

NATO LOGISTICS SUPPORT

By

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It is a basic tenet of the NATO Alliance that each nation is responsible for the logistic support of its own forces; however, it is recognized that a cooperative approach is often more economical and is realistically a necessity if an effective fighting force is to be maintained. Nowhere is the need for cross-national support more apparent for U.S. forces than in large-scale exercises in the NATO arena such as the annual Reforger Exercises. In the past, attempts at mutual support with our NATO allies often ran afoul of other statutory requirements imposed by the Armed Services Procurement Act and the Arms Export Control Act. In order to ameliorate some of these difficulties, the NATO Mutual Support Act of 1979 was passed.

From the point of view of the logistician, it is clear that U.S. troops in Europe, whether on exercises or in actual combat, will have to rely heavily for support from on-site sources. The impossibility of maintaining our own logistics train across the Atlantic is obvious if one considers the resources and enormous costs involved, as well as the types of support desired in the areas of port services, transportation, maintenance, laundry, messing, billeting, repair parts, and refueling of vehicles and aircraft. While there has never been disagreement that cooperation was paramount in obtaining the required logistics support, prior to the passage of the NATO Mutual Support Act, there were some impediments to achieving this end.

In the first place, host nation support used to be procured under the terms and conditions of the Armed Services Procurement Act which is adequate for purchasing from private contractors but hardly appropriate for dealings with sovereign foreign governments. There were clauses in the act, such as those on gratuities, contingent fees, and restrictions on benefits to officials, that NATO governments found offensive and derogatory. This was especially true since their contracts with the U.S. government contained no such implications of suspected wrongdoing. In addition, normal requirements for competitive bidding complicated matters, since the only available source of the materials or services was the foreign government itself. The act also precluded furnishing of logistics support in kind, a technique that is the key to cross-servicing arrangements under exercise conditions.

Another obstacle to mutual support concerned the method of providing material to other nations. In the past, all transfers had to fall under the provisions of the Arms Export Control Act which are far too cumbersome to provide the required operational responsiveness and totally inadequate for proper logistics support. AECA procedures provided for payment in advance, for charging indirect and administrative charges, and had no authority for replacement in kind. Since these provisions were not normally imposed on the U.S. when American forces received materials from her NATO partners, this lack of reciprocity was another irritant in our military relationships.

In view of these statutory detriments to logistic support of our forces within the NATO framework, the NATO Mutual Support Act of 1979 authorizes waiving portions of the Arms Export Control Act and the Armed Services Procurement Act in order to facilitate the transfer of goods and services. In addition, reciprocal pricing procedures have been established so that some of the surcharges required under FMS no longer need to be collected. To emphasize that this act does not apply to routine supplying and purchasing of material, a \$100 million annual ceiling was set on U.S. acquisitions. All in all, this act has been a major step in bringing about mutual logistics support of the NATO forces and will permit the better use of European resources for logistics support.

In order to accomplish the latter, USCINCEUR is expanding his efforts in Host Nation Support (HNS), i.e., those bilateral agreements with other Ministries of Defense to provide logistics support for U.S. war plans. Under these ambassadorial level agreements, USEUCOM negotiates Technical Agreements outlining support in such functional categories as transportation, civil labor, telecommunications, and procurement. To accomplish the detailed planning which translates U.S. requirements and HNS provisions into usable procedures, USEUCOM Logistics Coordinating Cells (ULCC) are being established in various countries during FY 82 and 83.

Steps such as these can only improve our logistics posture within NATO by providing support more readily and by giving us flexible procedures which enhance the capabilities of U.S. combat units in Europe as well as our NATO allies who see such measures as positive steps toward a truly integrated military structure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Commander Craig M. Brandt, USN, has been a member of the DISAM faculty since January, 1978, and serves as the Director of European Studies. He has served almost six years overseas, in Japan and Spain, and is a Navy Country Regional Specialist for Southern Europe -- Spain. LCDR Brandt holds a Master of Government Administration degree (University of Pennsylvania, 1975), and a Master of Arts Degree (Wright State University, 1981).