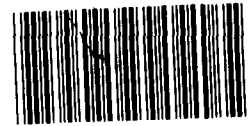
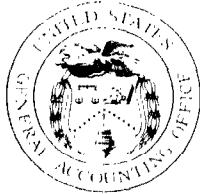


December 1990

BASE SECURITY

Evaluation of Alleged Weaknesses at the Miesau Army Depot

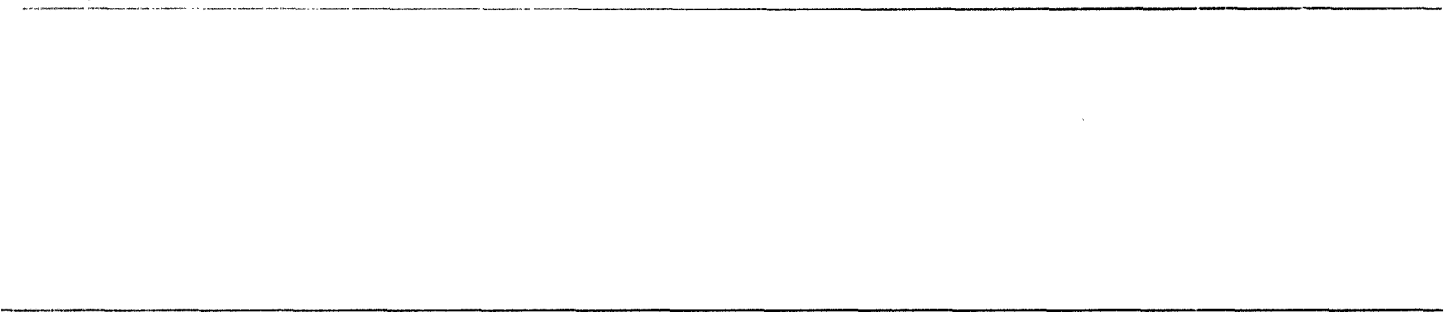


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National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-241142

December 4, 1990

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report responds to your June 1990 request that we review allegations made by an Army staff sergeant concerning the working conditions, safety, and overall security at the Miesau Army Depot in West Germany. Specifically, the sergeant stated that the military dog handlers (from the 66th Military Police Company) who patrol the perimeter of the depot are placed in a vulnerable position because they

- are not allowed to carry loaded weapons,
- are not provided advanced body armor,
- do not have adequate communications equipment,
- do not have sufficient backup, and
- are fatigued from an overly demanding work schedule.

The sergeant also pointed out two incidents in which he thought the security at the Miesau Depot had been jeopardized—a gate crashing and fences damaged by storms.

You also asked that we compare the security conditions at the Miesau Depot with those at other similar U.S. facilities in Europe.

Results in Brief

Most of the working conditions that the sergeant pointed out did exist at the time he wrote his letter in February 1990. The Miesau dog handlers were not allowed to carry loaded weapons; they were not issued more advanced type body armor; their communications equipment was not always functioning properly; and they were working as many as 10 consecutive days before getting a day off.

Various Army officials we interviewed in Europe agreed with the sergeant's concerns about the communications equipment and work schedules and are considering some steps to resolve these problems. However, because Miesau is considered a low-terrorist threat environment, these officials do not believe that Miesau warrants the use of loaded weapons, advanced type body armor, or additional backup response capability.

Also, Army officials do not believe the two incidents cited by the sergeant had jeopardized the security at Miesau.

The security conditions at Miesau are not comparable to those of other Army conventional ammunition storage facilities in Europe. For example, no other facility uses dog handlers, so many of the unique problems experienced at Miesau—shortage of dog handlers necessitating long work hours and the difficulty in loading weapons while controlling dogs—would not be present. Also, the other facilities are smaller than Miesau so communications hampered by longer distances and terrain conditions would not be a problem.

Overall, our limited review at Miesau and at another storage site did not identify any significant weaknesses in security provisions which would warrant a more detailed examination.

Background

The Reserve Storage Activity in Miesau is a component of the 60th Ordnance Group of the 21st Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM), U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR). Miesau Army Depot is the largest ammunition storage, maintenance, and distribution center in West Germany. It consists of a 2,436-acre storage area in Miesau and a 2,521-acre storage area in Weilerbach, West Germany. At these storage areas, Miesau issues, receives, stores, transports, inspects, renovates, maintains, and accounts for all types of conventional ammunition and small missiles.

The storage areas are secured with a combination of physical barriers and guard personnel. Physical barriers include a perimeter fence and magazines with an intrusion detection system, locks, and seals. The 4099th Civilian Guard Group, which is authorized 192 German civilian guards, is the primary security guard force. This group is augmented by dog teams from the 66th Military Police Company. These dog teams (each made up of a military working dog and a dog handler) patrol the perimeter fences of the Miesau and Weilerbach storage areas at night.

Dog Handlers Not Allowed to Carry Loaded Weapons

The sergeant and other dog handlers at Miesau believed that they had been placed in a very vulnerable position because they were not allowed to carry loaded weapons. They told us of several past incidents of potential danger with intruders and problems with wild boars, including one incident in which a boar had severely injured a guard dog. They also said that it was very difficult for a dog handler to load a weapon while handling a dog that had become excited because of an intruder or a wild

animal. In addition to holding the dog leash, the dog handler needs both hands to hold the gun (a 45-caliber pistol), insert the magazine, and chamber a round.

According to the dog handlers, carrying loaded weapons is common and is not considered a safety problem at other locations. They said that they had carried loaded weapons at previous posts while working as dog handlers or while performing other types of military police duties. As an example of differences in practice, they told us about the use of loaded weapons by dog handlers at special weapons storage sites.

USAREUR, 21st TAACOM, and Miesau officials said that Miesau is considered a low-threat environment and that patrolling with loaded weapons is not warranted. These officials said that guards who patrol at conventional ammunition storage sites throughout USAREUR are not allowed to carry loaded weapons because they are not considered a prime terrorist target. The officials believed that a terrorist would probably attempt to avoid detection before reaching an ammunition storage target.

Under USAREUR regulations, the 21st TAACOM commander has authority to establish policy regarding loaded weapons. The 21st TAACOM has decided that patrolling with unloaded weapons at conventional ammunition storage sites is prudent based on the assessment of a low-terrorist threat, coupled with a concern for accidental weapon discharges. Dog handlers and other patrolling guards are required to carry loaded weapons at the special weapons storage facilities in Europe, because the Army considers the threat at these sites to be greater due to the type of weapons being stored.

Advanced Body Armor Not Issued

The sergeant and other dog handlers acknowledge that they are issued a vest made of kevlar, but they seldom wear it because they contend that the vest is too bulky and does not offer adequate protection. The dog handlers believe that they should have available for their use the protection gear that is referred to as "second chance" body armor. They said that patrolling the perimeter fence on foot at Miesau places them in a sufficiently vulnerable position to warrant such equipment. As evidence of the need and practical use of second chance body armor, the dog handlers told us that their counterparts at special weapons sites use this equipment. All the dog handlers we interviewed said that they would wear the more advanced body armor if it were available.

USAREUR officials said that they do not issue second chance body armor to the dog handlers at conventional arms storage sites because it is not the normal body armor provided by the Army supply system. The advanced body armor can be purchased with local funds if the commander can justify the higher cost. Miesau officials said that, according to records for the last 4 years, no shots have been fired at guards; therefore, they believe that the threat conditions do not warrant the additional costs associated with the second chance body armor.

Problems With Communications Equipment

The sergeant said that radios used by the dog handlers are 15 years old and do not work 80 percent of the time. The sergeant had not maintained records to substantiate his allegation. Rather, the stated failure rate was his estimate of the time that the radios did not function properly because they had malfunctioned, had weak batteries, or were in "dead zones" (areas where interference prevents the radios from working properly). The sergeant and other dog handlers said that the radios have been a long-standing problem.

Miesau officials did not agree that the radio malfunctions were as severe as alleged by the sergeant but did agree that the communication system needed improvement and that they were in the process of installing new equipment. Miesau officials provided us a log that listed the radios' repair history since October 1989. The log showed that from 1 to 5 of the 17 radios available to dog handlers at Miesau required repair each month. These officials said that if other radios were malfunctioning or experiencing battery problems, the dog handlers should have reported these problems so that the equipment could have been repaired.

Miesau officials agreed that the dead zones had created a significant problem but said that this problem will be eliminated when the new equipment is installed. Miesau purchased 40 new radios and base stations with the objectives of (1) providing the capability for private (encrypted) conversations and (2) replacing equipment that, according to the 1988 justification, was considered outdated and required continuous repair and maintenance. The new equipment arrived in February 1990 and was initially assigned to the civilian support guards who are responsible for security at the gates and checks of storage bunkers at Miesau because they had radios older than the ones used by the dog handlers.

When the new Miesau commander arrived in May, he decided to assign 20 of the new radios to the Directorate of Security for the dog handlers.

The new radios are not yet being used by the dog handlers because the base stations and relay stations must be installed before the radios are effective. The relay stations will eliminate the problems with the dead zones. A contract was awarded on July 2, 1990, for this work, and the system should be functional by the end of November 1990.

Backup Response Considered Adequate by Miesau Officials

The sergeant and the other dog handlers believe that Miesau does not have adequate backup response for dog handlers encountering an intruder. They said that the only option for backup support is to call other dog handlers from the barracks. They did not consider this an effective option because in prior incidents it took 45 to 60 minutes for them to get their dogs, be issued their assigned weapons, load into vehicles, and travel to the site. They also said that an adequate backup response capability has not been available since an augmentation force was eliminated at Miesau in early 1989. The Augmentation Security Force included a 10-person reaction team with automatic weapons, which could respond very quickly.

The dog handlers were aware that Miesau officials had made an agreement with the German police for backup security but did not believe this was adequate. They said that it takes the German police some time to respond to a request for assistance.

Miesau officials believe that the German police can provide adequate response. As an example of the German police response time, these officials cited a December 1989 gate crash incident in which the German police responded within a reasonable period of time considering the fact that the intruder had already been apprehended. This was the only time assistance had been requested from the German police.

Miesau officials told us that the dog handlers' mission is not to engage in a gun battle with an intruder but to report the intrusion and maintain surveillance, if possible. The primary security concern is the removal of weapons or ammunition from the storage site at Miesau. Removing weapons or ammunition from this site cannot be done quickly because (1) forced entry to the bunkers is difficult, (2) the bulk ammunition at Miesau cannot be loaded and moved easily or quickly, (3) the bunkers are not marked as to the type of ammunition stored, and (4) the bunkers have electronic intrusion detection systems to alert security guards of attempted entry.

Dog Handlers Worked Demanding Schedules

According to the sergeant, the dog handlers were fatigued because they were working 10- to 12-hour shifts for 8 to 10 days before getting a day off. The sergeant told us that there has been some relief due to a change in work shift scheduling, which was made possible by the increased daylight hours during the summer months. However, the sergeant and other dog handlers were concerned that they could revert to a situation in which work hours for patrolling will increase in winter months, and the number of dog handlers may decrease if departing personnel are not replaced.

Miesau officials agreed that the dog handlers were working a demanding schedule at the time the sergeant wrote the letter. They attributed the problem to the following three factors:

- They were understaffed, with only 35 of the 51 authorized number of dog handlers assigned.
- A decision to use two shifts of dog handlers each night required them to work up to 10 consecutive days without a break to provide the minimum coverage in patrolling the perimeter fence each night.
- The high demand for dog handlers did not exist at Miesau until early 1989 when they were assigned responsibility for patrolling the perimeter fence after the augmentation force was eliminated at the conventional storage site in Miesau.

Miesau officials are considering some steps to resolve these problems, but a final solution has not been achieved.

Miesau and the 21st TAACOM have requested additional dog handlers, but there is a worldwide shortage of these personnel, according to USAREUR officials. The overall USAREUR staffing level for this specialty is 79 percent. The organizations with higher staffing levels than Miesau have higher priority missions. USAREUR officials expect that additional dog handlers will not be available to raise the staffing levels.

Miesau officials revised the work schedule for dog handlers to reduce the number of consecutive days they were on duty. Dog handlers at Miesau are divided into two squads. At the time of the sergeant's letter, each squad was assigned a shift from 5 p.m. to 12 midnight or 12 midnight to 7 a.m. In addition to the patrol hours, the dog handlers had to care for their dogs and perform other duties each day. Because of the shortage of dog handlers and the minimum requirements on the number of personnel assigned to patrol the fence, the dog handlers were working as many as 10 consecutive days before getting a day off. Miesau officials

changed the work schedule to provide the dog handlers with additional days off. They chose to have one 12-hour shift each night. The dog handlers patrol with dogs for 8 hours of the shift and patrol in vehicles during the remaining hours. By assigning one squad the responsibility for total coverage for 4 days and the second squad for the next 4 days, the dog handlers were able to work four 12-hour shifts and then have 3 days off and 1 day of training before starting a new cycle. Miesau said that this approach has worked well during the spring and summer, but they may have to change it with the longer winter hours of darkness.

The demands on dog handlers' time increased with the elimination of the augmentation force in March 1989. The force consisted of 122 personnel who were assigned to Miesau from other commands on a rotating basis every 2 weeks. In addition to providing a backup response team, the augmentation force supplied personnel to patrol the perimeter fence at Miesau. The dog handlers were used as a response team and to patrol the storage areas on a part-time basis. We were told that typically they would train for 4 hours and patrol the storage area for 4 hours each workday. Because they were not needed to meet the minimum coverage of the fence, supervisors had much more flexibility in scheduling the dog handlers' work hours, training, and days off. When USAREUR eliminated the augmentation force, Miesau officials decided to use the dog handlers to patrol the fence and German civilian guards to patrol the storage areas. They established minimum levels for patrol coverage on the fence and a new demand for dog handlers' time.

The Miesau commander told us that he is considering options to minimize the dog handlers' work schedule problems. The commander's preferred option is to consolidate the most sensitive items into one storage area and have the dog handlers patrol this area rather than the fence. The primary factor in considering this option is the cost of relocating the stored items. These costs were being estimated at the time of our review and no final decisions had been made.

Security at Miesau Allegedly Jeopardized

The sergeant cited two incidents in which he believed the security at Miesau had been jeopardized. The following sections describe these incidents.

Gate Crash Incident

According to an incident report, in December 1989, an intruder drove a car through the crash beam at the main gate, raced across the depot, and crashed through a beam into the ammunition storage area. Military

police pursued the vehicle through the depot and apprehended the intruder immediately after the vehicle stopped. The sergeant told us that he was concerned because of the time it took the German police to arrive.

Miesau officials said that the incident proved that the security system works effectively. They said that the individual was apprehended and that the German police responded when needed and within a reasonable amount of time, considering that the intruder had already been apprehended.

Storm Damage Incident

On February 3, 1990, a storm uprooted hundreds of trees in the storage area and caused extensive damage to the fences. The sergeant said that 3 weeks passed and no improvements were made on the condition of the fence. He alleged that there were numerous places where someone could enter the storage area within a few seconds. During a second storm that month, the sergeant said that the dog handlers had been unnecessarily placed in danger because they were required to continue patrolling the fence while other personnel were kept from the area because of the danger of falling trees.

Miesau officials agreed that the February storms had caused severe damage to the fences at Miesau and that it was several months before contracts could be awarded and the outer perimeter fence completely repaired. However, the officials said that the fence had been secured by installing concertina wire to the damaged areas and increasing checks of severely damaged areas. At the time of our review, we observed that all the outer perimeter fence for the storage area had been repaired and that the fence between the storage area and the administrative area was still damaged but was reinforced with concertina wire.

The commander of the Directorate of Security at the time of the storms told us that he had removed all the dog handlers from the fence patrol during the first storm, but a few of the people had been trapped in some areas overnight because falling trees had blocked the roads. The official also said that the patrol referred to by the sergeant during the second storm had taken place after the high winds had ceased but some leaning trees were still falling. Other personnel were scheduled to patrol the fence as part of a training alert. Because these personnel would have been standing rather than moving and because their presence on the fence was not required for security, he decided to keep them away from the fence to minimize the number of people subject to hazards.

Conditions at Miesau Not Comparable to Conditions at Other Storage Sites

The conditions at Miesau are not comparable to those of other USAREUR conventional ammunition storage locations. USAREUR does not use military dog handlers at other conventional ammunition storage sites. They are used at Miesau because of the size of the storage area and the large number of assets there. Miesau's problems—such as its shortage of dog handlers or the difficulty in loading weapons while controlling dogs—are unique. Military dog handlers are used at special weapons storage sites, but Miesau's problems would not occur at these locations because they are given priority in staffing and because the higher security requirements for these sites provide for the use of loaded weapons and body armor by dog handlers. In addition, these sites are much smaller than Miesau; therefore, they do not experience the same problems in communicating over long distances.

To compare conditions at Miesau with another conventional ammunition storage site, we visited a V Corps storage site that was (1) one of the largest ammunition storage sites in West Germany and (2) outside the command of the 21st TAACOM, which made many of the policy decisions affecting Miesau. The V Corps storage site (designated "PSP #3J") did not have any dog handlers as part of the guard force. A German civilian support group provided the guard services. The guards walk the perimeter fence at night, carry unloaded M16 rifles, and are provided the same type of protective vest as the Miesau dog handlers. The V Corps site's perimeter fence is well lit; Miesau's is not. In case of an intrusion, backup response is available from the 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Armored Division, which is located in a nearby town. Prior experience had shown that the brigade could respond within the 2-hour criterion established by USAREUR. The civilian guard group was staffed at 44 of the 76 authorized for 2 storage sites because of turnover and a USAREUR hiring freeze. Site officials, however, said that they are able to provide the minimum guard coverage required and believe that adequate security is provided at present.

Agency Comments

Department of Defense officials provided oral comments on a draft of this report. We have included their comments where appropriate. They agreed with our findings and stated that the matter would be reviewed further and that appropriate action will be taken, although they did not identify the specific steps they plan to take.

Scope and Methodology

To obtain a clear understanding of the alleged conditions, we interviewed the sergeant who made the allegations, three dog handlers who had the longest experience at Miesau, and two supervisory dog handlers. We also interviewed Miesau command officials and gathered supporting documents concerning (1) staffing levels and work scheduling practices for security personnel, (2) equipment provided to dog handlers, (3) provisions for reinforcement in case of an intrusion, and (4) the security implications of the gate crashing and the storm damage to the fence.

At the 21st TAACOM and the Provost Marshal's office for USAREUR, we identified the policies for the use of loaded weapons by security personnel, the equipment issued to dog handlers, and the staffing levels for security personnel at other locations. We also obtained a copy of the Provost Marshal's study of the sergeant's allegations. At each of the commands, we obtained officials' rationale for the current policies and discussed any actions taken or planned regarding the alleged conditions.

To obtain preliminary information on similarities between Miesau and other sites in Europe, we developed information on staffing, the use of loaded weapons, and equipment provided to security guards at a V Corps conventional ammunition storage site. We selected this site because it was outside the command of the 21st TAACOM, which established many of the policies affecting Miesau, and it was the largest non-21st TAACOM site available in West Germany.

We conducted our review between June 1990 and September 1990 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 15 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services and to the Secretaries of Defense and the Army. Copies will also be made available to other interested parties on request.

Please contact me at (202) 275-4141 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Davis". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Richard Davis
Director, Army Issues

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