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REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

Reductions Achieved In The Cost Of Transporting Military Mail From Okinawa To Points In Southeast Asia

B-165683

Department of Defense

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

700311

MARCH 31, 1970



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-165683

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on reductions achieved in the cost of transporting military mail from Okinawa to points in Southeast Asia. This review was made pursuant to the Budget and Accounting Act, 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53), and the Accounting and Auditing Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

Copies of the report are being sent to the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and the Air Force; and the Secretary of Transportation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James B. Stacks".

Comptroller General
of the United States

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFB Air Force Base
DOD Department of Defense
GAO General Accounting Office
MAC Military Airlift Command
SEA Southeast Asia
USAFPCS U.S. Air Force Postal and Courier Service

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

The General Accounting Office (GAO) wanted to find out if the most efficient and economical method of transportation was used by the Department of Defense (DOD) to distribute mail from Okinawa to points in Southeast Asia.

No attempt was made to evaluate the method used to transport the relatively small amount of mail inbound to Okinawa from Southeast Asia or to review the overall mail distribution system of DOD. (See p. 3.)

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Most of the mail being shipped from Okinawa to Vietnam and Thailand during calendar year 1968 was shipped northeastward to Japan on commercial aircraft and then transshipped southwestward to its final destination on commercial or military aircraft. This circuitous hauling, however, was discontinued in January 1969, after GAO called the matter to the attention of DOD officials. (See p. 5.)

The circuitous routing was used in 1968, even though there was sufficient unused space on direct Military Airlift Command flights to Vietnam to accommodate this mail and there was adequate local military airlift from Vietnam to subsequently deliver the mail to Thailand. (See p. 5.)

Use of the more direct military flights would have, in GAO's opinion, resulted in savings of about \$375,000 in commercial air transportation charges paid in calendar year 1968 for transporting more than a million pounds of military mail. In addition, the need for intermediate handling of mail shipments in Japan would have been avoided and the delivery of mail shipments would have been expedited because of the shorter flying time. GAO did not consider the cost of using Military Airlift Command aircraft since these aircraft were already stopping in Okinawa. (See p. 10.)

The decision to use a circuitous route apparently resulted from (1) the inadequate service previously experienced when mail was shipped direct

from Okinawa to Vietnam and (2) the belief of military postal officials that the Military Airlift Command could not provide the regular service necessary to haul mail.

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

During the review GAO proposed to DOD that available space on Military Airlift Command aircraft be used to move mail from Okinawa to Southeast Asia when direct commercial U.S.-flag service was either not available or inadequate. GAO proposed also that arrangements be made with the 5th Air Force and the 834th Air Division for local distribution of mail in Vietnam and Thailand and for such backup service as deemed appropriate. (See p. 12.)

As an interim measure, GAO proposed that the regularly scheduled Military Airlift Command flight operated for the purpose of delivering the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper be used to the extent practicable for distributing mail from Okinawa. (See p. 12.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

DOD officials have informed GAO that substantial amounts of mail are now being carried on military aircraft from Okinawa to Vietnam and Thailand and that the circuitous routing of mail has been discontinued. (See p. 13.)

Although the actions taken by DOD have eliminated the routing of mail through Japan, GAO is recommending that responsible DOD officials maintain a continuing watch over postal operations in Southeast Asia to ensure, to the extent possible, economical and efficient movement of mail. (See p. 14.)

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

GAO is reporting this matter to the Congress to direct attention to the savings that will result from the prompt corrective action taken by DOD.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The General Accounting Office has reviewed the practices and procedures of the Department of Defense for transporting military mail from Okinawa to points in Southeast Asia (SEA) during calendar year 1968. The purpose of the review was to find out if the most efficient and economical method of transportation was utilized. Our review was limited to mail shipments which originated on Okinawa and which were consigned to installations in SEA. No attempt was made to evaluate the method used to transport the relatively small amount of mail inbound to Okinawa from SEA or to review the overall mail distribution system of DOD. The scope of our review is described on page 15.

Military mail is distributed worldwide by means of a network of civil and military transportation systems. This network must operate efficiently to meet the exacting mail-transmission requirements of the military services. Speed, regularity, and reliability are the key requisites of an efficient mail delivery service. To obtain maximum advantage from the fast and round-the-clock service provided by the various modes of transportation, postal activities, where possible, should adapt their operations to avoid circuitous routing and intermediate terminal handling.

The postal services of the Departments of the Air Force and the Army operate under joint regulations. To minimize duplication and overlapping, the service that has a predominant interest in an area is responsible for all postal operations in that area. Under this concept, the Air Force is responsible for postal service between Okinawa and SEA.

The U.S. Air Force Postal and Courier Service (USAFPCS) was designated by the Director of Administrative Services, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force, as the single agency to provide worldwide postal and courier service for the Air Force. Its mission is to provide an integrated worldwide postal and courier service to authorized military organizations and to other Government agencies. The Chief of the USAFPCS is responsible for providing transportation management for the

movement of mail, including route planning and the programming of space on carriers. The Okinawa and Vietnam district offices of USAFPCS are part of a worldwide system operating under a chain of command from Headquarters, U.S. Air Force, through regional headquarters at Hickam Air Force Base (AFB), Hawaii, to the Okinawa and Vietnam districts.

The Congress has expressed a desire that military aircraft not be used to transport military mail except on routes where adequate service by U.S.-flag commercial carriers is not available, and DOD generally has adhered to this policy. During the period reviewed, U.S.-flag commercial carriers did not offer direct mail service from Okinawa to Vietnam or Thailand. Effective August 1, 1969, a U.S.-flag commercial carrier, however, inaugurated direct service to Thailand from Okinawa, and DOD informed us that this service would be used for air-eligible matter to the maximum capability of the carriers involved.

The principal officials of DOD and of the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force responsible for administration of activities discussed in this report are listed in appendix II.

CHAPTER 2

SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS BY

USING DIRECT MILITARY FLIGHTS

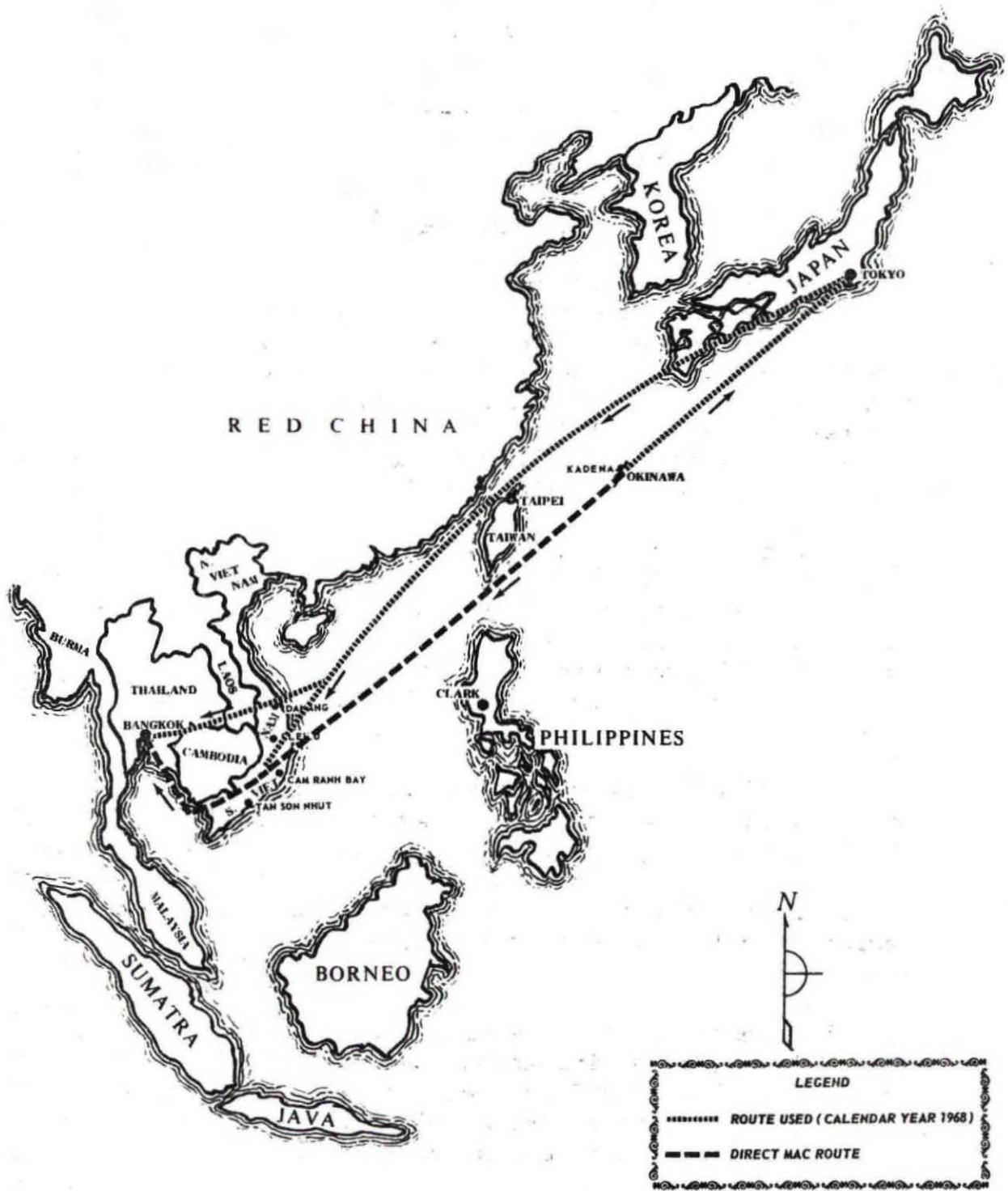
TO DELIVER MAIL

Our review of the methods used to transport more than a million pounds of military mail from Okinawa to Vietnam and Thailand during calendar year 1968 showed that most of the mail was backhauled to Japan on commercial aircraft and then transshipped to final destination on commercial or military aircraft. This backhauling, however, was discontinued in January 1969 after we called the matter to the attention of responsible officials of DOD.

The circuitous routing was used in 1968 even though there was sufficient unused space available on direct Military Airlift Command (MAC) flights to Vietnam to accommodate this mail and there was adequate intratheater airlift to accomplish subsequent delivery of the mail to Thailand. A map showing the circuitous mail route in contrast to the direct MAC route follows on page 6.

Use of the more direct military flights would, in our opinion, have resulted in savings of about \$375,000 in commercial air transportation charges paid in calendar year 1968 and would have expedited the delivery of the mail because of the shorter flying time. In addition, the intermediate handling of mail shipments in Japan would have been avoided.

The decision to use a circuitous route apparently resulted from (1) the inadequate service previously experienced when USAFPCS shipped mail direct from Okinawa to Vietnam and (2) the belief of USAFPCS officials that MAC could not provide the regular service necessary to haul mail.



INADEQUATE SERVICE EXPERIENCED
ON PREVIOUS DIRECT SHIPMENTS

During calendar year 1968, mail from Okinawa destined for Saigon, Vietnam, and Bangkok, Thailand, was shipped to Tokyo, Japan, on commercial aircraft and then transshipped from the Tokyo International Airport to destination on other commercial aircraft. Mail shipped from Okinawa to Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, was moved by commercial aircraft to Tokyo, transported 25 miles to Yokota Air Base, Japan, and then moved from Yokota Air Base by MAC aircraft to either Da Nang or Cam Ranh Bay. The use of MAC aircraft was necessary because there was no commercial service available from Japan to Da Nang or Cam Ranh Bay.

Air Force officials in Hawaii told us that the reason they used this circuitous route was because they had received inadequate service when the mail was shipped direct from Okinawa to Vietnam. Before the practice of backhauling mail to Japan was started, the mail had been shipped direct on aircraft operated by the 315th Air Division (now the 5th Air Force), which was under the command of the Commander in Chief, Pacific, and which was not a part of MAC.

An official of USAFPCS informed us that the 315th Air Division had not provided satisfactory service for mail deliveries. We were further advised that this resulted primarily because (1) the 315th Air Division lacked space on a regular basis to handle mail and (2) the loadmasters of the 315th Air Division did not have knowledge of the locations of air post offices in SEA, and, as a result, the mail was misdelivered or delayed at intermediate stops. Because of this unsatisfactory service, the USAFPCS officials stated that they had received constant complaints from units in SEA as well as from U.S. Army Pacific, Headquarters, pertaining to delay of mail deliveries. USAFPCS decided therefore to seek another method of delivering the mail and selected the backhauling of mail to Japan by commercial aircraft for transshipment to destination as the best method.

MAC AIRLIFT NOT REQUESTED

Air Force Regulation 76-38 provides that a request to establish service over an existing MAC route may be submitted by the military service to Headquarters, U.S. Air Force. There is nothing in the record, however, to indicate that USAFPCS officials had submitted a request for MAC service to Headquarters or had investigated the possibility of using MAC to move this mail. USAFPCS officials informed us that they had discounted the possible use of MAC because they did not believe that MAC could provide the regular service necessary to handle the mail.

We found that, contrary to the belief of USAFPCS officials, MAC aircraft stopping at Okinawa en route to Vietnam had adequate space available on scheduled flights to handle the mail shipments. MAC officials at Travis AFB, California, confirmed our finding and told us that MAC had adequate space to move all the mail from Okinawa to Vietnam without displacing other cargo.

We examined MAC flight records at Headquarters, 22d Air Force, Travis AFB, for the month of December 1968 and found that from two to eight MAC flights stopped daily at Okinawa en route to Vietnam. An official at Travis AFB stated that mail was adaptable to nearly any available space, including the belly compartments of aircraft or the tops of cargo pallets, and that mail could have moved on virtually any MAC flight going to the desired destination.

He further informed us that westbound transpacific flights had already completed the critical leg of their trip to SEA when they transited Okinawa. The critical leg of a flight is that segment of a route on which the least amount of cargo can be carried because of fuel requirements or weather conditions. After completion of this leg, additional cargo can be accommodated. The official also told us that, if necessary, minor rescheduling could have been arranged.

In addition to the above-mentioned MAC flights, MAC chartered a daily flight specifically for carrying the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper from Japan to Okinawa with subsequent stops at Clark Air Base, Philippines; Cam

Ranh Bay, Saigon, Pleiku, and Da Nang, Vietnam; Taipei, Taiwan; and return to Japan. One pallet of newspapers weighing between 2,000 and 3,000 pounds was unloaded at Okinawa each day. We believe that this flight could have been used to carry mail during calendar year 1968 and could continue to be used as long as the flight is in operation. As a part of another review, we proposed that the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper be printed in Vietnam or Thailand and thereby eliminate the need for this flight.

In addition to handling Vietnam mail, this flight, in our opinion, could have handled the mail destined for Bangkok, which during calendar year 1968 was being backhauled on commercial aircraft from Okinawa to Japan for transshipment to Thailand. The Thailand mail could have been delivered to Cam Ranh Bay by MAC and then transshipped by the 834th Air Division to Thailand along with the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper.

Although we did not determine from cargo and terminal personnel at Cam Ranh Bay what effect the addition of a relatively small amount of mail would have had on their admittedly heavy work schedule, the ability of these personnel to handle the lower priority Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper daily indicates that these personnel would have had little trouble in handling the mail destined for Thailand.

We have discontinued a detailed study of the question of transshipment at Cam Ranh Bay of mail destined for Thailand because, effective August 1, 1969, direct U.S.-flag commercial air service was inaugurated between Okinawa and Thailand. We have been informed by DOD that this direct U.S.-flag commercial air service is now being used to the maximum capability of the carriers involved. (See app. I.) Use of the direct commercial service will reduce our estimate of savings on future shipments to Thailand; however, significant savings will still result since the cost of direct commercial service is only about half the cost of commercial service by the circuitous route actually employed during calendar year 1968.

We believe that flights of the 315th Air Division, which were used at one time to move the mail between Okinawa

and Vietnam, could have been used to supplement the MAC flights and to ensure adequate and regular mail delivery. We believe also that, by using a combination of these services, adequate airlift would have been available for shipping mail between Okinawa and SEA without backhauling the mail to Japan.

OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE THE COST OF COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION

On the basis of our examination of records relating to mail shipments from Okinawa to Vietnam and Thailand during the 7-month period ended September 30, 1968, we estimate that commercial carriers were paid about \$375,000 during calendar year 1968 for transporting more than a million pounds of military mail from Okinawa to Japan and for transporting some of this mail from Japan to final destination. Our estimate of commercial cost by destination follows.

<u>Destination</u>	Estimated weight (pounds)	Estimated commercial cost
Saigon	277,020	\$147,000
Bangkok	322,764	172,100
Cam Ranh Bay	339,624	46,000 ^a
Da Nang	<u>77,460</u>	<u>10,500^a</u>
Total	<u>1,016,868</u>	<u>\$375,600</u>

^aCommercial charges to Japan only. MAC airlift utilized to destination.

This commercial transportation cost, in our opinion, could have been avoided if the mail had been routed direct from Okinawa to Vietnam on MAC aircraft and, where necessary, intratheater airlift utilized to effect final delivery.

We believe that our estimate of the reduction in commercial transportation cost is conservative, because the month of December--the heaviest mailing month of the year--was not included in our 7-month sample and we did not make

any adjustment for the handling costs in Japan that would have been avoided by eliminating the circuitous route. On the other hand, we did not consider the cost of using MAC aircraft since these aircraft were already stopping in Okinawa. We recognize that additional handling costs would have been incurred in transshipping the Thailand mail from Vietnam; however, these costs would have been nominal considering the small volume of mail involved.

CHAPTER 3

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

We discussed the circuitous routing of mail with Air Force officials at the Pacific Postal and Courier Region Headquarters, Hickam AFB, in April and October 1968, and we identified the savings that could be achieved by eliminating the backhaul of mail to Japan.

These officials told us that they were aware of the problem of moving mail from Okinawa to SEA and were not pleased with the then-existing system. They stated further that they were looking into the problem and that their goal was to move the mail from Okinawa on a regularly scheduled basis, both cost and service having been considered. The officials agreed that they would like to use aircraft of both MAC and the 315th Air Division to a greater extent, but they felt that additional details were needed from MAC and the 315th Air Division concerning the frequency of service and the availability of space on aircraft before any change could be made.

They agreed that savings were possible by using military airlift. They questioned, however, whether MAC could provide the frequently scheduled service from Okinawa to SEA that mail shipments require.

We brought our findings to the attention of the Secretary of Defense in a draft report dated October 17, 1969, and we proposed that available space on MAC aircraft be used to move mail from Okinawa to SEA when direct commercial U.S.-flag service was either not available or inadequate. We proposed also that arrangements be made with the 5th Air Force and the 834th Air Division for local distribution of mail in Vietnam and Thailand and for such backup service as deemed appropriate.

As an interim measure, we proposed that the regularly scheduled MAC flight operated for the purpose of delivering the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper be used to the extent practicable for distributing mail from Okinawa.

The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force, responding for the Secretary of Defense, commented on our findings in a letter dated December 11, 1969. (See app. I.) He advised us that the records of USAFPCS revealed that substantial amounts of mail were being carried by military aircraft to Vietnam and Thailand destinations from Okinawa. In addition, he stated that the MAC flight delivering the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper was being used on a daily basis by U.S. Air Force airmail terminals at Clark Air Base, Bangkok, Taipei, Da Nang, Okinawa, and Cam Ranh Bay for mail movements of 500 pounds to 5,000 pounds from each terminal.

The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary informed us that the backhauling of mail from Okinawa to Japan for onward movement to SEA points was discontinued in January 1969, several months after the completion of our fieldwork. He informed us also that the direct U.S. commercial service between Okinawa, Saigon, and Bangkok that began in August 1969 would be used for air-eligible matter to the maximum capability of the carriers involved.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that the prompt actions taken by DOD in response to our review have eliminated the backhauling of mail which existed during the period reviewed. The elimination of this circuitous routing should result in significant savings and should reduce the transit time on mail shipments.

RECOMMENDATION

Although the problems identified with respect to the delivery of mail shipments from Okinawa to points in SEA have been corrected, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct responsible officials to maintain a continuing watch over postal operations in Southeast Asia to ensure, to the extent possible, economical and efficient movement of mail.

CHAPTER 5

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review included an examination of pertinent records covering mail shipments from Okinawa to Vietnam and Thailand from March through September 1968, an examination of the flight records of the Military Airlift Command, and a review of military regulations covering the movement of mail.

We performed fieldwork at the following locations:

Headquarters, U.S. Air Force Postal and Courier Service, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

Headquarters, 22d Air Force, Travis Air Force Base, California

Kadena Air Base, Okinawa

APPENDIXES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, 20330

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

11 DEC 1969

Dear Mr. Sullivan

The Secretary of Defense has asked me to reply to your letter of October 17, 1969, providing copies of your draft report to the Congress on "Savings in the Cost of Transporting Military Mail from Okinawa to Points in Southeast Asia", T-OD-F 748 (OSD Case #3026).

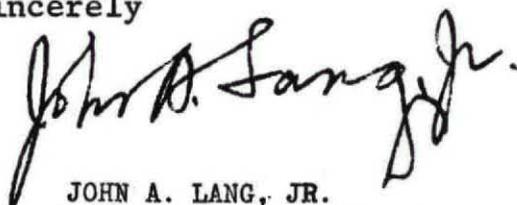
Your report contained two recommendations: That available space on Military Airlift Command aircraft be used whenever direct commercial U.S. flag service is not available or inadequate, and that MAC flight W 199 Y operating for the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper be used to the extent practicable. (Local distribution and MAC backup to be arranged with the 834th Air Division.)

Records of the Air Force Postal and Courier Service reveal substantial amounts of mail being carried by military aircraft to Vietnam and Thailand destinations from Okinawa. During the 12 Months ending September 1969, this volume averaged about 50,000 pounds to Saigon each month; 45,000 pounds to Cam Ranh Bay; 5,500 pounds to DaNang, and 32,000 pounds to Bangkok. Additionally, the W 199 Y supporting the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper is utilized on a daily basis by USAF Air Mail Terminals at Clark, Bangkok, Taipei, DaNang, Okinawa and Cam Ranh Bay for mail movements of 500 pounds to 5,000 pounds from each terminal.

The backhauling of mail from Okinawa to Japan for onward movement to SEA points has not taken place since January 1969. Utilization of direct U.S. commercial service between Okinawa, Saigon and Bangkok began in August 1969 and will be used for air-eligible matter to the maximum capability of the carriers involved.

Your continued interest in these matters is appreciated.

Sincerely



JOHN A. LANG, JR.
The Administrative Assistant

Mr. T. E. Sullivan
Director, Transportation Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY,
NAVY, AND AIR FORCE RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF ACTIVITIES
DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT

<u>Tenure of office</u>	
<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE:

Melvin R. Laird	Jan. 1969	Present
Clark M. Clifford	Mar. 1968	Jan. 1969
Robert S. McNamara	Jan. 1961	Feb. 1968

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE:

David Packard	Jan. 1969	Present
Paul H. Nitze	July 1967	Jan. 1969
Cyrus R. Vance	Jan. 1964	June 1967

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS):

Barry J. Shillito	Jan. 1969	Present
Thomas D. Morris	Sept. 1967	Jan. 1969
Paul R. Ignatius	Dec. 1964	Aug. 1967

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Stanley R. Resor	July 1965	Present
Stephen Ailes	Jan. 1964	July 1965

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY,
NAVY, AND AIR FORCE RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF ACTIVITIES
DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT (continued)

Tenure of office
From To

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY (continued)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
(INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS):

J. Ronald Fox	June 1969	Present
Vincent P. Huggard (acting)	Feb. 1969	June 1969
Robert A. Brooks	Oct. 1965	Feb. 1969

COMMANDER, MILITARY TRAFFIC MAN-
AGEMENT AND TERMINAL SERVICE:

Maj. Gen. Clarence J. Lang	Apr. 1969	Present
Maj. Gen. John J. Lane	Feb. 1965	Mar. 1969

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY:

John H. Chafee	Jan. 1969	Present
Paul R. Ignatius	Sept. 1967	Jan. 1969
Charles F. Baird (acting)	Aug. 1967	Aug. 1967
Robert H. B. Baldwin (acting)	July 1967	July 1967
Paul H. Nitze	Nov. 1963	June 1967

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
(INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS):

Frank K. Sanders	Feb. 1969	Present
Barry J. Shillito	Apr. 1968	Jan. 1969
Vacant	Feb. 1968	Apr. 1968
Graeme C. Bannerman	Feb. 1965	Feb. 1968

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY,
NAVY, AND AIR FORCE RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF ACTIVITIES
DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT (continued)

	<u>Tenure of office</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
<u>DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE</u>		
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE:		
Robert C. Seamans, Jr.	Jan. 1969	Present
Harold Brown	Oct. 1965	Jan. 1969
Eugene M. Zuckert	Jan. 1961	Sept. 1965
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS):		
Philip N. Whittaker	May 1969	Present
Robert H. Charles	Nov. 1963	May 1969
COMMANDER, MILITARY AIRLIFT COM- MAND:		
Gen. Jack J. Catton	Aug. 1969	Present
Gen. Howell M. Estes, Jr.	July 1964	July 1969