhagen, Denmark, for all operations and maintenance services, including weather support at Thule Air Base, Greenland. Under the contract terms, the Danish contractor is required to employ personnel trained in meteorological functions and able to understand, speak, read, and write English. The contractor is responsible for two weather functions:

1. Observing--the observing program includes surface aviation, balloon and rocket observations, surface synoptic observations, radio contacts, and forecast transmissions.
2. Forecasting--the forecasting program includes terminal forecasts, Thule defense area forecasts, severe weather warnings, route forecasts, and radio contacts.

According to the Air Force, the contractor satisfactorily met the contract's performance standards in all areas of weather support during the last year. Further, Air Force officials considered the contract service effective. These assessments tend to indicate that acceptable host nation support can be obtained at the base level.

Use of host nation  
weather products

The Air Force also uses host nation products to meet selected requirements. The European Forecast Unit, which is the Air Force's central forecasting unit in Europe, provided a variety of centrally prepared point forecasts and limited number of charts to Air Force weather detachments. To aid in this mission, the European Forecast Unit receives all products sent over the British Meteorological Office and German Civilian Weather Service facsimile circuits.

The exceptions are military-oriented products prepared by both the German Military Geophysics Office of the German military weather service and the Defense Services section of the British office. Air Force officials said they are studying the feasibility of using these host nation products.

LIMITED PLANS TO INCREASE  
HOST NATION SUPPORT

Although at least some host countries appear to have the technical expertise to meet U.S. needs, Air Force plans to expand existing support arrangements are limited to establishing central guidance centers and obtaining more uniform weather support. Furthermore, these arrangements will not affect U.S. weather support at the base level.

NATO is currently discussing two endeavors involving more unified weather support to NATO forces. First, the NATO Meteorological Committee is discussing the establishment of military analysis centers. Under this concept, U.S. weather detachments would receive their weather guidance products and forecasts from a single, wartime guidance center in each NATO region, rather than from the European Forecast Unit. However, the concept is still in the talking stage and would be a wartime concept. Therefore, it would not change the way U.S. Forces currently receive peacetime weather support.

Second, the Allied Force Central Europe Meteorological Committee has recently agreed in principle to a uniform 24- to 72-hour forecast for NATO's central region. The new forecast would be used by NATO commanders in making decisions on exercises or in a contingency. While the United States is supporting this attempt at standardization, the arrangement will not change the structure of weather support at the detachment level. Each country will still provide weather support to its forces.

In addition, the Air Force is currently working with the German military on a proposal that may increase host nation weather support. The German Military Geophysics Office is building a fortified weather facility and has asked the Air Force to provide weather products and some personnel. Air Force participation in this venture is being considered. Although the European Forecast Unit may be affected by such a joint operation, Air Force officials stressed that it is too soon to determine the effect.

Although some efforts are being considered, emphasis appears to be on wartime/contingency operations with little or no change in peacetime structures. Emphasis on wartime needs is important, but the practicality of having different structures in peace and war with an expected smooth/effective transition when required is questionable. Should not a fully interoperable capability be developed and exercised in peace and war?

REASONS FOR LIMITED USE  
OF HOST NATION SUPPORT

While believing that the British and German weather services have the know-how to assume U.S. weather support, Air Force officials were doubtful about the benefits to be derived because the United States would have to pay for any additional work or personnel. The officials were not sure whether dollar savings could be realized by replacing U.S. military personnel with costly host nation civilian personnel for the following reasons:

- Classified material. During exercises and wartime planning some weather personnel must have access to classified material. This material could not be entrusted to foreign nationals.
- Contingencies. The United States is in Europe not only for NATO but also for any other military contingencies that may occur. If U.S. weather support were totally provided by the host nation and if that country did not get involved in the contingency, it might not continue to provide U.S. Forces with weather support.
- Operating requirements. Often the United States and host nations have different operational criteria. Historically, weather services have tailored their products to the requirements established by their own forces.
- Civilians. During peacetime, German and British weather personnel are generally civilians. Air Force officials fear they would have less control over such civilians than they currently have over U.S. military personnel.

Most noteworthy, however, Air Force officials stated that the Air Weather Service has not studied the feasibility

of host nation weather support to U.S. installations. The former Commander of the Air Weather Service said it was not in his charter to ask allies to provide services and personnel that were not already available. Furthermore, Air Force officials stated that they had never received formal Defense Department guidance outlining the conditions under which they should consider or approach host countries about weather support and that, to their knowledge, U.S. studies had not been done in this area.

#### CONCLUSIONS

(The Air Force has a positive attitude toward increasing host nation support even though it has voiced concern about such support.) However, the move toward increased host nation support is essentially limited to establishing central guidance facilities and providing uniform wartime support. Although these are steps forward, more can be done to increase U.S. reliance on allied rear area support. Current operations tend to indicate that, with some exceptions, host nations can provide weather support at the central guidance center and base level.

The Air Force's concerns over such issues as the economies derived from host nation services, classified material, contingencies, differences in operating requirements, and control over civilians are valid but must be closely examined before a final conclusion can be reached. The Air Force reliance on host nations jointly or foreign operated bases tends to downgrade the Air Force's concern over some of these potential problem areas.) Similarly, the Thule Air Base experience and the concept of establishing full inter-operational capability in wartime should negate many concerns over the handling of classified material and employing foreign nationals. After all, how can a full inter-operational capability be established in wartime unless U.S. allies are relied on and the concept is practiced in peacetime?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

We recommend that you:

- Direct the Air Force to increase weather related host nation support where appropriate or use contract services similar to those at Thule Air Base and U.S.-operated airfields in other foreign countries.

--Intensify U.S. efforts within the NATO community to establish military analysis centers in all NATO regions. These centers should operate fully not only during war but also in peacetime to alleviate the need for separate guidance centers and improve interoperational capability.

We would appreciate receiving your views on our observations and recommendations.

As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of the Air Force; and interested congressional committees.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. W. Gutmann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

R. W. Gutmann  
Director