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Relationships between U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Command Structures--Need for Closer Integration. LCD-77-491; B-156489. August 26, 1977.

Report to the Congress; by Elmer B. Staats, Comptroller General.

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The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military command structures are similarly organized and have basically the same overall mission, which is to provide a combat-ready force to deter aggression from the Warsaw Pact nations. Findings/Conclusions: The close relationship of the two command structures is best illustrated by: several U.S. commanders being also NATO commanders; NATO assuming operational command of U.S. combat forces in a NATO war; and NATO being heavily staffed with U.S. personnel in peacetime. There are at least two alternatives that should be considered in analyzing the U.S. command structure in Europe: integration of the U.S. unified command with NATO's Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe, and integration of the component commands and the U.S. European Command. Recommendations: The Secretary of Defense should reexamine the U.S. command structure in Europe and make changes as necessary to insure that the structure is optimally organized to perform its primary wartime mission. The examination should include evaluation of the potential benefits of taking the leadership in giving NATO greater authority and control over peacetime logistics support in order to facilitate the transition to and effectiveness of wartime activities. The Secretary of Defense should also take a leadership role in encouraging a multilateral study to identify ways in which closer integration of the command structures of all the NATO member forces with the NATO command structure can be achieved. (Author/SC)

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S  
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN U.S. AND NATO  
MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURES--NEED  
FOR CLOSER INTEGRATION  
Department of Defense

D I G E S T

The United States participates in two commands in Europe--its own and NATO's Allied Command, Europe. The United States has a unified command; headquarters commands for the Army, Navy, and Air Force; and numerous subordinate command headquarters. (See p. 4.)

The U.S. and NATO command structures are similarly organized and have basically the same overall mission--to provide a combat-ready force to deter aggression from the Warsaw Pact nations. The close relationship of the two commands is best illustrated by (1) several U.S. commanders being also NATO commanders, (2) NATO assuming operational command of U.S. combat forces in a NATO war, and (3) NATO being heavily staffed with U.S. personnel in peacetime. (See p. 4.)

Over the years, the U.S. command structure has been studied and debated, both in the Congress and the executive branch; efforts have been made to identify, classify, reorganize, and streamline headquarters activities throughout the Department of Defense. These efforts were all intended to make more efficient use of resources by reducing the number, size, layering, and duplication of headquarters and by updating and streamlining command relationships. Prior efforts have resulted in reorganizations and consolidations of headquarters and headquarters functions. Several of these efforts and personnel cuts were initiated by the European commands. Therefore these commands themselves share the credit for the actions taken to date. (See p. 18.)

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The increasing interdependence of NATO members underscores the need for a NATO command that can respond quickly in the event of an attack by the Warsaw Pact forces, particularly an attack with little or no advance warning. Transition from a peacetime to a wartime structure should require minimal change. The only practical way to accomplish this is through the close integration of the command structures of the NATO members' forces with the NATO command structure. (See p. 43.)

The NATO and member nation commands should be integrated at least to the extent that the NATO command is fully knowledgeable, in peacetime, of the important military activities of member nations, such as the details of arrangements for logistics support--arrangements that could affect NATO wartime activities. (See p. 27.)

The U.S. command structure needs to be reexamined with these objectives in mind. Although the current Department of Defense position is that the most likely conflict in Europe will be a NATO war, the United States still maintains functions basically parallel to those of NATO. (See p. 28.)

The Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, has emphasized the need for concerted multinational efforts in such areas as equipment commorality; force interoperability; integration of command, control, and communications; and mutual logistical support as military imperatives in Europe. For these reasons, the United States should determine how its command functions can best be integrated with those of NATO. (See p. 28.)

This report discusses unilateral war and crisis management activities (see p. 28); problems of changing from a peacetime to

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a wartime posture (see p. 30); and the need for a functional analysis of the U.S. command structure (see p. 32)--areas where there are potentials for realigning or reducing the U.S. command structure and more fully integrating it with the NATO command structure.

There are at least two alternatives that should be considered in analyzing the U.S. command structure in Europe--alternatives that could improve U.S. participation in NATO and reduce the management layering that now exists. These alternatives are:

- Integrate the U.S. unified command with NATO's Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe. (See p. 45.)
- Integrate component commands and the United States European Command. (See p. 45.)

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense reexamine the U.S. command structure in Europe and make changes as necessary to insure that the structure is optimally organized to perform its primary wartime mission. The examination should include evaluation of the potential benefits--both to U.S. staffing and a strengthened NATO--of taking the leadership in giving NATO greater authority and control over peacetime logistics support in order to facilitate the transition to and effectiveness of wartime activities. (See p. 46.)

GAO further recommends that the Secretary of Defense also take a leadership role in encouraging a multilateral study to identify ways in which closer integration of the command structures of all the NATO member forces with the NATO command structure can be achieved. (See p. 46.)

The Secretary of Defense was given an opportunity to comment on GAO's report. Comments were not received within 60 days. Consequently, this report is being issued without agency comments. (See p. 46.)