

ETHICS

Using Official Representation Funds (ORF)

This opinion is in response to your questions regarding the use of ORF for a luncheon that will include civilian foreign dignitaries, foreign military officers, and their support staff members. Foreign representatives have been invited to a luncheon at an OCONUS installation. The guest list will also include their support staff traveling with the principals. You asked whether or not such support staff personnel (most of whom are foreign military junior officers) could be used when determining ORF ratios and if ORF funds could be used to pay for their meals.

AFI 65-603, *Official Representation Funds*, paragraph 5.5.3, states that “the use of ORF for support personnel traveling with eligible senior DoD member or for support personnel from the hosting official’s organization (i.e., executive officers, aides-de-camp, protocol staff, transportation drivers, personal security team members) is expressly forbidden.” This same rationale should be applied—with due consideration for the differences in military cultures and organization—to the support staff of foreign officials. Therefore, the executive officers and support staff should generally not be counted towards meeting the ORF ratios of non-DoD attendees to DoD attendees, contained within AFI 65-603, paragraph 3.1.

Paragraph 7.2.4 goes on to state that “crewmembers of military aircraft, official drivers, protocol personnel, executive officers, aides-de-camp and other support personnel... are not considered members of the official party, and ORF will not be used to defray their expenses” unless an exception is specifically approved by the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/AA). However, this restriction should be read within the context of the definition of an authorized ORF recipient for foreign personnel: “Distinguished citizens, military personnel and government officials of foreign countries whose grade, position, *function* or stature clearly justify the extension of official courtesies by the U.S. government.” AFI 65-603, paragraph 5.1. (emphasis added).

Support staff selected to accompany a foreign dignitary or senior military officer are often selected for their ability to act as more than mere logistics and travel coordinators. Frequently, they themselves are the subject matter experts on the areas to be discussed with U.S. officials or who can, otherwise, help translate difficult or abstract areas of conversation. If support personnel will have, despite their perhaps modest rank, a significant contribution to the substantive discussions contemplated between the official parties, then by virtue of their function, they should be considered as eligible recipients for ORF-funded official courtesies of the United States.