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Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program B-169242

Department of the Air Force

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**BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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OCT. 6. 1971

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-169242

Dear Mr. Reuss:

This is in reply to your request that the General Accounting Office (GAO) examine into certain aspects of selected Department of Defense (DOD) public affairs programs; namely, the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference, the Department of the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program, and the Secretary of the Navy Guest Cruise Program.

In accordance with your request and our letter of May 21, 1971, it was agreed that we would report separately on each program. This is our report on the Department of the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program. Our report on the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference was sent to you on June 29, 1971. We shall report on the Secretary of the Navy Guest Cruise Program in the near future.

The Department of the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program is operated on a decentralized basis in that each major Air Force command determines the frequency, number, and types of tours to be conducted. Initially we intended to include in our review all the civilian distinguished visitor tours conducted during the past year or two to determine (1) the number of tours conducted, (2) the number of civilian guest participants, (3) the cost of each tour, (4) the type and amount of costs recovered from civilian guest participants, and (5) the method of selecting guests.

We found, however, that in calendar year 1970 the Air Force, through its major commands, conducted 154 civilian distinguished visitor tours for 4,228 guest participants. Of the 154 tours, the Strategic Air Command conducted 51 tours for 1,683 guests. The Tactical Air Command conducted 29 tours for 536 guests. The remaining 74 tours, in which 2,009 guests participated, were given by the 11 other continental Air Force commands and the Alaskan Command. According to Air Force policy, overseas units cannot participate in this program.

In accordance with Air Force regulations, each guest arranges for his own transportation from his residence to the

embarkation point and for the return to his residence from the debarkation point. Also, in accordance with Air Force regulations, each guest reimburses the Government for the cost of his meals, lodgings, refreshments, and official receptions.

In view of the large number of tours conducted in 1970, we limited our review to the tours conducted by the Strategic Air Command since that command conducted the largest number of tours in 1970. Civilian guests participating in the Strategic Air Command 1970 Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program totaled 1,683. For meals, lodgings, and other personal services, participants in the program were billed a total cost of \$38,000.

We estimate that the costs incurred by the Department of the Air Force to conduct the Strategic Air Command's part of the Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program during calendar year 1970, over and above the costs billed, amounted to \$224,000. In addition to these costs, the Air Force used \$4,000 from a nonappropriated military welfare fund to cover the cost of meals for Air Force escorts and hosts involved in the Strategic Air Command tours.

The Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program is a Department of the Air Force public affairs program in which civic leaders in the business, professional, and religious fields are invited to visit an Air Force base and to meet with high-level installation officials. The primary purposes of these visits are to (1) broaden the civic leaders' understanding of the Air Force mission, (2) improve the Air Force's community relations, and (3) fulfill the Air Force's obligation to disseminate information to the public.

We were informed by an Air Force official that there were no available records to show exactly when the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program began. From the information made available to us, it appears that the program originated about December 1957 when the Air Force Chief of Staff authorized five major Air Force commands to approve travel by groups of civic leaders in military aircraft to

visit their command headquarters. The purpose of these visits was to orient and brief the guests on Air Force missions and capabilities. This program was later expanded to include the Alaskan Command and all major Air Force commands in the continental United States.

THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND CIVILIAN
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR PROGRAM

Types of programs

The Commander in Chief of the Strategic Air Command has the overall responsibility for the Command's Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program. He has delegated the authority for conducting visitor tours under the program to the Command's Directorate of Information and to the commanding officers of the 2d Air Force, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana; the 15th Air Force, March Air Force Base, California; and the 1 Strategic Aerospace Division, Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

The Strategic Air Command Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program is a combination of three separate programs: (1) the primary visitor program, (2) the unit visitor program, and (3) the numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor program. The following schedule shows the number of visitors and tours conducted under each program during calendar year 1970.

	<u>Number of tours</u>	<u>Number of visitors</u>
Primary visitor program	25	928
Unit visitor program	8	271
Numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor program	<u>18</u>	<u>484</u>
Total	<u>51</u>	<u>1,683</u>

Pertinent features of each of the three programs are discussed below.

Primary visitor program

Under this program, civic leaders from major cities throughout the United States are invited for 2-day tours of the Strategic Air Command Headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. This program is conducted by the Command's Directorate of Information.

Guests are generally selected from an area close to a Strategic Air Command base or a major city. This facilitates arrangements for transportation by military aircraft to Offutt Air Force Base.

Our review of tour itineraries showed that the guest participants had spent 2 days at Offutt Air Force Base. During their first day at Offutt, the guests attended briefings and toured an underground command post designed to command the launch of aircraft and missiles in case of enemy attack. This was followed by a tour of the Strategic Aerospace Museum and by a tour of specially designed aircraft called the Looking Glass. These aircraft fly 24 hours a day and are designed to assume the same responsibilities as the underground command post, if that post and other alternate command posts become inoperative. The second day included a tour of the Command's aerospace intelligence area where a demonstration of electronic equipment used to analyze intelligence data was given. A question and answer session was held at the end of the tour to permit the guests to comment on what they had seen during the 2-day program. A luncheon concluded the program and the guests were flown by military aircraft to the point where the tour began which could be the nearest Strategic Air Command base or commercial airport to their home.

Unit visitor program

The unit visitor program is conducted under the direction of the commanding officers of the 2d Air Force, the 15th Air Force, and the 1 Strategic Aerospace Division.

The tours conducted under the unit visitor program are essentially the same as those conducted under the primary visitor program. The principal difference is that the guests in the primary visitor program are selected by the Strategic Air Command from major cities throughout the country, whereas guests in the unit visitor program are selected locally by subordinate commands from areas surrounding Strategic Air Command bases. The 1 Strategic Aerospace Division did not sponsor any tours in 1970.

Numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor program

The numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor program, like the unit visitor program, is conducted under the direction of the commanding officers of numbered Air Forces and the 1 Strategic Aerospace Division. This program differs from the primary and unit visitor programs in that guests are invited to visit Air Force bases other than Offutt.

The 18 numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor tours in 1970 were given by the 2d and 15th Air Forces, whereas the 1 Strategic Aerospace Division did not sponsor any tours.

The tours conducted by the 15th Air Force generally covered 3 days. The agenda for the first day included traveling aboard an Air Force aircraft from the point of embarkation to the 15th Air Force Headquarters at March Air Force Base, Riverside, California.

On the second day the guests were given a tour of March Air Force Base and were briefed by Air Force personnel on 15th Air Force Command activities. Also the guests attended a luncheon at the officers' club and were given an opportunity to comment on the Command's activities in a question and answer session with senior Command officials. In late afternoon the guests were flown by military aircraft to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, where they attended an evening reception and dinner at the officers' club. They stayed overnight in visiting officers' quarters.

On the third day the guests toured various activities at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and visited a TITAN missile site. A luncheon was held for them at the officers' club. In late afternoon they were flown in Air Force aircraft to their debarkation points.

The tours conducted by the 2d Air Force included activities generally similar to those in the 15th Air Force tours except that the 2d Air Force tours lasted only 2 days. On the first day the guests were flown to the 2d Air Force Headquarters at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, where they toured the base and were briefed on 2d Air Force Command activities. In the evening they attended a dinner-reception at the officers' club and spent the night at the base.

On the morning of the second day, the guests were flown by military aircraft either to Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, or to Carswell Air Force Base, Texas, where they toured the base and were briefed on base operations. In the afternoon they were flown to their debarkation points.

Selection of guest participants

We were informed by an Air Force official that the selection of guest participants for the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program was handled entirely by the commanding officers of the major Air Force commands which conducted the tours under the program.

Although we found that the Strategic Air Command had no formal procedures for selection of guests under its three visitor programs (primary, unit, and numbered-Air Force-sponsored), our review indicated that the selection generally had been consistent within each program. There are, however, certain differences in the selection processes between programs.

Under the primary visitor program, a civilian contact is established in areas near major cities or near a Strategic Air Command base. His responsibility is to furnish to the Command a list of primary and alternate nominees from his

area. The Command's Chief of Staff selects from these lists the people who are to participate in the primary visitor program. Invitations are customarily sent to U.S. Senators and Representatives for the States and congressional districts in which the tour originates. During calendar year 1970 only one member of Congress accepted an invitation.

Under the unit and numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor programs, the selection of guest participants is handled either by the local Air Force wing or division commander or by a civilian contact.

Estimated costs

We estimated that the costs associated with the 51 tours conducted by the Strategic Air Command under its Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program in calendar year 1970 were about \$266,000. Of this total, about \$38,000 was charged to the guest participants and \$4,000 was charged to a military welfare fund supported by nonappropriated funds. The remaining \$224,000 was not separately identified by Air Force officials.

Costs charged to guest participants

Our review of the \$38,000 charged to the civilian guests who participated in the Strategic Air Command Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program during 1970 showed that each guest under the primary and unit visitor programs was charged an average fee of \$20 to cover the cost of three meals, refreshments, lodgings for 1 day, and official receptions. The average fee charged for these costs under the numbered-Air Force-sponsored visitor program was \$29. The main reason for the higher average fee in the numbered-Air Force-sponsored program was that many of the tours under that program took 3 days whereas all tours under the other two programs took only 2 days.

The above costs do not include the expenses incurred by guests in traveling from their residences to the embarkation points or in returning home from the debarkation points. Thus the total cost incurred by each guest would, in most cases, be in excess of the average fees stated above.

Costs charged to military welfare fund

Our review showed that approximately \$4,000 was paid by a military welfare fund to cover the cost of meals for the Air Force escorts and hosts involved in the Strategic Air Command Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program during calendar year 1970.

This military welfare fund--which is known as the Commander's 3-percent fund--was established by Air Force Regulations 176-2, dated April 1969. Under this regulation a base commander may expend in any fiscal year up to 3 percent of the total dividend income in the welfare fund for any purpose he considers necessary to accomplish the mission of his command. This fund is financially supported, in part, by dividends from the Army and Air Force Exchange and Motion Picture Services, both of which are nonappropriated fund activities. Other sources of income for this fund include contributions, donations, and other miscellaneous charges.

Costs charged to the Air Force

We believe that there were other costs applicable to the Strategic Air Command Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program conducted in calendar year 1970. We estimated that these costs amounted to about \$224,000, as shown below.

Services provided by military and civilian personnel	\$ 68,000
Use of military aircraft and ground vehicles	137,000
Per diem and travel allowances for Air Force escorts	18,000
Printing of information kits and group photographs	<u>1,000</u>
Total estimated costs	<u>\$224,000</u>

We concentrated, in estimating the cost of personnel services, only on those persons who had participated directly in the

planning, briefing, and escorting of the tour guests. In our development of the above costs, we obtained from the Air Force an estimate of time spent by grade or rank of such persons; we applied appropriate salary and wage rates which were in effect during calendar year 1970. The rates were derived from a DOD instruction dealing with standard rates for costing military personnel services and from the Civil Service Commission table of civil service employee salary and wage rates.

We used 1970 estimates provided to us by the Air Force in arriving at the cost of the military aircraft and ground vehicles used to transport the guests. These costs were based on the use of one aircraft and several vehicles for each tour, the number of miles driven and hours flown, and the standard Air Force budget estimates for cost by vehicle-mile and aircraft-hour. In those instances where information regarding the specific type of vehicles used was not readily determinable, we used the lowest vehicle-operating cost for that class.

Per diem and commercial air expense, cost of information kits, and cost of group photographs were recorded costs provided to us by the Strategic Air Command. No security checks were conducted on guests because the tours were considered unclassified.

In our discussions with Air Force officials concerning the cost estimates, they stated that the costs (of services provided by Government personnel and for use of military aircraft and military ground vehicles) would have been incurred by the command regardless of whether there was a tour program.

The Air Force officials pointed out that there was no individual in the Air Force whose sole job was to support the tour program. They pointed out, further, that the man-hours used in the tour program represented an insignificant amount of time when considered in the perspective of total military job requirements.

They stated that military flights supporting the tour program were a part of the Air Force's continuing proficiency

flying program and that training flights, regardless of passengers or cargo, must be flown to maintain crew proficiency.

The costs incurred by the Air Force for its Strategic Air Command's Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program did not represent the total cost of the Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program. As previously noted, 12 other continental U.S. Air Force commands and the Alaskan Command had conducted similar programs during calendar year 1970. Thus the cost for the overall Air Force Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program would have been substantially more than shown in this report.

We are not aware of any existing statute which would prevent the Air Force from incurring Strategic Air Command Civilian Distinguished Visitor Program costs or which would require the Air Force to recover these costs from the guest participants.

We have discussed our findings with Air Force officials but did not obtain written comments on this report. We plan to make no further distribution of this report unless copies are specifically requested, and then we shall make distribution only after your agreement has been obtained or public announcement has been made by you concerning the contents of the report.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

The Honorable Henry S. Reuss
House of Representatives