

GAO

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Living in Frankfurt

A Message From the Director and Staff of the European Office

A tour in an overseas office can be a fascinating experience which will undoubtedly enhance your professional and personal development. This handbook was prepared by the European Office to provide GAO staff interested in an overseas assignment with information on the living and working conditions in Frankfurt. Interested staff are also encouraged to seek additional information from current or former European Office staff members. In many respects, working in the European Office is no different than working in any other GAO field office. We are involved in a variety of issue areas and we work closely with the headquarters programming divisions. What makes our work unique is of course the foreign locations where it is performed. Europe, Africa, and the Middle East are all within our geographic area of responsibility. Working in these locations provides our staff with opportunities to experience first hand things that otherwise they may have only read about. At the same time, however, some of the logistical and cultural requirements associated with the travel can become stressful, and do require adaptability and flexibility on our staff's part.

Similarly, living in a foreign country requires some change in our staff's lifestyle. While there is a "little America" atmosphere within the U.S. State Department community in Frankfurt, where European Office staff live, day-to-day exposure to the German culture and language is inevitable. Most staff have found life in Frankfurt to be quite enjoyable, but we encourage everyone to carefully consider how an overseas relocation might effect their lifestyle.

We believe this handbook will answer many of your questions. If selected for an overseas assignment, you will receive detailed guidance and assistance from a number of GAO offices. In addition, the European Office will provide a sponsor to answer specific questions and help ease the transition when you arrive in Frankfurt.

Contents

A Message From the Director and Staff of the European Office	1
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Living in Frankfurt	4
The Post City	4
The American Consulate and Its Administration	4
Your Sponsor	5
Housing	5
Apartment Insurance	8
Food, Beverages, and Smoking Supplies	8
Clothing	9
Supplies and Services	10
Employment Opportunities for Dependents	13
Pets	15
Recreation and Social Life	15
Pleasure Travel	16
Driving	17
Mail and Communications	18

Working in the European Office	20
Travel	20
Leave	20
Business Cards	20
Moving to Germany	21
Employment Agreement	21
Passports	22
Shipping Household Furnishings	22
Air Freight	23
Surface Freight	24
Shipping Your Car	26
Your Arrival	27
Arrival of Household Goods	27

Appendix I One-Bedroom Floor Plans	30
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Appendix II
Two and
Three-Bedroom Floor
Plans

31

Abbreviations

ADAC	Allgemeiner Deutsches Automobil-Club
AAFES	Army/Air Force Exchange System
AFN	Armed Forces Network
APO	Army Post Office
DM	Deutsche Mark
DOD	Department of Defense
DODDS	Department of Defense School Systems
FIS	Frankfurt International School
GAO	General Accounting Office
ID	Identification Form
OFM	Office of Financial Management
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PX	Post Exchange
VCR	video cassette recorder

Living in Frankfurt

The Post City

Frankfurt am Main is the largest city in the state of Hessen. It has a population of about 663,000 and is surrounded by heavily populated suburbs, beautiful parks, and forests. Located in the center of the continent, it is a transportation hub; you can get to many European cities by air in 1 to 2 hours and by car or train in a day. Frankfurt, 328 feet above sea level, is on the banks of the Main River about 25 miles east of its confluence with the Rhine River.

Frankfurt is a commercial and financial center hosting approximately 500 American businesses and 20 American financial institutions. It is Germany's financial capital, with nearly 270 credit institutions, branches, subsidiaries, and representative offices of major domestic, continental, and foreign banks. And it is the seat of the Bundesbank, the equivalent of our Federal Reserve Bank.

Frankfurt has a long and distinguished history, of which it is justifiably proud. Not only has it been a center for trade fairs, book fairs, and banking for 700 years, but the Free City of Frankfurt was for 400 years the residence of and had responsibility for the election of the Holy Roman Emperor. Its status as a free city lasted until 1866, when Prussia took over. It has had long, enduring, and illustrious ties with the New World; early visitors to Frankfurt included such distinguished Americans as William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. The first German consulate in America opened in Philadelphia in 1826, and the first U.S. consulate in Frankfurt opened in 1829.

Frankfurt has a large foreign community, mostly Americans representing the U.S. military and federal agencies and American businesses. Currently, 47 countries have consular representation in Frankfurt. Many people in Frankfurt speak English fluently, and most speak some English. Still, it is a good idea to learn some German.

The American Consulate and Its Administration

The American Consulate General provides administrative support to several U.S. agencies, including GAO. Located at 21 Siesmayerstrasse, the Consulate is a 20-minute walk from GAO's European Office and the housing area. The staff, including attached agencies, comprises about 500 American and German personnel.

The Consulate General gives an orientation kit to newly relocated employees with information on life in Frankfurt and places of interest in Germany. Periodically, it offers orientation sessions for new personnel.

These sessions include talks on the operation of the Consulate General and on the functions of the Consulate and attached agencies. In addition, because the Consulate General is aware of the security risks in Europe, it continuously monitors security and alerts staff and dependents to potential problems. The Regional Security Officer also briefs the staff on security in separate sessions.

Your Sponsor

You and your family will be assigned at least one sponsor to answer questions and ease the transition to your new home and office in Frankfurt. Your sponsor will write or call you shortly after your appointment to the European Office. Normally, the sponsor

- meets you at the airport and takes you to your apartment;
- provides you with some groceries and cleaning supplies to get you started (on a reimbursable basis, of course);
- helps you get your identification cards (ID) and other necessary documents;
- introduces you around the office;
- helps you, if you want to find the necessary transformers or possibly a freezer (it's preferable to ask your sponsor to locate these items for you before you arrive, and you should send a check to cover them);
- shows you around the community and shopping facilities and explains the operation of Frankfurt's subway system;
- aids you in taking care of any other special needs.

Your sponsor wants the move to be as easy as possible for you and your family. If you have special needs or requests, do not hesitate to ask, but make your needs known well in advance of your planned arrival.

Housing

The State Department provides housing, utilities, maintenance, and related services to GAO on an agency reimbursable basis (at no cost to the employee). This arrangement—plus the assistance of your sponsor—help make the transition relatively free of the usual problems that surround moving to a new location.

Unfurnished apartment buildings in the Consulate housing area are provided for employees of agencies attached to the Consulate General (which includes GAO). A total of 382 apartments are within 29 buildings, an area officially known (on city maps, for example) as the Carl Schurz Siedlung. Each building has three floors of apartments and a basement and

attic level. The buildings have no elevators. Each has locking security doors, and security guards patrol the area on a 24-hour basis.

Between the buildings are large lawns, where children can play and you can relax and barbecue. GAO families live in the area along with the families of employees from other agencies.

The Consulate Housing Office provides maintenance and lawn care. But you are responsible for properly maintaining housing facilities and grounds and abiding by the Consulate's housing rules. Kitchens do not have garbage disposals or dishwashers. The city provides twice-weekly trash pickup at collection points behind each apartment building.

Permanent apartment assignments are made according to marital status and family size. One-bedroom apartments are assigned to single personnel. Two-bedroom apartments are assigned to couples with no children or with only one child. And three-bedroom apartments are assigned to families with two or more children. Most of the three-bedroom apartments have an additional half-bath, which reduces the size of one of the bedrooms. All main bathrooms have tub and shower combinations. A few four-bedroom apartments are available for large families. When four-bedroom apartments are not available for eligible families, three-bedroom apartments are assigned until larger ones become available.

For housing purposes, dependents must have traveled to post under official U.S. government travel orders and must reside with the employee on a full-time basis. Dependents who reside away from post for schooling or other purposes will not be considered part of the family for housing assignments.

All apartments are large and quite nice with generous wall space. They are painted white throughout, have drapes, a refrigerator, and a gas range. The drapes are usually beige and in good condition. If you want to bring your own drapes, they must be altered for German drapery rods. In Germany, drapes are fastened with small rollers instead of hooks.

Floors in the living rooms and dining areas are hardwood parquet. Floors in the bedroom areas are vinyl tile; floors in the bathrooms and kitchens are ceramic tile. Because the floors are often cold, you may want to bring carpets with you.

The bedrooms have built-in dressers but limited closet space. If you have wardrobes (armoires), bring them with you.

The apartments are not airconditioned because the summers usually are not very hot. Room fans (not provided by the Consulate) are adequate for the few really warm days. The apartment windows do not have screens. The apartments are heated by hot-water radiators. Such systems produce somewhat dry heat; therefore, portable vaporizers or humidifiers are recommended for the bedrooms. They are recommended for the entire apartment if you have respiratory problems.

Utilities—heat, water, gas, and electricity—are provided at no cost to apartment occupants. Telephone service (required for all personnel by State Department procedures) is billed to you. Telephone installation may take several weeks; this one-time service cost is included in your miscellaneous expenses. Monthly telephone bills are not itemized and there is a minimum monthly charge. Telephones with a usage meter are available for an extra charge.

Electricity in the apartments is 220 volt, 50 cycle not the 110 volt, 60 cycle found in the United States. "Step-down" transformers are used to make American appliances functional. You can buy these transformers in the military exchanges. Used transformers are also available from the nearby Thrift Shop or from other families scheduled to return to the United States for a more reasonable price. You can buy small travel transformers that work well for radios, shavers, and so on.

You may ask your sponsor to purchase various-sized transformers for you so they will be ready upon your arrival. Remember, however, that transformers affect only voltages, not cycles. Consequently, electric motors, which cannot be routinely switched to 50 cycles, operate at five-sixths capacity, making electric clocks useless and necessitating a low-cost conversion of record turntables and tape recorders. Depending on the current exchange rate (check with your sponsor), you may want to buy small German appliances for the kitchen. Many people have found it more convenient and less expensive to buy these appliances rather than use several heavy and cumbersome transformers.

Your apartment will have a larger storage area than most stateside apartments. Your basement storage room will range from 8 by 8 feet to 12 by 20 feet. Two, three, and four-bedroom apartments also come with a fourth-floor "maid's room" that can be used for storage or a guest room.

These rooms vary in size but are generally about 11 by 14 feet. Each building has a bathroom on the fourth floor for the common use of all apartment tenants in that building.

Each apartment building has a laundry room in the basement. You will be assigned your own washer and dryer.

Until your personal effects arrive and your permanent apartment is available, you will be housed in a local hotel or a temporary apartment on a reimbursable basis. How long you stay in temporary quarters depends on the arrival of your household goods and the availability of permanent quarters. The Housing Office will notify you when your household goods arrive and your permanent quarters are ready.

Apartment Insurance

GAO, under GAO Order 0267.1, Claim for Personal Property, will accept claims for damage resulting from a defect in the apartment such as a broken pipe or faulty electrical wiring. Coverage does not extend, however, to damages that cannot be traced to a defect or a breakdown of property owned by the government. In other words, you would bear losses resulting from an act such as forced entry and theft unless otherwise insured. Damage claims will be sent to OFM on GAO Form 287.

Apartment insurance is somewhat difficult to find in Germany and very expensive. But you can get it from several insurance companies in the Washington, D.C., area. A current listing of insurers is available from the State Department Transportation Office. Insurance coverage for personal belongings while on travel status is also available from these companies. You may find it worthwhile to check with your insurance company about overseas coverage.

Food, Beverages, and Smoking Supplies

All U.S. personnel assigned or attached to the U.S. Consulate receive military identification cards entitling them to use all military facilities. They also receive a ration card for liquor, cigarettes, coffee, and tea. Ration allowances are not unduly restrictive; most people find them more than adequate.

Many families find a large freezer useful. Upright models are more practical because kitchens are too small for chest-type freezers unless they are small. However, the basement storage room has outlets and freezers of either type can be placed there. You may bring a freezer from the States or

purchase one at the PX at prices comparable to those in the States. A limited number of used freezers may be available from departing members.

A variety of food is available from Army and Air Force commissaries; the Army/Air Force Exchange System (AAFES) Shoppette, a small market; and local markets. U.S. military commissaries and AAFES sales stores are located in Frankfurt, Wiesbaden (25 miles away), and Rhein-Main Air Force Base (15 miles away). The commissaries offer a choice of food similar to that of self-service supermarkets in the United States.

Unfortunately, you may not always find the item or the brand you desire in stock; if you use special or unusual canned goods or spices, stock up before you leave the states. In addition, U.S. military facilities are usually crowded, and shopping can be time-consuming.

Local markets, on the other hand, are adequately stocked with local and imported products and fresh items (generally at competitive prices, except for meat). Americans frequently shop there, especially for cheese and good white wines. (They are less expensive than those at the Class VI Liquor Store.)

Most popular brands of hard liquors, beer, wine, liqueur, and mixes are available at the Class VI store. Hard liquor is rationed (not applicable to German stores) at five bottles a month per adult. Various American soft drinks also are available.

Shopping hours are more limited in Germany than in the United States. German stores are generally open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. until 6:30 p.m., Thursday from 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 1 or 2 p.m. On the first Saturday of the month, most stores are open until 6 p.m.

The Military Shopping Center in Frankfurt contains the following facilities: the post exchange, commissary, liquor store, dry cleaners, gas station, garage, gift shop, audio/video shop, bookstore, bank, car wash, military post office, travel agencies, and several fast food shops.

Clothing

So that you may better plan your wardrobe, the climate in Frankfurt is similar to that of the Middle Atlantic States, except that Frankfurt summers are generally cooler and wetter. PXs in the Frankfurt area stock a very limited selection of clothes and fabrics. You may want to supplement

your wardrobe before leaving the United States, especially children's school clothing, such as boys' corduroys and blue jeans; larger women's and men's sizes; and women's petite sizes (5 feet 2 inches and under).

European-made clothes differ in style and materials and are generally expensive. However, careful shopping can provide good quality at reasonable prices. During the late January and July sales, you will find drastic price reductions and many excellent bargains.

You may order clothing, shoes, and other items from mail-order catalogs, such as Sears, Montgomery Ward, and J.C. Penny and have them shipped through the Army Post Office (APO). With an APO address, you pay U.S. postage only from origin of shipment to New York. If you have catalogs, bring them with you.

Supplies and Services

Basic Services

Tailoring, shoe repair, dry cleaning, laundry, barber shops, beauty shops, and similar services are available in nearby German stores and at the military shopping center.

Domestic Help

You can arrange for part-time, once-a-week or once-a-month cleaning help on a per-hour basis. European Office staff can recommend specific personnel.

Health and Medicine

The U.S. Army 97th General Hospital in Frankfurt and the clinic at Rhein-Main Air Force Base provide medical care to all official employees and their dependents. These facilities have a per-visit charge for outpatient care and a per-day charge for inpatient care. They accept most government health plans and handle all forms for most of the major medical plans.

Some medical plans do not provide coverage for overseas medical expenses, and others have strict limitations on what doctors and facilities to use. Be sure to check your policy or contact your insurer. Also, ask family or friends to check their health coverage before visiting you in Europe.

Military facilities do not provide dental care for civilians, but several well-qualified, English-speaking dentists practice in Frankfurt. European Office staff can recommend good dentists, as well as physicians.

All required shots are available at military medical facilities. Be sure to bring your immunization record for travel purposes. You need no immunizations for travel just to Germany from the United States. This policy is, of course, subject to change. GAO's Travel Services Section or the State Department can verify immunization requirements.

Also, bring copies of all family medical records and addresses of your physicians to (1) keep in contact with them during your tour in Frankfurt and (2) be able to use the U.S. Army Hospital. If you have any special medical problems, bring a long-term supply of drugs and medical supplies—prescription as well as nonprescription—as many brands are not available in Germany. Some prescription drugs are available at the U.S. Army Hospital, but you must visit the Army doctor before getting a prescription. Also, bring copies of your eyeglass prescription and a spare pair of eyeglasses or contacts. Optical care and service are available through the Army Hospital or from the local economy.

Religious Activities

U.S. military chaplains conduct regular services for members of the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. Latter-day Saints, Baptists, Lutherans, Christian Scientists, and Episcopalians are active in the English-speaking community. Many German Protestant and Roman Catholic churches are located in the Frankfurt area, some noted for their choral and organ music.

Banking

Most people find it practical to maintain U.S. bank accounts and to have their paychecks sent directly there. Make such arrangements early, however, to ensure that the bank is receiving your check before you depart for Europe. You may cash personal checks at the Consulate or the PX subject to current daily limitations and government pay and travel checks at the Consulate. The Army provides a bank operated by a U.S. financial institution where you may maintain an account, especially for travel. You may also find it useful to apply for the 24-hour teller card for access to quick cash when the bank is closed. You may purchase DMS with checks or cash at the Consulate or bank as well as other European currencies at the bank.

The Consulate also provides notary services. European Office staff can recommend other financial services in the area.

While traveling on official duty, you may cash personal checks at U.S. embassies and at other U.S. military banks. Sometimes you can use certain credit cards: American Express, Master Card, Visa, and Diner's Club. You may not use oil company credit cards in Europe.

To save time when cashing checks or shopping at U.S. military facilities, personal checks should be preprinted with your name and your spouse's name, your social security number, the European Office military telephone number (320-7511), and the address, as follows:

John E. Smith
Mary E. Smith
444-55-6666-FM 7511
Unit 25401 (GAO)
APO AE 09213

Whether you include your General Schedule grade in print is a matter of personal choice. However, cashiers and tellers will ask you to write your grade on the check at the time of cashing. While personal checks are rarely accepted on the local economy, you can open a "Eurocheck" account, checks from which are accepted throughout Europe.

Education

GAO employees' children may attend two school systems; the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS) and the Frankfurt International School (FIS). Both school systems have kindergarten through twelfth grade.

DODDS facilities are located on three campuses: (1) elementary, (2) junior high school, and (3) high school. The FIS operates a combined campus that is about a 20 minute drive from the State Department housing area. FIS has an American curriculum and a student population that is 45 percent American, 20 percent German, and 35 percent other nationalities.

Which school your child attends depends upon the current enrollment of DODDS. If DODDS is full, GAO will pay the full cost of the more expensive FIS. In addition, you have the option of paying the difference in cost between DODDS and FIS should you desire.

Three American-operated nursery schools, staffed by American and German teachers, are available. Demand is high, so you may have to wait until your child can be enrolled. Your sponsor can reserve a space for your child before you arrive, if you request. Most GAO parents are very pleased with the Carl Schurz Nursery School located in the housing area. You can get current cost information from your sponsor.

Many American universities and colleges offer programs in Frankfurt. Besides offering full-time studies on its Augsburg campus, the University of Maryland has a Frankfurt center offering limited evening courses in liberal arts for those interested in obtaining American college credits. Boston University has a graduate program leading to an M.S. in business administration, and the Universities of Utah and Southern California offer M.B.A. programs. Other U.S. colleges also have part-time study programs available.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, or Frankfurt University, offers German for foreigners, and its regular classes are open to Americans who are academically qualified and who can speak German. The Army Education Center offers language courses, and a number of German schools offer such courses.

Procedures for obtaining reimbursement for course work are the same as those in the United States, and classes must be taken during nonwork hours. Because much of your work will be outside the immediate Frankfurt area, you may find it difficult to attend classes regularly.

If your schedule permits, you may want to take an introductory language course before you move to help orient you to Germany. The DOD Headstart language program is available to GAO personnel (and dependents) at no cost in Washington, D.C., at the Pentagon. The Education Center and the library at the Abrams Complex also have German language tapes that may be borrowed or duplicated once you arrive. Also, you should consider borrowing a book from your library to give you some insights into the German way of life and economy.

Employment Opportunities for Dependents

Dependents receive special preference among qualified applicants for employment with the U.S. government in Germany. Since many of the military facilities and the attached agencies do not have direct-hire authority, dependents should begin the application process in the United States by filing an SF-171 form for each position desired with the Office of

Personnel Management (OPM) in Washington, D.C. The agencies with authority to hire from applicants in Frankfurt offer mostly part-time or short-duration opportunities.

Dependents would be wise to (1) bring copies of all college transcripts, (2) have complete information and records to fill out the SF-171s, (3) bring a list of each position they may have already applied for with OPM and the date on which they applied, (4) bring any notifications of ratings received from OPM, (5) have their resumes updated if they plan to seek jobs on the local economy (begin with birth date and show professional development chronologically), (6) learn the German language (see the section on continuing education), (7) talk to as many people as they can about their situations and ask for their advice and introduction to others who may be able to help them (about 1 million Americans live in Germany), and (8) plan for at least a 2- or 3-month period before securing positions.

The Job Information Center at the Civilian Personnel Office in Frankfurt and the Civilian Recruitment Center in Heidelberg should be their first stops in the job search. The "Arbeitsamt," or German Employment Commission, also has listings of jobs (mostly clerical and blue collar) available to Americans living in Frankfurt.

Dependent employment on the German economy is limited and usually hard to find. Generally, people must speak fluent German and have some specialized training that qualifies them for work permits so they do not take jobs from unemployed German citizens. Several American firms, however, specifically hire Americans in the areas of banking, computers, and electronics. These companies advertise in the local newspapers and military publications. In addition, the American universities with branches in Frankfurt actively seek college instructors for both part-time and full-time staff positions; normally, they require a Ph.D. or a master's degree (in the subject area) and some teaching experience.

Salaries for corporate professionals are slightly less than those for comparable positions in the States; engineering salaries are much lower. Fewer positions for professional women are available and securing one is often difficult.

Several local companies (video rental stores, insurance agencies, automobile dealers, and so on) cater to the American military community and are owned by Americans; openings at these businesses are usually filled quickly, but you need not be fluent in German to work there. Many

European Office staff have dependents who can also recommend employment opportunities. Consult your sponsor if you have dependents who may want employment.

Pets

Pets, such as dogs and cats, are allowed in apartments but must be confined or walked on a leash. Dogs and cats may be shipped to Germany without quarantine if (1) they are shipped nonstop directly to Frankfurt, (2) they have been inoculated for rabies and distemper not less than 30 nor more than 60 days before departure, and (3) they are accompanied by special forms issued by the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. These forms are printed in German but have corresponding English translations beside the area that your veterinarian must fill out and sign. Be sure to allow a few weeks for delivery of the forms from the German Embassy.

The importation of canaries has no restrictions nor documentary requirements, provided they are free from diseases. The importation of Psittacine birds, like parakeets and parrots; live poultry; and most other birds, however, is generally prohibited.

Check with the airlines for shipping instructions. Also, check with your vet regarding the best method to ship your pet with the least discomfort. You may ship a pet as excess baggage on your flight; this will secure the transportation of the pet in the baggage compartment of the aircraft you fly in, if advance arrangements are made. This excess baggage is at your own expense (tax deductible as a moving expense). You may not use Government Excess Baggage Authorization Tickets to transport pets.

Veterinary services are available through the U.S. military and from German veterinarians. German kennels are available if you wish to leave your pets in Frankfurt while traveling.

Recreation and Social Life

Numerous participant and spectator sports are available in the Frankfurt area, including golf, tennis, racquetball, bowling, swimming, and horseback riding. Clay tennis courts are available in the housing area, and residents are eligible to join the tennis club. The Dependent Youth Activities offers a full range of sports programs in football, basketball, softball, soccer, gymnastics, cheerleading, and baseball for children.

Currently, GAO participates in bowling, volleyball, and softball leagues. Some employees enjoy jogging, handball, and racquetball. Many families

participate with Germans on their volksmarches, which are walking tours in the scenic German countryside. For spectators, Frankfurt has Division I soccer teams, professional football, and the military services have football, basketball, baseball leagues, and so forth.

Bicycling and skiing are popular in Europe. Many bike paths are available in parks and the countryside, and special lanes are available in the cities. The ski areas of Germany, Austria, France, and Switzerland are easy to get to for long weekends. Both Alpine (downhill) and cross-country skiing are available.

Opera, ballet, concerts, recitals, theater, and the cinema are available in Frankfurt and Wiesbaden at reasonable costs. A few cinemas show English-language movies on a selected basis, and several U.S. military theaters in the Frankfurt area show American movies regularly. Festivals and pageants are held several times a year, and commercial exhibitions and trade fairs are held periodically in Frankfurt.

Many social clubs are available in Frankfurt. The American Consulate General Ladies Club and the American Women's Club of Frankfurt offer comprehensive programs for community welfare and social activities. The International Women's Club and Steuben-Schurz Society offer membership to non-Germans. The latter is for both men and women and has a youth group. The Union International Club offers membership to American and German business and professional men and members of the consular corps. It has a swimming pool, tennis and badminton courts, and an excellent bar and restaurant. Teen clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, Brownies, parent-teacher associations, and church groups are also available.

Pleasure Travel

Frankfurt is centrally located in Europe. You can travel to nearly anyplace in Europe by car in 2 days or less. You may also ride the train, which offers excellent service throughout Europe. Many commercial tours are available to popular European cities, as well as to Moscow, Istanbul, and other sites.

Frankfurt also has an excellent rapid-transit system referred to as the U-bahn, covering an extensive area. Two U-bahn stops are within walking distance of the housing area.

You and every member of your family should get tourist passports for personal travel. Apply for these passports when you apply for your diplomatic passports. You will be reimbursed for this expense.

Driving

Bringing your automobile to Germany is a personal choice, but you should discuss this decision with your sponsor. European cars are made to meet U.S. or European specifications. Cars with U.S. specifications can be shipped back to the United States with no problems; European specification cars must be converted to meet U.S. specifications, which is very costly, before they can be shipped to the United States. On the other hand, you can generally sell a European specification car easily before you return to the United States.

Remember, GAO will not pay to ship a European car purchased while overseas back to the States. However, new European cars made to U.S. specifications often have shipping costs included in the sales price. AAFES sells U.S. and Japanese cars in addition to European cars, at stateside prices plus shipping.

If you plan to bring an auto, be sure it is in good condition, especially the brakes, steering, suspension, and the window glass; have all repairs made before shipping your car. Pay special attention to rust problems. German auto inspectors are very critical of rust, and your car must pass an inspection every 2 years. Do not stock up on tires, as many makes of U.S. tires will not pass German inspection even when new.

AAFES garages are located at most military bases throughout Germany, including Frankfurt. These garages service U.S. cars, but parts availability is sometimes a problem. You may have to wait several weeks for a particular part or even longer for major repairs.

You may also have to wait for the garage or the dealer to obtain U.S. specification parts from another city or even another country. Service for German cars is available at German garages and is usually reasonable, but service for other European models may be expensive. Some Japanese cars can be serviced in Frankfurt by several Japanese car dealers, but repairs tend to be costly even when parts are readily available. Dealers generally do not have U.S. specifications on hand. Bring a set with you, if possible, to facilitate repairs. If not, you may have to order and air-freight a replacement part. This process takes a long time and adds significantly to your repair costs. If you are handy at auto repairs, you may want to bring your own tools and parts to do the work yourself.

Germany has an excellent freeway (autobahn) system with high speed limits. Traffic generally moves along at 75 to 80 miles per hour, and much higher speeds are permitted in some areas.

Gasoline at European stations is about double the price in the states or at the PX. Gasoline coupons, which reduce the price, are available to U.S. personnel for use in Germany. Similar coupons for Holland may be purchased at the PX, and coupons for Italy may be obtained in Italy with appropriate travel documents. Unleaded gasoline is available throughout Europe.

The cost of car insurance in Germany is generally comparable to the cost of U.S. insurance. Discuss this expense with your sponsor. Premiums are generally based on either the book value or the horsepower of the car. Some are also based on marital status and previous driving records. Liability coverage with a German company is required, but the rest may be obtained in the United States. Complete coverage can be obtained through the Consulate from an insurance company in Bonn on an immediate basis. Most staff have found this to be quite convenient and less expensive than other arrangements. If possible, bring a statement from your stateside insurance agent indicating the number of years you have driven without an accident. You may be eligible for a discount.

Many staff also join Allgemeiner Deutsches Automobil-Club (ADAC), which is a motorist club in Germany similar to the American Automobile Association in the United States. It provides roadside and other services for an associate membership. You may join ADAC after your arrival.

Mail and Communications

All of the families in the European Office have their mail sent to the Office. The APO address is: Name, ACG-Frankfurt, Unit 25401, APO AE 09213. If you are single and traveling for an extended period, the Office will forward your mail to your work location if you so request. The spouses of married travelers may pick up their mail at the Office.

Service between Washington, D.C., and the European Office takes from 4 to 6 days. GAO employees have duty-free import privileges for items that can be mailed to the APO address.

The Armed Forces Network (AFN) airs American radio and television programs but only one station is available, however. To receive this station, you need not convert your television; a transformer will suffice. Televisions with quartz lock tuners cannot be tuned in to the AFN station without the use of a video cassette recorder (VCR); VCRs are available in military shopping facilities at rates comparable to stateside prices.

To receive German programs or the local cable system you must have a multi-system TV or have your television converted. (This can be done after you arrive.) Multi-system TV's are readily available at the PX, but they tend to be more expensive than U.S. system TV's.

Working in the European Office

The European Office is currently authorized 50 staff, including five support personnel. A large portion of the assignments are for the National Security and International Affairs Division (NSIAD), and involve activities of the Department of Defense, State Department, and the Agency for International Development. The staff has become increasingly involved in examining international financial markets and banking and performs studies relative to foreign governments' programs. It also works for the General Government Division; the Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division; the Human Resources Division; and other GAO divisions. In many respects, this staff is similar to a regional office in the United States.

Travel

The European Office's territorial responsibility is vast. The European Office covers Europe, Greenland, Africa, and the Middle East to the eastern border of Iran. While visits to these areas are interesting and educational, you may be away from Frankfurt for as long as 6 weeks at a time. Most jobs in Germany require travel to locales within a 3-hour drive; you may return to Frankfurt on the weekends. Travel averaged about 20 percent of total working hours with no significant variance from job to job.

Leave

Annual leave in the European Office, as in other offices, must be approved in advance by your supervisor. The overseas annual leave ceiling is 45 days. On returning to the United States, you may carry a 45-day balance until you establish a lower ceiling, as explained in GAO Order 0247.1, "Time and Attendance Reporting."

Business Cards

Because your job will likely take you to many countries where you will work with foreign government and business officials, you should have a good supply of business cards. When ordering, you should include the information shown in the following example:

GAO

U.S. General Accounting Office
European Office

TEL (069) 7535-3100, FAX (069) 7535-3621

DAVID G. ARTADI

ACG Frankfurt
Unit 25401 (GAO)
APO, AE 09213
U.S.A.

American Consulate General (GAO)
Siesmayerstrasse 21
6000 Frankfurt am Main 1
Germany

You can order business cards before you leave the States or after you arrive in Europe.

Moving to Germany

Upon accepting an assignment to the European Office, you must sign an employment agreement, obtain U.S. passports for all family members, and arrange for shipping of your personal belongings and vehicle.

Employment Agreement

When you sign the agreement to serve for 2 years, transportation by American carriers will be furnished at government expense from your residence in the states to Frankfurt for you, your immediate family¹ and your household furnishings. If you decide to store some of your furnishings, the government will pay storage cost during your Frankfurt tour. The government has a net weight limit of household furnishings—18,000 pounds for both families and single staff members—that applies to the total shipped and stored. This amount, however, is quite adequate for average households.

Upon completing your assignment in the European office, you and your family are entitled to the same return transportation allowances. After 2 years of service, you may be granted an option to extend an overseas tour for an additional 2 years at the same post and to be eligible for home leave.

¹Children must be under 21 years of age or incapable of self-support. Dependent parents of employees or spouse are considered immediate family.

Home leave, which is not chargeable to annual leave, allows you travel expenses to and from your last duty station in the states, including transportation expenses for your immediate family. Home leave for employees stationed in Frankfurt is 5 days for each 12 months of foreign service. But a full 2-year tour must be completed before leave is granted, and the leave must be taken in the United States. Home leave may be granted and taken only if followed by another overseas tour. Under current policy, the maximum tour at any overseas office is 4 years, that is, two 2-year tours. Moreover, the 4-year period dates from initial assignment to the overseas post. This means that a second 2-year tour starts at the conclusion of the first tour and not when the employee returns to the overseas post from home leave. Also, home leave is limited to the amount accrued at the end of the 24-month tour (10 days) regardless of any delay in actually taking home leave.

If you are among the best qualified for promotion through the annual assessment process during the last year of your European tour, you may apply for promotion in your home unit or any GAO-wide opportunities. However, you are not eligible for promotion in the European Office during your last year. (See GAO Order 2335.8, "Merit Selection Program.") If you are transferring laterally, you will be assigned under a reassignment plan that will consider your needs and those of GAO divisions and offices in the United States. Currently, when transferring back to the States, you are asked to submit a list of preferences for reassignment, one of which is your home unit.

Passports

You and your family must obtain U.S. passports before leaving the states. You must have a birth certificate; a baptismal certificate with date and place of birth; a naturalization record; or other acceptable proof, such as notarized affidavits from your mother or witnesses certifying the date and place of birth. When you have your passport pictures taken, have additional photographs made and bring them with you to Frankfurt. You will need the extra pictures for visas required by some foreign countries and for various identification forms in Germany. You may obtain extras in the Frankfurt PX area. Usually, you will need about 18 pictures per adult and 9 per child to satisfy your immediate needs. Contact the GAO photographer for an appointment.

Shipping Household Furnishings

Your household furnishings are shipped to Frankfurt by air and surface. The furnishings you bring are a matter of preference, but consider the

following suggestions when making your decision. Regardless of what you ship or store, a detailed inventory of your belongings is a must. If a major item is missing but not specifically identified, it may be extremely difficult to make a claim.

Before shipping, determine whether the government offers sufficient insurance coverage. The maximum amount allowed under the Claims Act of 1964 is \$25,000. The government's coverage is limited by categories and computed on replacement value. GAO Order 0267.1 provides additional information on the government's coverage. If you have a homeowner's policy, find out whether it insures your household goods while they are in international transit. If not, you may wish to obtain extra insurance with a \$25,000 deductible, if possible. Considering inflation, it could cost much more to replace your belongings. The State Department's Transportation Office, the mover, or European Office staff can recommend insurance companies that provide the necessary coverage.

Air Freight

The government will ship by air a portion of your total weight allowance. The current allowance is 175 pounds of air freight per family member. You may use this allowance to ship essential items needed to keep your household going until the balance of your shipment arrives. To speed delivery of your air freight, write your name, "American Consulate General (GAO), Frankfurt/Main, Germany," on each box. Allow 2 to 3 weeks for delivery of air freight to Frankfurt. Since air freight has been known to take longer, use your baggage allowance to carry all valuable papers, such as your travel orders, inventory records, medical records, shipping contracts, official college transcripts, and work resumes, on the plane with you. Further, if you have fragile or small valuables, such as irreplaceable jewelry or cameras, bring them in your carry-on luggage.

Ask your mover to pack the air freight before packing any of the items for surface shipment or storage; this way you can add or subtract items as necessary to fully use the weight allowance. If you save the air freight for last and exceed the weight allowance, you will have to pay for the overage. In addition, your air freight will not be shipped until the State Department has received your payment for the coverage, and it has sent a cable to the moving firm authorizing it to ship the goods.

Also, ask the mover to bring scales for weighing the packed cartons. Your mover will be able to provide an estimate of these weights so you can plan what to bring in your air freight.

Some items suggested for air freight are

- clothing to include a change of seasons (winter jackets may be needed year round, as well as clothes for numerous social events, including Consulate functions);
- mechanical or battery-powered alarm clocks;
- a battery-operated radio;
- a bath mat;
- children's car seats;
- a first-aid kit;
- rain gear;
- an electric fan;
- sewing kit or machine;
- a collapsible two-wheel grocery cart;
- VCR;
- travel converter kit (available at most department stores);
- bicycles (especially children's);
- sports equipment;
- spices and cookbooks;
- medicine; and
- camera equipment.

Be sure to bring the mover's name and telephone number, the shipper's name and telephone number, the airline flight number and date, the waybill or freight bill number, and the inventory list with you. Should it become necessary, your shipment can then be traced much faster.

Surface Freight

What you decide to ship and what you decide to sell or leave behind in storage is a matter of preference. Most of your household effects can be used in Frankfurt. The average time for surface shipment from Washington, D.C., to Frankfurt has been 8 to 10 weeks; the time is normally longer for those coming from a regional office. If you have any particularly valuable item that you want to leave behind, you may want to have a friend or relative keep it for you.

The items you may want to leave behind are

- television sets equipped with quartz crystal lock turner (frequencies are different in Germany), unless you will use it in conjunction with a VCR;
- electric clocks or clock radios;
- heavy lawn furniture;

- lawn mowers and other garden equipment;
- trash cans; and
- light bulbs.

Also keep in mind that you may buy some treasures, such as grandfather clocks, dishes, or lead crystal, during your stay in Europe. You may need some of your weight allowance for your return trip to the states. (The weight allowance for the return trip is the same as that for moving to Frankfurt).

You can use the following household items in Germany:

- vacuum cleaners (bring extra bags and belts for your machine);
- sewing machine;
- movie and slide projectors;
- hand tools and small power tools;
- items needed for hanging pictures;
- bicycles;
- microwave ovens (only if 50 cycle or convertible to 50 cycle);
- Christmas lights;
- catalogs;
- nonperishable food (canned goods, spices, dry goods);
- freezers (preferably General Electric or RCA Whirlpool because of availability of service);
- television sets (color or black and white);
- carpets or rugs;
- bathroom decor (as all German bathroom fixtures are larger than U.S. fixtures, U.S. tank and toilet top covers do not fit German fixtures);
- console or component stereo equipment;
- light lawn furniture;
- barbecue grill;
- camping gear;
- electric fan;
- small stepladder; and
- sporting gear (most sports are available).

Most American appliances can be used with transformers. New appliances can be purchased from the PX; used ones can be purchased from people living in the housing area. Availability of used appliances is greatest in the summer, since this is when most people living in Consulate housing are transferred.

Before plugging any appliance directly into an outlet, be sure that its voltage is compatible with Germany's 220-volt electrical system. Be sure to bring your lamps as they will work with 220-volt bulbs and a small plug adapter, which is available in Germany.

Shipping Your Car

You may ship your car (American or foreign) to Europe at government expense provided you agree to use it as necessary on government business on a reimbursable basis. Likewise, that car or another American-made car may be shipped back to the states at government expense. The government pays all costs for cars that occupy less than 800 cubic feet; you must pay expenses for cars exceeding this limit. Most vehicles, including Volkswagen buses, are within this limitation. A foreign-made, foreign-purchased car may not be shipped to the United States at government expense except under extremely limited circumstances (which currently do not apply to Europe).

Before shipping your car, make sure you have adequate insurance coverage. You can purchase additional insurance protection (marine insurance) from the dispatch agent. Also, be sure that removable items, such as rearview mirrors, mats, cushions, the cigarette lighter, and hubcaps, are listed on the shipping manifest (because they may disappear during shipment) and that proper mileage is recorded. If possible, pack these items separately in your surface shipment along with the jack, spare tires, and snow tires. Before moving such items, however, check with your dispatch agent.

The average time for shipment is 4 to 8 weeks. The dispatch agent will arrange to have your vehicle picked up at your residence, and you will not have to drive it to the port for shipping.

When your car arrives in Frankfurt, the Consulate Motor Pool Office will change your headlights and make small modifications to meet German requirements. It may require you to buy new tires to meet German requirements for high-speed driving. The Motor Pool Office will also arrange to have your car inspected at a German inspection station. Your car will have to be inspected again in 2 years.

German law also requires that you have a first-aid kit and a triangular reflector in your car. These items can be purchased at the AAFES auto store.

The Consulate provides, free of charge, German and international driver's licenses, which do not require that you take exams or road tests if you have a valid stateside license.

Your Arrival

Your first few days will be spent settling in, obtaining IDs, and getting oriented to your new environment. On the first day, you will probably unpack and catch up on your sleep. On the second day, you will probably go to the European Office for an introductory tour and then to the Consulate to take care of your IDs. You will need extra photos for everyone in your family 16 and older to apply for ausweis (German ID card) and driver's licenses. All family members 10 and older receive military ID cards. Bring your shipping documents so that the Consulate can trace your shipment.

You will immediately receive an ID enabling you to use the commissary and PX. Your sponsor will take you to the military shopping center. If possible, arrive in Frankfurt early in the week so that you can do all of this before the weekend.

Be prepared for some significant cash outlays within the first few months: reimbursing your sponsor for food, transformers, telephone installation charges, auto inspection, auto insurance, and possibly new tires.

Arrival of Household Goods

The Consulate will notify you when your household goods arrive and schedule a date for delivery to your permanent quarters. Agree on a tentative date, and then check immediately with the Housing Office to make absolutely certain that all repairs, painting, and subsequent cleanup will be completed by that date. Then confirm the date with the Consulate.

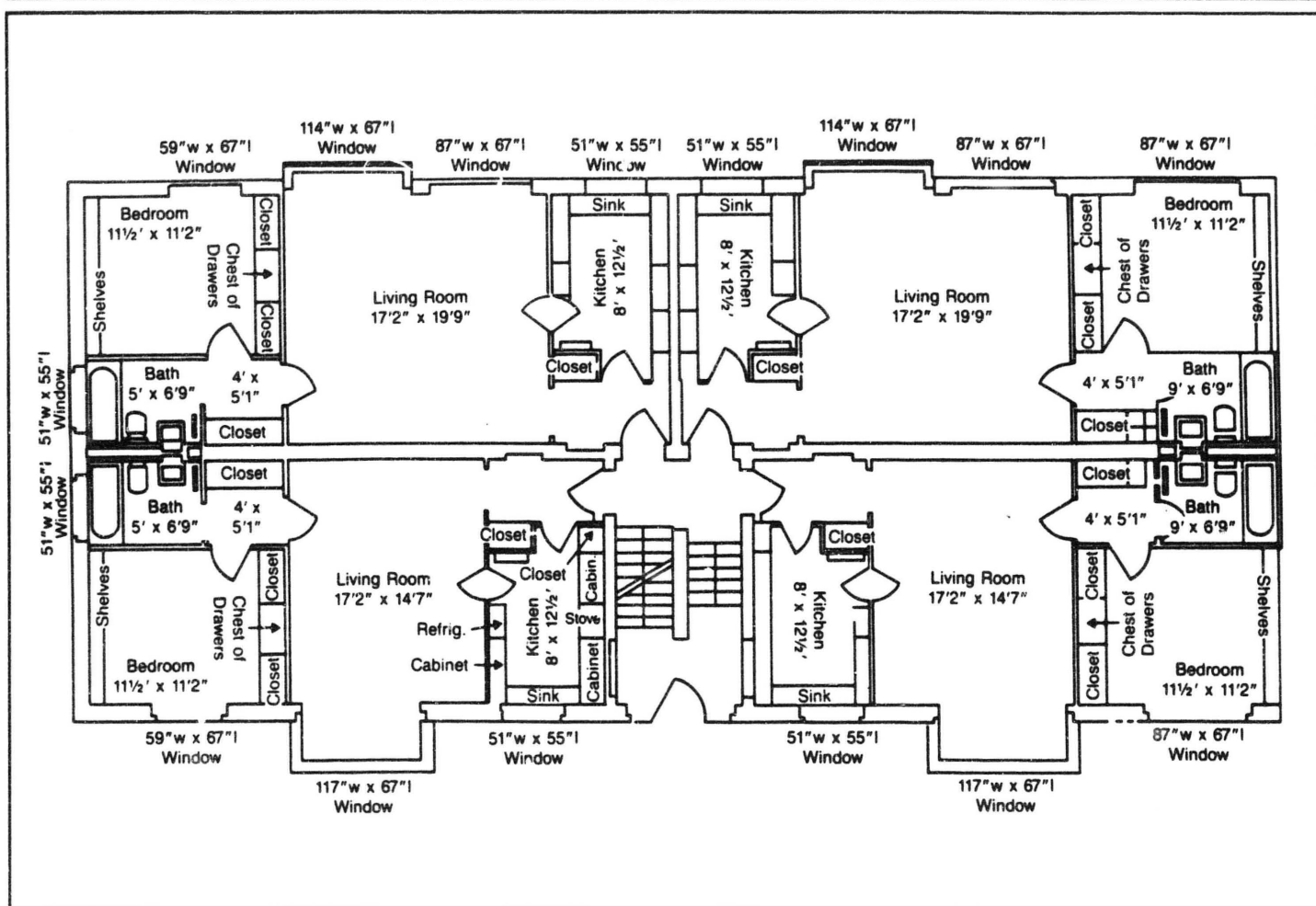
When your goods are delivered, carefully examine the furniture and any unpacked or uncrated items for damage. Also, check large items and crates/cartons (each will have a number) with your inventory list or the mover's inventory list. It is not necessary to refuse to sign the bill of lading or delivery receipt in case of damage or loss. Just make an appropriate notation on the mover's inventory or any other documents that the mover presents for your signature, detailing the exact nature of the damage or loss.

Notify the Consulate if you have had damage or loss so that it can, in turn, contact the agent of the delivering carrier. Also, notify your stateside

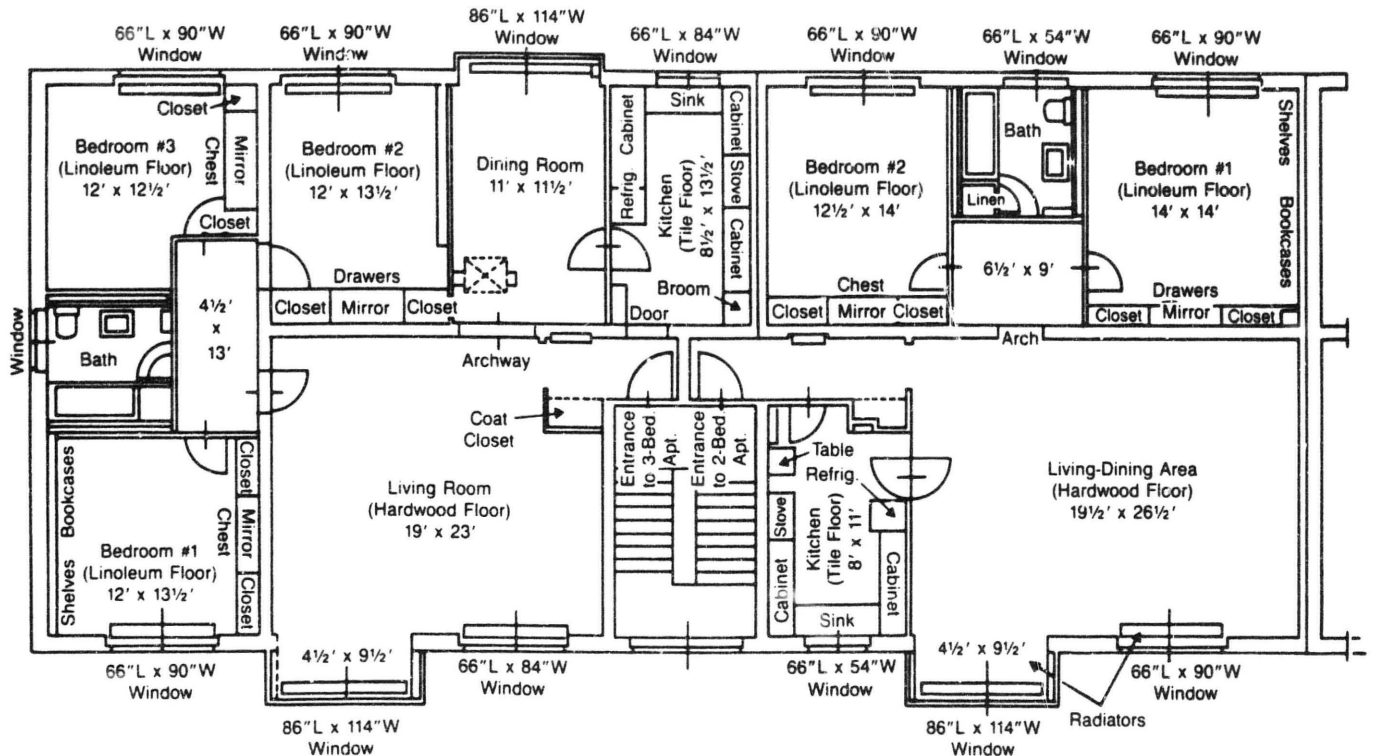
mover of any damages, and state that a claim will follow. Do not discard, clean, or repair damaged property (which is relatively rare) before an agent inspects it or before obtaining estimates of the repair costs from a qualified professional. The latter will give you a full report in writing and charge a fee, which can be included in your subsequent claim. File any claim for damage or loss first with the shipper, not GAO or the Consulate. (See GAO Order 0267.1. for details on filing claims.) European Office staff also can advise you on the proper filing procedures. There is a 2-year time limit for filing claims.

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One-Bedroom Floor Plans



Two and Three-Bedroom Floor Plans



Note: Casement windows with fixed centerpanes in all rooms except kitchen and bath.

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

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