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Ralph E. Jackson

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Relocating The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing

by

Ralph E. Jackson

**University of Maryland at College Park
School of Public Affairs
PUAF 790 Project Course**

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**Sponsor:
Colonel Mike Taylor, USAF
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Table of Contents

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|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Background: Crotone | 4 |
| Criteria | 12 |
| The Alternative: Dual Basing | 15 |
| Evaluation: | |
| Domestic Politics | 17 |
| NATO Politics | 17 |
| Budget | 20 |
| Deterrence | 25 |
| Operational Effectiveness | 29 |
| Potential Compromise: Split the Difference | 33 |
| Recommendation | 35 |
| Conclusion | 36 |
| Appendix: Airlift / Tanker Aircraft Calculations | 38 |
| Endnotes | 40 |
| Bibliography | 45 |

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Introduction

In 1992, the United States must vacate Torrejon Air Base in Spain because of a decision by the Spanish government. To relocate the affected American aircraft, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization agreed in 1988 to fund construction of a new airbase at Crotone, Italy. In 1990, certain factions in Congress began efforts aimed at reversing this decision, considering it preferable for the aircraft to return to the United States instead. This paper examines alternative options for fulfilling the U.S. commitment to defend NATO's southern region.

At issue is the construction of the proposed NATO airbase at Crotone ("crow-TOE-nee"), Italy. The base would house the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing, which must vacate Torrejon ("TORE-uh-hone") Air Base, near Madrid, Spain, by May, 1992. The 401st, composed of 72 F-16 fighter aircraft, is the only U.S. fighter wing in NATO's southern region, and is considered extremely important to the region's defense. The alternative to a new base at Crotone is a concept known as Dual Basing, first advanced by Representative Patricia Schroeder. In essence, dual basing arrangements would provide for the wing to be based in the United States and to deploy to Europe in times of crisis and for periodic training.

The question of the 401st and Crotone is part of several larger questions. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the other historic developments of 1989 and 1990, the question was viewed in the context of burdensharing -- how to equitably divide the costs of providing for European security among NATO's members.¹ Even though the burdensharing aspects of the issue faded as the Warsaw Pact collapsed, Crotone remained salient because of its relevance to the question of the level of U.S. commitment to NATO's southern region. As recent history has shown, this area is not a stable one, even though its defense was of secondary importance to NATO in the face of the more direct Warsaw Pact threat. Now, however, NATO's southern region is receiving increased attention as the Soviet threat to Central Europe diminishes. Moreover, U.S. willingness to assist in its defense will affect Allied perceptions of the U.S. as a reliable security partner and may well be taken as a signal about the future of the American commitment

to European defense and the NATO Alliance.

It is necessary to point out that, since these issues are both contentious and current, the availability of data on them is somewhat limited. Much of the documentation on the proposed base at Crotone, including a recent study by the General Accounting Office, is classified, and hence unavailable for use in this paper. The Dual Basing proposal is a recent addition to the debate on the future of the U.S. force structure, and is thus not as thoroughly documented as are some defense concepts. Thus, some of the specific arrangements associated with dual basing are suppositions on the part of the author; this is somewhat inevitable with concepts that are in the process of being defined. Also, much of the material on this issue came from personal interviews with officials who must observe the U.S. policy to "neither confirm nor deny" the presence of nuclear weapons at any given U.S. installation. Thus, while the unclassified literature attempts to deal with the issue of nuclear weapons as it relates to the 401st, this paper will not.² Finally, all opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the State Department.

Background: Crotone

Spain joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1982, but cooperation between the U.S. and Spain dates back to a 1953 agreement between President Eisenhower and Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. This agreement has been renewed at five-year intervals since then, although most recently with a significant change. Shortly after Spain joined NATO in 1982, the center-right government of Leonoldo Claco Sotelo was replaced by Filipe Gonzales Marquez, a socialist whose platform included a referendum to ratify or overturn Spain's membership in NATO. Once in office, Gonzales realized the benefits of remaining in NATO (it was a condition for Spain to become a member of the European Economic Community, which occurred in 1986), but had to go forward with the referendum. In April 1986, Spanish voters approved continued NATO membership, but only with a pledge by Gonzales to reduce U.S. presence there and limit Spain's participation in NATO's integrated military structure. Thus, in July 1986,

Gonzales began bilateral negotiations with the U.S. aimed at effecting this reduction. Torrejon Air Base and the 401st TFW, because of their proximity to and visibility in Madrid, were political focal points from the outset.³

The United States currently has four major bases in Spain. Rota Naval Base on the Atlantic coast of southern Spain is a major supply port for ships joining the U.S. 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. Zaragoza Air Base, in northern Spain, is a training base for Air Force fighter squadrons from throughout Europe. Moron Air Base is a support annex for tanker aircraft and is located in southern Spain about 100 miles north of Gibraltar. Torrejon Air Base is located 14 miles outside of Madrid near the suburb of Torrejon de Ardoz, from which the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing, consisting of three squadrons of 24 F-16 aircraft each (plus as many as three or four additional or spare aircraft per squadron), operates.⁴ During the course of the year, the squadrons of the 401st deploy forward from Torrejon to bases in Italy and Turkey for exercises and training.⁵

The General Dynamics F-16 "Fighting Falcon" is the Air Force's primary multirole fighter and attack aircraft. This single-seat fighter, specialized for both air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, is one of the most maneuverable airplanes ever built. In addition to its conventional weapons capabilities, it is nuclear-capable. The aircraft became operational in 1979 and has been frequently upgraded since then. Five American tactical fighter wings in Europe (including the 401st) are equipped with F-16s, as are many Allied air forces and the Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron (the Thunderbirds). In Operation Desert Storm, F-16s proved to be extremely successful in combat, and the aircraft is widely respected as one of the most capable and versatile fighters in use today.⁶

Although the U.S. wished to maintain the forces at Torrejon, the negotiations did not yield this result. In December 1987, Spain announced that the aircraft would have to leave. The U.S. Ambassador to Spain, Reginald Bartholomew, had unsuccessfully sought compromises, each of which had been "met

with an unvarying, unyielding, one-word reply: No."⁷ While the U.S. had sought to avoid such an outcome, it had no choice but to accept what State Department spokesman Charles Redman termed a "sovereign decision" by Spain.⁸ While the State Department praised other aspects of the basing agreement (which allowed the other bases to remain and discontinued U.S. military assistance payments to Spain), the initial reaction from the Department of Defense seemed to be resigned to the fact that the 401st TFW and its aircraft would no longer be available in southern Europe: "It is a serious loss and I don't see any real prospects that another country will accept the planes," was one DoD spokesman's formulation.⁹

This was not to remain the case. The 401st is the only U.S. Air Force tactical fighter wing based on the Mediterranean littoral and would support Italy, Greece, and Turkey in time of conflict.¹⁰ The Italian Prime Minister, Giovanni Goria, released a statement on January 20, 1988 expressing hope that the aircraft could remain in Europe.¹¹ General John R. Galvin, who, as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), is NATO's highest ranking military officer, echoed the Italian sentiments, referring to the 401st as "vitally important" for NATO's southern region.¹² However, because of budget constraints on the U.S. Air Force, the costs of any transfer would have to be paid either by NATO or by another host nation. In February 1988, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, Alton G. Keel Jr., presented the case to NATO officials while Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci conferred with Italian officials. While Carlucci noted that the U.S. did not wish to reduce its presence in Europe, he made it clear that the fate of the 401st had become a European issue.¹³

In late May 1988, the issue was resolved, when NATO defense ministers, at their semiannual meeting in Brussels Belgium, formally asked Italy to host the wing and committed NATO to pay for the move using NATO common funding. Secretary Carlucci hailed this provision as "extraordinary" and "a very positive effort in the direction of burden-sharing."¹⁴ The Italian government had asked that the request come from the Alliance as a whole, and not solely from the U.S., to assuage domestic opposition.¹⁵ In June 1988, the Italian cabinet and parliament agreed to accept the aircraft.¹⁶

What began as a bilateral U.S.-Spanish issue had quickly grown to include the entire NATO alliance. Keeping the aircraft in Europe was an Alliance-wide concern, and the solution that enabled this was hailed as a triumph of Alliance cohesion and solidarity: NATO agreed to fund the relocation and construct a new base by using the NATO Common Infrastructure Fund (to which all members except Spain and France contribute). This fund was established to pay for wartime operating bases for NATO forces, and this decision of the defense ministers to fund a peacetime operating base using infrastructure funds was unique. Normally, each nation pays the costs of stationing its forces in Europe, irrespective of which country they are stationed in. Thus, the United States funds all construction on Ramstein Air Base in Germany (a U.S. base), just as Germany funds construction of all peacetime bases for its forces. However, because of the desire to keep the 401st in Europe, NATO agreed to a unique funding arrangement, building Crotona (a peacetime, not a wartime, operating base) using infrastructure funds. The net result was that the United States would pay 28% (the fraction of U.S. contributions to the infrastructure fund) of the cost of the new base yet get full use of it.¹⁷

The base was to cost approximately \$700 to \$740 million, of which 28% (\$195 - \$210 million) would come from the U.S. share of the infrastructure fund. In addition, the U.S. would pay roughly \$125 million for costs (such as family housing and recreation facilities) that would not be shared by the Alliance. Thus, the total cost to the U.S. would be about \$320 million.¹⁸ The proposed base has been alternately described as a "21st Century air base" or an "American Theme Park";¹⁹ initial plans called for the base to be built on 2,750 acres of land, and include a runway, taxiways, aircraft parking facilities, and over 175 other facilities for operational, support, and community activities. All U.S. service members will live on the base (unlike at many U.S. bases in Europe), requiring housing, schools, a commissary, and other facilities for approximately 10,000 personnel and dependents.²⁰

As currently projected, the construction of the base at Crotona is scheduled to be completed in 1996, although this date may slip to 1997 because of a temporary moratorium imposed by Congress.²¹

This is not necessarily the case, however, as NATO can continue the construction (although without U.S. funds)²², and some senators "believe and understand that the 1-year moratorium on new construction at Crotona will probably not have much, if any, impact."²³

The recent historic events in Eastern Europe -- including the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact (described in more detail below) -- and growing U.S. budget woes combined to bring new Congressional scrutiny to Crotona. Further, the United States began the process of reducing forces, both at home and abroad; this process includes closing and scaling down many bases both in Europe and the U.S.²⁴ Thus, the question arose in Congress: why spend so much money for a new base when the U.S. is planning on shutting down scores of bases in the face of a diminishing threat?

Some members of Congress, most notably Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, the chairwoman of the House Armed Services Committee's Military Installations and Facilities subcommittee, are determined to see the base killed, while others, including many Democrats in the Senate, appear willing to let U.S. contributions for the base resume if its cost is reduced. In the budget for Fiscal Year 1990, the Armed Services Committees (which authorize expenditures) placed a limit on the maximum U.S. expenditure on Crotona at \$360 million. Initially, the U.S. was to pay 28% of the costs of the operational part of the base (i.e. through the NATO Infrastructure Fund) in addition to paying for all of the family housing and recreation facilities. The Senate approved the Administration's request in full, which translated into \$470 million, or 55% of the base's projected costs at that time (\$885 million). The House, however, authorized only the standard 28% share for the U.S., or \$250 million. The Conference Committee split the difference, resulting in the funding cap of \$360 million becoming law. The DoD met this cap by revising the U.S. share of the costs down to \$320 million, but not by renegotiating with NATO, as some in Congress had envisioned. Instead, the number of family housing units was cut back, the method for paying for them was changed, and other accounting changes were made to keep the U.S. payments below the Congressionally mandated limit. Representative Schroeder was angered by what she felt was DoD duplicity and used this in 1990

to gain support for legislation that would preclude any U.S. contribution to Crotone.²⁵

The eventual outcome in the FY 1991 authorization was a freeze on all expenditures of U.S. funds (even those previously authorized) until a meeting of NATO foreign ministers (the North Atlantic Council - the NAC) could reaffirm the need for Crotone. This occurred on December 18, 1990, enabling the resumption of expenditures of previously authorized funds. No new funds have been appropriated for Fiscal Year 1991, however, because of a one-year moratorium on all new U.S. appropriations (the result of action by the Senate Military Construction subcommittee of the Appropriations committee) for construction at Crotone (including those through the NATO Common Infrastructure Fund).²⁶

Clearly, the results of the dramatic events in Eastern Europe of 1989 and 1990, including the diminution of the Soviet threat to NATO and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization underlie all analysis of this and related issues.²⁷ Also crucial are the effects of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990: Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and their aftermath.

It is clear that security policies in Europe no longer have the facile justification of the imminent Soviet military threat. While other threats to European stability and security exist, the direct Soviet military threat, which was the main concern for over 40 years, is no longer as immediate, and policies designed in response to it are being reevaluated. It has also become clear that the U.S. military presence in Europe will decline significantly in the years ahead. While there remain concerns that the Soviet Union continues to pose a threat to stability (especially along its periphery or due to its own internal turbulence) or may return to its old ways, these are by no means the only concerns that this analysis will address.

Indeed, several other potential threats to the security and stability of NATO's southern region exist. The August 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq served as a reminder that much of the world lacks the optimistic outlook that Western Europe enjoys and that threats to stability and American interests can still

arise without the Cold War. As the Democratic Study Group put it in September 1990, "even though the current crisis [Iraq's invasion of Kuwait] will undoubtedly be over before the Crotone base is completed, *the Middle East will remain a highly volatile region for the foreseeable future*"²⁸ (emphasis added). The current concerns about Kurdish refugees and Kurdish nationalism are only one possible scenario for future instabilities in the region.

The diminution of the Soviet threat and the recent coalition victory in Kuwait combine to produce a snapshot of American forces in Europe that is at best blurred due to the great flux imposed by these events. What is clear, though, is that while some units will return to the United States, some will remain in Europe at least for the foreseeable future. At issue is the question, which path should the 401st TFW take, since, in any case, it cannot remain in Spain after May, 1992.

The question sometimes arises, why not station the aircraft at Turkish bases such as Incirlik? Similar bases such as Izmir, Pirinlik, Cigli, or others, could present similar options, although Incirlik is the most prominent and mission-oriented of the U.S. airbases in Turkey. Incirlik, located near Adana, in the south-central part of Turkey, is used primarily as a training base into which NATO units of many nations deploy for several weeks at a time to use nearby air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery and bombing ranges. The facilities there are excellent, although there are no U.S. aircraft permanently stationed there. The units based there are essentially support and maintenance for the base and core support units for the flying squadrons that deploy there for training and NATO exercises. Because of the facilities there, the cost to relocate the 401st to Incirlik would be minimal. Incirlik will probably be used as a training base as long as the United States has tactical aircraft based in Europe. While permanent stationing of over 70 aircraft there would require some additional construction, these costs would be small compared to the costs of building all facilities from scratch, as would be necessary at Crotone.

Basing the 401st in Turkey, however, is not practical because of resistance within Turkey to hosting

foreign forces on a permanent basis, and this policy is unlikely to change. Although a staunch NATO ally (as proved during Operation Desert Storm), Turkey must consider Arab and Muslim sensitivities toward "unwanted" and "Western" influences. The Turkish government carefully balances these concerns with its NATO responsibilities and allows significant use of the various bases there for NATO training. It also allows communication, logistics, and support facilities, but no operational ground, air, or naval units are permitted permanent basing in Turkey. There are at least three major reasons for this. First is the wish to avoid alienating Turkey's Arab neighbors by so overtly hosting a permanent American presence.²⁹ The lesser presence of communication and caretaker units on bases is relatively easy to dismiss, but over 70 F-16s would be a much more conspicuous presence.

Second, given the instabilities within some portions of the Turkish population, such an overt embrace could be enough to cause a reaction against the government and against NATO. The effects of these instabilities could be seen during Operation Desert Storm, during which the civilian government of President Turgut Ozal (with the approval of Turkey's National Assembly) "overrode portions of a treaty between Turkey and the United States that said the base could only be used for NATO operations"³⁰ and allowed twice the usual limit of 48 foreign aircraft to operate there. This policy generated opposition both from the military (which favored a more isolationist posture)³¹ and domestic opinion.³² While President Ozal appears to have avoided serious repercussions from this exceptional move, there are no signs that the sort of radical change in policy that could allow permanent basing of a wing of F-16s in Turkey is in the offing.³³ Finally, Turkey, bordering the Soviet Union, prefers not to antagonize its superpower neighbor by permanently hosting foreign forces in peacetime.³⁴

Other potential bases for the 401st have been examined, and the decision to relocate the 401st to Crotone came after considerable study of alternate locations. At this point, other locations in Europe do not represent viable policy options. The two alternatives under consideration for future U.S. policy are to go ahead with Crotone or to return the 401st to the U.S. and meet the commitment to NATO's southern

region through dual basing. These are the two options this paper will address.

Criteria

The two options will be evaluated in terms of three broad criteria: political, economic, and military benefits. These are the same criteria that are used in evaluations of national strategy.³⁵ Certain aspects of each of these considerations are particularly relevant in the context of the Crotone/Dual Basing controversy. Specifically, each option will be examined with regard to United States domestic politics, political relations with the NATO Alliance, monetary costs to the United States, military deterrence, and operational military effectiveness. Each of these criteria is useful in understanding the controversy as well as being relevant to the decision.

In many important respects, the Crotone question has come to prominence because of domestic political concerns. Initially, the issue of Crotone appeared settled with the decision by the NATO defense ministers to proceed, and controversy over Crotone was not initially anticipated. The U.S. would be getting full use of a new base for only one quarter of the cost, and it was assumed that a "triumph of burdensharing" such as this would be acclaimed with little controversy at home. However, with the historic changes in Europe, the U.S. budget deficit, decreases in the defense budget, and closings of bases domestically, the Congress became reinterested in Crotone, suspicious that it might be a relic of cold war thinking, pursued by planners oblivious to a changed geopolitical reality.

It is fairly clear that Congress will have the last word on the extent or existence of any future U.S. contributions to Crotone; Congressional political considerations may thus ultimately be the most important of any of the criteria used in this analysis. While this paper neither attempts to forecast the likely outcome on Crotone nor suggests that an option's actual merit is determined mainly by Congressional perceptions of its merit, it must be recognized that a policy option must be viable in Congress if it is to be worth pursuing. Of course, the opinions of decisionmakers are shaped by an option's worth in terms of political,

economic, and military criteria. Thus, moderate levels domestic political support are necessary for any recommendation, although this is not to say that the most politically popular option is to be automatically recommended.³⁶

Given the continuing value of NATO and the benefit to the U.S. of continued involvement with and influence in Europe, any effects of an option on Alliance cohesion and U.S. relations with and influence within NATO should also be considered. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney recently wrote that "alliances and other security partnerships remain fundamental to U.S. policy."³⁷ Potential effects on NATO include influencing perceptions of continued U.S. interest in the region, European fears of abandonment and U.S. isolationism, and U.S. willingness to continue to contribute to European security against external threats to stability in the southern region. Thus, it is worthwhile to include an option's effects on relations between the United States and its NATO Allies in the calculation of costs and benefits.

While construction of an airbase at Crotone or the dual basing of the 401st would have a number of economic effects, the most significant for this analysis is the monetary cost to the United States. This criteria thus becomes a straightforward evaluation of the dollar costs of each option to the United States. In the case of relocating the 401st to Crotone, most of the cost would be borne by the NATO Common Infrastructure Fund, with the U.S. bearing roughly one quarter of the total cost. There may be some additional costs to the U.S. for this option, as the NATO Common Infrastructure Fund only provides for housing, chapels, etc. to meet the NATO standard for operating bases, and it would not be desirable to attempt to cover the costs of dependent housing from the infrastructure funds. (To do so would open a "Pandora's box" of possible requests; for instance, Germans could request infrastructure funds to support construction of dependent housing for German forces committed to NATO and stationed within Germany. For such reasons, the U.S. did not request and NATO did not offer payment of such costs from infrastructure funds.³⁸ Italian funding of such construction remains a possibility.) In the case of dual basing, there would be costs associated with the return of personnel and families from Europe, but such costs

would be small compared to the costs of construction. Differences in costs between operations at Crotone and those associated with dual basing will also be considered.

Cost is an especially appropriate criterion to use, since it has ostensibly been the major sticking point with Congress regarding the Crotone issue. In submitting the House-Senate conference report on military construction for fiscal year 1991 to the Senate, Senator James Sasser (D-TN) stated that the Crotone issue "is not about military strategy. It is about Federal spending. This issue is about the deficit. This issue is about the fiscal priorities of the Federal Government."³⁰ Clearly, this rhetoric cannot be taken in isolation, since issues of spending, deficit, and fiscal priorities can only be weighed in terms of what is gained for the money spent. The other criteria will be measures of this output, and hence must be balanced against the cost. Nevertheless, it is clear that the cost of an option is an important criterion weighing on its acceptance or rejection.

While there are other economic implications of the decision to relocate the 401st to Crotone or to a base in the United States, they will not be considered because they are of secondary magnitude, difficult to quantify, and beyond the scope of this analysis. Thus, while local economies (either in the U.S. or in Italy) would benefit from the presence of the 401st, such effects will not be considered. Not only are studies of the economic costs and benefits of military units highly involved, it seems inappropriate to base decisions such as this on what is sometimes referred to as "pork barrel politics." This is not to deny that such motivations exist; only to note that they will not be included in formulating a recommendation. Also, long term effects on the U.S. economy of engagement overseas, protection of Mediterranean commerce, etc. will not be considered because such effects are rather distant.

The final criterion is that of military effectiveness-- both in deterrent and operational terms. The former, deterring conflict, is the stated strategy of NATO forces, and is accomplished by having sufficient military capability (and the willingness to, if necessary, employ it) to convince potential aggressors that

gains from aggression are not worth the costs. Should deterrence fail, these forces must be able to carry out their missions and protect NATO and American interests. Examples of the types of situations in which NATO or the United States could need effective forces in the southern region are another Arab-Israeli war, the Iranian hostage rescue mission of 1979, the raid on Libya of 1986, the "tanker war" in the Persian Gulf of 1987 (which led to the reflagging and escorting of Kuwaiti tankers by the United States during the Iran-Iraq war), and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. As American forces in Central Europe are drawn down, the importance of forces dedicated to the Southern region will increase. The deterrent and operational effectiveness of the 401st TFW under each option is reflected in this criterion of military effectiveness.

The Alternative: Dual Basing

Building an expensive base at Crotone is not the only proposed option for meeting the United States' commitment to NATO's southern region. In an article entitled "Bring Our Troops Back Home -- and Save a Few Billion," Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) argues that building self-contained cities for our troops overseas "made sense during the height of the Cold War, but [makes] little sense today. They are incredibly expensive, inflexible to changes in threat, and packed with support staff who can contribute little to fighting a war."⁴⁰ Schroeder referred specifically to the 401st TFW by noting that

the planes, pilots and crews of the 401st do not operate out of Torrejon and would not operate out of Crotone. Rather they deploy to bases in Turkey and Italy to conduct their [wartime mission]. Each squadron, and its associated personnel, is gone from Torrejon about four months a year. The 401st proves that dual basing works; but why is its home base in Europe? Even ignoring new construction costs, Air Force figures show that it is 16 percent cheaper to operate a wing here than abroad.⁴¹

Representative Schroeder notes that contingencies such as Desert Shield/Desert Storm require units that can quickly deploy as opposed to the massive in-place fortifications that defense against an all-out Warsaw Pact attack on NATO required. Given that it is cheaper to base units in the United States, why not forego the costs of moving soldiers' families overseas (and back three years later) and simply deploy the soldiers

themselves in time of crisis to the forward bases to which they would deploy anyway? Since these bases must be maintained in any case, there would be no additional costs from this part of the plan. Further, building a new base for the 401st seems to make little sense when the DoD is closing bases both at home and abroad. Thus, the rationale for Dual Basing.

The House Armed Services Committee, in its report on the FY 1991 Defense Authorization Bill, noted additional advantages to Dual Basing: since units would be geared toward deployment, they could be deployed wherever a crisis threatened, giving the U.S. additional flexibility. Also, such training deployments "exercise the full range of activities necessary to send troops to conflict ... [such as] sealift and airlift, logistics and supply [and] ... coordination and joint activities with the host nation. So, these exercises will heighten wartime readiness in a way that permanently forward deployed troops cannot."⁴² In light of these advantages, the Committee directed DoD to study dual basing as an option for the future of U.S. forces.

Dual basing is clearly the least costly option (at least in terms of up-front costs), since no new facilities would need to be built or modernized. Similarly, this option should be quite acceptable to Congress; indeed, the House had few qualms about mandating this outcome in the legislation they sent to the conference committee. While the Republicans in Congress and the Administration do not favor this option, their only real weapons to avert such an outcome would be convincing Senate Democrats, such as Jim Sasser, who are not entirely opposed to the base, to prevail in conference, or, as a last resort, obtaining a veto of the bill. Although there was talk of such a veto in response to the FY 1991 appropriation, such threats were defused by the conference committee, and would be an extreme position in any case.⁴³ It does not seem at all unreasonable that a Democratic House-Senate coalition could enforce such an action. Indeed, it might entail nothing more than extending the current one-year prohibition another year for each of the next several years.

Evaluation: Domestic Politics

Representative Schroeder leads the charge of Congressional Democrats opposed to the base at Crotone under virtually any circumstances. Further, Senate Democrats condemn the Air Force for not sufficiently scaling back the plans and projected costs of the base. The base at Crotone has incurred the wrath of the first group; indeed, any disposition of the 401st other than returning the aircraft to the U.S. may engender their opposition. The second group seems amenable to lower-cost versions of the Crotone base, and would probably not oppose other dispositions of the 401st within Europe, provided that the cost is substantially less than \$360 million. Although how much less expensive the base would need to be to win over this second group is not certain, recent testimony by General Galvin that the projected cost of the base has been reduced by one third may well be sufficient.⁴⁴

Thus far, the charge led by Representative Schroeder has been unable to cancel Crotone. This, combined with remarks by Senator Sasser, indicate that a less costly base may well find an agreeable, though not warm, Congressional reception. Sasser remarked that "it is time for the Air Force to go back to the drawing board and develop a plan that will win the approval of our allies and the Congress."⁴⁵ While dual basing has its vocal supporters, it seems that either option could, if properly presented, win Congressional approval. While it is not possible to review the most current Pentagon presentation on Crotone, it would seem reasonable to conjecture, on the basis of General Galvin's testimony, that it will suffice to pass Congress, although perhaps against stiff opposition from significant segments of House Democrats.

NATO Politics

Lieutenant General E. S. Leland, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. European Command at the time, testified in 1989 that Crotone is "an important demonstration of Alliance solidarity and willingness to shoulder an extra burden in difficult times."⁴⁶ The option of going ahead with Crotone would garner the strongest support with the NATO Allies. The outcome was hailed as a triumph of Alliance unity and

burdensharing, and seeing it through to a successful conclusion could only strengthen NATO. When the United States announced in 1988 that it could not pay to keep the aircraft in Europe, the Alliance rose to the occasion. Further, the NAC's reaffirmation of Crotona in December 1990 was both unanimous and unequivocal:

The Foreign Ministers concerned join with their defence colleagues in unanimously reaffirming the continued importance to the Alliance of basing the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing in the southern region and in endorsing continuation of construction with common infrastructure funding of a new airbase at Crotona, Italy, for the Wing's future deployment.⁴⁷

Transmitting the full report of the NAC deliberations to Senator Nunn (D-GA), Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney noted that "the Alliance strongly backs the Crotona project."⁴⁸

To turn down the proffered assistance now, after having gained both consensus on and reaffirmation of NATO's support for the base would appear ungrateful and disingenuous. Further, this issue may be seen as an indicator of U.S. willingness to remain involved with and committed to the Alliance and Europe in general. Continued strong American presence in the southern region, guarding against instability in its various forms, would be concrete proof of such commitment to the region and to the Alliance.

In terms of NATO relations, dual basing does very poorly. Refusing to go forward with Crotona after asking NATO to fund the base (for which the U.S. itself was unwilling to pay), would suggest to the Allies that either the deal wasn't good enough or NATO isn't important enough. Not only would the U.S. be turning down a modern base it had specifically requested (and which it alone would get to use even though it had paid only a fraction of its cost), it would be turning its back on Allies who had requested that the 401st remain in the southern region. This would be a clear sign that America's commitment to NATO is declining; without the commitment of a major partner, the Alliance could only become less cohesive. Further, such an action would not help any future U.S. requests of the Alliance, and calls for future burdensharing would seem cynical at best, coming from a partner that proved itself unwilling to pay even a bargain price to meet an Alliance commitment it had voluntarily undertaken.

Congresswoman Schroeder suggests that since Allies are cutting their defense budgets, they would not mind a decrease in U.S. commitment.⁴⁹ In general terms this is true; there seems to be little protest to the closing of many U.S. bases overseas. However, the issue of Crotona has much more specific implications. Crotona is unlike other bases; besides being uniquely located, the U.S. asked for and received an invitation to relocate the 401st there at NATO expense. Further, the plans for the base have been modified and the NAC has gone out of its way to accommodate Congress; to turn down the offer now would not be seen as simply a budget-cutting measure, it would appear distinctly ungrateful. To some in Congress, the issue may be no more than one of budget; however, to NATO nations (especially those in the southern region) it is more: an about-face on Crotona could signal a drop in U.S. commitment to Europe, thus diminishing American influence in what remains a key center of global power.

While NATO played a significant role as a military alliance during the Cold War, it is first and foremost a political alliance, and as such, can still play an important role in managing the security of Europe in the future. As General Galvin recently testified,

NATO remains essential. ... The NATO of the future will continue to:

- Provide the Trans-Atlantic security link.
- Serve as a crisis manager.
- Act as an agent for change.
- Enable an integrated, affordable defense.
- Provide stability.
- Ensure against unpredictability of the USSR.
- Make renationalization unnecessary.⁵⁰

While the non-military components of security are receiving more attention now, its military aspects are still salient. The willingness of the United States to work with NATO nations through the NATO Alliance to help meet the potential threats in the Mediterranean will strengthen European willingness to work within a NATO framework instead of discarding it. Keeping this framework strong can serve both U.S. and common interests in the future, but this requires a willingness to keep it robust. Backing out of Crotona would be a concrete sign that the U.S. is unwilling to provide military resources to help meet evolving challenges to European security. Going forward with an effective base would send a strongly positive

signal. Willingness to proceed with Crotone is especially important not only because it may be viewed as a post-Cold War and post-Desert Storm test case, but also because of the significant funds provided by the other NATO nations at U.S. request. Senator Warner offered the following:

We must keep in mind the decision to build a new airbase at Crotone was a NATO decision -- one which was made by all 16 of the NATO allies. If [Crotone is not funded in the future], the Congress would be unilaterally canceling a decision which was made unanimously by our NATO allies. I submit that this is not the proper way to treat one's allies.⁵¹

It certainly is not the way to treat allies if a nation intends to keep the alliance structure strong in swiftly changing times.

Budget

In submitting the House-Senate conference report on military construction for fiscal year 1991 to the Senate, Senator Sasser emphasized the importance of minimizing expenditures.⁵² Clearly the cost of Crotone is critically important. However, its costs should not be taken in isolation, but in the context of the requirement to contribute to the security of NATO's southern region. Thus, it is appropriate to compare the costs of Crotone with those of dual basing.

Originally, the cost of the base was quoted at \$827 million. This figure has been repeated over several years, suggesting that the effects of inflation may be less significant than unpredictable fluctuations in exchange rates and changes in construction costs over time. Although the most current and detailed plans have not been released by the Pentagon, a general estimate is possible. Due to Congressional pressure, the designs for the base have been revised and downsized. In Congressional testimony, General Galvin discussed reducing the cost of the base by one third.⁵³ Also, the cost of family housing has been reduced. To the extent that the current projection is that the housing will be built by the Italian government and then leased (in a lease-to-own manner) by the Air Force, with the occupants drawing a normal housing allowance and paying it to the Italian government, this cost can essentially be ignored, since personnel who

are stationed in the United States also receive either a housing allowance or government quarters of comparable value. Thus, to the extent that the personnel of the 401st will still be stationed and housed somewhere, the housing costs will still need to be paid. Removing housing costs from the budget, decreasing the overall cost of the base by one third, and taking 28% of that as the U.S. share (through contributions to the NATO Common Infrastructure account), the overall cost of Crotona to the United States comes out to \$120 million.

| <u>Original costs:</u> | | <u>Revised costs:</u> | |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------------|-------|
| NATO costs: | \$827m | Original total: | \$827 |
| US share (28%): | \$230m | minus housing: | \$181 |
| US-only costs: | \$200m | subtotal: | \$646 |
| Total US cost: | \$430m | Revised cost (-1/3): | \$432 |
| | | US share (28%): | \$120 |

Source: GAO cost study, author's calculations.

Some⁵⁴ have suggested that the U.S. will not realize a savings if the base is not built, since it was to be built with NATO common infrastructure funds -- funds which have already been contributed by the various nations, and which, if not spent on Crotona, will be spent on other projects. While this makes some sense, it seems dubious that the availability of roughly \$800 million for "other projects" would not reduce requirements for future contributions substantially. Intermingled with this are a variety of questions about how the U.S. can expect to control how its funds are spent when they are to be first intermingled with other nations' funds, and how the Congress can withhold only those funds earmarked for one project (Crotona) but not all other U.S. contributions to the common infrastructure fund. While these are relevant questions, it would seem that answers could be found, if in no other way than by forcing the Administration to go to NATO and formally request the cancellation of construction at Crotona. In any case, the most straightforward way to deal with this issue is to assume that a decision not to build Crotona results in a savings to the United States of whatever its share of Crotona's cost would have been.

Dual basing, while not requiring any new construction, has its own unique costs. Given the necessity of periodic rotations to the forward bases for training and familiarization (in addition to any deployments in times of crisis), there would be significant costs of deploying the entire unit overseas. Analysis by OSD suggests that a six month deployment would cost \$9.6 million for per diem costs and \$7.7 million for transportation costs for the 72 aircraft and associated personnel and equipment. This is on top of day-today operating costs that would be incurred in any case.⁵⁶ This suggests annual costs of \$17 million for a dual basing arrangement (with the wing present for 6 months out of every 12), or \$35 million for permanent presence of 72 aircraft (deployed for six month rotations -- i.e. multiple wings rotating to Europe). Alternatively, the individual squadrons of the 401st could be deployed for six months (out of every 18) each, thus providing continual presence (but minimal capability) at minimal cost. This would yield annual costs of \$11.5 million, or \$14.2 million if the deployments were limited to 4 months each (and each squadron rotated each year). These costs are summarized below:

Annual costs of dual basing

| <u>Unit deployed</u> | <u>frequency/duration</u> | <u>annual cost</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Sqdrm (24 a/c) | 2/yr (6 mo) | \$11m |
| Sqdrm (24 a/c) | 3/yr (4 mo) | \$14m |
| Wing (72 a/c) | 1/yr (6 mo)* | \$17m |
| Wing (72 a/c) | 2/yr (6 mo) | \$35m |

* Note: this line does not reflect continual presence; the others do.

Source: USAFE estimates.

Advocates of "Dual Basing" schemes note that it is less expensive for units to operate in the U.S. than abroad. While this is correct if the units are not periodically deployed overseas, "Dual Basing" costs more on a yearly basis when the costs of such deployments are included.⁵⁶ However, less money is spent abroad under such a plan.⁵⁷ For some in Congress, *where* money is spent may be more important than *how much* money is spent, thus giving rise to a preference for more spending (but at home) over less spending (but abroad). However, as explained in the discussion of criteria, this analysis will treat all

government spending as equal, given Senator Sasser's remarks on the connection of this issue to the Federal deficit and Federal spending. While money spent at home may "trickle down" as tax revenue in time, greater spending (wherever) makes for larger budgets.

Additionally, frequent deployments overseas will cause a hardship on many personnel. While the impact of six month deployments every two years has not been studied, something analogous has: remote tours of duty. These are assignments overseas with a duration c 12 months, with the military member unaccompanied by dependents (who remain in the U.S.). The cost of remote tours in terms of the impact on morale and retention can be significant. Neither frequent deployments nor remote tours are the stuff of which happy marriages (nor happy careers) are made, and historically such disruptions have hurt retention, translating into additional costs for training replacements for those who separate from the services earlier than they might have. Using the results of a recent OSD study on remote tours seems reasonable as an approximation of the effects of frequent deployments; if anything, the effects should be understated, since a remote tour, once completed, need not be repeated for several years, while deployments will reoccur every two years.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel, Christopher Jehn, argues that, on balance, "accompanied tours are the least expensive way to meet our current overseas commitments."⁴⁸ Part of the reason for this is an assessment that each one percent drop in the retention rate of service members costs the government approximately an additional \$160 million yearly. If all overseas tours (all services) were made unaccompanied and 12 months long, officials extrapolate this to forecast a decrease in retention of 7.5%, which would cost \$1.2 billion annually.⁴⁹ Clearly, the early separation of the highly trained pilots and technicians of a unit such as the 401st would not be without cost. Taking an estimate from Schroeder's original dual basing article that 400,000 American military personnel are based overseas, the study on retention suggests an average loss of \$3000 per person (while not all personnel would separate from the service, early loss of a pilot can equate to many hundreds of thousands

of dollars). Taking this over the roughly 5000 military members associated with the 401st suggests a loss of \$15 million.

Subtracting the retention costs (\$15 million) from the cost to the U.S. of the base (\$120 million) and setting the result equal to the additional annual cost of dual basing's deployments yields a payback period from 3 to 28 years depending on the assumptions made as to the deployments and the discount rate. While more detailed manipulations are possible, the imprecision of the initial data (i.e. lack of access to current, detailed estimates of the base's cost over time) does not suggest that the precision to be gained would be meaningful. What is both clear from this data and unlikely to change given moderate revisions is the fact that the expenses of building the airbase at Crotona are offset rather quickly by the high costs of dual basing.

Base cost vs Dual Basing costs

| | | Discount rate | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | | <u>5%</u> | <u>7%</u> | <u>9%</u> | <u>11%</u> |
| Dual basing cost: (per year) | \$35m: | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | \$17m: | 7.1 | 7.7 | 8.2 | 9.0 |
| | \$14m: | 9.1 | 10 | 11 | 13 |
| | \$11m: | 12 | 14 | 18 | 28 |

The chart indicates payback period (in years) for payments to equate to base cost of \$105m at given discount rate

source: author's calculations.

Proponents of dual basing can of course contend that such analysis overestimates the cost of deployments by overstating their size and frequency or understating the costs of the base. The former objection is undeniable, but the second can cut both ways. To the extent that cost minimization is the only objective, units could be based in the U.S. and never deploy to Europe. This would yield budgetary savings, but at even greater costs in terms of military effectiveness and political costs. Similarly, dual basing can appear quite effective if the deployments are made very long and comprehensive (i.e. turned

into short tours of duty), but only at significant cost. The key question regards the existence of a satisfactory tradeoff between the two: can sufficient capability be obtained at less cost than a complete base? This analysis suggests that the answer is no. The duration and frequency of deployments suggested above are compatible with the House Armed Services Committee report, which suggested deployments of one quarter of the total force, lasting six months, thus yielding continuous U.S. presence in the region, with each unit rotating once every two years.⁶⁰ The above calculations assume deploying one third of the total force (the smallest operational unit -- a squadron) for six months at a time, yielding continual force presence, with every unit rotating over once every 18 months. This suggests that a schedule similar to that proposed by the HASC report but is more costly (even over a moderately short time horizon) than a permanent base at Croton. Admittedly, uncertainty as to the final cost to the U.S. of the base at Croton can alter these results substantially, although one conclusion seems clear in any case: while its immediate costs are less than those of building a base, the case for dual basing on the grounds of saving money is considerably weaker when all costs are considered over time.

Deterrence

The 401st TFW -- the only U.S. fighter wing in the southern region -- is effective both militarily and politically largely because of its presence in the region. Representative Schroeder's plan reduces the wing's effectiveness in terms of both operations and perceptions. Operationally, dual basing ignores factors such as the additional time and resources required to deploy aircraft and the associated logistics and support personnel and equipment from the United States. With the reduction in operational effectiveness comes reduced deterrence. Further, replacing the 401st's presence with a planning document promising to deploy the wing in time of crisis would also reduce its effectiveness in terms of perceptions -- both deterrence and reassurance. This is similar to the necessity of deploying INF in Europe, even though the same military missions could be assigned to submarine-launched ballistic and cruise missiles. The crucial difference is one of perception. As Strobe Talbott described the INF, "the issue was not really a matter of whether available American weapons could hit Soviet targets and counter Soviet weapons; it was a matter

of confidence, of atmosphere, of psychology."⁶¹ Similarly, aircraft based in the U.S. which are slated to deploy to Europe during a crisis do not give the Allies the same degree of reassurance of U.S. commitment, in part because they do not provide the day-today contacts between American and Allied units that keep the perceptual (and actual) links of U.S. commitment strong.

Advocates of dual basing argue that, with the diminished Soviet threat, less capability in the southern region is required. In March 1990, General Galvin observed that "the threat is instability."⁶² Such threats may arise from several possible quarters. In addition to Middle Eastern conflicts, there is the potential for instabilities on the Soviet Union's borders as well as possible threats from North African instabilities. Regarding the first, Henry Kissinger recently wrote that

civil war [in the Soviet Union] could trigger mass migration into the fragile new democracies of Eastern Europe or into adjoining countries in the Middle East. Repression could spill over into military action against neighboring territories."⁶³

Regarding the second, the Washington Post, during the Gulf war, noted that "governments in southern Europe are concerned about the Iraqi war's potential to foment political instability across North Africa, where the rulers of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are responding to the demands of their publics by showing more support for Baghdad."⁶⁴ While much of the article dealt with the effect of the Persian Gulf war, it also discussed underlying conditions that seem to worry the Europeans, even without the war:

In a region troubled by soaring birth rates, chronic unemployment, and Islamic fundamentalist movements ... social tensions in North Africa ... could have serious consequences for Europe as well, according to officials and analysts [in Paris]. ... "These governments were already under a tremendous amount of pressure just from their domestic problems," a senior French government analyst said. ... The threat of political turmoil and the possible ascendancy of Islamic regimes among neighboring Arab states has gradually emerged as a major security concern in the post-Cold War for France, Italy and Spain."⁶⁵

Analysis from OSD supported this assessment: "The likelihood of instability in the Northern Littoral of Africa - Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, is very high and will continue to grow with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. We may have won the war in the Persian Gulf, but the Middle East will continue to be

a bed of unrest."⁶⁶ Democratic senator Strom Thurmond concluded that "regardless of the diminished threat in central Europe, the threat of turmoil in the Mediterranean region still exists. Building the airbase at Crotona will put our Air Force where it can best meet that threat."⁶⁷

Unlike Central Europe, the southern region did not receive vast quantities of NATO military might during the cold war; the 401st is the only American fighter wing stationed in the southern region. Thus, while the removal of several wings from central Europe as part of the post-cold war draw-down will leave wings remaining, there is only one wing in the southern region: if the 401st is removed, none will remain. Nor could those that would remain in Germany and Central Europe be counted on to quickly reinforce the southern region: overflight rights over nations such as Switzerland, Austria, and France would be necessary but could be difficult to obtain quickly in times of tension.⁶⁸ Such factors have led General Galvin to frequently state that if he had only two fighter wings in Europe in the post-Cold War environment, he would put one of them in the southern region at Crotona.⁶⁹ This makes sense since, the more limited one's resources, the more important it is to have them in the right locations. As The Economist recently stated,

The large forces that most NATO countries fielded to guard the alliance against the Warsaw Pact provided enough flexibility to deal with most crises outside Europe, such as the Gulf war. But, *with sharply reduced forces, this flexibility will no longer come naturally. It must be planned.*⁷⁰ (emphasis added)

Also in contrast to developments in the Central Europe, Soviet forces that could threaten the southern region have not been reduced, and, to the extent that NATO still contemplates a need to deter the Soviet Union, forces in the southern region are the ones to whom this task falls.⁷¹

In view of these threats, the North Atlantic Council, composed of the foreign ministers of the 16 NATO nations, noted on December 18, 1990 their continued support for Crotona:

The evolving security challenges facing NATO, including the changing nature of the threat and the planned reductions in forces and bases throughout the Alliance, make the retention of the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing in NATO's southern region *more important now than ever before*. With fewer forces deployed, those remaining must be located in the most advantageous positions.⁷² (emphasis added)

Deterrence, being composed of willingness and capability, is an elusive quality to measure, yet an important one. While in-place forces are proof of U.S. capability in a region and a strong indication of U.S. willingness, a system comprised solely of dual-based forces leaves more room for doubt about both the U.S. capability and willingness to deploy forces in defense of NATO's southern region. As OSD analysis put it,

The only way you know that deterrence is successful is the lack of conflict. Wars don't occur because we are forward deployed. They occur because we don't have in-place forces, which leaves uncertainty. [The perceived lack of U.S. commitment] in Europe (WW I and WW II), Korea, Vietnam, and Kuwait all have resulted in conflict. There has been no war in Europe over the last 45 years or Korea over the last 27 years because of the certainty of our commitment there with in-place forces.⁷³

Secretary Cheney amplified on these remarks in his Annual Report to the President and the Congress:

The forward presence of U.S. forces will remain a key element of U.S. strategy, albeit at generally reduced levels, consistent with changing threats. Forces for forward presence are essential for strong security alliances. Forward-deployed forces play a critical role in deterring aggression, preserving regional stability, and protecting U.S. interests. They are visible evidence of U.S. commitment and provide our initial capability for crisis response and escalation control. This nation still very much depends on forward deployments in Asia, Europe, [and] the Mediterranean⁷⁴

Noting that dual basing is presently practiced in some cases, OSD analysis argues that the visible presence of U.S. forces in a region is a deterrent.⁷⁵ Dual-based forces can augment such a deterrent, but they can not replace it: if there are no permanently based forces at a base, there is no American presence there, only a commitment to come if needed. While such a commitment may be credible for the host nation (in light of the Desert Shield/Desert Storm experience), it does not carry the same weight with potential adversaries as does constant presence and operations. On the one hand is a commitment to provide

forces -- a commitment that can be doubted (despite all evidence to the contrary, eg. Saddam Hussein was undeterred by numerous warnings preceding Desert Storm); on the other hand are the forces themselves.

Linked to deterrence is the ability of armed forces to send signals -- both to allies and adversaries - in times of tension or crisis. At such times, the only alternatives possible with dual basing are to initiate deployment or not. With stationed forces, a broader range of actions, such as heightened alert and more sorties near specific areas, is possible. Not only does this allow the U.S. greater flexibility in terms of signaling, it avoids a posture such as that which preceded World War One with the crisis-instability risks inherent in all-or-nothing mobilization. As OSD analysis put it, "dual based forces can only send a major signal - one that could be misjudged and cause a bad situation to get worse."⁷⁶

Operational Effectiveness

Should deterrence and signals of U.S. resolve fail to prevent a conflict, forces that are forward based are more effective in combat than those that are based on a separate continent thousands of miles away. As OSD put it, "Combat readiness is not a measure of how fast you can deploy, it is how well you fight after deploying. Units that initially deploy to a crisis area are very vulnerable to attack. They lack the logistic and maintenance support needed to conduct sustained combat operations."⁷⁷ Even though the 401st would actually fight from forward bases instead of from Crotone, the difference in supply lines between Crotone to Turkey (within the unrefueled range of an F-16) and the United States to Turkey (a mission requiring extensive refueling and usually an intermediate stopover) is undeniable. Testifying before the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Military Construction, General Galvin detailed the significant logistics support provided by U.S. forces based in Europe to Desert Storm.⁷⁸ The combat forces for Desert Storm came from Europe as well as the U.S.; having the ability to provide supply and logistics support from U.S. bases in Europe as well as in the U.S. was extremely important to the success of the operation.

Other factors that would diminish the ability of dual-based U.S. forces to fight effectively are the lack of readiness due to virtually constant rotation and the lack of familiarity with the combat theater imposed by limited training. With regard to the first, the House Armed Services Committee suggested that a unit would rotate to its forward base for six months every two years.⁷⁹ This suggests that units would forever be either preparing for or resuming normal operations following a deployment. Indeed, such a schedule would mean every unit either has had a deployment in the previous nine months or will have one within the next nine months. With such emphasis on getting ready to deploy and resuming normal routines following deployment, the usual training process could only suffer. (The schedules assumed above in the section on cost are even worse in this regard.)

In terms of familiarity, pilots who fly daily in the Mediterranean region and deploy once or twice a year to their forward bases are considerably more familiar with the operating area than those who fly from bases on a separate continent three quarters of the time. Lack of familiarity with factors such as the terrain, the air-traffic control procedures, emergency airfields, the disposition of other nations' assets, etc. would contribute to a degradation in combat readiness.⁸⁰ Contrary to the claims of dual basing's proponents, "units that are rotating in and out of a location are not able to maintain the same levels of readiness that in-place forces can over the long term."⁸¹

Additionally, it could take significant time and resources to re-deploy the 401st from the U.S. to Europe -- up to eight to ten days before the units would be ready for combat operations, according to one (highly conservative) estimate.⁸² Deploying dual-based forces during a crisis would also require considerable resources that would be in short supply at such times, namely, airlift and tanker aircraft. Analysis from OSD suggests that the equivalent of 60-70 sorties by C-141 Starlifter transport aircraft and 72-90 sorties by KC-135 Stratotanker tanker aircraft would be required.⁸³ This is consistent with a rough mathematical model constructed by the author and shown in the appendix. According to this model, a squadron of 24 F-16 aircraft, supported by 13 sorties by C-141B Starlifters (actually, 26 sorties; 13 sorties

carrying cargo, each of which returns to its starting point) requires the equivalent of 29 sorties by KC-135 Stratotanker refueling aircraft to deploy to the Middle East from the United States. Thus, a wing of three squadrons would require almost 90 refueling sorties and 40 transport sorties (80 when return trips are included).

While such missions would not be extraordinary during normal conditions, the availability of tanker and transport aircraft quickly becomes a limiting factor during an operation such as Desert Shield. On the other hand, F-16s based at Crotona would not need in-flight refueling to fly to other airfields in the Mediterranean area, and the shorter distance would allow the transports to fly with greater loads and hence (possibly) fewer sorties. While it would be possible to calculate the additional dollar costs of the transatlantic missions, this would obscure the real costs of such missions: the opportunity cost of those airlift and tanker assets (i.e., what next-highest-priority mission goes unaccomplished?). Given the experiences of Desert Shield, it is likely that every available transport and tanker aircraft will be extremely valuable.

In arguing the relative effectiveness of dual basing as opposed to building a base at Crotona, Representative Schroeder makes the arguments in a letter to her Congressional colleagues that other NATO capabilities in the Mediterranean, including American aircraft carriers and Allied airpower, can provide the necessary deterrence and stability to the region and that, being a NATO (not an American) base, Crotona's effectiveness would be limited since it could not be used for "out of area" actions (at least, not without consent of Italian and/or NATO authorities, which could be difficult to gain). These arguments seem to express the minimal cost in terms of military effectiveness, in Schroeder's mind, of forgoing the base at Crotona.⁶⁴

Congresswoman Schroeder's first argument is that existing assets can take care of the minimal threat that remains. With regard to carrier airpower, this is partially true, but there is no full substitute for

the permanent American presence and the firepower of over 70 F-16's. The two systems -- naval aviation and landbased aircraft -- are complementary, not interchangeable. For instance, it would take roughly two aircraft carriers to provide the same number of strike aircraft as the 401st, but the U.S. historically averages only 1.1 aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean.⁸⁵ While U.S. carriers are extremely effective, their numbers are limited (and shrinking) and a single carrier can not cover the entire Mediterranean. Carriers also may need time to sail to the area where they are needed. Further, the United States' carrier resources would probably be severely stretched during a crisis. Additionally, carriers, by virtue of the fact that they are "over the horizon" much of the time, do not have the same advantages in terms of presence that land-based squadrons have. While a vital part of overall U.S. strategy, naval airpower can not replace the 401st TFW any more than land-based airpower can offset the requirement for aircraft carriers.⁸⁶

With regard to Allied aircraft, arguments such as Schroeder's surfaced when the Spanish Air Force announced its intention to purchase McDonald Douglas F/A-18 Hornet aircraft, which are similar in capability to the F-16. However, the Spanish F/A-18s would be neither fully integrated into the NATO military structure nor capable of performing certain missions related to a "flexible response" strategy that only U.S. aircraft and aircrews could perform.⁸⁷ In addition, there are no permanently based NATO or U.S. aircraft in the Mediterranean other than the 401st with truly comparable capabilities. The argument that other NATO aircraft in the region can handle the threat simply ignores the need for the unique capabilities of the 401st. It should also be noted that there are no significant bases which would be comparably located for dealing with threats from North Africa. While there are bases in northern Italy, none has the advantages in location that Crotona has.

Congresswoman Schroeder's second argument is that aircraft based at Crotona could only be used in NATO roles. While this is, strictly speaking, correct, it is not entirely persuasive. First, threats to Europe originating in North Africa are no more "out-of-area" than threats from Eastern Europe. Second, Italy's aversion to "out-of-area" actions may well decrease as the security situation changes and such

contingencies become more likely and more threatening. Indeed, Italian units participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Third, one cannot ignore the "realpolitik" aspect of the situation: the capability to use the aircraft without NATO consent (i.e. a decision to seek forgiveness rather than permission) should not be discarded as an option; it would not be unprecedented, and could hence be a powerful deterrent in the region.

The aircraft could also be flown first to a base outside the NATO area from which they would fly combat missions without violating any NATO restrictions. In a crisis in North Africa, for instance, U.S. aircraft could deploy from European bases to bases outside of Europe (for instance, in Saudi Arabia or Egypt) without controversy. Only when the aircraft are employed directly into combat from the NATO bases does the "out-of-area" question arise.⁸⁸ As an example, the deployment of U.S. aircraft from German and other European bases to the Persian Gulf never raised these sorts of questions precisely because they flew combat missions only from non-NATO bases. Along these lines, the North Atlantic Council stated that the "use of Crotona for military missions outside of the European Theatre would be considered on a case-by-case basis as agreed between the [Italian and American] governments."⁸⁹ The NAC also noted the absence of restrictions should the U.S. withdraw the aircraft from their NATO commitment and "redeploy them if their presence and capabilities are required for military missions outside of the European Theatre."⁹⁰

Potential Compromise: Split the Difference

In addition to the options of building a base at Crotona to house all three squadrons of the 401st TFW or bringing the entire wing back to the United States, a combination of the two would be possible. A smaller base at Crotona could be built to house part of the wing on a full time basis, with the remainder of the wing based in the United States and deploying to Crotona for training and in times of crisis. The Congressional Research Service suggested "... a stripped-down base, which serves aircraft and crews rotated from the continental United States -- a base with an airstrip and facilities for a small group of full-time personnel. It could be a base without dependent housing and all the facilities, and costs, associated

with a new, full service airbase. Taking this approach would in no way denigrate our commitment to NATO.⁴¹ In fact, this approach was strongly suggested by Senator Sasser: "the Pentagon must now go back to the drawing board and come back to the Congress and to NATO with a deployment plan that is acceptable and one that achieves true cost savings."⁴²

As an illustrative example of how such a plan could work, each of the three squadrons could serve one "remote tour" (i.e. one year, without families) at Crotona every third year.⁴³ During the other two years, the squadron would operate from a base in the U.S., deploying to Crotona for one to two months of training each year. Since the tour at Crotona would not involve moving any families (they would remain in the U.S.), the base would not require facilities for families. Nor would it require facilities for the permanent presence of 72 aircraft; only 24 would be there permanently, while another 24 would be there temporarily (when a squadron from the states deploys for training). In time of war, all three squadrons would presumably deploy to Crotona and assigned forward bases. Such a base thus seems to bridge the gap between the cost of a full base and the limitations of dual basing, making it an option worth considering.

The obvious method of reducing the cost of Crotona is elimination of the up-front costs for family housing. However, it is dubious how much this could really save overall, since most of the married personnel of the 401st would maintain houses in the states for their families while they deployed to Crotona (even on the one year "remote" tours). These houses would still be at government expense via the standard housing allowance. Further, since the squadrons which are not deployed to Crotona for the year-long remote tour would deploy there for periodic training, many of the costs discussed before relating to "Dual Basing" would come in to play: costs of transportation to roughly the same extent, per diem costs less so. Similarly, the personnel who are deployed to Crotona on the remote tour would be subject to the hardships (and hence, increased attrition) discussed in the DoD study on remote tours and retention.

Further, any aircraft which are not at Crotona at the outset of a crisis would require precious time

and resources to deploy (as discussed earlier); once they did so, they could find themselves at a base with three times the number of aircraft it was designed to handle (should the contingency be one involving North Africa, instead of one requiring deployment to forward bases). Taking all of the above factors together, it appears that instead of being a middle option which shares the virtues of the more polar alternatives, the austere option shares the others' drawbacks.

Recommendation

Based on the foregoing analysis, the best choice for the United States is to go forward with Crotona Air Base as planned. There is a clear need for U.S. presence in Europe's southern region, both in military and political terms. While potentially somewhat less palatable in Congress, this option is far superior to dual basing in most respects. It maintains relations with the NATO Allies better while serving as a strong deterrent to instability in NATO's southern region. Should deterrence fail, forces operating out of Crotona would be more effective than dual-based forces. While the costs of the two options are dependent on factors which are not fully known, it is clear that dual basing is not significantly less expensive over time than is a base at Crotona, and may be more so. Dual basing's most persuasive claim is that it can be made to be less expensive by reducing deployment frequencies and durations, but this can only be done at the expense of further undercutting its political and military effectiveness.

While the costs of the base are substantial, our NATO Allies have agreed to pay a large share of them. Further, the costs of the base are being reduced by scaling back the plans. While such efforts are unquestionably worthwhile, attempting to economize by deploying units on a rotational basis to an "austere" base only yields false savings; the option of austere/rotational basing, while perhaps preferable to dual basing, is inferior to building the full airbase as originally conceived. Attempting to gain the advantages of both a base and dual basing by steering a middle course yields only the disadvantages of both.

Summary of Criteria:

| <u>Criterion:</u> | <u>Recommendation:</u> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Political | |
| Domestic: | Dual Basing (weak) |
| NATO: | Crotone (strong) |
| Economic | |
| Cost: | indeterminate |
| Military | |
| Deterrence: | Crotone (strong) |
| Operational Effectiveness: | Crotone (strong) |

Conclusion

While a nation's intentions can fluctuate rapidly, its capabilities take much longer to change -- for more or less capability. Few could have predicted in 1981 what Europe and the Soviet Union look like today; it is unlikely predictions about the turn of the century can fare better. Presently, the Air Force is moving toward composite wings -- flying units that integrate several different aircraft to perform missions more effectively.⁹⁴ Similarly, NATO is moving toward multinational units. Perhaps Crotone Air Base, originally conceived as the home for 72 American F-16s, may eventually house a multinational composite wing, composed of German defense suppression aircraft, British strike fighters, and American air superiority stealth aircraft.⁹⁵ But such speculations, while fascinating, are some distance in the future. What is more foreseeable today is the need for Crotone as a base for the 401st TFW so that the United States can fulfill its commitment to the effective defense of NATO's southern region.

Continued U.S. engagement in Europe will reap important geopolitical benefits for the United States. In the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm, the issue of Crotone is part of the broader question concerning the shape of the "new world order," to which President Bush referred during the crisis in the Persian Gulf. While the structure of this order and the disposition of U.S. forces within it remain to be determined, it seems likely that both will be shaped as much by an incremental and evolutionary process of individual decisions as by any grand strategy or master plan. The decision on where to base the 401st is one of the multitude of elements that will determine the structure of U.S. forces, which will inevitably also shape the new world order itself. Thus, questions regarding Crotone Air Base and the permanent base

for the 401st have significance beyond merely that of building an additional base and deciding where to station 72 aircraft.

The author can not help but wonder if the eventual outcome of a dual basing arrangement might not in practice be a slow phasing out of U.S. commitments to Europe. Initially, dual basing could gain support through a deployment schedule that maintained some capability (but only at significant cost). Progressively, the deployments would be scaled back, reducing cost (and effectiveness) until little was left of the original U.S. commitment. Current U.S. Administration policy runs very much counter to such isolationist impulses, and for good reasons. As President Bush put it,

Even in a world where democracy and freedom have made great gains, threats remain. ... Renegade regimes and unpredictable rulers. New sources of instability. All require a strong and engaged America. ... Notwithstanding the alteration in the Soviet threat, the world remains a dangerous place with serious threats to important U.S. interests... ⁹⁶

The price of American non-engagement internationally is a less stable and less vital international system, and, in a world of increasing interdependencies in all spheres (including economic, cultural, and social interactions as much as if not more than security ties), this can only diminish the quality of life for all Americans. While this analysis does not attempt to recommend national policy on a continuum of engagement versus isolationism, it does not seem unreasonable to note that the option that makes the most sense in terms of political, economic, and military criteria also makes the most sense in the context of the current Administration policies of global engagement. Thus follows a recommendation against a move toward isolationism, both on the grounds of the specific analysis herein and on the grounds of broader principles. As was suggested previously, the shape of the post-cold-war world will be determined by small decisions as well as large ones; to the extent that the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing plays a part in this new world, it should do so based at Crotona.

Appendix: Airlift / Tanker Aircraft Calculations

This model calculates estimates of the number of refueling sorties required to support a deployment of F-16's and C-141's. The fighter aircraft used is the single seat F-16C; most of the aircraft of the 401st TFW are that version. The two-seat F-16D has slightly less internal fuel and would require slightly more in-flight refueling. C-141 Starlifters are assumed to be the transport, since the 401st would have no requirement for a C-5's capability to carry outsize cargo, and the larger airlifters would presumably be designated for missions requiring that capability. KC-135 Stratotankers are assumed to be the refueling aircraft, both because they are more plentiful than the KC-10, and because calculations involving KC-10s would be complicated by its capacity to carry some cargo itself. If different aircraft were used, different results would be obtained, but the basic trends should remain valid. It is also worth noting that the most capable aircraft (such as KC-10's) will be in the greatest demand in a crisis situation, making them less available for such a deployment.

The model assumes that range is proportional to fuel and computes a "miles per gallon" estimate for both the fighters and the transports. Using this estimate, the model generates total fuel required for a mission of given length, subtracts each aircraft's internal fuel from that requirement, and takes the difference as the amount of fuel that must be provided by tanker aircraft. A standard tanker load of 94,500 pounds of fuel is assumed; this is an approximation that would be affected by a variety of factors beyond the scope of this model. It should be noted that the assumption that range is proportional to fuel is a weakness of this model; in reality, the amount of fuel used for takeoff, climb, approach, landing, and reserves does not vary with mission length. Only in the cruise phase of the flight is the model's assumption valid, but a more accurate model would be much more difficult to construct. To the extent that results agree with OSD analysis, it appears that the model's approximations are not grossly inaccurate. It should also be noted that this model assumes that transport aircraft returning to the U.S. from Europe (i.e. empty but against prevailing winds) require the same refueling support as those flying cargo to Europe.

The model takes 5300 miles as the "U.S. to Middle East" range because this is approximately the distance from the East Coast to Incirlik AB, Turkey. Incirlik was used because it is a NATO forward base, because it was used to support combat operations during Operation Desert Storm, and because it is a base to which European units frequently deploy for training (and would hence be a likely candidate to host the 401st during their annual training deployments). Similarly, the 1000 mile figure from "Crotone to Middle East" is derived from the distance from Crotone to Incirlik.

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Tanker Data:

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Appendix: Airlift / Tanker Aircraft Calculations

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Aircraft name: | F-16C | C-141B | Constants: |
| | | | 6.7 lbs / gal |
| | | | 94,500 lbs offload / KC-135 |
| Init fuel (gal): | 2,050 | 12,000 | |
| Init fuel (lbs): | 13,732 | 80,400 | |
| Range (NM): | 2,100 | 2,550 | |
| NM / gal: | 1.02 | 0.21 | |
| NM / lb: | 0.15 | 0.03 | |
| Cruise speed (kt): | | 430 | |
| Range: | | 2,550 | |
| Fuel consumpt (Gal/hr): | | 2,025 | |
| Hours: | | 5.93 | |
| Fuel (gal): | | 12,009 | |

Scenario 3 sqdrns, US to Incirlik
Distance = 5300

| | | |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|
| Aircraft name: | F-16C | C-141B |
| Distance: | 5,300 | 5,300 |
| Total fuel- lbs: | 34,657 | 167,106 |
| Refueling reqd-lbs: | 20,925 | 86,706 |
| A/C per squadron: | 25 | 20 |
| Lbs/squadron: | 523,124 | 1,734,118 |
| KC-135 / squadron: | 6.00 | 18.00 |
| Total KC-135: | 24.00 | |
| + 3 squadrons: | 72.00 | |

Endnotes

- 1 Pat Towell. "The Pentagon vs. Congress." Air Force Magazine February 1990, p.42. The article refers to Crotona being tested by Congressional committees against standards of "equity among allies."
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- 3 Henrik Bering-Jensen. "Negotiations over U.S. Bases: Matter of Pride, Pragmatism." Insight. April 13, 1987.
- 4 "United States Air Forces in Europe." Air Force Magazine May 1989, p. 98.
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- 7 Jim Hoagland. "Spain Just Says No." Washington Post. December 23, 1987, p. A2.
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- 12 Walter Andrews. "Washington News." United Press International. January 22, 1988.
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- 20 Grimmatt, p. 3.
- 21 Sasser, *ibid*.
- 22 *ibid.*, p. S17702.
- 23 Charles Grassley. "Military Construction Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 1991 Conference Report." Congressional Record. October 27, 1990, p. S17705.
- 24 "Information for Members of Congress." Letter from Eugene J. Ronsick, Colonel, USAF, Chief, Program Liaison Division, Office of Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, dated January 29, 1990. Reprinted in "Military Construction Appropriations for 1991." Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Military Construction Appropriations. Part 4. Reference #: Y 4.AP 6/1:M 59/6/991/pt.4 (101st Congress, 2nd session), pp. 609-610.
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- 26 Sasser, p. S17702.
- 27 Although the Warsaw Pact remained a military alliance in theory until February 26, 1991, it had not been effective for some time. See Blaine Harden. "Warsaw Pact Disbands Military Union." Washington Post. February 26, 1991, p.A16.
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- 30 Jonathan Randal. "U.S. Planes Strike Iraq From Base In Turkey." Washington Post. January 19, 1991, p. A23.
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40 Pat Schroeder. "Bring Our Troops Back Home--and Save a Few Billion." Washington Post. June 24, 1990, p. C5.

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- 64 William Drozdiak. "North Africans' War Stance Makes Europeans Uneasy." Washington Post January 29, 1991, p. A10.
- 65 *ibid.*, p. A10, A15.
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93 This example is for illustrative purposes; it may or may not correspond to actual plans. It is not intended to suggest what the Air Force or the Department of Defense may be contemplating; the author has no knowledge of the contents of such plans.

94 For discussion of the "Composite Wings" concept, see the April 8, 1991 issue of Air Force Times.

95 The suggestion of multinational composite wings was made to the author by LtCol Gary LeGassey during a personal interview on April 5, 1991. LtCol LeGassey is an Air Force officer assigned to the Joint Staff. He has been involved with the Croton issue since its inception.

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