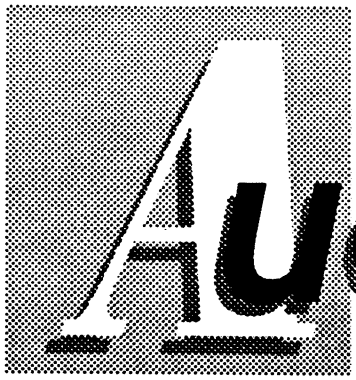

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT FOR SENIOR DOD OFFICIALS

Report No. 96-089 March 26, 1996

Department of Defense

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Acronyms

GEP	Ground Entry Point
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
SLTCC	Senior Leadership Travel Communications Center

INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
400 ARMY NAVY DRIVE
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22202-2884

Report No. 96-089 March 26, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
(FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND COMPTROLLER)
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INFORMATION SYSTEMS
AGENCY
DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF

SUBJECT: Audit Report on Communications Support for Senior DoD Officials
(Project No. 5RD-8013)

Introduction

We are providing this report for your information and use. This report is the first of two reports resulting from our Audit of Communications Support for Senior DoD Officials. The audit was performed in response to a complaint made to the Defense Hotline (Case No. 95-L59295) on travel communications support for the Secretary of Defense (the Secretary) and Chairman, Joint Staff (the Chairman). The complainant made five allegations concerning the construction and staffing of a new Senior Leadership Travel Communications Center (SLTCC) to support the travel of the Secretary and Chairman. The creation of the SLTCC was part of a comprehensive communications upgrade program the DoD implemented to remedy deficiencies in communications support for senior DoD officials. Specifically, the allegations cited duplication of facilities, unnecessary hiring of personnel, and improper management of resources. The complainant suggested that communications deficiencies could be corrected more cost-effectively by upgrading aircraft communications equipment, upgrading equipment in an existing facility, and realigning current personnel.

Audit Results

The five allegations were unsubstantiated. The Joint Staff, the Air Force, and the Defense Information Systems Agency effectively planned and managed the construction and staffing of the SLTCC. Details on the five allegations and our audit results are in Enclosure 1.

Audit Objectives

The audit objective was to evaluate communications that support the Secretary and the Chairman. Specific objectives were to determine the validity of the allegations in the complaint made to the Defense Hotline and to evaluate the management control program as it applied to the primary audit objective. Although we announced the objective to evaluate the management control program, we did not complete that objective because the planned

communications upgrades to the SLTCC were not being implemented by a single assessable unit or organization. Therefore, we did not review implementation of the management control program applicable to communications that support senior DoD officials.

Scope and Methodology

To assess the validity of the five allegations made to the Defense Hotline, we evaluated the missions and functions of organizations providing communications support for the Secretary and the Chairman. We reviewed the acquisition strategy, contracting, and staffing for the proposed improvements and the communications requirements for the Secretary and the Chairman.

Specifically, we:

o evaluated documented requirements for communications support for senior DoD officials;

o examined documentation, dated from FY 1988 through October 1995, that related to the allegations;

o discussed with support personnel the existing capabilities of travel communications, deficiencies in existing equipment, and planned upgrades to the capabilities, and

o reviewed staffing, cost estimates, requests for proposals, and existing contracts for proposed upgrades.

Audit Period, Standards, and Locations. We performed this economy and efficiency audit from April 1995 through January 1996. The audit was performed in accordance with auditing standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States as implemented by the Inspector General, DoD. The audit relied on computer-processed data for information; however, we did not rely on the computer-processed data to develop our audit conclusions. We did not use statistical sampling procedures to perform the audit. A list of organizations visited or contacted is in Enclosure 2.

Prior Audits and Other Reviews

No audit work on the audit subject has been performed in the last 5 years.

Other Matter of Interest

Our evaluation of the complaint to the Defense Hotline identified audit issues related to the acquisition of model VC-X aircraft to replace VC-137 aircraft in the 89th Airlift Wing at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. We issued a separate report entitled, "Acquisition of the Replacement Aircraft for Model VC-137 Aircraft," on January 30, 1996, to discuss those issues.

Audit Background

Senior DoD officials have a continuous requirement for secure communications and must be able to maintain those communications with the national command authorities at all times. Senior DoD officials include the Secretary of Defense; Deputy Secretary of Defense; Chairman, Joint Staff; and Vice Chairman, Joint Staff.

The offices of the Secretary and the Chairman have established communications requirements for a system capability that includes:

- o an ultrahigh frequency satellite communications terminal in the National Military Command Center,
- o remote access to ultrahigh frequency satellite communications,
- o interfaces with ground communications systems, and
- o trip communications support.

Before June 1995, three communications facilities in the Pentagon and communications on board Air Force executive fleet aircraft stationed at the 89th Airlift Wing satisfied the communications requirement to support senior DoD officials. Reliable and secure communications on board executive fleet aircraft are vital for senior DoD officials and their staffs to accomplish mission objectives.

In 1988, senior DoD officials identified deficiencies in the quality of the communications systems in the Pentagon and on executive fleet aircraft. Those deficiencies and the actions taken by DoD management to upgrade the systems that support the Secretary and the Chairman are discussed below.

Discussion

Beginning in 1988, the Air Force attributed the problem of poor quality communications to outdated technology, the lack of reliable equipment, and insufficient logistical support. In November 1994, the Defense Information Systems Agency, the agency responsible for the overall coordination and management of communications systems in DoD, defined problem areas as ground entry point (GEP) connectivity, airborne channel capacity, trip planning, training for support personnel, and staffing. The following paragraphs describe specific deficiencies in the GEP and the airborne communications systems.

Pentagon GEP Conditions. Because of old equipment, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) travel communications teams experienced difficulty establishing phone connections from remote ground sites and airborne sites to the Pentagon GEP. Also, because of old equipment, the existing GEP console and associated radios were increasingly difficult to repair. Those problems limited GEP operations and its ability to support the requirements of the Secretary and the Chairman.

Executive Fleet Aircraft Communications Conditions. The communications system on board the 89th Airlift Wing aircraft lacked sufficient channel capacity to provide secure voice and data communications for DoD officials. Also, the single ultrahigh frequency satellite system on board the aircraft was not dependable and did not provide the level of support needed by senior DoD officials.

Air Force Recommendations to Correct Communication Deficiencies. On February 1, 1993, the Interoperability and Technology Directorate, Control, Communications and Computer Agency, Department of the Air Force, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, completed a study on deficiencies in communications support to senior DoD officials and issued the report "Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Travel Communications Enhancement Plan." The report recommended improvements to correct deficiencies. The document defined improvements to ground and air communications for senior DoD officials through phased modifications, replacements, and upgrades of the communications systems. Specific recommendations included:

o upgrading the Pentagon GEP,

o establishing commercial telephone service and international commercial satellite capability on executive fleet aircraft,

o expanding secure voice and data communication capabilities on the executive fleet aircraft, and

o establishing a preventative maintenance program for the executive fleet communications system.

Implementation of Recommendations. In response to the Air Force recommendations, the DoD created the SLTCC to provide improved voice and data communications support for senior DoD officials. The construction and staffing of the SLTCC was part of a comprehensive plan to upgrade communications support for senior DoD officials. The SLTCC began operations in June 1995. The SLTCC, a consolidation of the three communications facilities at the Pentagon, is staffed by the Air Force Pentagon Communications Agency. The SLTCC is located in the National Military Command Center and contains a new GEP and associated equipment, cabling, and antennas. Although relatively new, the SLTCC has improved the conditions and corrected the deficiencies that the Defense Information Systems Agency previously identified. The Air Force also upgraded existing long-range executive fleet aircraft with International Maritime Satellite capabilities and flight phones.

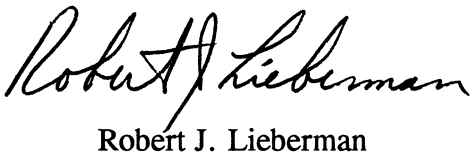
Conclusion

The audit results showed that the allegations to the Defense Hotline were unsubstantiated. The SLTCC has a unique communications support function and efficiently uses resources by consolidating three facilities into one facility.

Management Comments

We issued a draft of this report on January 29, 1996. Because the report contains no findings or recommendations, no comments were required, and none were received. Therefore, we are publishing the report in final form.

We appreciate the courtesies extended to the audit staff. For additional information on the audit, please contact Mr. Robert M. Murrell, Audit Program Director, at (703) 604-9507 (DSN 664-9507) or Mr. Eric B. Edwards, Audit Project Manager, at (703) 604-9515 (DSN 664-9515). Enclosure 3 lists the distribution of this report. The audit team members are listed inside the back cover.



Robert J. Lieberman
Assistant Inspector General
for Auditing

Enclosures

Allegations Made to the Defense Hotline and Audit Results

The complaint made to the Defense Hotline, Case No. 95-L59295, consisted of five allegations concerning travel communications support for the Secretary and the Chairman. The allegations and the audit results pertaining to each allegation are provided below.

Allegation 1. A communications center, the SLTCC, is being built and staffed under the guise of providing better communications support for the Secretary and Chairman. The Secretary wanted only his voice communications upgraded when he traveled. The Chairman did not want any money spent or commitments made for the SLTCC without his approval. In addition, he wanted his communications to remain under his control.

Audit Result. The allegation was not substantiated. The improvements and upgrades to the travel communications support for the Secretary and Chairman were part of a properly planned and approved project, "The OSD Travel Communications Enhancement Plan."

In a "Background Paper on Travel Communications Supporting OSD and the Chairman," December 1992, the Military Assistant to the Secretary identified problems with the travel communications support for senior DoD officials. As a result, the Technical Integration Center, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, was tasked to develop a plan to improve OSD travel communications. The resultant draft enhancement plan dated September 30, 1992, was approved by the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Interoperability and Technology, for release in February 1993. On November 4, 1994, the Secretary and the Chairman approved the enhancement plan. The consolidated travel communications facility (known as the SLTCC) became operational in June 1995, was staffed by trained communicators, and can provide airborne and on-site communications support.

Allegation 2. The DoD will spend $1 million to construct a communications facility, when an underutilized secure facility, the Crisis Coordination Center already exists and houses part of the voice communications system for senior DoD officials.

Audit Result. The allegation was not substantiated. The SLTCC, including installation of walls and floors that are soundproof, cost about $50,000.

The Crisis Coordination Center is not a communications facility. The Crisis Coordination Center is a suite of rooms designed for high-level and secure meetings regarding worldwide situation monitoring, military operations planning, and crisis management. Although the Pentagon GEP had connectivity with the Crisis Coordination Center, it did not have the equipment necessary to support the travel communications requirements of the Secretary; the Chairman; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; and the Vice Chairman, Joint Staff.

Allegation 3. Fourteen to seventeen additional military personnel are planned to staff a 24-hour facility to handle voice communications when the Secretary and Chairman travel. Staffing already exists, and with a few realignments in expertise to communicators, the OSD Cables Division could provide adequate support.

Audit Result. The allegation was not substantiated. The SLTCC is authorized 22 positions.

The mission of the SLTCC is to provide travel communications support for the senior DoD officials on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis. The functions of the SLTCC include:

o operating and maintaining the GEP and communications consoles,

o preparing trip plans,

o performing administrative functions relating to communications support, and

o providing airborne and on-site communications support.

The SLTCC staff is organized into four five-person teams. Two communicators and the Senior Communications Officer for the Secretary and the Communications Advisor for the Chairman will accompany each principal when they travel. The two communicators will set up and operate an on-site communications base for the duration of the trip. The Senior Communicator and the Communications Advisor will accompany the principals to provide on-the-spot, personal communications support. At the Pentagon, three communicators per shift will operate the GEP on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis. Staff not assigned to travel status will operate the GEP, develop trip planning booklets, conduct training, and perform other administrative functions. The duties of the SLTCC staff and the extensive travel requires professionally trained communicators fully dedicated to support the Offices of the Secretary and Chairman.

The OSD Cables Division is responsible for providing executive and administrative support to the OSD. The staff of 19 performs its functions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The staff could not perform its administrative mission and continue to provide the frequent and extensive travel communication support responsibilities of the SLTCC. Further, the OSD Cables Division staff was not trained as communicators or to perform maintenance on communications equipment.

Allegation 4. A GS-15 was hired to consolidate the Secretary's communications. The job description of the GS-15 duplicated functions performed by the OSD Cables Division.

Audit Results. The allegation was not substantiated. The senior communications officer position is authorized at the GS-15 level. However, the position has never been filled at that level. The senior communications officer

position was held by a contractor from September 1994 through January 1995. A chief master sergeant occupied the position from December 1994 through May 1995, and a GS-13 assumed the position in May 1995. In addition, the position description of the senior communications officer does not designate functions and responsibilities that duplicate the administrative functions of the OSD Cables Division.

Allegation 5. DoD is establishing a new staff and facility that have no direct functional or administrative oversight by the Secretary or his support staff.

Audit Result. The allegation was not substantiated. The DoD is staffing a draft DoD directive, "Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Staff Communications Support." The draft directive requires the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence) to provide policy, guidance, and oversight of supporting communications. When finalized, the directive will establish responsibility for functional and administrative oversight of the SLTCC.

Organizations Visited or Contacted

Office of the Secretary of Defense

Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Washington, DC
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence), Washington, DC

Joint Staff

Director for Operations (J-3), Washington, DC
  National Military Command Center, Washington, DC
  Nuclear Operations/Command and Control Division Command Center Liaison Section, Washington, DC
Director for Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems (J6), Washington, DC

Department of the Army

Director of Information Systems for Command, Control, Communications and Computers, Washington, DC

Department of the Navy

Naval Command, Control and Ocean Surveillance Center In-Service Engineering, East Coast Detachment, Systems Engineering and Integration Division, MD

Department of the Air Force

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Financial Management and Comptroller), Washington, DC
Office of the Vice Chief of Staff, Washington, DC
  Office of Special Air Mission, Washington, DC
Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Command, Control, Communications, and Computers, Washington, DC
  Air Force Pentagon Communications Agency, Washington, DC
    Combat Systems Division, Washington, DC

Other Defense Organizations

Defense Information Systems Agency, Arlington, VA
- Deputy Director for Engineering and Interoperability, Arlington, VA
- Communications Watch Division, Arlington, VA
- Joint Interoperability and Engineering Organization, Reston, VA

Washington Headquarters Services, Washington, DC
- Director for Correspondence and Directives, Washington, DC

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Senate Subcommittee on Defense, Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations
House Subcommittee on National Security, Committee on Appropriations
House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
House Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs, and Criminal Justice, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
House Committee on National Security

Audit Team Members

This report was prepared by the Readiness and Operational Support Directorate, Office of the Assistant Inspector General for Auditing, DoD.

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