

NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA)

By

Major General Homer D. Smith, USA (Ret.)

[This article originally appeared in the *Army Logistician*, November-December, 1986, and is reprinted with the permission of that magazine.]

As the only international logistics support agency within NATO, NAMSA provides logistics support services for weapon and equipment systems held in common by NATO nations.

Tucked away in the smallest nation of the North Atlantic Alliance is an organization whose services are used by all member nations with the exception of Iceland. The NATO Maintenance and Supply Organization (NAMSO), the largest logistics organization of NATO, is headquartered in the City of Luxembourg. Conceived through an initiative of the United States, NAMSO was created by the North Atlantic Council on 2 April 1958. The Organization consists of a Board of Directors and an executive arm, the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA).

Although established in a political, military, and economic environment substantially different from that of today, the mission of NAMSA, laid down in its 1958 charter, has remained virtually unchanged over the nearly three decades that have elapsed and is still valid in its essentials today. Whenever two or more nations have the same weapon systems in their national inventories, they can use the logistics support services of NAMSA. The objective is to maximize effective logistics support to the military forces of the Alliance while minimizing the costs to nations, both individually and collectively.

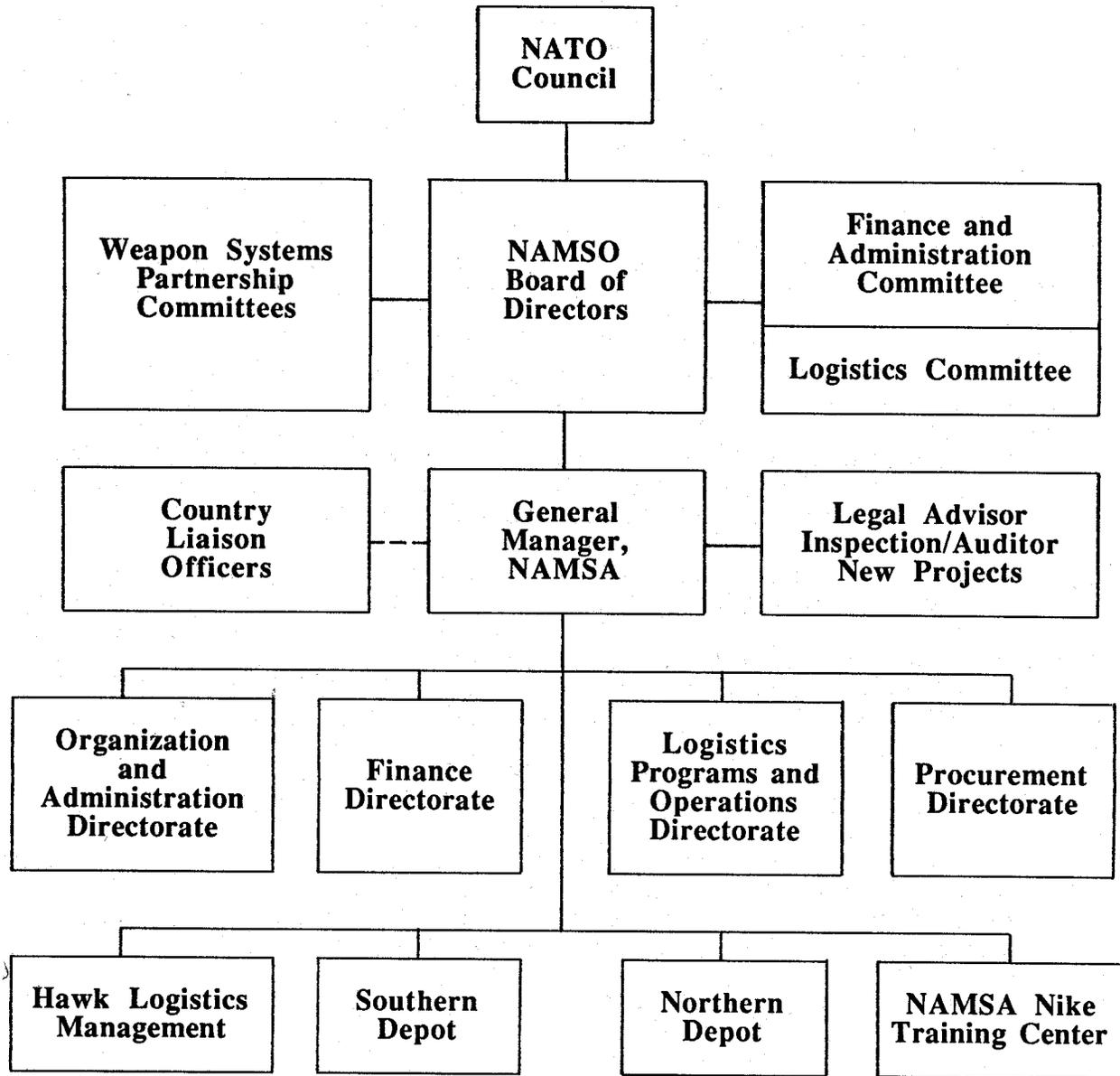
The mission that NAMSA is charged with in both peace and war includes the following:

- Consolidation of repair part requirements of the several nations, centralized stockage of items peculiar to selected weapon systems, procurement in support of supply and maintenance activities, mutual emergency support for priority requisitions, and redistribution of surplus and excess supplies among member nations.
- Maintenance and repair of selected weapon systems and equipment by contracted maintenance and in-house facilities.
- Codification services, configuration management, calibration, transportation of materiel, and other technical services.

To effectively perform this mission for the forces of the 15 member nations, NAMSA relies on standardized procedures that have been coordinated with the 15 defense establishments.

The workforce of the Agency includes nearly twelve hundred civilians recruited from member nations. The Agency is headed by a general manager, currently General Marc-A. Cauchie of the French Army. He is assisted by four directorates and reports to the Board of Directors of NAMSO, who represent capitals of the participating nations (as shown in the following chart). The Board reports directly to the NATO Council.

STRUCTURE OF THE NATO MAINTENANCE AND SUPPLY ORGANIZATION



In addition to the headquarters element of the Agency, NAMSA operates a depot in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, known as the Northern Depot. A second depot, the Southern Depot, is located at Tarranto, Italy. Logistics management of the NATO Hawk missile system is performed by an office located near Paris, France, while maintenance training for the Nike missile system is operated by the Agency at Fort Bliss, Texas. Due to the phase-out of Nike in Europe, the Fort Bliss activity will be closed by the end of this year [1986].

The following chart shows the various weapon, radar, communications, and other systems currently being supported by NAMSA together with the nations for which the work is done.

SYSTEMS AND NATIONS SUPPORTED BY NAMSA

	Missiles And Rockets							Radar			Communications			Artillery		Other		
	Nike	Hawk	Lance	Sidewinder	TOW	MLRS	Patriot	NADGE/NAEGIS	AWACS	Drone Class 89	Forward Scatter	Satcom	NICS	Crypto	FH-70	SP-70	F-104 Aircraft	Torpedoes
BELGIUM																		
CANADA																		
DENMARK																		
FRANCE																		
GERMANY																		
GREECE																		
ITALY																		
LUXEMBOURG																		
NETHERLANDS																		
NORWAY																		
PORTUGAL																		
SPAIN																		
TURKEY																		
UNITED KINGDOM																		
UNITED STATES																		
SHAPE																		

As a NATO agency, NAMSA operates on a no profit-no loss basis using commercial-type cost accounting procedures that provide clear visibility of operating costs to member nations. By identifying the support costs of each individual weapon or equipment system, these accounting procedures allow NAMSA to measure the cost-effectiveness of each supported system.

The Agency's role in times of tension and war was not overlooked in the original charter. By that charter, NAMSA is included in the NATO Alert System and actively participates in the development of selected alert measures to ensure its preparation and responsiveness during times of crisis. In addition, within the Agency there is a nucleus of mobilization-oriented and -trained personnel. This responsive element, together with a dedicated communications system and an Emergency Control Center, ensures that one central focal point within NAMSA will be available for crisis management.

The strength of the Agency lies in its role in consolidating member nations' requirements for supply, maintenance, and engineering support and thereby forming the basis for centralized procurement of materiel and services. Competitive bidding is exercised from all known potential sources in NATO-Europe, Canada, and the United States. In-house depot-level repair is performed for LANCE and TOW and will soon include electronics for the multiple launch rocket system (MLRS). Future systems such as the next-generation European antitank missile Trigat, the advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM), its short-range version (ASRAAM), and Maverick, are under study as candidates for prospective support by NAMSA when fielded in NATO-Europe.

The Agency actively attempts to expand its capabilities to be able to respond to any customer request for support. When several nations plan to collaborate in the fielding of a given system, they are urged to request advice from NAMSA as early as possible since it may take several years before a common logistics support concept can be agreed upon.

The present trend toward more cooperative U.S.-European weapon developments, highly refined and mandatorily trimmed military budgets, and maximum interoperability and standardization throughout the forces of NATO can only enhance the Agency's role in providing standardized, cost-effective, and responsive logistics support for Alliance weapon systems.

Since the inception of the Agency, the United States has been its major supplier, with over 50 percent of the total value of contracts let to U.S. military or commercial sources. This is not surprising since most NAMSA-supported systems are of U.S. origin. In addition, the United States provided the first two general managers of the Agency, both of whom were general officers. A management review initiated by the United States and composed of international experts devised the basic structure of the Agency in 1963. It remains much the same today with its present operative concepts of weapon systems management and commercial cost accounting. Further, the supply and procurement procedures used by the Agency are essentially based on those of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Although it performs some important functions in management and supply, the United States has never used many of the Agency's services. This loss of opportunity is not to be attributed to the much larger scope of logistics support operations of U.S. Forces but to legal considerations.

The NATO Mutual Support Act of 1979 allowed the United States to expand its role as a customer of the Agency. This act, Public Law 96-323 (and amplified by DODD 2010.9, DODI 2010.10, AR 12-16, and AFR 400-9), provided the legal foundation for U.S. Forces in Europe to use the Agency as a logistics support resource. In February 1982, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) signed an umbrella agreement with NAMSA establishing the terms for mutual logistics support and supplies and services. In actuality this agreement is implemented through separate arrangements between the component commands and NAMSA on an individual basis.

Since 1982 the role of the United States as a customer has expanded as a result of increased interest in the improved readiness that can be achieved through shortened downtime and cost-effectiveness, both of which result from a reduced pipeline length. Consequently, the United States went from no significant direct use of NAMSA in 1983 to involvement in a number of support relationships with the Agency today. Each type of support falls under a separate implementing arrangement of the USEUCOM-NAMSA umbrella agreement.

In June 1985, the United States joined with the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy in a weapon system partnership for coordinated logistics support of the MLRS [Multiple Launch Rocket System]. Support will include depot-level maintenance of selected electronics assemblies, selected technical and engineering support, direct exchange of electronics assemblies and sub-assemblies, and mutual emergency support for high-priority requisitions.

The United States, Germany, and the Netherlands formed the Patriot weapon system partner-ship in August 1985. The United States plans to participate in a common support program for depot-level maintenance of Patriot-peculiar equipment. A project planning office has been estab-lished under the direction of a U.S. national.

The Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) has arranged to use the contracting services of NAMSA to obtain depot-level maintenance support for the AIM 9-L missile. As more nations join the program, the AFLC expects considerable benefits in terms of savings and the availability of serviceable missiles through this in-theater repair capability.

NAMSA currently provides six qualified technicians to repair and calibrate U.S. Army test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment (TMDE). The TMDE is preselected and workloaded into the Agency program by the 517th Maintenance Battalion in Zweibrucken, Germany.

U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) have concluded an agreement with NAMSA for storing and maintaining USAFE War Reserve Material (WRM). Under this agreement NAMSA will provide day-to-day storage and maintenance management of this WRM, which consists of aircraft support equipment, vehicles, personnel support assets, and aircraft consumables. The materiel will be positioned at sites from which U.S. reinforcing units can draw it during a crisis. By using NAMSA services, USAFE can avoid adding more blue-suit personnel in the theater during peacetime.

NAMSA has also performed work on the TOW and LANCE for the United States.

As long as our Allies continue to procure U.S.-produced systems and support them through NAMSA, the United States will remain a major supplier in the future. The increased use of the Agency since the implementation of Public Law 96-323 certainly points to greater use of the capabilities of this multinationally staffed logistics support Agency.

The U.S. role as a source of management expertise will be particularly important over the next few years. This stems from a recently completed review of the operations and future of the Agency that was inspired, initiated, and chaired by the United States. The review generated major recommendations relative to the role of the Agency within the Alliance, expansion of its mission, and enhancement of its organization and management processes.

One recommendation concerned acquisition logistics or integrated logistics support for jointly developed systems. The review identified the need for greater attention to support considerations in the early phases of the development of joint systems. NAMSA was found to be the only "multi-national, multifunctional logistics organization in NATO which, at least in embryo, has the total range of logistics support capabilities in being or in potential to support virtually any equipment and weapons system acquisition program." In this light, the review recommended that NAMSA assume the role of acquisition logistics support agency for the Alliance. This proposal is currently under consideration at the appropriate levels within NATO.

Other advanced management proposals, such as the introduction of a revolving fund in the Agency's operations, were included in the recommendations stemming from the review. This year the Board of Directors of NAMSA and the North Atlantic Council, to whom they report, will assess the recommendations. It is hoped that the final product will strengthen the abilities of the Agency and increase its effectiveness in providing improved logistics support throughout the Alliance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major General Homer D. Smith, USA (Ret.), became the first director of logistics of the NATO International Staff in Brussels shortly after his retirement from active duty in 1979.

General Smith gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Klaus Broecker, NAMSA Assistant for New Projects, and Gary Appleton, the U.S. Representative to NAMSA, in writing this article.