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# Security Assistance in the Heart of Europe

By

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Situated in the heart of Europe between NATO and the former Warsaw Pact countries lies neutral Austria. Despite its long proclaimed neutrality, Austria remains, by virtue of its location and politics, an important friend of the United States and a continuing partner in security assistance.

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

For most of the past millennium, what is now the Republic of Austria, formed the core of first the "Holy Roman" and later the "Austro-Hungarian" Empires. As such, Austrians were intimately involved with European great power politics and participated in all of the major European wars. Austria has, through this connection, a long and notable martial tradition. The world's first military academy was founded by Empress Maria Theresa in Wiener Neustadt in 1752 and still trains officers for the Austrian Armed forces (the *Bundesheer*). The Austrian Navy deployed the first modern torpedo.

Following the breakup of the Empire in 1918, Austria was established as a republic. Austria's independence ended, however, with the invasion of Hitler's *Wehrmacht* in 1938 and the subsequent annexation to Germany. Following the Nazi defeat, the republic was reestablished but received its full sovereignty only when the Austrian State Treaty ended the Four-Power occupation in 1955.

## NEUTRALITY

The day after the last occupation soldier left Austrian territory, the Federal Parliament passed a constitutional law which proclaimed that Austria would henceforth be permanently neutral. The Austrians have interpreted this to mean that no foreign troops would be stationed in the country and that Austria would not participate in any military alliances. It also prevents foreign troop movements through Austria (or through Austrian airspace) except in support of humanitarian or United Nations (U.N.) missions.

Although neutral, Austria is nevertheless an active member of the UN and participates in its peacekeeping activities. There are presently *Bundesheer* battalions wearing blue UN peacekeeping helmets stationed in Cyprus and on the Golan Heights.

## AUSTRIAN DEFENSE POLICY

Austria practices armed neutrality. It has organized a unitary, militia-based system of defense (with universal male conscription) similar to that of Switzerland. Fully mobilized, Austria can field approximately 200,000 soldiers. The active-duty cadre, around 40,000 strong, is organized around one mechanized infantry division, armed with U.S.-made tanks and howitzers as well as indigenous combat vehicles, and an air division equipped with Swedish jet interceptors (Saab Drakens), helicopters, and air defense artillery. The militia is primarily a lightly armed force with responsibility for defending specific geographical areas or fighting from fixed installations.

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## AUSTRIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The U.S. and Austria have a long history of close, friendly relations. Many Austrians remain grateful for the generous assistance Americans provided following World War II. Despite occasional setbacks, such as the [President Kurt] Waldheim affair and technology leakage concerns, this good will has extended to military-to-military relationships as well. For a number of years, the Austrian Ministry of Defense (AMOD) has permitted American officers (U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer trainees) to attend the Austrian General Staff Course. Other U.S. soldiers receive training in alpine techniques in Austria. The most pervasive of these contacts, however, take place in the security assistance program.

## SECURITY ASSISTANCE IN PERSPECTIVE

Security assistance played a decisive role in reestablishing the *Bundesheer* in 1955. Departing American occupation troops left in place a considerable amount of World War II-era equipment for use by the organizing Austrian Army. Grant aid continued, under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), until 1963. Equipment worth \$96 million was delivered to Austria during this period. Loans through the U.S. Import-Export Bank provided Austria a means of easing the transition from MAP, and by, 1969, Austria had "graduated" to being a cash Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customer. Austria has made more than \$250 million of cash FMS purchases over the years.

Training programs followed a similar progression: first, a surge of officers and NCOs requiring training in basic skills, followed by a need for more technical courses. More than 500 Austrians have received training through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and its predecessor programs; the current Army Commander and a number of other high-ranking officers have received IMET-funded training.

## THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE OFFICE, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

For neutrality reasons, the Austrians did not allow a Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) to be established in the country. Therefore, the Defense Attaché was given the additional responsibility for security assistance in Austria. To assist him, a two-person augmentation element is attached to manage security assistance programs. This element uses the unofficial name of "Security Assistance Office (SAO)." It is authorized an Army Major (48C) as the Security Assistance Officer/Assistant Defense Attaché, and a Sergeant First Class (71L) as Operations NCO, and it works out of the Embassy in Vienna.

## LIFE IN THE LAND OF MOZART

Although there are very few U.S. military personnel stationed in Austria, there is a rather large U.S. government presence. In addition to the Embassy, there are also diplomatic missions to the United Nations and to several arms control negotiations. (The Conventional Forces Europe [CFE] and the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction [MBFR] talks took place in Vienna.) The total international community is larger still with sizable contingents of business people, missionaries, students, and refugees. For these and other reasons, Vienna is an exciting and interesting place in which to live and work.

Although support facilities are limited, a co-op commissary serves the official American community, and the Embassy Medical Unit has both a general practitioner and a psychiatrist. Mail service is provided via a weekly APO connection with a U.S. base in Germany.

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The large international community in Vienna supports three English-speaking schools, including the American International School. There are also English-speaking congregations for most major Christian denominations as well as other religions.

No government housing is provided for SAO personnel; its members must obtain their own by means of a private lease.

## CURRENT SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Most of the SAO's effort is in the area of Foreign Military Sales. Austria's main battle tanks (M60A3s), howitzers (both M109-series and older towed models), and scout helicopters (OH-58s) were purchased through FMS. In addition, Austria possesses numerous items of U.S.-origin support equipment. The Austrian Ministry of Defense (AMOD) also makes regular ammunition purchases through FMS. Annual FMS purchases for the past five years have averaged around \$10 million. A large part of each year's purchases are for spares (through a Cooperative Logistics Supply Support Arrangement [CLSSA]) to support end items already in the inventory. Most FMS cases (circa 85 percent) are with the U.S. Army, about 10 percent with the U.S. Air Force, and the balance are with the Navy, DLA, and other cases.

Currently, Austria is upgrading its indirect fire capability. It recently signed an FMS case for the purchase of an additional 24 M109 howitzers in the "A5" configuration. Additionally, the Defense Ministry is planning on upgrading its existing M109 howitzer fleet to at least this level.

Having overcome a legal roadblock concerning the wording of the State Treaty, Austria has now begun acquiring short-range, defensive guided missiles. The American TOW IIA is under consideration as a candidate in the longer-range antitank category. A live-fire test is planned to take place in Austria with other competitors for 1991.

Austria also purchases weapons and equipment from U.S. commercial sources, which have averaged \$8.4 million in the last five years.

Austria, along with a few other "richer" neutral and non-aligned countries, continues to receive a small IMET allocation. The *Bundesheer* is self-sufficient in almost all of its training needs and uses its IMET money for the training of personnel in low-density technical fields and for Professional Military Education. In recent years, this technical training has consisted primarily of USAF courses, such as Air Traffic Officer, Flight Safety Officer, and Advanced Aerospace Medical Officer. Austria also regularly sends officers to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and occasionally to the USAF Air Command and Staff College and to the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM), as well. It also participates in the Army War College and National War College International Fellows Programs when invited.

Austria pays all travel and living allowances for its IMET students. It also reciprocates by providing U.S. personnel the Austrian staff college and alpine training mentioned earlier.

The U.S. Administration, under pressure from Congress, has given notice it plans on deleting Austria and other richer countries from the IMET program. The American Embassy in Vienna, however, continues to argue that the program should be continued, pointing out that the small amount (\$15,000) that Austria receives annually is more than repaid by the goodwill and professional relationships created through IMET and by the value of reciprocal training.

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## ARMAMENTS COOPERATION

Although limited in scope due to its neutrality policy, Austria has a growing armaments cooperation relationship with the United States. As might be expected, Austria possesses a considerable natural advantage in alpine technology. Much of this technology (e.g., skis, winches, and climbing equipment) has military applications. The Austrian defense industry is highly developed in several other important sectors (such as small arms, ammunition, light armored vehicles, and optical equipment), and has much to offer in cooperative ventures.

Although the AMOD spends relatively little on research and development, it nonetheless has impressed U.S. officials on the quality of its technology. Four Data Exchange Agreements have been concluded with the U.S. Army and several more are pending.

A Reciprocal Procurement Memorandum of Understanding is currently the subject of negotiation. Even without this, however, several Austrian firms have had success with bidding on U.S. government contracts. For example, the Steyr-Daimler-Puch concern's subsidiary, Steyr-Mannlicher, is one of the finalists in the U.S. Army's Advanced Combat Rifle competition.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the impression of many Americans, Austria is more than the land of the three "M's" (Mountains, Music, and Mozart). Austria is an important friend and an ongoing security assistance and defense cooperation partner.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Allen Lovell is an Instructor in Security Assistance Management. His instructional areas at DISAM include European Studies and Armaments Cooperation. Major Lovell holds an M.A. in West European Studies from Indiana University and a B.A. in Sociology from Arkansas State University.