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**CURRENT AIR BASE GROUND DEFENSE DOCTRINE:**

**Are We Postured to Meet the Expectations of the AEF?**

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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## *Preface*

The United States Air Force has transitioned to a CONUS based expeditionary force to reduce PERSTEMPO and offer greater flexibility in force projection options. As the Air Force develops answers for one problem, it reveals another. With the end of the Cold War, reductions to our forward-deployed forces, and the emergence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threats, the USAF is left with the problem of protecting the Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) in a deployed environment.

Air Base Ground Defense (ABGD) has always been a key mission for aerospace forces. Throughout the history of military aviation, airfields and bases have been threatened with enemy attack in one form or another. USAF efforts to create a viable ABGD system have been a sporadic combination of episodic buildups and subsequent drawdowns of security force personnel and equipment. In essence, the Air Force has struggled with the concept of how to defend it's air bases for decades, from World War I to OPERATION ALLIED FORCE.

The Air Force is hoping that they have finally found the answer with the activation of the 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group. With their motto: "ready to go anywhere, any place, anytime," the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is a multidiscipline unit that offers a total force protection (FP) package. Depicted, as a revolutionary concept, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG integrates all aspects of FP (i.e., air base ground defense, combating terrorism, physical security, operations security, personal protective services, resource protection, intelligence, counterintelligence, logistics, etc.) into a single cohesive unit. With the

capability to deploy within 24 hours of notification, the USAF has finally established a viable solution to the age-old problem of protecting our deployed assets.

I chose this topic because as a Security Forces Officer, I am the product of twenty years of participating in the uphill struggle to defend our air bases. More importantly, as an Air Force Officer, I understand that America's global role and force projection influences will only increase for our country is the world's only remaining superpower. To meet our nation's National Military Strategy, the Air Force developed the AEF concept to project and employ aerospace power throughout the full spectrum of conflict. Thus, it is essential that the Security Force's develop sound doctrine to protect this aerospace force, regardless of the deployed location.

Is the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG really the answer, or is it an ill-advised pursuit by the Security Force's senior leadership to regain footing in previous combat employment roles? My research findings will provide the reader with the current status of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, and hopefully it will also provide some insights into the direction that the Security Forces have chosen to pursue concerning the issue of protecting the Air Force's deployed assets.

I am indebted to my faculty research advisor, LTC Randall A. Soboul, for his invaluable guidance and assistance in the completion of this research project. I am also indebted to Col. Dale Hewitt, 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group Commander, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for providing me the opportunity to interview members of his command. And finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my old friend, CMSgt Richard Hackney, 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group Senior Enlisted Manager, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for providing me with his firsthand knowledge in activating the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG.

### *Abstract*

The United States Air Force has transitioned to a CONUS based expeditionary force to reduce PERSTEMPO and offer greater flexibility in force projection options. However, with the end of the Cold War, reductions to our forward-deployed forces, and the emergence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threats, the USAF is left with the problem of protecting the Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) in a deployed environment.

Air Base Ground Defense (ABGD) has always been a key mission for aerospace forces. Throughout the history of military aviation, airfields and bases have been threatened with enemy attack in one form or another. USAF efforts to create a viable ABGD system have been a sporadic combination of episodic buildups and subsequent drawdowns of security force personnel and equipment. In essence, the Air Force has struggled with the concept of how to defend it's air bases for decades, from World War I to OPERATION ALLIED FORCE.

The Air Force is hoping that they have finally found the answer with the activation of the 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group. With their motto: "ready to go anywhere, any place, anytime," the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is a multidiscipline unit that offers a total force protection (FP) package. Depicted, as a revolutionary concept, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG integrates all aspects of FP (i.e., air base ground defense, combating terrorism, physical security, operations security, personal protective services, resource protection, intelligence, counterintelligence, logistics, etc.) into a cohesive unit. With the capability to deploy within 24 hours of notification, the USAF believes it has finally established a viable solution to the age-old problem of protecting our deployed assets.



This study examines the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG's ability to meet the expectations of the Aerospace Expeditionary Force. I reviewed USAF historical archives and related literature to establish the background and significance of the Air Force's struggle with the concept of how to effectively handle the air base defense mission since World War I. I assessed and analyzed the unclassified version of the current threat to qualify the USAF's logic for establishing the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG. I followed up with personal interviews and assessed current documents explaining the mission, capabilities, and concept of operations of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG. I then addressed some current ABGD salient issues affecting the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG's, along with identifying current status and recommendations. Finally, I summarized the information provided in the previous chapters, identified shortfalls existing in the USAF's efforts to protect deployed assets, and concluded with my recommendations for the future of the ABGD mission.

My hypothesis is that the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has made tremendous strides in the improvement of our ABGD mission; in fact, it is at the highest state of readiness it's ever been in the history of airpower. However, despite this much-improved position, the USAF still has a long way to go, specifically integrating our current ABGD concept with the needs of the AEF; modernizing our force with superior force enabling technology, and finally, updating our ABGD operational and tactical doctrine to effectively operate on tomorrow's battlefield.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

*It is easier and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nests and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air.*

—General Giulio Douchet

### **Scope of Research**

Less than a year after the deadly terrorist bombing in Khobar Towers, Saudi Arabia, the Air Force answered a tremendous “wake-up call” by activating the 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group on March 17, 1997. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is the first force protection unit of its kind in the Air Force, developed in response to significant increases in threats to deployed forces caused by a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG's mission is, first and foremost, providing Force Protection capability in the event an Aerospace Expeditionary Wing (AEW) or Aerospace Expeditionary Task Force (AETF) is deployed in support of a contingency operation. Additionally, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG serves as a force protection enabler by supporting Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) steady state rotations in Southwest Asia. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is selectively manned with fully integrated multifunctional disciplines that are highly trained and equipped with state of the art technology and prepared to rapidly deploy to any contingency ranging from small scale contingencies to

major theater wars. In essence, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG provides commanders an immediate “first-in” force protection asset through the use of rapid global mobility.<sup>1</sup>

While a historical review reveals that the activation of an elite Air Base Ground Defense (ABGD) organization isn’t anything new to the USAF; there are several significant factors that differentiate the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG from its predecessors. Foremost, the organization’s composition encompasses integrated multifunctional disciplines which include security forces, intelligence, counterintelligence, communications, logistics, civil engineers, medical, and disaster preparedness personnel. This specialized force provides the AEW/AETF commander a cohesive full dimensional approach encompassing the total ABGD mission, ranging from air base security to chemical weapons defense. In contrast, the USAF response to strengthen air base security in Vietnam, “OPERATION SAFESIDE”, consisted of only security personnel performing internal and external area defense.<sup>2</sup>

I want to make it clear that this is not a comparative analysis study of elite air base defense units. This study focuses on the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG and how it is postured to meet the expectations of the emergent AEF concept. The central focus is the question: Is the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG the answer for protecting the AEF while deployed or is it another stopgap measure, consuming resources until the AEF concept fades away with the changing nature of war and global commitment?

## **Methodology**

My analysis begins in Chapter 2 providing a historical perspective of the evolution of ABGD to gain insight as to how the USAF got to where we are today. Chapter 3 discusses the three types of threat levels facing today’s air base environment, along with examining some early signs or indications of a changing mission/requirement. Chapter 4 reviews the current 820<sup>th</sup> SFG mission, capabilities, and concept of operations. Chapter 5 addresses some current ABGD

salient issues affecting the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, along with identifying current status and recommendations. Chapter 6 summarizes the previous chapters, identifies shortfalls in the USAF's efforts to protect deployed assets, and concludes with recommendations and considerations for the future mission of ABGD.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG's ability to meet the expectations of the AEF. Excluded from this study is the subject of Air Defense. While 820<sup>th</sup> SFG does have limited point air defense capability, this paper does not address the full dimensions of "air defense" of the airbase environment due to the study length constraints. Additionally, this is not a guide concerning operational and tactical ABGD doctrine. A key point to note is throughout the text the terms force protection and ABGD are used synonymously.

My sources cited throughout this research are a combination of government documents, civilian studies, historical references, military briefings, news and periodical articles, and personal interviews.

## **Conclusion**

My hypothesis is that the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has made tremendous strides in the improvement of our ABGD mission; in fact, it is at the highest state of readiness it's ever been in the history of airpower. However, despite this much-improved position, the USAF still has a long way to go, specifically integrating our current ABGD concept with the needs of the AEF; modernizing our force with superior force enabling technology, and finally, updating our ABGD operational and tactical doctrine to effectively operate on tomorrow's battlefield.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Air Force News, *Air Force Answers "Wake-up call," Increases Force Protection*. March 1997. On-line Internet, 28 January 2001, available from <http://fas.org/irp/news/>.

## Notes

<sup>2</sup> “OPERATION SAFESIDE”. In April 1965, the USAF Chief of Staff approved the formation of a special security unit that would be trained and employed in Vietnam to determine the validity of the art of base defense. Fox, Roger P. *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1963-1973*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Air Force Office of History, 1979).

## Chapter 2

### Historical Perspective—Past to Present

*Aircraft mechanics and other technicians need not be infantry- trained...since their duties were entirely different from those of the Infantry (sic), they should receive only that portion of infantry training which would permit them to move in a military manner from place to place. In the event of a domestic emergency, enlisted men of the intelligence usually found in Air Service organizations could be quickly instructed and equipped to perform their part creditably.*

—Major General James Fechet  
Chief of Air Service, 1927

*US reliance on small numbers of high-value, forward deployed or forward based aircraft makes those assets tempting targets for ground attack. The Air Force must have sufficient organic force protection capability to support single service air operations in deployed locations.”*

—The Air Force Executive Guidance  
October 1996

The United States Air Force and its predecessor, the Army Air Corps, have enjoyed a considerable degree of safety from ground assault since the earliest days of military aviation. During World War I, U.S. Air Forces operated from bases located in close proximity to static, unchanging trench lines, and enjoyed a high degree of security from ground attack.<sup>1</sup> Airfields in the forward areas were no more than open grass fields with areas to park or maintain aircraft and generally provided little in the way of lucrative military targets for the enemy to attack. Additionally, most air units were displaced throughout the rear area supporting changing Corps objectives. With the general absence of fixed facilities, they could easily be displaced prior to

facing any organized enemy ground threat. This lack of a serious ground threat enabled commanders to orient their air base ground defense forces toward interior or perimeter guard functions.

During the interwar years, US air base defense policy was based largely on our World War I experiences, never progressing beyond the interior-guard system because of the perceived lack of a ground threat. The standard policy for airfield protection relied on soldiers performing basic infantry skills, largely learned in the “Great War”.<sup>2</sup> It would be November 1941, before Lieutenant General Walter C. Short, Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, even considered training Air Corps personnel for ground defense missions.<sup>3</sup> Many opinions on the Air Staff would later change after December 7, 1941.

The Germans opened World War II using blitzkrieg warfare to smash their European enemies. Using airpower and airborne forces, Germany captured or destroyed a number of allied air bases in support of major ground offensives in 1939 and 1940.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not until May of 1941, when the Germans captured airfields on the island of Crete, that the allies saw a need to change their concept of air base defense.<sup>5</sup> The occupation of Crete demonstrated the importance of having trained and dedicated personnel for the protection of airfields because a small German force defeated a much larger force of British troops consisting of primarily untrained support personnel.<sup>6</sup> This defeat led British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to declare he “would no longer tolerate a half-million Air Force personnel without a combat role. All airmen were to be armed and trained, ready to fight and die in defense of the airfields; every airfield should be the stronghold of fighting air-groundmen, and not the abode of uniformed civilians in the prime of life protected by a detachment of soldiers.”<sup>7</sup> To address the Prime

Minister's concerns the Royal Air Force Regiment was formed on February 1, 1942 with the primary responsibility of protecting airfields.<sup>8</sup>

The regiment's first mission was to provide relief for army units defending air bases in Britain. At first the regiments were utilized as a mobile striking force, capable of immediate defensive response by trained station personnel (i.e. all personnel assigned to the Royal Air Force (RAF) with the exception of medical, dental, chaplains, and women's services). As the war progressed and the threat of home invasion decreased, the regiments deployed overseas with the RAF forward-based forces. Overseas, the regiments were used as a mobile force to clear captured airfields of enemy resistance, remove minefields and obstructions, and to protect the RAF flying squadrons.<sup>9</sup> From their initial formation and deployment in 1942 until the end of World War II, the RAF regiments successfully defended against all but two attempts by axis powers to capture British airfields.<sup>10</sup> Having wisdom and foresight, the RAF realized the necessity of a dedicated base defense force and retained the regiment on active duty even after the war ended. This dedicated Air Base Ground Defense(ABGD) force still exists today.

In 1942, following the British example and modeled after the RAF, the United States Army Air Forces approved the formation of air base security battalions with an initial manning authorization of 53,000.<sup>11</sup> The organizational composition called for each battalion to be equipped with M-2 half-tracks, self-propelled 75mm guns, heavy machine guns, 60mm mortars, M1 rocket launchers, and a tank platoon.<sup>12</sup> Their mission was to provide security for air bases and other vital installations of the Air Corps such as fuel tank farms, bomb dumps and radar stations. The battalions were trained and organized to provide both fixed and mobile defense forces; however, falling under the Services Command, personnel were assigned such unglamorous duties as "guarding gasoline, ammunition, ration dumps, empty warehouses, dry



cleaning facilities, hotels, and the entrances to the Officers clubs.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, following the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, it was no surprise when the Army Air Forces (AAF) did away with dedicate ground defense forces as part of the post-war drawdown.

In 1947, the United States Air Force was formed becoming a separate service. Under a 1947 joint service agreement between the Army and Air Force, the Air Force became “responsible for the security of it’s own installations ...including protection against air, mechanized, and chemical threats”.<sup>14</sup> The USAF was unprepared to meet this mission and entered the Korean War, in 1950, totally untrained for combat and with minimal ABGD capabilities.

Thrust into a combat environment that threatened air bases, the USAF began to take immediate steps to build up it’s ABGD forces. By December 1950, USAF Air Police (AP) forces had expanded from 10,000 to 30,000 personnel in an effort to beef up dedicated forces for ABGD.<sup>15</sup> The initial units were outfitted with light infantry weapons and trained as infantry soldiers. However, the problem of having an ill-defined doctrine for ABGD still persisted. The USAF finally got around to developing an ABGD doctrine near the end of the war. On March 3, 1953, Air Force Regulation 355-4, *Defense – Local Ground Defense of Air Force InstallationS*, was published which defined the mission of ABGD.<sup>16</sup> However, this regulation only clarified the responsibility of the installation commander for protecting air bases from local attacks, the USAF still did not embrace the concept of total air base defense. Active ground defense was merely perceived as an “emergency function” not requiring sustained ground defense operations.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the war the USAF attempted to plug the ABGD gap by throwing money, manpower, and equipment at the hollow base defense program. Despite three years of war, the USAF still had no formal ABGD training program until the end of the war; which is remarkable, considering the Air Force was responsible for the mission after 1947. Fortunately,

apart from of the lack of doctrine and force structure, US and ROK air bases were not seriously threatened during the Korean War.

By the end of the war, the overwhelming requirements eventually pushed the USAF into accepting the need for a viable ABGD system. Although limited in scope, the USAF did have in place: doctrine, force structure, training, and equipment to form the foundation for a dedicated ABGD capability. However, with air bases not serious threatened during the Korean War, revised intelligence estimates, a new national strategy, and a postwar USAF budget reduction, the USAF could not justify the additional manning needed for the ABGD mission.<sup>18</sup> The result was the USAF once again was forced to drawdown manpower and significantly reducing its capability to defend air bases. However, the difference this time was that the leadership realized a continuing need for such a capability and managed to retain a limited ABGD capability. It would be this limited capability that would force the USAF to abandon the concept of local ABGD against an overt threat external to the installation. It adopted a new concept of air base defense outlined in Air Force Regulation 205-5, *Internal Installation Security*.<sup>19</sup> This concept emphasized internal reinforced security, which called for an expanded interior guard system to counter covert threats “inside the wire.” Centering on protecting critical weapon systems, equipment, and facilities from sabotage, Air Police (AP) managed the security of key areas via strict personnel access control. Small, mobile sabotage alert teams (much like today’s security response teams and armed response teams) provided the initial response and reinforcements came from off-duty AP personnel.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for a number of political, economic, and military reasons, the USAF ABGD mission was simply left to “die on the vine.”

It’s hard to comprehend the unbelievable luck the USAF enjoyed in the area of ABGD throughout WWI, WWII, and the Korean War. Despite being involve in three major theater

wars, the USAF installations were relatively free from ground attacks, at least any attacks serious enough to disrupt air operations. However, this fortune would run out during the Vietnam Conflict. The war in Vietnam was different from the earlier war experiences because it was a guerilla type war and there was no established front. The rear areas were just as vulnerable to enemy attack as were the troops in the main combat zones of Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> Over the course of the conflict 475 ground attacks were conducted against 10 key air bases.<sup>22</sup> Once again, the Air Force began the war unprepared to embrace the ABGD mission.

At first, from 1961 through 1964, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was responsible for external and perimeter defense while the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) provided internal security.<sup>23</sup> However, with no real doctrine or concept of operations the ARVN and VNAF were ill prepared for this mission. This weakness was painfully highlighted on November 1, 1964, when the Viet Cong (VC) attack Bien Hoa Air Base with mortars, destroying five B-57 aircraft and damaging an additional fifteen.<sup>24</sup> US Ambassador Maxwell Taylor stated, “the Bien Hoa attack demonstrated beyond any doubt that RVNAF defense measures were inadequate, uncoordinated, and intrinsic to all US/RVN air bases.”<sup>25</sup> This prompted the limited deployment of US Army and Marine ground forces to assist in the defense of RVNAF bases and US facilities. *Thus, the lack of an ABGD capability became one of the United State’s first “incremental” steps leading to full-scale escalation of the war effort.*

This arrangement with the Army and Marines had problems from the beginning, since it relegated US forces into a strictly defensive role. By 1965, as Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) penetration and standoff attacks escalated, the services began to question the validity of this agreement. Even General Westmoreland, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, firmly believed that the use of ground forces for this task would

cripple decisive offensive operations and delay the enemies defeat. Therefore, he ordered all air base commanders to initiate defensive efforts and instructed that all services without infantry protection organize, train and exercise to perform their own defensive and security functions.<sup>26</sup> General Westmoreland's directions were directly applicable to the USAF, which subsequently directed all air force commanders to support practical internal security self-defense actions. However, what is significant is that the Air Force selectively omitted Westmoreland's implementing instructions for establishing patrols, outposts, and reaction forces as a means for external security. This omission relegated USAF ABGD policy and practice to internal efforts, which lasted to the war's end. The bottom line: the ABGD mission did not extend beyond the legal perimeter of its installations.<sup>27</sup>

The TET offensive of January 1968 reignited the criticality of air base vulnerability as the VC mounted forty-four attacks against friendly airbases destroying 13 aircraft and leaving 40 others with major damage.<sup>28</sup> The USAF responded with "OPERATION SAFESIDE", a program designed to refine its internal security response by organizing and deploying combat security police squadrons to assist in the protection of air bases during high-threat periods. In March 1968, the 821<sup>st</sup> Security Police Squadron, with 500 assigned personnel, became the first such unit organized.<sup>29</sup> Utilizing U.S. Army Ranger instructors, all squadron personnel underwent a fifteen-week training program stressing marksmanship and infantry skills, at the Army's Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. Following this training, the 821<sup>st</sup> deployed to the Republic of South Vietnam as a centralized quick reaction force, capable of providing firepower, mobility, base perimeter surveillance, and security of internal base areas. By July of 1967, the Air Force Chief of Staff approved the organization of a total of three Security Police squadrons, one Wing Headquarters, and a Security training school.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the initial success of “OPERATION SAFESIDE”, the problems associated with air base defense in Vietnam persisted, as the result of the U.S. military’s failure to properly identify and adapt to the type of war being waged. The VC/NVA saw the conflict as a guerrilla war, where the main purpose of their attacks on air bases was to harass U.S. forces by conducting psychological and informational operations. The objective of attacking airfields was not the total destruction of U.S. Air Force assets, but to wage an attrition war that would steadily kill Americans and destroy aircraft in an effort to undermine U.S. popular support for the war.<sup>31</sup> Overall, USAF security personnel did an excellent job of internal defense. The problem was that the Air Force senior leadership refused to acknowledge the ultimate responsibility for the areas that influenced the security of its bases, nor did they develop the organic structure and capability required to expand that security outside the base perimeter.

Air force concerns with the ABGD mission did not decrease with the end of our involvement in the Vietnam War, as it had in previous wars. After years of unsuccessfully transferring the ABGD mission continuity, the USAF leadership’s finally acknowledged the criticality of maintaining a viable ABGD capability. Steady refinements in doctrine and training drove clarifications of responsibility and enhancements of ABGD during the next 20 years. In 1979, a new doctrine of distributed area defense (DAD) was conceived to respond to the more capable standoff threats, such as mortars and handheld rocket attacks. Formalized in AFR 206-2, *Local Defense of US Air Force Bases*, the DAD concept recognized that the external ABGD mission would fall to the Air Force if the Army was unavailable.<sup>32</sup> By 1980, a new AFR 206-3, *Air Base Defense Deployable Local Ground Defense Forces*, spelled out how the security forces would be organized, equipped, and trained to support the DAD concept. Additionally, throughout the 1980’s the Air Force Office of Security Police established training centers and

large-scale ABGD exercises to test the capabilities of the program. With the addition of hundreds of security police personnel authorizations to support the Ground Launched Cruise Missile Program, the Air Force was finally coming to grips with the problem of maintaining an ABGD capability.

Combat operations in Grenada, Panama, Desert Storm, and Allied Force tested the USAF's ABGD mission capabilities. But unlike previous conflicts, the Air Force proved it was prepared for the challenge despite being conducted in environments with varying degrees of ground threats and in an era of reduced manpower, caused by the end of the Cold War. However, despite the overwhelming success in the aforementioned conflicts, the Air Force leadership still did not fully embrace the scope of the ABGD mission. Only the Security Forces community realized the viability of having a capable ABGD mission. As a result, throughout the 1990s, they reprioritized other needs such as law enforcement and K-9 support, in order to maintain a credible ABGD capability. Unfortunately, it would take a terrorist bombing of a US facility, on 25 June 1996, to galvanize the USAF's commitment to its ABGD mission.

The incident in Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia provided clear indications of the change in potential threats to US forces and facilities. The Khobar Tower terrorist bombing killed 19 service members and injured hundreds more. Terrorists detonated a bomb with an estimated yield of more than 20,000 pounds of TNT just outside the fence of the American occupied sector of Khobar Towers. This was the second terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia in less than a year, the first being an attack upon the Office of Program Manager Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPMSANG).<sup>33</sup> This incident and related threat has served to focus future plan development and employment of forward-deployed forces. The emerging Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) and the Khobar Towers bombing "set the stage" for activating an elite air base

ground defense organization. The 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group (SFG) is designed to meet the emerging challenges faced by an AEF. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG was developed as a fully integrated multifunctional organization tasked with providing current and future doctrine for air base ground defense operations.

## Summary

Throughout the history of aerospace power the mission of Air Base Ground Defense has been ad-hoc and conducted on a temporary basis. Despite the chronological losses of USAF personnel and equipment, Air Force leaders were reluctant to embark on establishing a sustained, credible ABGD capability. This still exists in part today, as our ABGD doctrine covers the full spectrum of defense extending from inside to outside the base perimeter, but our current operational concepts do not adequately address the area beyond the legal perimeter of the air base. Throughout the Middle East, arguably one of the highest threat environments in the world, USAF security forces still patrol from behind the fences, hiding behind a veil of false security.

THIS IS POIGNANT BECAUSE asymmetric threats dominate the environment and internal security, as one piece of a larger security entity, may not be enough to deter aggression. Commanders' force protection concerns must understand the motives and means of the aggressor and develop counter strategies in accordance with our stated ABGD doctrine. We must practice what we preach. Chapter 3 will analyzed the current threat situation that set the stage for the USAF to activate the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1961-1973* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1979), 1.

## Notes

<sup>2</sup> LTC Lawrence R. Lane and LTC Albert F. Riggle, “Air Defense for Global Engagement/Global Power”, Research Report (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1993), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Fox, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Lt. Col. Wayne Purser, “Air Base Ground Defense: An Historical Perspective and Vision for the 1990s”, Research Report (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air War College, 1989), 7.

<sup>5</sup> J.F.C. Fuller. *The Second World War, 1939-1945, A Strategically and Tactical History*. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), 67.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War–The Grand Alliance* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), 777.

<sup>8</sup> Col. A.C. Carlson, “Air Base Defense,” CORONA HARVEST Report (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, 1952), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Vick, *Snakes in the Eagles Nest: A History of Ground Attacks on Air Bases* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 1995), Appendix B. Chronology of Ground Attacks on Air Bases.

<sup>11</sup> Fox, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Carlson, 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Purser, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Fox, 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Purser, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Carl Berger, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973: An Illustrated Account*. (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1984), 257.

<sup>22</sup> Fox, iii

<sup>23</sup> Vick, 76.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Fox, 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Col. John E. VanDuyn. “Analysis of Combat After Action Report 7<sup>th</sup> AF, 29 Jan-30 Apr. 1968”. Project CORONA HARVEST No. 0003161, (K132.103-13. Jan-Apr, 1968, USAF Collection, AFHRA).

<sup>29</sup> Fox, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>31</sup> David A. Shlapak and Alan Vick, *Check Six begins on the ground: Responding to the Evolving Ground Threat to U.S. Air Force Bases*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 1995), 28.



## Notes

<sup>32</sup> Lt. Col. Edward Herron and Lt. Col. Robert Reider, "History of Air Base Ground Defense Training", Research Report (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 1987), 10.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Secretary of Defense. "Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad, Annex A- The Downing Investigation Report." 15 September 1996, n.p. On-line Internet, 12 December 2000, Available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/downing\\_rpt/annx\\_a.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/downing_rpt/annx_a.html).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Current Threat**

*The security environment in which we live is dynamic and uncertain, replete with a host of threats and challenges that have the potential to grow more deadly.*

—A National Security Strategy for a New Century

#### **Threat Levels I, II, and III**

The threat to air bases takes many forms, ranging from a single individual's criminal activity to an adversary's potential to wage Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) warfare. Historically, elements such as Special Forces, light infantry, airborne and airmobile, terrorist, guerilla, and irregular units have successfully employed conventional warfare tactics to harass personnel and destroy vital resources. Criminal activity, such as pilferage of critical items, information theft, and violent crimes have also had an impact on air operations, but at a much lower level of conflict. At the higher level of conflict, the threat may encompass NBC weapons, as well as air-to-surface and surface-to-surface attacks with conventional weapons. The acquisition of technologically advanced equipment such as man-portable surface-to-air missiles, global positioning sighted mortar munitions, and night vision devices make these adversaries even more difficult to detect and neutralize. The current ABGD doctrine divides the threats to air bases into three levels in order to provide a general description and categorization of threat activities, identifies the defensive requirements to counter them, and establishes a common

reference point for planning guidelines.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that the threat activities will occur in a specific sequence, or that there is an interrelationship between each level. However, the level of threat denotes a responsibility for action by USAF's ABGD security forces. The enemy may use one or all of these threats to attack air bases. ABGD forces must be capable of reacting from Level I through Level III, to ensure successful sortie generation.

Level I is the least dangerous, but the most probable threats air base defenders are likely to encounter. They include small-scale threats conducted by enemy controlled agents, enemy sympathizers, terrorists, and civil disturbances. Enemy controlled agents' primary missions include espionage, sabotage, and subversion. Their activity spans the range of military operations and may increase during war or military operations other than war to include assassinations of key personnel, kidnappings, and/or guiding special purpose troops to selected targets of opportunity. For example during WWII, both sides conducted numerous sabotage and subversion missions against storage facilities and air base installations. Furthermore, enemy sympathizers are civilians supportive of the enemy and are often the most difficult to affect because they are indigenous to the population. Their ability to provide assistance, information, and shelter to guerrillas and enemy unconventional forces has had substantial effects upon the outcome of military operations. One of the best examples of enemy sympathizer support was in Somalia, where civilian support was indispensable in the warring gang's success against United Nations forces. Another Level I threat is terrorism, perhaps the most insidious and difficult threat to neutralize and eradicate. Whether being state or individually sponsored their actions span the range of military operations and can have influential consequences upon military operations. The terrorist bombing of Khobar Towers had a direct impact upon how the USAF would conduct its future ABGD mission. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, it resulted in the

activation of an elite ABGD organization, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG. The final threat category in this category is civil disturbances, often classified as riots and demonstrations. While they may not be sufficiently pervasive or violent enough to fully threaten air operations, they can have a significant influence upon air operations; much like the large anti-nuclear demonstrations had upon the US air bases in England during the mid-1980s.

Level II is the next dangerous probable threat level encountered by air base defenders. Level II threats include attacks by guerrilla forces, unconventional forces, and small tactical units. Irregular and indigenous forces conducting guerrilla warfare pose serious threats to ABGD forces and can cause significant disruptions to air operations. For example, the disruption caused by VC forces firing five or six mortar rounds into US air bases and then dispersing into the jungle hampered US air operations throughout the war. Unconventional forces are special operations forces trained in unconventional warfare techniques that include long-range reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, and sabotage operations. Small tactical units are mission specific organized forces that are highly skilled in conducting raids and ambushes, along with secondary tasks like reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. Although, ABGD forces have not encountered this type of threat since WWII, the probability exists that future enemies may have such forces that are derivatives of the Soviet “Spetnaz” special purpose forces.

Level III is the most dangerous, but least likely threat encountered by ABGD forces. They include major attacks by aircraft and theater missiles armed with conventional or NBC weapons, airborne, heliborne, amphibious, and major ground attacks. These threats require timely assistance from a response force (RF) or a tactical combat force (TCF) for the current USAF ABGD force structure is organized to only delay, not defeat, this level of threat.<sup>2</sup> Presently the

likelihood of a large ground force attacking an air base is relatively small. Early detection of large ground forces by modern surveillance systems would allow US commanders time to disrupt their actions before they could interfere with air base operations.

In response to the threat levels, the USAF is tasked to provide in-place and deployable air base defense forces, organized, trained, and equipped to undertake the ABGD mission. During periods of low- or mid-level threats (Level I or II), air base defense forces have the primary responsibility for defeating enemy attacks by penetrating forces and/or from stand-off attacks inside a designated air base tactical area of responsibility (TAOR). The USAF component will ensure adequate support is available from the other joint components to meet surveillance and denial needs, such as for the standoff threat, beyond the capabilities of the Air Force.<sup>3</sup> In any case, Level I or II threats must be defeated or delayed until assistance comes from response forces, usually US Army Military Police units assigned to area commands with supporting fire.

During periods of high-level threat (Level III), air base defense forces will depend on support from rear area security response forces of sister service components or host-nation forces to ensure the survivability of air bases. These usually include US Army, US Marine, or host-nation forces located outside the air base TAOR, who have sole responsibility for security requirements.<sup>4</sup> However, USAF base defense forces are still responsible to defend and delay until tactical combat forces can be employed against the threat. As for countering aircraft and missile threats directed against air bases, USAF ABGD forces must rely upon support from the host nation or US Army Air Defense forces. As note earlier, while the ABGD forces do have the capabilities for limited point air defense the subject of full dimensional “air defense” will be left for another study, due to length constraints.

## **Early Signals of Change**

The requirement for the Air Force to forward-deploy assets in support of contingencies short of a major theater war is expected to remain high over the next 15 to 20 years.<sup>5</sup> These forward deployments demonstrate the United States' commitment as a world leader, lend credibility and enhance regional stability for our allies, provide a crisis response capability, and promote U.S. influence and access to all corners of the globe.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, these deployments will also antagonize state and non-state adversaries in these regions.

The current superiority of the United States in conventional military power will likely force our adversaries to pursue an asymmetric response to U.S. provocation. These adversaries may use unconventional means such as NBC weapons or terrorism to avoid direct confrontation with deployed forces and thus challenge U.S. resolve in the region. Adversaries may also employ terrorist tactics to disrupt or destroy key centers of gravity required by deployed forces to sustain regional military operations or inflict casualties on U.S. Air Force personnel in an effort to weaken American public support for continued presence in the region.<sup>7</sup>

Nuclear weapons, even the simplest devices that have been developed by various proliferant countries, have an enormous potential for physical damage. Such weapons can destroy or damage major portions of the rear area and greatly impair both the physical communications and electronics infrastructure of the battlespace. Military forces deployed against an adversary with nuclear capabilities must take precautionary measures to try to limit the effects of a nuclear blast.

Other nuclear threats, possibly from non-state organizations, include the theft or outright purchase of nuclear material. The threat posed by terrorist construction and deployment of a radiological dispersion device (RDD) is real, but limited. A RDD is a device designed to utilize radioactive material to cause disruption, damage, or injury.<sup>8</sup> However, RDDs do not include

nuclear weapons such as those described above. The widespread use of radioactive materials in medicine, industry, and research makes it entirely plausible that terrorists could acquire radioactive material, and the requirements for design of such a device are not beyond that of a terrorist group. The military utility of RDDs is much smaller than that of chemical and biological weapons. Historically, RDDs have been generally envisioned as having a role in attempts to achieve area denial, although cheaper and more effective substitutes are widely available.

The biological warfare threat is expected to grow over the next decade as some twelve countries are now believed to have biological warfare programs, and there is the possibility that terrorist groups could develop or obtain biological agents.<sup>9</sup> There is an increasing availability of biological warfare-related technology, materials, information and expertise, and publicity about potential vulnerabilities. Genetic engineering is one of a growing number of bio-technologies that could allow countries to develop agents, such as modified viruses, that would make detection and diagnosis difficult and may defeat current protection and treatment protocols.<sup>10</sup> Because of the dual-use nature of all the materials needed to produce biological warfare agents, any country with the political will and a competent scientific base probably could produce agents. However, the preparation and effective use of these agents by hostile states or groups is more difficult than some popular literature suggests.<sup>11</sup>

Like the threat from biological warfare, the threat from chemical warfare also could grow in the coming years. Many states have chemical warfare programs and there is a danger that these capabilities will spread to additional states. The increased availability of related technologies, coupled with the relative ease of producing some chemical agents, has increased concern that their production and use may become more attractive to states or terrorist groups in the future.

## Summary

Today's ABGD forces like the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG face a new and more complex threat. No longer are Level I and II threats the most likely threats our forces will encounter. The inability of our adversaries to threaten the United States with traditional military force drives them towards an asymmetric approach—using high explosives, chemicals and biological agents, and potentially even nuclear devices.<sup>12</sup> The reality of having to encounter Level III unconventional threats, such as the use of NBC weapons and their delivery means is becoming highly probable. More than 25 countries have or may be developing NBC weapons and the means to deliver them.<sup>13</sup> While the 1990s witnessed a considerable reduction in the threat from the countries with nuclear weapons and the indefinite and unconditional extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the security challenges posed by the continuing spread of WMD remains daunting. In addition, the NBC proliferation threat has become transnational and now has the potential to come from terrorist organizations or organized crime groups. Proliferation of NBC weapons and associated delivery systems presents a daunting challenge to the AEF and defense forces tasked to protect the airbase. The activation of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is a response to counter this challenge. The next chapter will explore the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG capabilities and concept of operations to protect against this new emerging threat.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> JP3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations*, 28 May 1996, 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> AFI 31-301, *Air Base Defense*, 1 August 1986, 5.

<sup>3</sup> AFPD 31-30, *Air Base Defense*, 2 March 1995, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the Secretary of Defense to the President and Congress*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 1996), 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Joint Doctrine Capstone and Keystone Primer*, 15 July 1997, A-18.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the Secretary of Defense to the President and Congress*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 1996), 2-3.



## Notes

<sup>8</sup> Department of Defense, *Proliferation: Threat and Response, January 2001*, (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, January 2001), 113.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>12</sup> DOD, Responses to Transnational Threats, vol. II, Force Protection Report, Defense Science Board, Oct 1997, v.

<sup>13</sup> DOD, *Proliferation: Threat and Response, January 2001*, 114.

## Chapter 4

### Current Doctrine

*At the heart of war lies doctrine. It represents the central beliefs for waging war in order to achieve victory. Doctrine is of the mind, a network of faith and knowledge reinforced by experience, which lays the pattern for the utilization of men, equipment, and tactics. It is fundamental to sound judgement.*

—General Curtis E. Lemay,  
USAF, 1968

As per direction of the Air Force’s Chief of Staff General Fogleman, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG was developed in response to significant increases in threats to deployed forces caused by a rapidly changing geopolitical world environment. Assigned to Air Combat Command under the command authority of the 9<sup>th</sup> AF commander, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is a multidiscipline unit that has two directly subordinate squadrons, the 822<sup>nd</sup> Security Forces Squadron (SFS) and 823<sup>rd</sup> SFS located at Moody AFB, Georgia.<sup>1</sup> Composed of numerous attached unit type codes (UTCs) from different CONUS major commands (MAJCOMs), the Air Force Reserves, and the Air National Guard, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG provides three cohesive integrated squadron level force protection teams. (Note: as a reminder, the terms force protection and ABGD are used synonymously throughout the text).

### Mission

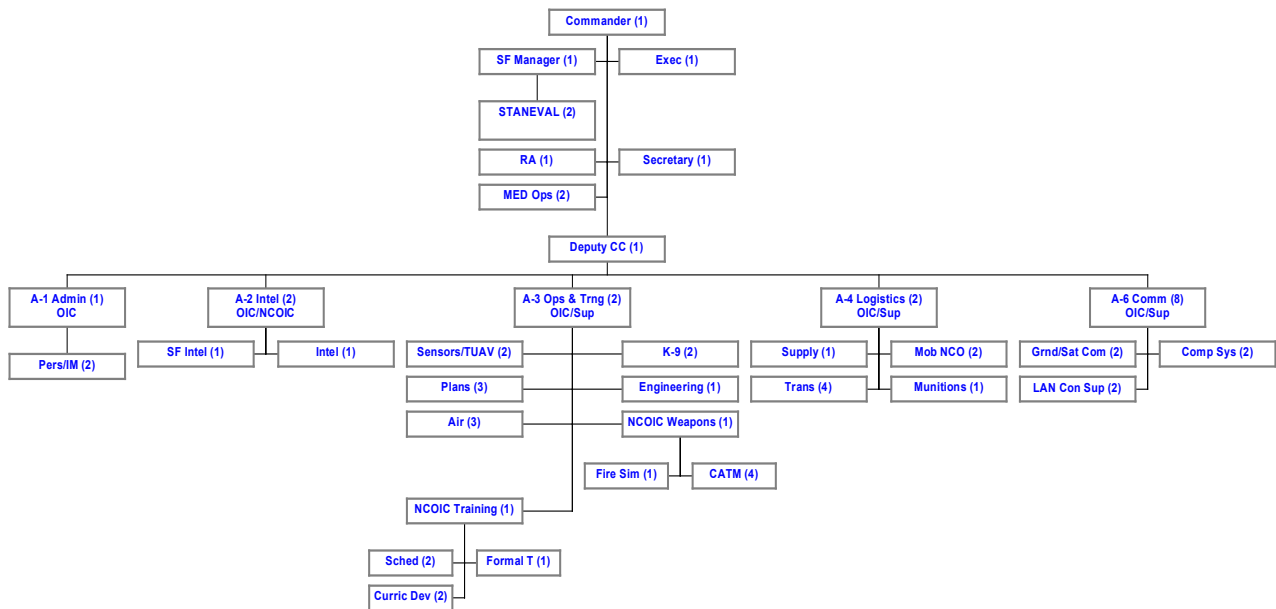
The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is tasked to provide fully integrated, highly trained, “state-of-the-art” force protection in support of an AEW deployed during a contingency operation. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG also

supports AEF steady state rotations. Manned with twelve multifunctional disciplines, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is capable of “first-in” rapid deployment to any operating location in support of the USAF Global Engagement mission.<sup>2</sup>

## **Capabilities**

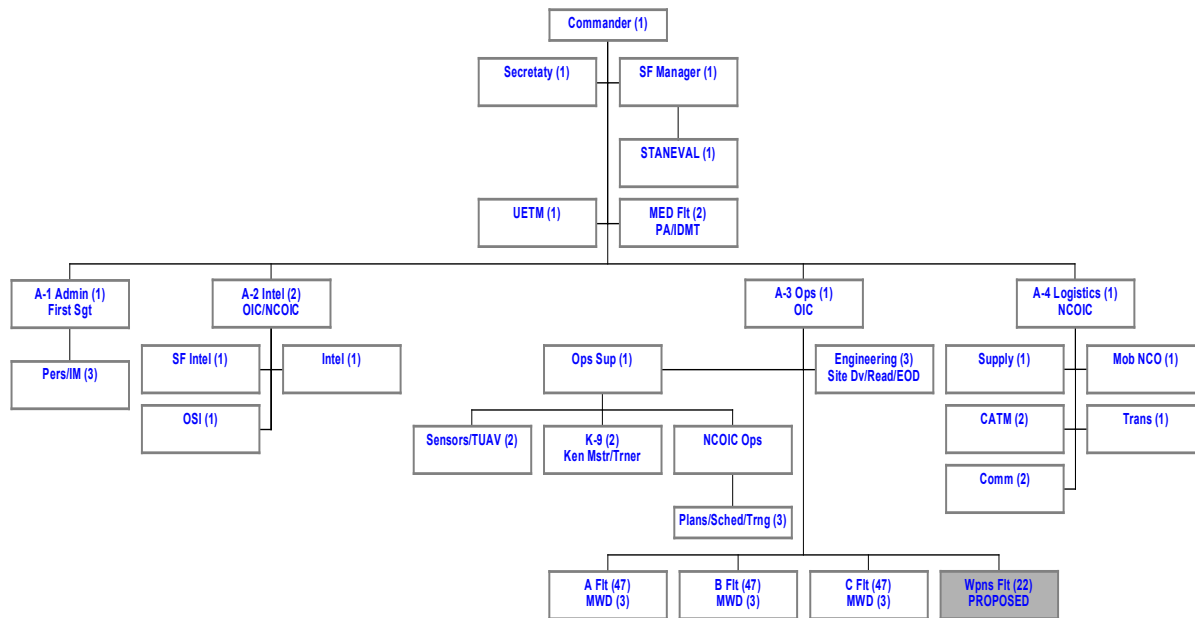
The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG’s current force structure consists of three Force Protection Headquarters, three 6-person Airborne Liaison Teams, nine 48-person Force Protection Flights, one 22-person heavy weapons flight, three 13-person Airborne Security Elements, three 2-person Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Teams, and eighteen 2-person Sniper Teams.<sup>3</sup> The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is organized, trained, and equipped to achieve “First-In” deployed force protection (FP) objectives for missions ranging in scope from small scale contingencies (SSC) to major theaters of war (MTW). The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG (with squadrons and/or attached UTCs) are tasked to provide ABGD capability for the Aerospace Expeditionary Wing (AEWs) and Aerospace Expeditionary Task Forces (AETFs).

The Group’s headquarters (HQ) provides the framework to establish and conduct effective FP procedures worldwide. Inherent in the command structure of the headquarters elements is twelve different Air Force Specialty Codes. This robust command element gives the Group Commander direct control over the critical staff expertise needed to counter various threats and allows the coordination of key components such as explosive ordnance disposal, communications, intelligence, civil engineering, and logistics. The Group HQ is designed to provide continuity, standardization, functional oversight, reach-back, communications, intelligence, logistics, administrative and staff support. Figure 4-1 identifies these unique capabilities organized into the headquarters group.



**Figure 1 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group Headquarters Organizational Chart.<sup>4</sup>**

Under the Group there are two squadrons designed to deploy as an integrated Squadron Level Force Protection Team. Manned with 187 personnel each squadron is trained, organized, and equipped to secure “high-risk” locations.<sup>5</sup> Figure 4-2 identifies the organization of the squadron.



**Figure 2 Security Forces Squadron Organizational Chart.<sup>6</sup>**

At the tip of the spear, is the deployable 33-person Force Protection Headquarters, which is composed of group and squadron headquarters personnel.<sup>7</sup> The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is capable of deploying three separate Force Protection Headquarters simultaneously. Based upon mission, enemy, terrain, time and troops available (METT-T) principles, this translates into three separate small-scale FP missions or one large FP mission. Designed for rapid deployment, a deployable headquarters, coupled with its force protection flight and crew-served weapons flight, is capable of deployment within 24 hours of notification, given the appropriate alert status. Figure 4-3 identifies the unique multifunctional disciplines organized into a deployable Force Protection Headquarters. Figure 4-4 identifies a deployable Force Protection Flight. The overall goal of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is to achieve full-spectrum force protection synergy by combining the right multifunctional disciplines to effectively provide a safe ABGD environment for the AETF.

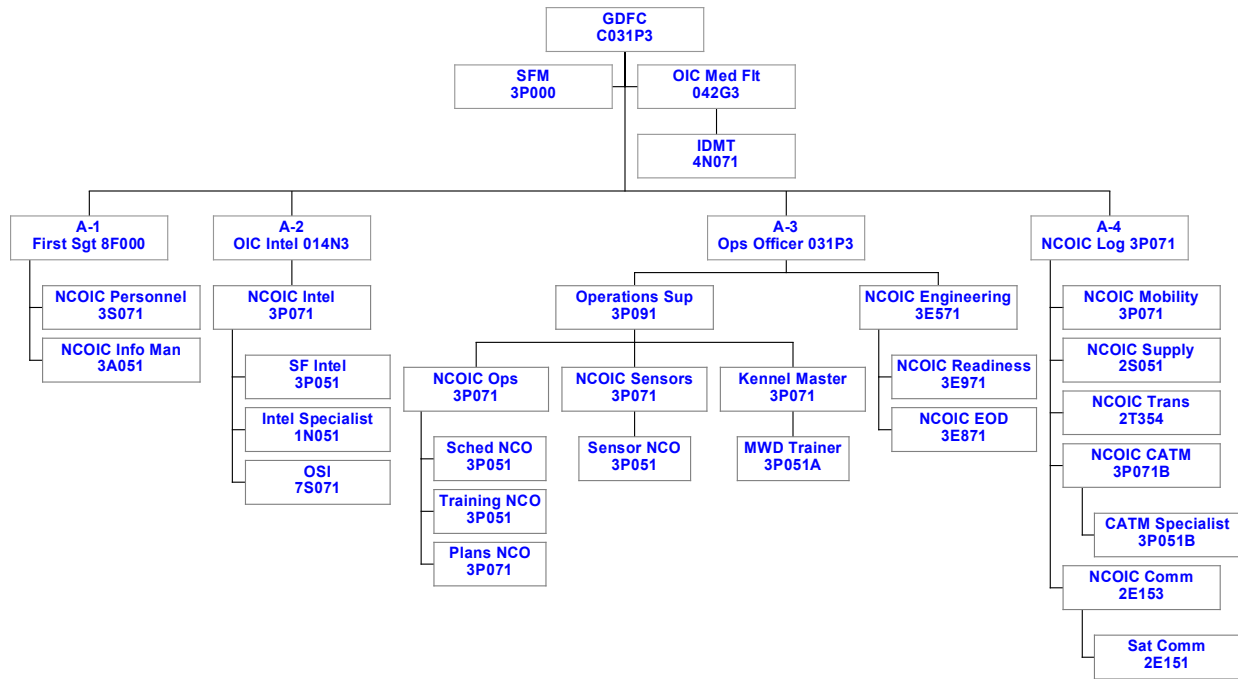


Figure 3 Deployable Squadron Headquarters Organizational Chart.<sup>8</sup>

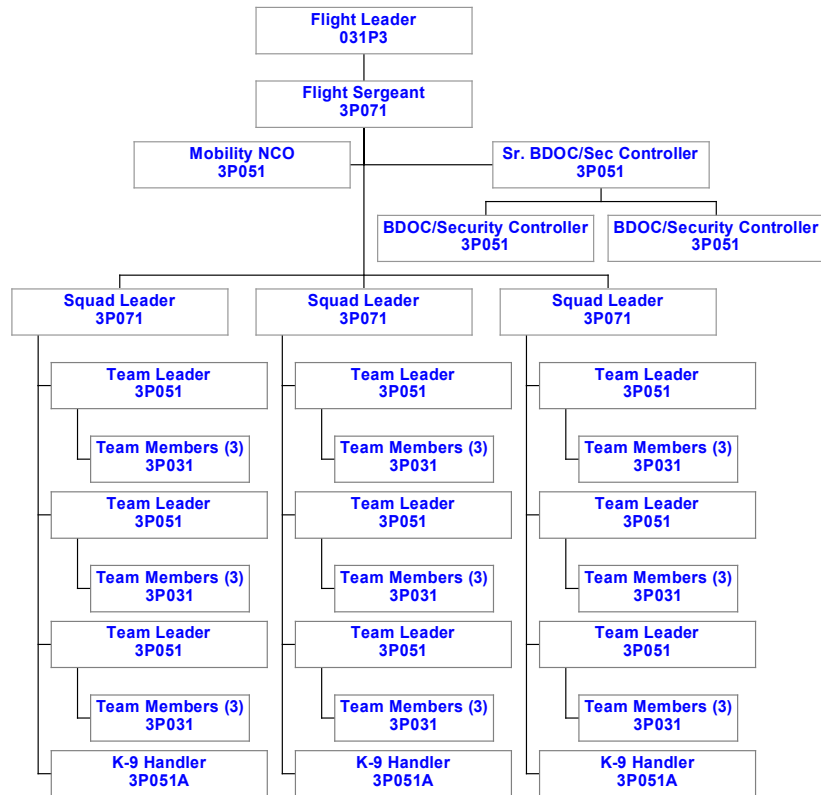


Figure 4 Deployable Flight Organizational Chart.<sup>9</sup>

## Concept of Operations

Under current national contingency plans, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is tasked with the conduct of airfield security within the AEW concept of operations for security forces to allow unhindered conduct of air operations and FP of USAF resources, equipment, and personnel. Currently, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has only a “blue and silver” Deployable Headquarters Team, one assigned to each USAF AEW (the 366<sup>th</sup> Wing at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina).<sup>10</sup> Upon the activation of a third squadron, the concept of operations calls for one element to be on-call with the AEW, one element to be deployed with an AEF steady state, and one element to be in a reconstitution/training status. Figure 4-5 outlines the proposed 820<sup>th</sup> SFG concept of operations.

<b>ELEMENT 1</b>	<b>AEW On-Call</b>	<b>Deployed Steady-State</b>	<b>Reconstitute - Train</b>
<b>ELEMENT 2</b>	<b>Reconstitute - Train</b>	<b>AEW On-Call</b>	<b>Deployed Steady-State</b>
<b>ELEMENT 3</b>	<b>Deployed Steady-State</b>	<b>Reconstitute - Train</b>	<b>AEW On-Call</b>

**Figure 5 Purposed Concept of Operations.<sup>11</sup>**

Given this, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG makes the following three basic assumptions as matter of employment doctrine.

1. **Enemy Assumptions:** the enemy is not greater than threat Level II, consisting of not greater than company size elements (100 to 130 personnel) and/or special operations forces. Additionally, the enemy has no armored threat. Unarmored mounted threat may be present.
2. **Friendly Assumptions:** the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will conduct airfield security missions with not less than a HQ and forces determined by METT-T.
3. **FP Planning:** all planning will be threat based and FP requirements will be determined by the theater CINC, consistent with the threat and mission objectives. However, while the executive agency for FP varies by location, the USAF AETF senior tactical commander or the deployed AEW wing commander is responsible for the FP of their people and resources. However, the deployed 820<sup>th</sup> SFG Defense Force Commander (DFC) will be the wing commander’s focal point for FP. The AETF or AEW

commander, with the assistance of the DFC, will develop and chair a FP committee to synchronize FP efforts of all assigned units.<sup>12</sup>

820<sup>th</sup> SFG operations consist of six phases: Pre-deployment, Site Activation, Deployment, Employment/Sustainment, Transition/Redeployment, and Reconstitution.<sup>13</sup>

1. Pre-Deployment: 820<sup>th</sup> SFG provides military training teams (MTTs) to the lead wing, time permitting. The MTTs provide FP common soldier skills guidance and training to the unit. They also initiate the intelligence preparation of the battlespace, in conjunction with the wing intelligence unit.
2. Site Activation: During this phase, the lead 820<sup>th</sup> SFG personnel provide initial FP advice to the commander and establish host nation (HN) security and liaison with the US embassy. Additionally, advice and assessments on the tactical situation are provided to the inbound DFC via organic reachback capability.
3. Deployment: 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will deploy a “first-in” FP capability and be in place 24 hours before the AEW/AETF arrival.
4. Employment/Sustainment: In this phase, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG’s personnel conduct and/or participate in the AEW/AETF commander’s initial site vulnerability assessment and serve as the commander’s FP advisor. They will provide installation security, establish vehicle search areas/procedures, establish circulation control, provide limited convoy escort, and provide limited mounted/dismounted patrolling both inside and outside the base perimeter. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will also utilize organic technology to enhance detection and conduct random antiterrorism measures (RAM). They will initiate, establish, and maintain liaison with the host nation, sister service, and coalition forces. Additionally, they also provide identification badge services to enhance circulation control and maintain a response force (RF) to react to perceived/actual threats during the AEW/AETF employment and sustainment operations. The size of the RF will be contingent upon METT-T principles.
5. Transition/Redeployment: In view of the fact that the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is tasked to support AEW/AETF operations, and that this unit is a unique composite unit that cannot be readily replaced, an effective transition period with follow-on expeditionary combat support units is required. This ensures maintenance of the required level of FP throughout the transition/deployment or drawdown phase of the AEW/AETF operation. The current concept of employment calls for rotational forces to backfill the primary unit within 90 days of initial deployment.
6. Reconstitution: This phase is a CONUS based operation. During the reconstitution phase, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG personnel finalize their after action reports with lessons learned and submit them through the AEF Center, at Langley AFB Va. The unit also conducts preventative maintenance, retraining, and service checks on organic equipment in order to conduct repairs and order replacements as necessary.



Command and control of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG deployed forces requires sound communications, command, control, and information (C3I). The effective interrelationships between the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG commander, group staff, squadron staffs, and a FP force is the key element to the C3I process. During day-to-day CONUS based operations, the respective unit commanders administratively and operationally control all flights. Upon MAJCOM notification of deployment, all flights and elements transfer operational control (OPCON) to the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG/CC, who reports directly to the AEW/AETF senior tactical commander or the deployed wing commander IAW Joint Pub 3-10.1.

## **Summary**

The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is a multidiscipline unit assigned under the direction of Air Combat Command providing a fully integrated, highly trained, “state-of-the-art” force protection team to support deployed AEWs and AETFs. Manned with twelve multifunctional disciplines, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is capable of “first-in” rapid deployment to any operating location in support of the USAF Global Engagement mission. The Groups headquarters element provides the framework for establishing and conducting effective ABGD operations worldwide. Designed for rapid deployment, this unit coupled with its force protection flight and crew-served weapons elements can be fully deployed within 24 hours of notification. Once the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG arrives at a forward operating base, the unit accomplishes an immediate FP assessment of the area utilizing the METT-T principles. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will then incorporate all physical security and antiterrorism measures necessary to ensure AF resources and personnel have a secure environment in which to conduct operations. In essence, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG offers the USAF a total ABGD package, integrating all aspects of the ABGD mission into a one cohesive unit. With that said, Chapter 5

addresses several key issues the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has encountered in its attempt to consolidate the ABGD mission.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Air Force Instruction 10-405 (draft), *Operations- 820<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Group (SFG)*, 1 September 2000. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Briefing, 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, Subject: Mission Briefing, present 15 February 2001 Security Forces Senior Officer Symposium, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, Slide 4.

<sup>3</sup> Briefing, Slide 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Slide 11.

<sup>5</sup> Briefing, 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, slide 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Slide 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Slide 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Slide 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Slide 8.

<sup>10</sup> Chief Richard Hackney, Personal Interview, 9 March 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Briefing, Slide 10.

<sup>12</sup> AFI 10-405 (draft), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 4.

## Chapter 5

### Current Issues Under Consideration

*Rear guards are the safety of armies and often they carry victory with them.*

—Fredrick the Great, Instructions to his Generals, 1747

#### **Issue: 820<sup>th</sup> SFG or MAJCOM Crisis Response Groups – who has precedence?**

On 14 March 2001, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will under go its third evolution since its transfer to Air Combat Command (ACC). The initial concept only intended the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG to be a multifunctional headquarters group providing force protection expertise and guidance to the AEF commander. The second evolution added seven 44-man Security Forces (SF) flights to the headquarters; however, it lacked cohesiveness as the attached SF flights were distributed between active and reserve forces throughout the USAF. The third evolution cohesively integrates all assigned elements and personnel into one organization responsible for full dimensional force protection. However, with the addition of the MAJCOM specific Crisis Response Groups (CRGs are small multifunctional teams consisting of security forces, medical, intelligence, etc. personnel designed to respond to area crisis) modeled after the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG template, the question arises as to who has precedence for responding to operational contingencies?

## **Status**

With respect to being the USAF's only "911" FP responder, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has to operate/coexist with the MAJCOM CRGs responding to FP crisis situations within their respective areas of operations (AORs). As per USAF Air Staff direction, each MAJCOM was directed to establish a CRG similar to the multifunctional composition of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, that is considerably smaller in size and capability, in order to handle small-scale FP types of incidents with their AORs.<sup>1</sup> These include primarily military operations other than war (MOOTW), such as Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs) and responding to terrorists bombings.

The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG will still be the "911" responder for large scale military operations and support the AEW/AETFs. The authority to deploy an AEW/AETF and subsequent ABGD team resides in ACC, whom the MAJCOM components still support.

## **Recommendation**

The 1998 Kenya and Tanzania US embassy bombings are excellent examples of MOOTW that needed FP support. The AETF supporting OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH is another example on a different scale. Let's practice what we preach and understand that the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG and the MAJCOM CSG missions may be similar, but they are vastly different when you compare the size and scope of their mission. The MAJCOM's need CRGs for responding to small scale FP type of incidents and the USAF needs the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG to provide full dimensional ABGD for the AEWs and AETFs. To clarify the issue, the USAF should delineate criterion for the deployment of both with special attention to the threshold between deploying a CRG or 820<sup>th</sup> SFG.

## **Issue: Air Defense Capabilities?**

As stated earlier, this paper does not address the full dimensions of “Air Defense” of the air base environment due to the study length constraints. However, it is significant to ask the question, “what happened to the allocations for fulltime Air Force Short Ranged Air Defense Stinger Units, initially purposed for the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, in 1997?”

The initial security force plans called for a well-trained, limited scale, Stinger force capable of point air defense with provisions for expanding into a fully mission capable unit. The draft plan was called “OPERATION POINT GUARD” and consisted of fielding an all-volunteer Security Forces flight of 34 personnel assigned to the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG. The Air Force Stinger unit would be able to train 100 percent of the time, giving them the opportunity to become the best man-portable air defense group in the world. Plans called for initial training to be conducted at the Army Air Defense School at Fort Bliss, Texas. Additionally, each member of the unit would have the opportunity to fire live rounds at ballistic aerial targets. If Point Guard was approved and successful, future plans called for a larger flight with state of the art Avenger or HUMRAAM systems.<sup>2</sup> In sum, this meant that the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG would have the additional mission of point air defense to support the AETF.

### **Status**

The activation of the air defense flight has yet to occur, despite the activation of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG with its two subordinate squadrons and their relocation to Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. Determined efforts by senior security force (SF) leaders to re-establish the program have still not convinced the Air Force to “buy into” the concept of establishing it’s own air defense units. The prognoses for activating the Stinger units does not look promising, considering that the USAF closed the ROK SF Stinger program in 1995, as a result of the service wide personnel drawdown.

Currently, there are two schools of thought: 1) SF leaders would like to bring back the Stinger program to allow for independent air defense capability within the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, and 2) Operational leaders recognize the need for an intrinsic air defense capability, yet they are satisfied with the current Army support and are very reluctant to take on additional missions.

### **Recommendation**

In any case, the only air defense capability the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG employs is eight M2 .50 caliber machine guns attached to their Air National Guard heavy weapons flight. If one takes into account the numerous countries around the world that possess the capability for airborne attacks, I would have to agree with my SF peers that it would seem logical to activate the purposed Stinger unit for point air defense. However, considering the magnitude of this issue alone, I will defer analysis of “Air Defense” as future “food for thought” and another study.

### **Issue: EOD and NBC Specialist Personnel?**

EOD and NBC specialist personnel are assigned to the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG to enhance the Security Force’s ability to successfully accomplish the ABGD mission in an austere environment. However, they currently offer limited capabilities and have usually completed with their mission long before the deploying unit is ready to depart.

### **Status**

The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has two enlisted Civil Engineering Readiness personnel (AFSC 3E971) assigned to the unit to counter the NBC threat. Each person is assigned to one of two deployable Squadron Headquarters, of which only one NBC readiness person deploys with the unit. The NBC specialist’s main duty is to be on the advanced party (ADVON) team for the main support

base. They compile an NBC threat assessment and an NBC operational picture for the deployed location, and turn over all of their information and intelligence to the CE Readiness personnel, who arrive later with the wing's support package. They then become advisors for NBC force protection issues. In sum, they essentially provide only the initial assessment and recommendations with a limited capability.

The NBC specialist's primary means of chemical detection is the M256 Chemical Agent Detector Kit. Chemical Agent Monitors are available, however at this time, they are having some problems with them, and therefore are not deployable. The M22 Automatic Chemical Agent Alarm (ACAA) is currently awaiting delivery and the unit is on the priority list to receive them. The NBC Specialist also carries M8 and M9 paper for liquid detection. Lastly, the unit has digital dosimeters and an ADM-300 RADIAC meter for detection and protection from radioactive sources. The only other chemical detection capability is that of the security forces who carry the M8, M9 papers and the M256 Kit.<sup>3</sup>

As for the EOD personnel, like the NBC specialist, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has two enlisted 3E871 personnel assigned, again one per deployable Squadron Headquarters. They serve the same function as the NBC personal to do assessments; they have no current capability to conduct EOD operations. The unit must rely on the incoming EOD teams to conduct render safe conditions.

## **Recommendation**

Despite the EOD and NBC specialists limited capabilities, the Civil Engineer (CE) career fields (NBC, EOD, and Site Development) are still needed to ensure the survivability of the installation and augment the AETF. Under the current situation, when the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG deploys the NBC and EOD specialist are committed to staying until the SFG rotates out. After they are finished with their mission, usually within 30 days, their skills are then seldom utilized and they

are assimilated into the support squadron for various base support details, ranging from building fighting positions to assisting in sentry duties. A better utilization of the CE specialists would be to remove them from the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG and placed them into special CE team, such as an Air Force Civil Engineer Support Team. Here they could still be deployed with the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG ADVON team to provide the initial assessment responsibilities. However, upon completion of their mission (usually within 30 days) and with the arrival of base support personnel they could then be re-deployed to other bases to prepare them for use by subsequent AETFs.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> CMSgt Richard Hackney, Personal Interview, 25 January 2001.

<sup>2</sup> CPT Mick Simonelli, "Security Forces and Man-Portable Air Defense" *Security Forces Digest*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 1997, 20.

<sup>3</sup> TSgt Robert Lindt, Personal Interview, 26 January 2001.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

*Security no longer ends at the base perimeter. We must assume responsibility for a much larger tactical perimeter that will keep the threat away from our people and equipment.*

—General Ronald R. Fogleman, 1997

The logical question to ask after reading this thesis is “Is the 820th SFG postured to meet the needs of the AEF?” My assessment is partially, but it is relatively untested. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG has made tremendous strides in the improvement of our ABGD mission; in fact, ABGD is in the best shape it’s ever been in the history of air power. However, despite this much-improved position, we still have significant challenges ahead, specifically: 1) fully integrating our ABGD resources and force structure into the needs of the AEF, 2) continually modernizing our forces with superior force enabling technology, and 3) updating our ABGD operational and tactical doctrine to effectively operate on tomorrow’s battlefield.

A historical review of the ABGD mission proves that air base defense resource allocations are risk based and programmatically sustained. In the past, the USAF has piecemealed its ABGD investments only to experience a devastating event that highlighted shortfalls, such as the WWII German victory on the island of Crete, the surprise VC attack on Bein Hoa Air Base in Vietnam, or the terrorist bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. Past oversights, shortcomings, and lessons learned must be incorporated through a sustained effort. A viable ABGD capability is a long-term investment program. A cyclical pattern of ABGD responses has

not worked in the past and it will not work to protect Air Force assets in the future. The loss of airframes and personnel has sufficiently demonstrated this fact from WWI to Operation Allied Force. As the USAF moves into the new century, a new emerging threat environment has predicated the need for changing the way the USAF executes its ABGD mission.

Today's ABGD forces, like the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG, face a new and more complex threat. No longer are Level I and II threats the most likely threats our forces will encounter. The reality of having to encounter Level III unconventional threats, such as the use of NBC weapons and their delivery means is becoming highly probable. More than 25 countries have or may be developing NBC weapons and the means to deliver them.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the NBC proliferation threat has become transnational and now has the potential to come from terrorist organizations or organized crime groups. Proliferation of NBC weapons and associated delivery systems presents a daunting challenge to the AEF and defense forces task to protect the airbase. While the activation of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG does attempt to close the gap in countering this challenge, ADVANCEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY ARE STILL NEEDED IF WE ARE TO REDUCE OUR RELIANCE ON MANPOWER

Since the end of the Cold War, the US Air Force has made great strides toward becoming an expeditionary aerospace force. Since 1990, the Air Force has downsized by 36 percent while overseas contingencies have greatly increased. In 1989, the Air Force averaged 3,400 people deployed for contingencies and exercises. Since the end of DESERT STORM, the average had grown to 14,600 in FY 97.<sup>2</sup> Many deployments, due to short time constraints and/or austere conditions, cannot expect external (US Army, host nation, or coalition) air base defense support to be readily available. These contingencies and AETF deployments require the Air Force to move forward with a viable air base ground defense capability. The 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is that viable capability providing fully integrated, highly trained, "state of the art" force protection for the Expeditionary Air Force. Utilizing a multifunctional organizational structure, the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG is

capable of “first-in” rapid deployment to any operating location in support of the USAF Global Engagement mission.

The majority of this study provides “food for thought”; based on the current transitional status of the 820<sup>th</sup> SFG. Thus, the jury is still out. As an institution, the USAF must embrace the myriad ABGD challenges of the new century. We must never forget that even though the primary mission of the Air Force is air power, it takes “ground power” to facilitate that mission. A viable ABGD capability is a critical portion of the ground power that affords the freedom to generate the air power that takes the war to the enemy.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> DOD, *Proliferation: Threat and Response, January 2001*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document 2-4.1, Force Protection. 29 October, 1999. P.33-35.

## *Glossary* □

AAF	Army Air Forces
ABGD	Air Base Ground Defense
ACAA	Automatic Chemical Agent Alarm
ACC	Air Combat Command
AEF	Air Expeditionary Force
AETF	Air Expeditionary Task Force
AEW	Air Expeditionary Wing
AF	Air Force
AFB	Air Force Base
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Codes
AP	Air Police
AOR	Area of Operations
ARVN	Army of Republic of Vietnam
CE	Civil Engineering
CINC	Commander in Chief
CONUS	Continental United States
CRGs	Crisis Response Groups
C3I	Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence
DAD	Distributed Area Defense
DFC	Defense Force Commander
EOD	Explosive Ordinance Disposal
FP	Force Protection
FOA	Forward Operating Agency
HQ	Headquarters
HN	Host Nation
IAW	In Accordance With
MAJCOM	Major Command
METT-T	Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops, Time
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
MTT	Mobile Training Teams
MTW	Major Theater Of War

NBC	Nuclear, Biological and Chemical
NEO	Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OPCON	Operational Control
OPMSANG	Office of the Program Manager Saudi Arabian National Guard
PERSTEMPO	Personnel Tempo
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAM	Random Antiterrorism Measure
RDD	Radiological Dispersion Device
RF	Response Force
ROK	Republic of Korea
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Air Forces
SSC	Small Scale Contingencies
SF	Security Forces
SFG	Security Forces Group
SFS	Security Forces Squadron
TOAR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
USAF	United States Air Force
UTCs	Unit Type Codes
VNAF	Vietnamese Air Forces
VC	Viet Cong
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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