

TERRORIST VULNERABILITY:  
FAILURE OF POLICY?

A Research Paper

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by

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## **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Government or the Department of Defense.

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## *Preface*

I chose the topic of this paper for two reasons. The first is the seeming lack of focus in protecting our armed forces in deployed locations. There is a plethora of guidance, regulations, and policies on the topics of terrorism, anti-terrorism, and counter-terrorism available to the warfighter, but there appears to be a lack of continuity and a true joint effort by all of the Services. My intent with this project is to point out possible failures in current procedures and recommend potential solutions.

The second, and more personal reason for choosing this topic is my own experience as a victim of terrorism while deployed on military duty. On 10 August 1987, in a suburb of Athens, Greece, I suffered injuries in a terrorist bombing. Ten of us were returning to our hotel in an unmarked minibus after flying a routine military mission. We were not innocent bystanders, but the actual target as a parked car filled with explosives was detonated by remote control as we passed it. Due to an error in the placement of the explosives, we were all spared serious injury.

After the bombing, I was amazed at the confusion and lack of preparation of the military personnel to deal with a terrorist event. In 1987, they had little guidance on how to deal with or adequately protect military forces against terrorism and I wanted to see if improvements have been made since then.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance I received during the course of this project. I would like to thank the superb staff at the Fairchild Library at Air University for

their knowledge and assistance in making this project possible. I would also like to offer my sincere appreciation to Lt Col Steve Torrence, my faculty research advisor, for guiding me through this endeavor. Of course, I have to thank my wife, Deb, for her patience and understanding while I completed this project.

### *Abstract*

The deployment of US armed forces to areas of unrest exposes them to possible attack from hostile state and non-state actors. US forces represent American interests and provide an opportunity for an adversary to attempt to influence US public or political opinion through violence or threat of violence. For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on the threat of terrorist bomb attacks against US forces abroad. When it comes to protecting deployed United States military forces against terrorism, is force protection provided sufficient priority under current US security policies and guidance?

Traditional research methods were used to analyze and provide possible solutions to the problem. US government publications, military manuals, and professional journals provided the primary information sources to avoid possible periodical and newspaper bias. Also, the suicide bombing of the US Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996 are used as case studies to illustrate the similarities and differences of the findings, recommendations, and force protection guidance resulting from each of two mass-casualty bombings, 13 years apart.

There are similarities between the two bombings, but while there is certainly more guidance and written policy concerning the terrorist threat to US forces since 1983, there does not appear to be a truly united effort among the armed forces to protect themselves against terrorist attack. This requires the creation of a true joint doctrine leading to better training, education, and resources to protect deployed US forces and deter terrorism.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*Even in friendly territory a fortified camp should be set up; a general should never have to say: 'I did not expect it.'*

—The Emperor Maurice, *The Strategikon*, c. 600 AD

Terrorism. The word itself strikes fear into many people around the world. Seemingly senseless acts of violence create a desire in people to understand the motivation of terrorists. This is not intended to be a psychological study on why terrorists act, but a discussion why terrorists may choose to strike US armed forces deployed overseas. More importantly, what can the US government do to better protect its armed forces' men and women against this threat?

### Background

Terrorism is a natural weapon for the very weak. By attacking an enemy's morale rather than its physical forces directly, the terrorist achieves a disparate payback in political power for a minimal expenditure.<sup>1</sup> Brian Jenkins, a former member of the Rand Corporation and author of many reports on international terrorism, notes that terrorism is violence to effect the people watching rather than the actual victims. Fear is the intended effect, not a byproduct of the act.<sup>2</sup> As a result, terrorism can be a strong weapon wielded by the weak to affect many people other than the actual victims.

It is important to note the effect terrorism has on society in general, but the American people in particular. Terrorist acts are media events Cable News Network (CNN) brings into homes around the world. Since terrorism is a type of political theater designed to alter governmental authority or behavior, the perceived inability of democratic governments to respond effectively to terrorist incidents, as seen in the media, affects the confidence of citizens and allies.<sup>3</sup>

### **Increased US Involvement in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)**

The end of the Cold War diminished the threat of a major war against a known and powerful enemy. The President's National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement calls for a presence of US forces, in areas of unrest, to advance US strategic interests and influence. This also serves as an effort to promote regional stability and democracy abroad. A large part of this strategy involves using the US armed forces to deter aggression and participate in peacekeeping operations.<sup>4</sup>

The military instrument of power is normally thought of as the last resort to protect national interests or achieve national objectives, and traditionally is designed for sustained combat operations against a known enemy. MOOTW, on the other hand, involves deterring war, resolving conflict, and promoting peace. The idea is to prevent or limit hostile activity in a region or support humanitarian operations.<sup>5</sup> In an operation promoting peace or aiding a humanitarian relief operation, a reduction in force protection and security emphasis is not uncommon.

## **Relevancy of the Study**

Normally, the US military has faced the defined and readily identifiable fielded forces of an enemy during military operations. In order to support our national security strategy, the United States has become more involved in MOOTW; this often places forces in situations where existing political or religious differences within the host nation create an atmosphere of hostility towards the US presence. The enemy is not well-defined and the possibility of confrontation exists between ideological radicals and extremists and the US forces.

This study is relevant for two reasons. The first is the MOOTW increase. In MOOTW, the environment is often permissive, political objectives are the driving force and the impact of inappropriate action must be considered.<sup>6</sup> In the past, US forces were in permanent facilities surrounded by fences and gates staffed by guards. With fewer permanent bases overseas, US forces are often housed in unsecured areas. Since the intent of MOOTW is not to be permanent, US forces often erect tent cities or live in existing hotels or host government facilities. Political considerations and restrictive rules of engagement in an operation often limit the security measures our forces can take.<sup>7</sup> Highly visible security mechanisms such as armored vehicles, checkpoints, dogs or fences may not be feasible.

The second reason this study is relevant is the lack of a sufficient joint effort towards force protection from terrorism. The US military has a myriad of joint publications and directives created to conduct joint warfare and defensive operations, and even a joint publication devoted to antiterrorism. Yet, after issuing the joint publications, two terrorist incidents occurred in one year in Saudi Arabia. Something still appears to be wrong.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Donald J. Hanle, *Terrorism: The Newest Face of Warfare* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1989), 116.

<sup>2</sup>Brian Jenkins, *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict* (Los Angeles: Crescent Publications, 1975), 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Public Report of the Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism* (February 1986), 9.

<sup>4</sup>President William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington DC: The White House, US Government Printing Office, February 1996), 13.

<sup>5</sup>Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, I-1.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, I-1.

## Chapter 2

### Case Studies

*...give the enemy a spanking from behind. You can kill more soldiers by scaring them to death from behind with a lot of noise than by attacking them from the front.*

—General George S. Patton, Jr.  
*The Patton Papers, 1940*

There have been numerous terrorist attacks throughout the world and it would be impossible to study all of them in the limitations of this paper. Therefore, two significant terrorist incidents were selected as representative case studies, the suicide truck bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983 and the truck bombing of Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in 1996.

These particular incidents involved the use of explosives and created mass casualties. The bomb is the contemporary terrorist's weapon of choice. They are inexpensive to produce, attract attention, generally involve low risk to the terrorist, and are easily deniable should the bomb produce undesirable results.<sup>1</sup> Since 1983, approximately half of all recorded terrorist incidents involved explosives.<sup>2</sup> Also, thirteen years separate the two incidents. When comparing the two incidents, were improvements made over the intervening years to protect our forces against terrorism? Terrorism has received a significant amount of attention in our nation's capitol, but is that making significant differences in force protection?

## **The Beirut Bombing, 1983**

US military forces entered Lebanon in September 1982 as part of a multinational force. Initially, forces were generally welcomed by the local populace and the environment was considered benign. The American Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) resided in the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) Headquarters building located within the Marine compound at the Beirut International Airport. The US mission was to establish an environment that would permit the withdrawal of foreign military forces and aid the Lebanese government in establishing sovereignty in the Beirut area.<sup>3</sup>

At approximately 0622 on Sunday, 23 October 1983, a terrorist bomb destroyed the BLT Headquarters building.. The explosive device, estimated at the equivalent of 12,000 pounds of TNT, was contained inside a Mercedes stakebed truck driven by a single individual on a suicide mission. Moving at approximately 35 miles per hour, the truck penetrated the concertina wire fence surrounding the compound, swerved around several sewer pipe barriers, and passed several armed guards before crashing through the entrance to the building and exploding in the lobby. The blast left 241 US military personnel dead and more than 100 wounded.<sup>4</sup>

Following the bombing, the Secretary of Defense established the Long Commission to conduct an inquiry into the terrorist attack. The commission's task was to examine rules of engagement and security measures in place at the time of attack and present their findings and recommendations.<sup>5</sup> Numerous findings and recommendations were cited in the final report, but key findings included a failure in the chain of command, lack of accurate intelligence, and lack of military preparedness on the part of the US forces.<sup>6</sup> The commission concluded the chain of command failed to correct or amend the defensive

posture of the forces, based on the deteriorating political and military conditions in Lebanon. Also, their recommendation was for the Secretary of Defense to take “whatever administrative or disciplinary action he deems appropriate” to correct the supervision problem.<sup>7</sup> This seemingly punitive measure did not provide the necessary sound guidance on rectifying the flow of information or awareness down through the chain of command.

Intelligence was identified as abundant, but not tailored to the commander’s needs. Specifically, human intelligence (HUMINT) support provided to the commander was virtually non-existent.<sup>8</sup> The committee recommendations were obvious: tailor the intelligence and improve the HUMINT support to US forces in conflict areas.

Perhaps the lack of military preparedness was the commission’s most disturbing conclusion. The commission found US forces in Beirut “not trained, organized, staffed, or supported to deal effectively with the terrorist threat.”<sup>9</sup> It was recommended by the commission “the Secretary of Defense direct the development of doctrine, planning, organization, force structure, education and training necessary to defend against and counter terrorism.”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Khobar Towers Bombing, 1996**

US forces are not new to the Persian Gulf region. The United States has maintained a military presence in Saudi Arabia since the 1950s, primarily serving as Saudi military advisors and trainers. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 dramatically changed the US presence and role in the region. Massive US forces, acting to protect vital regional interests, entered the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and led a coalition of forces to free Kuwait and halt Iraqi aggression.<sup>11</sup> However, DESERT STORM did not end the threat of Iraqi

aggression. The US maintains a strong military presence in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region to monitor Iraq's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and keep Saddam Hussein's regime in check. Thus, if our regional presence does not deter Iraqi aggression, then US military forces are prepared to execute an immediate response.

Generally, Americans felt secure and welcome in Saudi Arabia and even after the 1983 bombing in Beirut, Saudi Arabia presented little danger.<sup>12</sup> During DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, security increased to levels associated with war. After hostilities ended, force protection was still actively pursued, but in the context of a stable and secure environment.<sup>13</sup>

On June 25, 1996, military members from the United States and other nations resided in a compound near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, called Khobar Towers. Occupied by military members since DESERT STORM, this residential high-rise complex housed nearly 3,000 US personnel assigned to the 4404th Air Wing (Provisional).<sup>14</sup> That day, a violent explosion rocked the compound as a terrorist truck bomb, containing 3,000 to 8,000 pounds of TNT, detonated just outside the northern perimeter fence. The result was 19 fatalities and approximately 500 personnel wounded.<sup>15</sup>

Following the bombing, the Secretary of Defense directed an assessment be made of the facts and circumstances surrounding the Khobar Towers bombing. The Downing Task Force, led by retired General Wayne Downing, was established to complete the investigation. Divided into two distinct phases, the assessment involved research and analysis of directives, instructions, policies and regulations relevant to force protection in the Department of Defense and the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM). The second phase involved assessments of security and interviews with commanders, staff,

and armed forces' personnel involved in security at Khobar Towers.<sup>16</sup> The task force arrived at 26 detailed findings in the overall investigation.<sup>17</sup> However, the areas of concern can be narrowed to three broad categories: flaws in the chain of command, inconsistencies in intelligence, and a lack of standardized force protection guidance and doctrine.

The Downing Task Force found the chain of command responsible for not providing adequate protection of the forces at Khobar Towers. The task force cited “the inconsistent, and sometimes inadequate, force protection practices among service forces, joint headquarters, and different countries resulted from insufficient command involvement.”<sup>18</sup> Task force recommendations were intended to ensure the proper operational structure for conditions and to promote continuity within the chain of command.

Intelligence was considered good in most respects, but lacking in key areas. The terrorist threat to US forces in the region was identified, but not all potential sources of information were exploited, particularly HUMINT.<sup>19</sup> The task force recommended more emphasis on the analysis of intentions and capabilities of regional terrorists.

The task force identified the lack of force protection standards and guidance as a problem in providing adequate security. There was no comprehensive approach to force protection established in the region. The task force recommended the creation of a single DOD agency to “develop, issue, and inspect compliance with force protection physical security standards.”<sup>20</sup>

## Summary

The two terrorist incidents, though 13 years apart, have significant similarities. While specific details differ, the general findings and recommendations are remarkably similar regarding the bombings. In both instances, the chain of command, intelligence weaknesses, and the lack of adequate guidance regarding force protection were identified as problems contributing to the successful terrorist attacks.

So, what happened in the 13 years between the bombings? Apparently, there continue to be problems in force protection development. The next chapter discusses the changes that occurred in the time between the Beirut and Khobar Towers bombings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Joint Publication 3-07.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*, iii.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, *Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983*, Washington, 20 December 1983, 2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>11</sup>Secretary of Defense, *Report to the President: The Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, September 16, 1996), 2.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>15</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Downing Assessment Task Force*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 30 August 1996), v.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, vii.

## Notes

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

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., viii.

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

## Chapter 3

### Force Protection Guidance and Policy

*JFCs should avoid complacency and be ready to counter activity that could bring harm to units or jeopardize the operation.*

—Joint Pub 3-10, *Doctrine for Joint Rear Operations*

During the period between the terrorist attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon and the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, numerous laws, documents, and guidance have been written on the subject of force protection, particularly terrorism. Exploring all of them is a nearly impossible task, but examining several key elements of the guidance and policy is important to show weaknesses and establish a basis for further analysis.

#### Statutory Responsibility

Congressional testimony and hearings on the Beirut bombing and other terrorist attacks in the early 1980s resulted in the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986. This cornerstone document intended to provide enhanced diplomatic security and combat international terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The law defines responsibilities for protection against terrorism at overseas locations. Under Title I, the Secretary of State is responsible for the protection of all US government personnel stationed abroad except for those under the command of a United States military commander.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act addresses State Department terrorism

considerations and issues in considerable detail. The military receives little guidance except in Title XI.

Title XI addresses security at military bases abroad and states “there is evidence that terrorists consider bases and installations of United States Armed Forces outside the United States to be targets for attack.”<sup>3</sup> Under Title XI, the Secretary of Defense is provided “recommended” actions that should be taken for security against terrorism. The actions only say the Secretary of Defense “should” review the security of the bases and that he/she “should” institute a training program for military members concerning security and terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

Over the years, the Department of Defense (DOD) developed guidance for commanders concerning terrorism. Many joint publications address force protection and security, and every commander, regardless of level of command or service affiliation, has the responsibility for planning, resourcing, training, exercising, and executing antiterrorism measures to provide security for his or her forces.<sup>5</sup> DOD Instruction 5210.84 assigns the security responsibility for military personnel and their dependents to the combatant commander within the geographic area of responsibility.<sup>6</sup> Joint Publication 3-10 further delineates responsibilities in combatting terrorism, as the Joint Rear Area Commander (JRAC) has the responsibility for combatting terrorism in the joint rear area.<sup>7</sup> The component commanders are then responsible for fighting terrorism in their area of operations as directed by the JFC.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, the DOD is not the lead agency for combatting terrorism. The Department of State (DOS) is the lead agency for terrorism outside the United States and the Department of Justice is the lead agency for domestic terrorism.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, the

DOS and the DOD use different methods to assess the terrorist threat in the same region.<sup>10</sup> The DOD focuses on the terrorist factors exclusively when conducting a terrorist threat assessment while the DOS uses broader factors, such as the political climate.<sup>11</sup> This causes confusion, within the area of responsibility, over which assessment is more accurate. Even the threat levels have different criteria, leading to possible confusion over the actual threat level and actions to be taken.

### **Doctrinal Guidance**

Since the mid 1980s, the theme of the US Armed Forces is one of joint warfare. To accomplish this, a series of joint doctrine publications was created to aid the modern warfighter in planning and operating with other Services' forces and, in many cases, with other nations' forces. These documents provide a common perspective from which our military plans, operates, thinks about, and trains for war.<sup>12</sup> Many of the publications mention security and force protection, but the 3-0 series publications covering joint operations address the issues the most. The intent of the series is to provide doctrinal guidance to link all levels of warfare, but the emphasis on force protection varies between doctrinal publications and levels of war.<sup>13</sup>

Joint Publication 3-0 provides the Joint Force Commander (JFC) guidance for considerations at the outset of combat. Force protection to conserve the fighting potential of the joint force is one of the considerations.

JFCs counter the enemy's firepower and maneuver by making personnel, systems, and units difficult to locate, strike, and destroy. They protect their force from enemy maneuver and firepower, including the effects of weapons of mass destruction. Air and maritime superiority operations; air defense; and protection of airports and seaports, LOC, and friendly force lodgment all contribute to force protection.<sup>14</sup>

When Joint Publication 3-0 discusses joint operations other than war, security is identified as an applicable principle. The book states “security deals principally with force protection against virtually any person, element, or group hostile to our interests.”<sup>15</sup> Terrorists are mentioned as an example of a group possibly opposed to our cause and JFCs are cautioned to avoid complacency. JFCs should always be ready to counter hostile activity and remain alert even in a non-hostile environment.<sup>16</sup>

*Doctrine for Joint Rear Area Operations* actually provides response guidance for terrorism. It identifies antiterrorism and counterterrorism procedures, but does little more than define them and direct the reader to other source documents. It is interesting to note the primary source documents are different for antiterrorism and counterterrorism. The primary source for antiterrorism is Joint Publication 3-07.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*, and for counterterrorism is Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*.<sup>17</sup>

## **Summary**

The responsibility for the protection of US military forces against terrorism begins at the highest levels in the government and filters down through the commanders at various levels. While doctrinal guidance concerning force protection is available to the warfighter, defense against a known enemy during combat is one thing. Defense against terrorism is another. The current joint doctrine surrounding terrorism currently is rather generic in nature and may not serve the JFC in all operations. Therefore, further doctrinal guidance in combatting terrorism is required.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *International Terrorism: A Compilation of Major Laws, Treaties, Agreements, and Executive Documents*, 102d Cong., 1st sess., July 1991, Committee Print, 62.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>5</sup>Joint Publication 3-07.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*, I-2

<sup>6</sup>DOD Instruction 5210.84, *Security of DOD Personnel at U.S. Missions Abroad*, 22 January 1992, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Joint Publication 3-10, *Doctrine for Joint Rear Area Operations*, 28 May 1996, III-2.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, III-2.

<sup>9</sup>Joint Pub 3-07.2, III-2.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>12</sup>Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 10 January 1995, vi.

<sup>13</sup>Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, ix.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, IV-6.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, V-2.

<sup>16</sup>Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, 16 June 1995, II-4.

<sup>17</sup>Joint Pub 3-10, III-2.

## Chapter 4

### **Analysis and Evaluation of Force Protection**

*The practice of using regular and irregular forces against an enemy's soft and relatively vulnerable rear area has been demonstrated repeatedly and successfully throughout the history of warfare.*

— Joint Pub 3-10, *Doctrine for Joint Rear Operations*

After reviewing two representative terrorist attacks and some of the policy and guidance in effect during the time between them, data analysis and evaluation reveal several shortcomings. The chain of command, intelligence, and lack of adequate guidance were identified in both attacks as problem areas. Is there a solution to prevent or significantly reduce the chance of a mass-casualty terrorist incident against US military forces in the future?

#### **The Chain of Command**

Failure in the chain of command was identified as a finding in the Beirut bombing in 1983. More specifically, it was the failure within the chain of command to inspect and supervise the defensive posture of the Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) assigned to the peace keeping mission at the Beirut International Airport.<sup>1</sup> Confusion surrounding the mission of the Marines and the changing environment in Lebanon certainly contributed to supervisors failing to properly assess the situation and adjust the security posture.

The original mission statement issued by USCINCEUR in 1982 identified the US forces as “part of a multinational force presence in the Beirut area.”<sup>2</sup> The word “presence” caused perceptual differences throughout the chain of command. One of the most significant differences was whether or not the MAU was responsible for ensuring the operation of the Beirut airport.<sup>3</sup> The higher echelons of command understood the Marines had no mission to secure the airport. However, the MAU commanders felt this was an implied mission and the DOS also thought keeping the airport operational was part of the Marines’ mission.<sup>4</sup>

During the time the Marines were in Beirut, the environment became more hostile. All levels of command recognized this, but the assigned mission remained the same.<sup>5</sup> Also, the Long Commission revealed the chain of command believed the force protection responsibilities were the responsibility of the MAU commander.<sup>6</sup> Because of the changing environment, Headquarters, USEUCOM dispatched a special team with the specific responsibility of analyzing security measures against terrorist attacks to evaluate the security at the Office of Military Cooperation (OMC). The visit prompted significant OMC security changes, but the team was not tasked to visit the MAU compound. Senior officers within the chain of command visited the compound prior to the 1983 bombing, but made no recommendations to enhance security.<sup>7</sup> Had the chain of command been as aggressive and systematic with the Marine forces as with the OMC, the security measures might have improved.

Similarly, the chain of command in the Khobar Towers bombing was identified as a contributing factor to the lack of force protection. The location of the main headquarters, USCENTCOM, was half a world away in Tampa, Florida. Finding 19 in the investigation

following the bombing simply stated, “the chain of command did not provide adequate guidance and support to the Commander, 4404th Wing (Provisional).”<sup>8</sup>

Much like Beirut, no member of the US Central Command inspected the force protection in place at Khobar Towers. USCENTCOM relied on Air Combat Command (ACC) for inspections and for much of the security.<sup>9</sup> Adding to the problems of force protection was the lack of theater-specific standards and training programs.<sup>10</sup> Also, the mission was constantly expanding and changing. During a J-7 assessment of CENTCOM exercise INITIAL LINK 96, the staff recommended to CENTCOM that they consider different force options or doctrinal adjustments as the mission evolved from that of a Joint Task Force (JTF) to a more semi-permanent force.<sup>11</sup> They apparently recognized the need for a change in the security standards.

During a 4404th Wing self-assessment in March 1996, several security problems around Khobar Towers were identified. The most prevalent problem was with the perimeter fence.<sup>12</sup> It had several weak areas, some obstructed views, and was too close to several buildings, specifically Building 131 which took the brunt of the blast. Since US forces and Saudi police shared the responsibility for Khobar Towers’ security, the US military liaison approached the Saudis about repairing and moving the fence. This was in line with the regular meetings held with the Saudis to “review and coordinate” measures against terrorism.<sup>13</sup> However, implementation of any ideas resulting from these meetings was a local command responsibility and they received little or no follow-up.<sup>14</sup>

After the bombing, Secretary of Defense William Perry testified before Congress that the Saudis had refused at least two requests to move the fence.<sup>15</sup> However, the problem was not passed up higher command levels. Perry testified the local US commander’s

decision not to pass the request up the chain was likely due to his deference to the local culture and respect for the Saudi's more flexible interpretation of time.<sup>16</sup>

In both bombings, chain of command inaction was identified as contributing to if not causing the bombings. Also, chain of command problems were at both ends, as information did not flow properly either way. This was most likely due to confusion over responsibility and guidance, the top of the chain did not wish to tell subordinate commanders how to provide protection for their forces and the subordinates did not communicate problems to the senior officers. From the top down, this simply reflects delegated authority, but the perception may have been flawed. For Beirut, USCINCEUR was an Army General located in Belgium. The chain of command then flowed through the Naval component to the Naval forces afloat and finally to the Marine Battalion in Lebanon. The changing political situation and strategy in Lebanon was not passed down through the chain. Similarly, the Marine commanders did not pass their security concerns to the next level.<sup>17</sup>

In the Khobar Towers bombing, the situation was similar. USCINCCENTCOM was located in the United States while a Marine general commanded the JTF in Saudi Arabia. The wing commander in charge of security at Khobar Towers was an Air Force brigadier general. The perception probably existed down the chain of command that security for the forces was adequate. The political situation and strategy were stable and had been for some time. However, the local commander had identified security problems and failed to pass them up the chain of command when he was unable to resolve a problem at the local level.<sup>18</sup> In both incidents, force protection was an implied task for subordinate commanders and the local commanders did not alert senior officers of security problems.

Also, security measures seemed focused at the tactical level in both Beirut and Saudi Arabia. If the entire chain of command is responsible for their subordinates, then joint force protection doctrine should be developed at the operational or strategic level. While emphasis on joint training and the development of joint doctrine for the armed forces eliminated some of the confusion and clarified responsibility within the chain of command, a void still exists today in force protection against terrorism. There is no single source authority or joint doctrine on force protection for commanders or military members to use to develop an effective defense.

## **Intelligence**

In both terrorist incidents, intelligence was also identified as a shortcoming; not necessarily the lack of intelligence support, but the lack of focus. During any MOOTW operation, potential threats must be understood and appreciated. The uniqueness of MOOTW requires that intelligence gathering be multi-disciplined and multi-source.<sup>19</sup>

In Beirut, the ability of intelligence sources to locate armor, artillery and conventional troops was excellent.<sup>20</sup> However, the intelligence support lacked an institutionalized process to fuse the information into a usable support mechanism for the operational commander.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, there was a significant lack of HUMINT support to the operation. The commission concluded the establishment of an all-source intelligence fusion center and improved HUMINT capabilities in Beirut or other areas of potential conflict may avert future terrorist attacks.<sup>22</sup>

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 reorganized the DOD and created an emphasis on joint warfare.<sup>23</sup> This created a directorate devoted to joint intelligence efforts,

theoretically solving the intelligence fusion problem described in the Long Commission report. However, similar findings following the Khobar Towers bombing indicated there was still a intelligence support gap.

The investigation following the Khobar Towers terrorist bombing concluded the intelligence efforts provided warning of the terrorist threat.<sup>24</sup> Minor incidents had occurred within the region, leading up to the 13 November 1995 bombing of the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM/SANG).<sup>25</sup> Following the bombing of OPM/SANG, security became a greater concern in the region. Yet, even given the increased security awareness, intelligence support surrounding the Khobar Towers bombing lacked the information needed for adequate defense. For example, few analysts were devoted to antiterrorism efforts. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) had 40 people assigned to combatting terrorism at the time of the bombing, yet only seven were making detailed assessments of the situation in Saudi Arabia.<sup>26</sup>

The investigation following both bombings also identified shortcomings in intelligence focus. Arguably, the US military has the finest intelligence capability in the world. Yet, in the two cases, intelligence was less than optimum and the lack of adequate HUMINT was highlighted.

If the US is to continue its involvement in MOOTW, then a HUMINT intelligence base must be developed as quickly as possible to support these operations. Force protection programs require sufficient knowledge of area threats. Support functions are necessary to provide the indications and warning of terrorist activity. The human element, characteristically found in MOOTW, makes HUMINT extremely valuable to force protection.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, reliable HUMINT resources are not created instantly, and

due to the short-notice nature of MOOTW, human intelligence sources may not be available during early phases of the operation if at all.

## **Guidance and Doctrine**

The final major similarity between the two terrorist bombings is a lack of guidance and doctrine. While a lot of information is available to commanders, it can be confusing or inadequate. Joint Publication 1 describes joint doctrine as “a common perspective from which we plan and operate, and which fundamentally shapes the way we think about and train for war.”<sup>28</sup> The recommendations made by the Long Commission following the bombing in Beirut described the need to improve in this area. The commission recommended “the Secretary of Defense direct the development of doctrine, planning, organization, force structure, education and training necessary to defend against and counter terrorism.”<sup>29</sup> The Downing Assessment Task Force made similar recommendations to improve force protection. Their recommendations were to “establish prescriptive DOD physical security standards” and then to “designate a single agency within DOD to develop, issue, and inspect compliance with force protection physical security standards.”<sup>30</sup>

Currently, there is no separate doctrine for force protection. Probably the closest doctrinal guidance available is Joint Publication 3-10, *Doctrine for Joint Rear Area Operations*. It does not discuss MOOTW in any depth, but does acknowledge that threats to the joint rear area exist through the range of military operations.<sup>31</sup> Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* describes security as one of the principles of MOOTW. The manual advises the Joint Force Commander to avoid

complacency and keep forces alert even in non-hostile environments.<sup>32</sup> Without proper doctrine aiding decisions on force protection, a commander will have a difficult time assessing the situation and utilizing resources.

The progress made towards force protection in the thirteen years separating the two bombings seems inadequate. Proper doctrine and guidance should solve the majority of the problems and are keys to providing the force protection against terrorism that armed forces require and deserve.

### **Recommendations**

Given the two terrorist incidents and a review of current guidance and doctrine regarding force protection, a course of action must be developed. An organization within the DOD must be established to deal with terrorism and the protection of US forces. Force protection should be a broad program focusing on centralized planning and direction followed by decentralized execution. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff needs to create a joint antiterrorism and counterterrorism task force to develop force protection doctrine and establish standardized procedures for defending against terrorism. A single agency or task force under the operations directorate would eliminate the confusion that exists between the DOS and the DOD. Currently, the division of responsibility between the two departments can result in different standards for force protection.<sup>33</sup>

Also, force protection emphasis must expand to recognize as many threats as possible, particularly during MOOTW. One of the reasons the attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut was so successful was that the means of attack was beyond the

imagination of those tasked with security.<sup>34</sup> In the Khobar Towers incident, the wing commander and the security forces were focused on preventing a terrorist bomb from penetrating the compound.<sup>35</sup> While it is virtually impossible to counter all threats, a commander cannot afford to focus on single threats. A task force dedicated to force protection must be able to analyze the most likely threats and recommend procedures to counter them.

True joint doctrine for force protection could also take advantage of all the Services' security forces and produce a synergistic approach to force protection. The Air Force and Army must become the lead agents for staffing a task force dealing with terrorism and force protection issues. Both Services are located on land and generally more vulnerable to terrorists. Normally positioned off-shore, the Navy and Marines are less vulnerable to certain types of terrorism. They shouldn't be excluded from force protection doctrine, but they do operate under different circumstances.

Intelligence support must be timely, accurate, and focused on force protection. Coordination is critical between plans and operations, and during the planning process; it is important for intelligence analysts to begin laying the ground work for focused intelligence. Since the development of HUMINT sources requires time, the inclusion of intelligence representatives in all phases of planning is critical. Intelligence is an integral part of force protection. *Doctrine for Joint Rear Area Operations* states "effective intelligence support, merged with counterintelligence and law enforcement agency information, is essential to conducting successful security operations."<sup>36</sup>

Finally, force protection against terrorism will not work unless proper education and training take place from the highest to the lowest levels in the military. Commanders need

to understand the threat and have the doctrine available to adequately provide protection to subordinates in the chain of command. Service members need to learn what local area threats are and what measures are being taken to defend against them.

During the investigation following the Khobar Towers bombing, it was learned security force personnel were not briefed on the threat, no terrorist response exercises were held, and no weapons training was conducted in country to practice in the environment they were expected to defend.<sup>37</sup> This is unacceptable when protecting US forces against terrorism. Joint forces need to practice in the area they are to protect and rehearse the actions they must take. Rather than individual Services providing their own security forces, the armed forces must develop a joint security team, trained using joint force protection doctrine, to provide force protection against the terrorist threat during overseas operations.

The time has come to develop an agency or task force within the joint staff to focus on terrorism and develop force protection doctrine. These measures are necessary to ensure armed forces' security against terrorist threats. With adequate force protection, military members can remain focused on their primary mission, accomplish required objectives, and rapidly return to the United States.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, *Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983*, Washington, 20 December 1983, 56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

## Notes

<sup>8</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Downing Assessment Task Force*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 30 August 1996), 46.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Pat Towell, "Perry Defends Handling of Terrorist Threat," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 54, ISS 28 (July 13, 1996): 1982.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Maj Roger J. Mauer, *Peacekeeping in Lebanon; Lessons Learned*, Research Report no. 84-1416 (Naval War College, Newport RI, 5 March 1984), 20

<sup>18</sup>Towell, 1982.

<sup>19</sup>Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, 16 June 1995, ix.

<sup>20</sup>Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, 63.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>23</sup>Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces*, 24 February 1995, I-2.

<sup>24</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Downing Assessment Task Force*, 29.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>27</sup>James F. Lindner, *Force Protection: A Critical Function During Military Operations Other Than War*, (Newport, RI: National Center for Intelligence Studies, 16 June 1995), 10.

<sup>28</sup>Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 10 January 1995, vi.

<sup>29</sup>Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, 133.

<sup>30</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Downing Assessment Task Force*, 13.

<sup>31</sup>Joint Publication 3-10, *Doctrine for Joint Rear Area Operations*, 28 May 1996, I-5.

<sup>32</sup>Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

<sup>33</sup>Secretary of Defense, *Report to the President: The Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, September 16, 1996), 12.

<sup>34</sup>Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, 123.

<sup>35</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Downing Assessment Task Force*, 51.

<sup>36</sup>Joint Pub 3-10, I-3.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 57.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

*Terrorists are among the most insidious and difficult threats to neutralize and eradicate. Their actions span the range of military operations.*

—Joint Publication 3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations*

Terrorists present an asymmetry of vulnerability to regular armed forces. They have no regular army, economy, territory, or population to attack or protect.<sup>1</sup> This presents a unique adversary to commanders and subordinates in the armed forces. A dedicated task force or agency is required to provide the resources and guidance necessary for commanders to ensure the protection of their subordinate units and eliminate the confusion of responsibility between the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

Doctrine developed at the strategic or operational level is necessary to provide congruent guidance throughout the chain of command. The Army and the Air Force should be appointed as the lead agents since they are the primary units based in an operations area. Intelligence efforts need to be focused on force protection requirements and integrate as many sources as possible to provide a complete threat assessment to the chain of command. Joint forces trained and rehearsed in antiterrorist tactics need to be made available to the Joint Force Commander as part of a force protection package.

By creating a joint antiterrorist and counterterrorist task force, the United States can plan and implement a dynamic force protection program at the operational level. A more secure environment can be achieved in the area of operations, preserving freedom of movement and freedom of action. Ultimately, better force protection allows for the more rapid achievement of national objectives with less risk to human life.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Lessons of Beirut: Testimony Before the Long Commission*, RAND Report N-2114-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, February 1984), 7.

## *Glossary*

**antiterrorism.** Force Protection Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military forces.

**counterterrorism.** Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism.

**terrorism.** The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological.

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