

Interstate International Supports U.S. Military Band on European Tour

For more than 200 years, the United States Armed Forces have fielded musical ensembles. Today, nearly every branch of the armed services fields several bands, with different musical styles and purposes. Military bands boost morale, add dignity to military ceremonies, and provide entertainment and outreach for the general public.

Military bands also act as musical ambassadors of the U.S. armed forces around the globe. Certain branches, such as the U.S. Air Force, keep bands permanently stationed at U.S. bases overseas, while premier U.S.-based ensembles often perform international concerts and tours. Having scheduled an extensive tour of Europe, one such military band needed to facilitate the movement of equipment

THE CHALLENGE:

The project faced many logistical challenges inherent in moving a orchestra across multiple countries on a strict touring schedule:

- Packing musical instruments, band uniforms, and other equipment for each performance. In total, more than 100 pieces needed to be moved, weighing thousands of pounds and worth millions of dollars. Special considerations needed to be made for certain pieces of equipment:
 - » All lithium batteries needed to be catalogued and stored according to local customs regulations.
 - » Certain wooden instruments and fur-trimmed uniforms needed to meet the standards of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).
 - » Certain instruments contain ivory, which is banned in the European Union. Any ivory pieces needed to be swapped out for synthetic replacements.
- The moving, unpacking, and repacking needed to be done around the band's concert and rehearsal schedule. Since most concerts were held in the evening, the equipment needed to be packed and moved during early morning hours.
- Though most stops on the concert tour could be reached via ground transport, the trip from Basel, Switzerland and Helsinki, Finland required air transport.
- Various customs and import tax issues needed to be addressed before transporting equipment across international borders.



THE SOLUTION:

Interstate has earned the trust of several prominent military bands over the years due to our ability to carry out projects like the European tour with efficiency and care. We establish and tailor each logistics plan to the client's unique needs. During the project's preparation and implementation, we stress three core values:

- 1. Global Partners for Global Action:** In our eight decades of logistics experience, we have developed a strong network of global partnerships. With this network already in place, we assemble the most experienced partners across the region for developing and executing a multinational logistics project.
- 2. A Seat at the Table:** Our approach goes beyond transparency: The client and partners are always active participants in the development and execution of the logistics plan. No matter where in the world, they have a seat at each project meeting.
- 3. Real-Time Cargo Visibility:** The tight scheduling of a concert tour requires real-time updates between stops. The client remains aware of the cargo's whereabouts to readily execute changes and contingencies that may arise.

THE APPROACH:

Throughout the project, Interstate turned our three values into decisive logistics strategy. Examples of our approach included:

- Organizing regular meetings with essential project participants to discuss tour dates and times, types of equipment and shipping pallets, transport details, and other information. These meetings began several months before the band's final pre-tour rehearsal in the U.S. This collaboration and transparency facilitated agile response times for seamless execution of the plan.
- Organizing cargo transport, including air freight between Switzerland and Finland. A special flight was chartered for this purpose.
- Procuring a carnet to allow for the temporary import of cargo without paying duties or taxes. The carnet had to accompany the equipment on each stop of the tour. This required careful tracking, as each item listed on the carnet needed to ship back to the U.S.
- Implementing a specialized strategy for packaging cargo. The pallets were custom-built, with special non-transparent shrink wrap used to secure the equipment. Each pallet was carefully catalogued so that each piece of equipment would be placed on the same spot on the same pallet during each stop on the tour.

OUTCOME:

In the summer of 2024, the military band's European tour went off as planned. No concert dates were missed. Each piece of equipment returned to the U.S. in working order, and no customs penalties were incurred. The project met the client's commitments to carrying out world-class performances for their audiences throughout Europe.