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Foreign Military Troops in the United States

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Summary

This report discusses to what extent and why military personnel and forces from foreign nations are sometimes stationed in the United States. Upon discovering specific instances of foreign troop presence, some members of the public have expressed concern. In general, however, the presence of such foreign representation on U.S. soil is neither a new nor unusual phenomenon. This report will be updated when significant, new information becomes available.

Background

The great bulk of foreign military personnel in the United States are individuals assigned here for specialized training or to fill exchange faculty and staff positions. They can be found on almost all major training installations of all Services throughout the United States. Their duration of presence in the United States could range from a few weeks to several years. On occasion, foreign military units participate for a few weeks in combined military exercises on U.S. land or water training ranges (one of the more widely noted being a small Russian unit that trained with U.S. forces at Fort Riley, Kansas in October 1995). A single, comprehensive listing of where and why all foreign personnel and units are here would be quite extensive and is not known to exist.

The largest number of foreign personnel come here under the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) sponsored by the State Department and executed by the Department of Defense. For FY1998, DoD estimated that some 8,840 foreign military personnel from some 116 nations would be hosted throughout the United States under IMET. (For background, see CRS Report 96-854, *International Military and Education Training Program*, by Richard Grimmett, October 25, 1996, 6 p.)

An example of a U.S. site that hosts many foreign students is Fort Benning near Columbus, Georgia. The U.S. Army Infantry School there annually trains a total of 750 to 800 foreign students from up to 109 different nations. On the same post, the School of the Americas has trained, on an annual basis, approximately 700 additional students from 16 Latin American nations (see CRS Report 97-726, *U.S. Army School of the*

Americas: Background and Congressional Concerns, by (name redacted) and (name redacted), updated March 17, 1998, 9 p.).

An example of a nation that stations and trains many military personnel in the United States is Germany. Typically, Germany has some 2,500 people at 54 locations throughout the United States and Canada. It maintains a German Armed Forces Command U.S.A. and Canada Headquarters in Reston, Virginia. In 1996, the German Air Force Tactical Training Center for fighter pilots was established at Holloman Air Force Base near Alamogordo, New Mexico (see CRS Report 96-462, *German Military Presence in the United States: The Case of Holloman Air Force Base*, by Karen Donfried, May 22, 1996, 6 p.). The German Air Force Command for US/Canada is headquartered and major surface-to-air missile training is conducted by the German Air Force Air Defense School at Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas.

Reasons

The Government of the United States invites foreign military personnel and units to train in the United States for several reasons. In some cases, there appears to be mutual benefit in providing unique U.S. facilities to allies and friends; for example, most small nations cannot support all the specialized and high-level training opportunities found in the United States and many do not have the open spaces needed for intensive practice with modern weapons. In other cases, it is felt that today's immersion of foreign soldiers in U.S. military doctrine and practices would pay dividends whenever they might be called to fight as partners in battle. Some believe that their temporary immersion in American culture leads to greater understanding and eventual promotion of democratic ideals abroad. On a narrower basis, it appears that local U.S. communities tend to welcome foreign military guest programs for perceived cultural and economic advantages.

Finally, there is some element of reciprocity involved in inviting foreign military units and personnel to the United States. For fifty years, the U.S. strategy of "forward presence" has resulted in large numbers of U.S. forces being stationed in many foreign nations — with their concurrence. For example, while Germany has approximately 2,500 military personnel in the United States, some 60,000 U.S. troops are currently stationed in Germany (see CRS Report 95-829, *U.S. Military Dispositions: Fact Sheet*, by (name redacted), updated April 13, 1998, 2 p.).

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