

Germany 1990

In October of 1990, those of us lucky enough to be selected for site support for the Army JSIPS delivery to Maintz Finthen Army Air Base in Germany, prepared for, and began our delivery to site, with all shelters and power equipment being transported to Carswell Air Base outside of Ft Worth.

Our equipment and initial delivery support team was loaded into 2 - C5A aircraft for the trip to Frankfort Air Base. We were lucky enough to be allowed to make the first leg of our trip to Dover AFB in the upper level crew quarters of each aircraft, some even allowed to occupy the third seat behind pilot and copilot !



I was not high enough in the pecking order to get that opportunity, but the view out the side window, from behind the pilots seat was ok !

To our surprise, before we re-boarded in Dover for the flight over the Atlantic, we were informed we would have to travel in the upper level passenger seating area. At least the flight engineer offered to share coffee, drinks and other stuff with us. I don't remember anyone giving him any tips for the extra service?

Now for the good stuff!

Upon our arrival at Frankfort, the aircrew parked the aircraft in a secure area that was next to a grassed sloping hill area, this area of the flight line was large enough to accommodate offload of shelters, where they could be attached to trucks for final delivery to site location. We were in the first aircraft to land, the second aircraft arrived within about 15-25 minutes.

When we were allowed to de-board the aircraft, we noticed that there was a long set of concrete steps on that sloping hill area leading up to a building. We were told the building had a small store inside, where we could buy drinks, food, etc.

Great !!

After that long flight we could not wait, so off we went to walk across flight line to the steps, and go get our stuff! As we walked toward those steps, I noticed we walked over a small diameter, black rubber hose that was stretched across the pavement. No big deal! But, before we reached those steps, I heard a vehicle approaching from our right, and as I looked in that direction I saw a police vehicle, lights on, with Air Force Security Police giving us the eye!

They arrived quickly, weapons at the ready, got out and we were immediately ordered to the ground ! Glad it was not raining that morning.

Ok, so we just got off a highly classified transport flight and only wanted some refreshments and food, what could possibly be wrong with that?

We were immediately informed we had crossed the restricted 'Red Line' and could be arrested.

I ask where the red line was located and he informed me that the 'black rubber line' we had crossed 'was the Red Line!'

I attempted to correct him, and responded, that the line he referred to was black, not red!

It seemed to piss him off that I would even attempt to contradict him. Oh well, guess my mouth gets ahead of me at times, but then I have been known not to hide my opinion !

So, in the end we were saved when an Army military officer who traveled with us, came over and vouched for us, and we were released to his custody!

But...ya think we might have been set-up ?

So I guess, to be safe, never leave the immediate area of a parked aircraft, on a restricted flightline and always assume any black lines, or rubber looking hoses you may see on that flight line are really the 'Red Lines' and you should know you cannot cross it without proper permission!

Our road trip to the Mainz Finthen Army Airfield site was uneventful, as we unloaded and set up shelters on site and began our tour. I did two years of support duty at the site and thankfully never had another run in with 'armed' military security!

(The following pics were taken before and after our trip. You will notice no Army helicopters visible at all. Our shelter site was located in the field area beyond end of runway. That field area now has a paved parking area and large pad surrounded by a double secure fence and controlled entry security building)

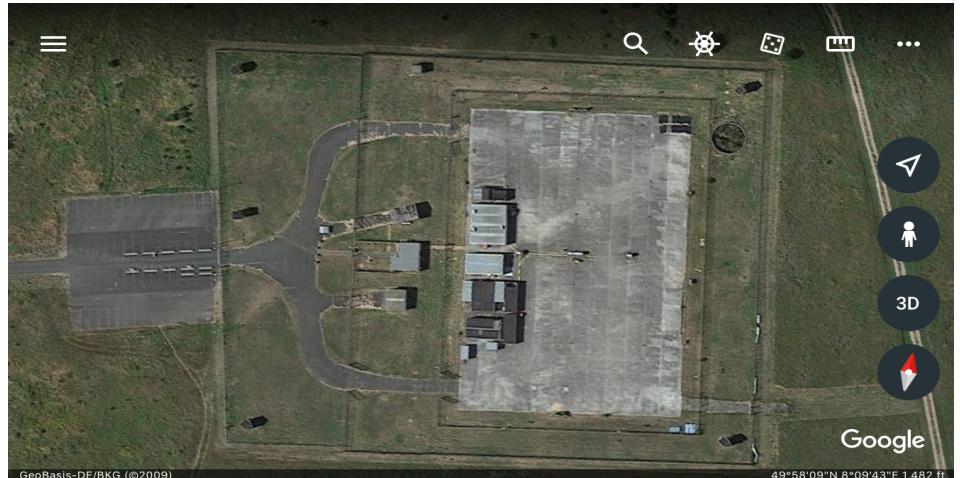
> Pad site just out of view to the right side beyond end of runway.
Mainz, Germany can be seen in background.



> Pad site can be seen in this aerial view, right center, light gray square in green field, with black outline.



> More recent 2009 Image of pad site noted in black outline from image above.



> The above pics are the only ones I have of the actual site. Sadly, no pics available of the pad site after System Shelters and SATCOM setup was completed.

I must add, the supervisory staff, engineers we worked with, and military personnel we were training, were among some of the best I have ever had the opportunity to work with.

The opportunity to work on project system design, 'integration and test', and then have the opportunity to assist with final delivery to our customer, was a rewarding experience that will never be forgotten.

To the supervisory staff and engineers that helped make my contribution to the project delivery a success, thank you.

I also need to express my gratitude to those engineers who stood in for me for site 'on call' duty, so that I could take that Harley out on a few of those two day rides to see some of Europe while there.

Gene Chapman and I also managed to get a few hundred miles of mountain bike riding in along the Rhine River, visiting some of the old Castles and other areas close by. Easy ride from our living quarters to work and back down thru the orchards and local farm areas, weather permitting !

And a note to the personnel in the (CSG) Comm Support Group Shelter. Sorry I had to lock down the AC temp control thermostat. The Comm shelter does need to be kept on the cool side to protect that critical comm equipment!

And I must add, I lost count of the number of trips I made to the Frankfort airport to shuttle personnel back and forth for trips back to the states, and to the airport Customs office to process paperwork for our freight expeditor, for the many shipments and deliveries to and from site.

Sad to find out, that down the road some 4 years later, the Army decided our system was far too advanced for their 'short personnel rotation schedules' (1 year), so they canceled it! Yes all that equipment was returned to Garland for potential re-use for other JSIPS contracts and/or just removed completely from service. I know where you might have been able to get a great deal on a lightly used shelter!

Jim Lawson (Sr Systems Engineer)
Site Logistics, Shelter AC & Emergency Power Support
(Oct 1990 - Nov 1992)

The following pics were taken by Jim Gray, of the JSIPS Integration and Delivery Team members, before 'pack and ship'.



