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USAF FORCE PROTECTION:

DO WE REALLY CARE?

by

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Abstract

Problem Statement

The US Air Force provides the preponderance of the world's most lethal, technologically superior airpower, yet does comparatively little to protect it when its most vulnerable–on the ground. Although the Air Force concept of force projection requires deployment into hostile zones, it traditionally placed little emphasis on protecting its force, unlike its sister services and close NATO partner, the Royal Air Force. Plainly, the Air Force has yet to institutionalize force protection. Service leadership continues to wrestle with integrating force protection with the flying mission, historically reacting to security events vice protecting against them, and therefore repeating the lessons of history. Without a greater understanding of modern force protection roles and missions, Air Force leadership is unwittingly increasing the criminal and combat risk to American airpower.

Methodology

Exhaustive multinational documentary research was conducted, using relevant books, journals, government reports, service regulations, historical studies, master's theses, research papers, and informal interviews from both the British and American perspective. Finally, the author's extensive Air Force Security Force experience added practical insight to this study.

Conclusions

Force protection is critical to employing air and space power, but is hampered by institutional Air Force bias against the necessity for indigenous ground combat forces fully integrated with air operations. Clearly, the key to removing these impediments is to eliminate the leadership reaction and contraction cycle of force protection by institutionalizing the program.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Force protection is everybody's business. Securing the people and resources a commander needs to successfully complete the mission is the essence of the security principle of war. Today, United States (US) forces are engaged in every conceivable type of military and humanitarian operation throughout the world, covering the entire spectrum of conflict. Consequently, protecting US military forces is vital to continued public support of on-going operations and stability of the conflict's political objectives. Force protection should be an integral part of those missions—but is it?

The United States Air Force (USAF) provides the preponderance of the world's most lethal, technologically superior airpower, yet does comparatively little to protect it when it's most vulnerable–on the ground. The Air Force arsenal is dominated by sophisticated, often one of a kind capability that, if lost, would have serious consequences for the supported Commander-in-Chief (CINC), the service, and our nation. In peace and war, the Air Force concept of force projection requires deployment into hostile zones, air expeditionary forces operate from austere, bare base environments, and mobility forces are consistently deployed around the world. Additionally, aircraft provide the majority of the Air Force's ability to meet its global reach, global power, and deterrence

responsibilities for the nation. A single ground attack, successful penetration, or moment of enemy control could be disastrous for American airpower. But surprisingly, the Air Force traditionally places little emphasis on protecting their force, unlike its sister services or close NATO partner, the Royal Air Force (RAF).

Plainly, the Air Force has not yet institutionalized force protection. Service leadership continues integrating force protection with the flying mission by historically reacting to security events, vice protecting against them, and therefore repeating the lessons of history. "…Unless the force protection improvements become truly imbedded in the institutional process, are consistently applied down to the tactical level, and adequately adapt to changes in the strategic environment, they are bound to fail."[1] It's simply a matter of perception–the perception engendered in a service bred by 50 years of flying culture. Without a greater understanding of modern force protection roles and missions, Air Force leadership is unwittingly increasing the criminal and combat risk to American airpower.

Need for Study

In 1986, Lt Colonel Wheeler stated, "in a world of sophisticated and expensive weapon systems, base defense is not a glamorous mission and is therefore not given the priority it requires."[2] Force protection has not held a significant Air Force role since the service's beginning. Scholarly military literature abounds with studies on air base force protection, its significance, and various employment methodologies. However, most research fails to explore the influence of Air Force culture on force protection; indeed, the influence this culture has on service organizational structure and policies. As a result, senior Air Force leadership must become acutely aware of the effect Air Force culture

has on its force protection capabilities, leading to a greater awareness of structural impediments and predicating a more effective use of limited force protection assets. Leadership educated in the benefits of integrated force protection will certainly help ameliorate the problem.

Scope and Limitations of Study

Due to externally imposed length, classification, and time constraints, the paper is limited in scope. Although organizational impediments exist in virtually all Air Force mission areas, this research is confined to their negative impact on protection of Air Force resources in conflict situations. Comparing the USAF with the RAF, where applicable, adds another view to ponder the paper's thesis. This topic limitation allows focusing on those Air Force cultural and organizational practices that impede protection of USAF aircraft and personnel.

Definitions

For a more complete understanding of this paper, the author's definitions of relevant terms are:

Force protection. assuring security of the personnel, equipment and operations of a military unit throughout the spectrum of conflict.

Air base defense. subset of force protection concerned with protection of an air force's personnel, equipment, and operations within the footprint of an air base.

Air base ground defense. defense of an air base from ground attack.

Air base air defense. defense of an air base from air attack.

Active defense. that portion of the principle of security designed to provide active, violent defensive measures against potential aggressors. Active defense associated with airpower is air base defense.

Methodology

A descriptive paper, the study's hypothesis maintains a negative correlation exists between service policies, organizational structures, and an institutionalized USAF force protection program.

An exhaustive literature review using books, journals, government reports, service regulations, historical studies, master's theses, and research papers provided the majority of data. The College of Professional Development Senior Officer Command Course and Air Force service school lesson plans were examined. Informal open-ended interviews with sister service and RAF officers were conducted to substantiate current force protection practices in their respective services. Finally, the author's 22 years of USAF Security Force experience added an invaluable practitioner's view to the information gleaned in the literature.

Organization of Remainder of Study

Chapter 2 of this paper reviews the literature, presents a brief history of modern air base force protection, and compares US military and RAF air base force protection programs. Chapter 3 identifies impediments to USAF force protection through examination of service roles and missions, culture, organizational structure, and mission emphasis. The author's conclusions are contained in Chapter 4.

The history of aerial combat is relatively short and that of Air Force force protection much less. Why must air bases be protected?

Notes

[1] Maj Eugene A. Robinett, "Force Protection in the Wake of the Dhahran Bombing," Research Report no.97-03 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 1997), 2.

[2] Lt Col Michael I. Wheeler, "The Reality of Air Base Ground Defense," Individual Study Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College, 1986), iii.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Lineage of Modern Air Base Force Protection

World War I saw the first use of aircraft in combat and protecting them on the ground was not a concern. There was no ground threat. Trench warfare had stymied ground force maneuvering even though airfields were close to the front. Most believed the main airplane threat was to other aircraft, not ground targets, so many planners simply dismissed their value. While the true value of the airplane in war was realized during World War I, controversies then erupted over the nature and extent of air base defense.

United States Army Air Service (USAAS) leadership, a small component of the Army staffed with staunch airpower advocates, began to isolate ground combat skills training from initial enlisted training. Referring to aircraft mechanics and technicians in 1921, "Lt Colonel J.E. Fechet, Chief of the Training and Operations Group of the Air Service, maintained…since their duties were entirely different from those of the infantry, they should receive only that portion of infantry training which would permit them to move in a military manner from place to place."[1] Ground defense, in the minds of USAAS leadership, was considered a land service mission outside of the air component's purview. This view prevailed until the outbreak of the Second World War.

World War II saw the introduction of more lethal, technologically advanced combat aircraft. Aircraft were decisive in this war and military planners soon realized their strategic value. Control of the air became critical–critical enough to destroy them at every opportunity. Realizing this, Nazi forces in the Mediterranean, beleaguered by RAF attacks from Crete, struck the island in 1941 to capture the airfield at Maleme and occupy the island; they succeeded. In a few short hours, the airfield was captured–airmen offered little resistance as the RAF, like the USSAF, depended on the army for defense and the army ignored defending Maleme. Crete was occupied a few days later. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was incensed by this defeat—giving the Germans a forward airfield to attack their North African bases—mostly due to the British inability to muster an effective airfield ground defense. Ordering an immediate review of RAF defense capabilities, he believed "every man in air force uniform ought to be armed with something…every airman should have his place in the defence scheme…they are expected to fight and die in the defence of their airfields."[2] When the review was completed, he was equally livid at the disturbing results and said: "The enormous mass of non-combatant personnel…is an inherent difficulty in the organisation of the air force. Here is the chance for this great mass to add a fighting quality….Every airfield should be a stronghold of fighting air-groundmen…not the abode of uniformed civilians…protected by detachments of soldiers."[3]

Churchill understood the capture of Maleme was not as much an operational as it was an organizational problem; the RAF must defend itself, and Churchill ordered it done. Thus, in February 1942, the RAF Regiment was born primarily "to provide a

mobile striking force ready for immediate action, whilst defended localities on the airfield were manned by trained and armed station personnel….”[4]

In this country, the British experience had no effect. United States Army Air Corps (USAAC) leadership continued to view air base defense as unnecessary to the success of the flying mission, but by June 1942, General Marshall ordered activation of 296 air base security battalions. Interestingly, although General Marshall mandated their creation as defense against local ground attacks, USAAC leadership passively resisted. Consequently, their actual employment was much different. Comprised of 53,000 black men, “this type of unit was activated for the purpose of providing defense for an air base, against parachute, glider and ground attacks; but it…never functioned in that capacity. Missions usually assigned…guarding gasoline, ammunition, and ration dumps, entrances to Officer’s Clubs…hotels, empty warehouses, dry cleaning establishments…infantry units were placed on air bases for defense….”[5] The lessons of Maleme were ignored. USAAC leadership, remaining unconvinced as to the necessity for an inherent force protection capability, chose not to replicate their British partner’s emphasis on air base defense.

Conversely, the RAF “decided at the close of the war to retain the RAF Regiment as an essential element of a ‘balanced Air Force’.”[6] By 1943, ground threats to overseas air bases had largely disappeared and the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) began deactivating air base security battalions. In fact, “following the Japanese surrender…in September 1945, the AAF lost all its ground defense forces….”[7] The USAAF ended the war without an established air base defense program and the cyclical, love-hate relationship demonstrative of future USAF force protection had begun.

After World War II, frenzied debate over service roles and missions became commonplace, especially after recognition of the USAF as a separate service, and ground defense was a principal issue. Prior to the USAF split from the Army, a service agreement declared "each department responsible for security of (their) own installations."[8] Similarly, the Key West Agreement of 1948 identified base defense as a common service function. However, the agreement did not specifically assign a ground defense mission to the USAF, so service leaders interpreted this as ground defense was primarily an Army mission. "Hence, from the outset, the Air Force's (ground) defense role had been vague…."[9] Korea changed that.

The Korean conflict saw immediate expansion of USAF ground combat forces. Air Force leaders were concerned about the numerical superiority of the Chinese–air base defense responsibilities were quickly organized under the Air Provost Marshal and Air Police manpower increased from 10,000 to 39,000. "Yet, after 1 year of war, the Air Provost Marshal could still report…'the Air Force is without policy or tactical doctrine for Air Base Ground Defense'."[10] Force protection relied on enlisted men with little ground defense training and absent direction in a combat theater. Also, many senior USAF leaders still believed air base defense was entirely an Army problem. Their rationale was simple—as air bases were typically located in an army's defended rear area, they were therefore part of the rear area commander's zone of responsibility and had to be defended. Luckily, this misguided opinion was never combat tested…in this war.

By March 1953, the USAF issued its first formal air base ground defense doctrine. Acknowledging the need for an inherent self-defense capability and replicating RAF Regiment organization and functions, the doctrine assigned mission execution to base

defense task forces organized and equipped like infantry. These task forces, comprised mostly of airmen not directly linked to flight operations, and commanded by the Air Provost Marshal or base commander, would be trained by local air police units that would also act as its cadre.

Concurrently, Strategic Air Command (SAC), adapting RAF Regiment ground defense precepts to the USAF nuclear mission, insisted nuclear security point defense was *the* essential USAF base defense role, not area defense as previously believed. Area defense is an offensive army function; SAC believed the USAF must retain its ground defense mission around air bases (point defense) because to rely on offensive maneuver forces for defense was contrary to land warfare doctrine and consequently conflicted with USAF force protection concerns. Both prophetic and insightful, this SAC concept was the major catalyst for changing USAF force protection thought.

Much the same as in World War II, the decline of a credible threat of attack against our air bases in Korea led to a later major mission change. By modifying the SAC point defense concept, the air police mission became internally focused on protecting resources from theft, pilferage, and such, rather than defending the bases from ground attack. By late 1953, the air base defense foundation laid in Korea fell victim to a lack of ground attacks, reduced defense conventional war budgets, and the new national security strategy of "Containment."

The effect of "Containment" on USAF force protection efforts was immediate and widespread…new intelligence estimates made internal threats and sabotage infinitely more likely than overt ground attack…McCarthyism was at its apex. Not surprisingly, an Air Staff study conducted under these new contextual elements found USAF air base

defense doctrine completely unsound and introduced a new Installation Internal Security Program.

All of this had immediate impacts on USAF force protection. Air police end strength was cut 20% and the air base defense program withered on the vine. The Air Base Defense School closed in 1956, and the newly introduced Air Training Command 40 hour Air Police Combat Preparedness Course became the only source of air base defense training. Woefully inadequate, this training was "hardly more than an extension of the internal security course offered in basic air police training."[11] Nuclear deterrence was the primary USAF mission at the time, and SAC nuclear security point defense took precedence over air base defense. The service was at the bottom of another force protection cycle.

On 1 November 1964, mortar shells slammed into Bien Hoa Air Base, Vietnam, marking the first ground attack on an air base in Air Force history. USAF senior leadership was totally unprepared–in their mind, Army rear area forces had failed to properly defend the air base. However, leaders failed to fully comprehend a basic precept of maneuver warfare that, once an army moves into the offensive, forces may not be readily available for rear area defense. While USAF Air Police leadership understood their dilemma and tried to expand air police responsibilities, they were limited in their ability to redirect Air Force emphasis to ground defense. Wing commanders took as much action as they could while the debate continued. All the while, air base attacks became more frequent and increasingly deadly.

Service reaction to Bien Hoa was typical. General Harris, then Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF), demanded of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that the

Army and Marine Corps deploy dedicated forces to each USAF air base in Vietnam. At the same time, he proposed, "development of an Air Force security force along the lines of the RAF Regiment."[12] General Westmoreland, then Commander United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, given General Harris' letter for action by the JCS, promptly directed air base defense be conducted per JCS Publication 2; commanders are responsible for security of their own commands, a doctrinal element unchanged since the 1948 Key West Agreement. Despite this edict, the Second Air Division Commander in Vietnam took exception, stating the USAF was only responsible for security to the air base perimeter. "Henceforth to the end of the war, this became fixed USAF policy and practice."[13]

Absent dedicated external ground force assistance, USAF security police forces used their creativity in designing effective measures for force protection in Vietnam. Responding to the CINCPACAF proposal for a dedicated security force, a test USAF Strike Force concept, patterned after the RAF Regiment, was enthusiastically pursued. "In the summer of 1966, the USAF Security Strike Force project was given the code name 'Operation SAFESIDE'…the unit was allowed to operate off base in these locations because of the stand-off threat…kept the VC from conducting successful…attacks during the six months the unit was in Vietnam. Upon completion of the test, the unit was redeployed…and disbanded…in early 1967 because of the continued perception by senior AF leadership that off-base defense operations were not an Air Force responsibility."[14]

Once the test unit was disbanded, the Chief of Staff directed a functional study to determine the size and mission of USAF security police units required for defense of

future deployments in hostile environments. Designed primarily to provide security for tactical units at a bare base, these combat security police units would deploy in advance of, or with, aircraft units. However, combat security forces were not "designed to operate without external defense support, nor to cope with enemy stand off threats."[15] In so doing, the Air Staff again restrained force protection to firmly established internal security functions.

This restriction caused combat security police units to have no appreciable effect. Neither land force doctrine or JCS Publication 2 changed; the USAF was responsible for security of their bases, but refused to let their security forces operate off base even though the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army used stand-off weapons in 96% of their attacks.[16] Combat security police forces were thus doomed to failure and, in the face of Nixon's Vietnamization program and increasing costs of the war, were deactivated by 31 December 1969, along with all combat ground defense training. Despite Vietnam's lessons, USAF leadership continued to regard its own force protection, nuclear security excepted, a low priority. Even then, the mission was still viewed as an infantry function, outside of the Air Force air superiority mantra.

Immediately following Vietnam, the USAF, alone among the services, continued to argue that JCS Publication 2 stipulated their only functions involved those combat operations necessary for successful prosecution of war through airpower. Responsibilities for defense of its bases, also assigned by the publication, were ignored.[17] "This question of roles and missions has been responsible for the lack of Air Force concern about providing local defense forces for base defense since its establishment in 1947."[18] Senior leadership appeared to have no regard for force protection either as a

combat mission or as part of the technologically superior aeronautical mission of the service. Interestingly, Army military police planners, the units responsible for rear echelon defense (therefore protectors of the air base) were unsure of "…who was going to take care of an attack on the air base and consequently air base defense was not incorporated..."[19]in their area defense plans. If the Army wasn't going to do it and the USAF forbade its people from it, who was protecting the air base?

This changed in 1984 with the signing of a joint USAF-Army Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Under initiative #8, the Army became responsible for defense of USAF installations outside the immediate perimeter of the base while initiative #9 tasked the Army with training USAF Security Police in supporting air base defense roles. At first, this arrangement appeared to settle the now 40-year-old argument over USAF force protection responsibility. However, it did not last. By 1989, the magnitude of the Army's responsibility for air base defense began to seep in. At that time, the Army decided their initiative #8 responsibilities would become an Army National Guard and Army Reserve military police mission. "There will simply not be enough US Army forces to counter the threat external to every air base. This requires USAF…personnel to take on some *external* responsibility…."[20]

Further diluting the Army's responsibilities, Brigadier General Bell, then US Army Reserve Military Police Corps Commander, said "even if the resources were available, the Army does not favor the concept of putting such a valuable asset on the tight leash…the mobility, communications, and firepower of military police units give them a capability of operating effectively over a wide area. To tie them down in an exclusive air base ground defense role is to rob them of their full potential."[21]

The perennial incompatibility of offensive maneuver characteristics of the Army and the Air Force's air base defense needs became evident. In 1993, the Army terminated initiative #9 and streamlined initiative #8 to apply only to declared wartime operations. This situation became de facto USAF force protection policy until 25 June 1996, when the Khobar Towers explosion caused an immediate, wide-spread reaction, and again, an increase in USAF self defense capabilities. In his report to the Secretary of Defense, General Downing recommended the USAF learn force protection lessons from its British allies. This was a common recommendation to USAF leadership, dating to 1942, but here-to-fore unheeded. What drives this virtually perpetual advice?

Descriptive Comparison of USAF and RAF Force Protection

Until 1996, USAF force protection was the exclusive purview of the Security Police (now Security Forces) organization, a specialized force with diverse missions and areas of expertise. Still primarily charged with the SAC developed concept of internal security for mission critical resources, Security Force missions also include maintenance of law and order, corrections, anti-terrorism, weapons training and maintenance, air base defense, protection of classified information, and product protection through the acquisition cycle. Each mission requires specialized training and experience resulting in narrowly focused subsets of the overall security mission.

Security Force units are not self-contained fighting forces like the RAF Regiment or US Army Military Police. Air Force security units require extensive logistical, intelligence, and medical support indigenous to the others. However, all are trained in basic infantry skills and air base defense, except during the years of US Army led ground defense training. During that period, more advanced skills were taught, but only to

security specialists—with few exceptions, no other Security Force members were trained in ground defense. This lead to a plethora of mid to senior noncommissioned officers and senior company and field grade officers without formal ground defense training. In late 1996, all security force specialties were merged into one, while retaining all previous mission areas.

With the activation of the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG), USAF force protection became a service-wide, multi-disciplined, Security Force led program, complete with those non-security skills necessary for an integrated, combined arms effort. "The 820th is different in two ways…first, its only mission is force protection for units and installations on deployment abroad. Before…those duties were handled as an add-on requirement by Air Force security units–whose day to day job was to support a wing at their home station…also different because, unlike other security force units, it combines all the specialties it needs in one organization."[22] The force protection reaction cycle is on the up slope. However, the 820th SFG, patterned after the Vietnam era Operation SAFESIDE and adopting self-contained fighting force precepts, is the *single* USAF force protection organization so organized, trained, and equipped. In every other USAF Security Force unit, excepting Korea, force protection is at best a secondary mission.

Conversely, the RAF Regiment "exists to defend Royal Air Force bases from attack. As airfields are liable to attack from both the air and the ground, the Regiment is organised to combat both."[23] Their sole job is ground defense. Other RAF organizations are responsible for protection of life and property, securing classified information, and those air base operability tasks critical to deployed air forces. Unlike its USAF

counterpart, creation of the Regiment was partly a conscious effort to relieve the British Army of the airfield defense mission. "By providing within the RAF a nucleus of trained fighting units, the RAF Regiment ensures that the defence of air bases is under unified control, and at the same time it relieves the army of a commitment which could only be met by diverting trained manpower and units from their primary purpose…"[24] The RAF has institutionalized force protection, achieving a synchronicity not found with their American friends.

Other subtle, yet far-reaching differences exist in these programs. The USAF force protection concept is heavily dependent on augmentation from base personnel. In my experience, the local security force squadron trains augmentees to minimum proficiency, augmentees are provided episodic currency training, and they grudgingly become part of base defense operations. The British take an opposing view, derived from their World War II experiences and the constant threat of terrorism in the United Kingdom. "Airfield defence is not the responsibility of the RAF Regiment alone. Any member of the Royal Air Force may expect to be called upon to grab a weapon and defend his locality. To this end, he receives regular Ground Combat Training, administered and carried out by RAF Regiment instructors attached to every major station."[25] RAF force protection is enhanced by knowledgeable, well-trained base personnel vice the inefficient USAF approach, where I've seen even annual weapons qualification is an anomaly.

Another distinction can be seen within the respective organizations. In typical USAF aircraft wings, the security force is subordinate to the support group commander, along with other support and service organizations. The USAF, alone among the services, considers force protection strictly a combat support function. In the RAF, the Regiment

reports to the operations wing commander, an organization responsible for controlling and coordinating the daily tasks of the base flying operation. This structure orients force protection to the mission of the flying unit at a particular station, not to the operation of the base, as with the USAF structure.

A third difference is deploying into high threat areas. Excepting the newly formed 820th SFG, when an USAF aircraft unit deploys, its security force does not. Instead, force protection at the deployed location is an ad hoc organization, made up of elements from different USAF units. This structure undermines unit integrity and severely limits that protective force's effectiveness. Additionally, service personnel policies often mandate flight, squad, or individual rotations during long-term deployments, destroying continuity of effort. However, when the RAF deploys a squadron, so does the Regiment, and this results in an integrated, combat ready team.

Summary

Force protection did not surface as an issue for airpower planners until World War II, and then in reaction to the Nazi capture of Crete. Upon Churchill's order, the RAF Regiment was established and given the air base defense mission it accomplishes to this day. The US approached the problem slightly differently. After activating air base security battalions in 1942, a lack of ground attacks, coupled with an inherent reluctance to assume what was considered an Army mission, caused USAAF leadership to disband these units prior to the end of the war. Thus began the USAF cyclical, reaction-expansion approach to force protection.

In Korea, the air base security cycle occurred in little over two years. In Vietnam, reacting to the first ground attack in its history, USAF leadership at first expanded service

wide force protection responsibilities with Operation SAFESIDE, later returning to the view that air base security was essentially a land service issue. Over the years, this roles and missions debate continued, despite a nine year hiatus in the 1980s when the Army assumed responsibility for air base external defense. Unfortunately, the Army recanted in 1993 and the Air Force was again without an indigenous ground defense capability until stand-up of the 820th SFG in early 1997.

A brief descriptive comparison of USAF and RAF programs show major service cultural, organizational structure, and policy differences impacting successful force protection. Simply stated, the RAF believes force protection is an integral part of their flying mission and employs the RAF as a combined arms team. The USAF does not, mostly due to institutional impediments to force protection. These impediments are explored in Chapter 3.

Notes

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[3] Ibid, 777.

[4] Col A.C. Carlson, "Air Base Defense," CORONA HARVEST Report, (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, 1952), 11.

[5] Ibid, 7.

[6] Ibid, 4.

[7] Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1961-1973* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1979), 4.

[8] Ibid, 5.

[9] Ibid, 5.

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[13] Ibid, 28.

[14] Wheeler, 11.

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[24] British Air Ministry, *RAF Regiment in Action: Ground Defense in the RAF* (London, England: Ministry of Defense, 1945), 14.

[25] Gander, 77.

Chapter 3

Impediments to Protecting the Force

While we can hope the Army or host-nation forces will be available to defend our airbases, we cannot afford to depend on them.

—Lt Colonel Price T. Bingham

Like any large organization, the USAF has ingrained structural bias. Restraining effective Air Force force protection are institutional barriers found in service doctrine, culture, organizational structure, and mission emphasis. If examined and understood, these impediments may cease to exist.

Doctrine

Doctrine is a fundamental way a military organization thinks about and trains for military operations. USAF doctrine did not address force protection until the September 1997 publication of Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1. Until then, as discussed in Chapter 2, the belief that air base ground defense was not an USAF mission was inculcated in service leadership, reflected in a history of conflicting doctrinal references.

As late as 1992, USAF aerospace doctrine clearly represented an airman's view of war, concentrating on the opposing air threat. Airmen revised the principle of security to read "the lethality of aerospace forces makes the security of friendly forces from enemy air power a paramount concern,"[1] further stressing defense from air attack by stating "air

and launch base operability and defense must be major considerations in campaign planning and execution…the ability to provide and defend these bases and to resume operations quickly after an enemy attack are crucial to aerospace operations."[2] The doctrine strongly emphasizes offensive counter-air against these target sets, even stating the "capture of enemy air bases rather than their destruction can be particularly important."[3] Yet, only inference and oblique references address USAF defense against these same threats—"…units should be organized to enhance self-defense capabilities…should provide at least limited protection for their personnel and resources."[4] The overwhelming offensive spirit of the Air Force is evident, creating a doctrinal arrogance plainly seen in historical USAF oscillation on force protection policy.

Table 1 Ground Attacks on Air Bases (World Wide) 1942-1990

Motives for Attack	Number of Attacks	%
Capture Airfield	41	6
Deny Defender Use of Airfield	47	7
Harass Defender	173	27
Destroy Aircraft and Equipment	384	60
Total Attacks	645	
Total Aircraft Damaged or Destroyed		2,050

Source: David A. Shlapak and Alan Vick, *Check Six begins on the ground* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 1995), 24.

USAF airpower doctrine, written by and for airmen to maximize the airplane's warfighting potential, failed to acknowledge the service's role in defending airplanes on the ground. Regardless of contrary historical evidence of ground attacks against air bases, service leaders, aviators themselves, have codified the pure airman's perspective of warfighting over 40 years. Offensive minded airmen often quote Douhet—"…it is easier

and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nest and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air"[5]—when advocating airpower. However, the rest of Douhet's maxim—"and every time we ignore this principle we commit an error,"[6]—is rarely used. By remaining heavily dependent on the Army for both ground and air defense of their airfields, the Air Force commits that error.

In contrast, by 1945 the RAF had "foreseen that air forces engaged in future operations…would require protection against ground and air attack for their bases…."[7] They integrated force protection into airpower doctrine from the outset. Current British thought is "security should enable friendly forces to achieve their objectives despite the enemy's interference…active measures include the defense of the base and entry points."[8] Remarkably similar is the wording found in AFDD 1: "…requires friendly forces and their operations be protected from enemy action that could provide the enemy with unexpected advantage…air base defense is an integral part…."[9] Unfortunately, while the RAF included force protection in their doctrine since World War II, force protection was incorporated into USAF doctrine only after the Khobar Towers bombing. Until then, USAF Security Forces operated within narrowly defined parameters, hampered by an institutional belief the Air Force had minimal self-defense responsibilities. Even now, service policy included in Air Force Policy Document (AFPD) 31-3, Air Base Defense, mandates land force responsibility for external defense.

Service Culture

If USAF doctrine represents "unassailable truths" of airpower and airpower advocates dominate the Air Force, then one can reasonably conclude Air Force doctrine is a function of its culture. In a service dominated by pilots with little knowledge of or

exposure to force protection and indoctrinated with airpower tenets without force protection principles, service culture is not receptive to the adjustments required for effective force protection.

Why should the Air Force adjust when it is not necessary in other services or the RAF? Air Force culture stresses service customs and policies that maximize convenience and quality of life not found in those other service's cultures. Also, "…the Air Force is leading the other services in its tendency toward occupationalism…unfortunately, these tendencies are stronger with pilots and with time in service…(and) should not be surprising because of the institution's dependency on technology and on specialists."[10] Aviators dominate the Air Force. Combined, these factors result in a senior leadership brought up in and perpetuating this culture, and lacking the experience, background, and training necessary to integrate force protection into the flying mission. Yet, Secretary Perry, when presenting the Downing Assessment to the President, said, "How then can we accomplish our missions without compromising their success or abandoning them altogether? The answer is that we will require trade offs in other areas, such as cost, convenience and quality of life."[11] These offsets run afoul of Air Force culture and have been a price service leaders are unwilling to pay.

A strong service tendency toward specialization produces an almost exclusive reliance on the Air Force Security Force for the force protection mission. Outside of the security specialty, very few service members are trained in basic soldiering skills, qualify with a rifle or handgun, or receive anything other than rudimentary defense training. A characteristic of their highly technical culture, USAF airmen are unique amongst the services and the RAF in this respect. Effective force protection requires everyone.

However, this adjustment requires "a culture change in the way the Air Force is looking at force protection and not relying on security forces alone…."[12]

Air Force education and training further exemplify a culture ill equipped to handle ground combat. Elementary base defense training did not exist at enlisted basic military training until the mid-1990s and is still absent from enlisted professional military education.[13] Similarly, USAF service schools did not include force protection in their courses of instruction until 1996; since then, two hours of instruction have been added to the Air War College curriculum and one hour at Air Command and Staff College (both are 10 month schools). Even the Air Force Wing and Group Commander courses, designed for newly assigned commanders of USAF field units, only recently included force protection in their training plans.

In the RAF, basic military training includes elementary infantry skills, with recurring ground defense training at their units. Officers learn aspects of force protection at all levels of training and education because airfield defense is an integral part of their mission. Despite the fact "today it is an accepted axiom of air warfare that secure bases are essential for the successful conduct of air operations,"[14] Air Force culture continues its myopic predisposition against its own protection, thereby diminishing its potency as an expeditionary force.

Organizational Structure

Service culture dictates, to a great degree, the Air Force organizational structure. Force protection is viewed as an anomaly in the USAF, an attitude reflected in its inconsistent placement within the organization. At the Air Staff, Security Forces are directly subordinate to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the *only* structure where force

protectors actually work for the commander. At major air commands (MAJCOMs), Security Forces report to the Chief of Staff, not the Commander, while placement in a numbered air force varies by command. For example, in Twentieth Air Force, Security Forces report to the Safety Director while in Third Air Force it is the Director of Logistics. Certainly, management principles play a significant role in the structure of these headquarters, but the relatively obscure placement of force protection within the organization dilutes the commander's authority and control over it.

"Security force commanders must work for the 'air boss'. Force protection is the operational responsibility of the wing commander. It is fundamental to generating air and space power. The security force is key to the wing's ability to deploy and operate. Consequently, the Air Force must provide every wing commander direct control of the wing's force protection assets…."[15] Unfortunately where direct operational control of force protection is critical, many wing organizational structures insulate the "air boss" from the security force through intermediate levels of supervision and often a complex series of host-tenant organizational relationships.

As described in Chapter 2, Security Forces generally report to the support group commander, but that commander may or may not be subordinate to the "air boss." In intercontinental ballistic missile units, security forces are dissected between the operations and support groups, and at bases hosting major units of different MAJCOMs, security force structure is incredibly complicated. The point is, the commander responsible for accomplishing the air or space mission must be the commander with direct control over the base defense force.

Again, the USAF occupies a unique position. Sister service force protection organizations are directly responsible to the commanding officer of the particular activity, while the RAF Regiment is subordinate to the station commander (USAF wing commander equivalent) through the operations wing commanding officer. This analysis reveals a basic difference between USAF force protection and all others. The Air Force focuses on defending the base over protecting the mission, i.e., geographic versus functional orientation. It appears "…there is still an internal dilemma within the Air Force. It has still not definitely determined to what extent the Air Force itself will participate in its own defense."[16] Influenced by many years of debate over doctrine, emphasis on nuclear security, and an apathetic cultural environment, Air Force force protection has not received the support it needs.

Mission Emphasis

"Why is it that we, on the one hand, acknowledge the threat to our bases and spend millions of dollars on passive defense…but on the other hand, choose to limit our involvement as a service in the area of active defense?"[17] This is evidence that force protection is not a vital mission, some argue not an Air Force mission at all, and is the thread that sews force protection deficiencies together with an institutional lack of emphasis.

The cause is easily understood; the importance of ground combat to the USAF mission of employing air and space power is judged quite low. Since service inception, force protection has typically been a low visibility, Security Force functionally generated program; until an unfavorable incident forces reaction. As discussed above, Air Force leaders lack understanding of the criticality of force protection, resulting in serious

program impediments. The most powerful barrier, inadequate resource allocation, has sobering implications.

"The Air Force force protection investment should be threat based and programmatically sustained, rather than episodic. Force protection must be a long-term investment program."[18] Most USAF force protection funding is buried in the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) appropriation under the base operating support mission area. The actual Program Element for Air Base Defense, PE27588, is categorized mission support. This categorization links the force protection mission to supporting the base vice the wing combat mission and, due to the "color of money", permits diversion of force protection funds to other base operating support areas.

In the Security Force community, I have personally had little control over unprotected funds and they were often raided. Results of these raids vary considerably, from program stretch-out to trading manpower for equipment. Consequently, security force commanders, more often than not, are left with no money to positively impact force protection.

Emphasis may be shifting in favor of force protection and the Air Force now contends "resources for force protection should be planned and programmed as essential elements of the force structure they support…."[19] It is placing more financial emphasis on force protection, as well as increased advocacy among the services. This direct tie to the air and space power mission may reverse the historical disconnect between force protection and air campaign planning. Unfortunately, this newly found emphasis on resource allocation was not self-generated, but directed by the Secretary of Defense in the aftermath of Khobar Towers. Again, the Air Force is reacting.

Summary

Organizational impediments to force protection exist in four distinct areas: doctrine, service culture, organizational structure, and mission emphasis. Historical relegation of the force protection mission as an adjunct to the service's airpower mission is the common thread.

Service leadership does not truly comprehend the value of indigenous force protection, given their indoctrination that ground defense is a land service, not air service, responsibility, or they lack familiarity with the concept due to its conspicuous absence from airpower doctrine until 1997. By comparison, the RAF considers force protection a full partner in their airpower doctrine and fully integrates its concepts.

Air Force culture perpetuates a force of highly trained specialists, tending toward an over reliance on USAF Security Forces for the entire spectrum of force protection functions. As discussed earlier, subject matter education is superficial and even that is newly instituted. Combined, these factors create a tepid organizational climate for sustaining effective USAF force protection and a misperception that integrating force protection with airpower employment planning is unnecessary.

Finally, service culture fosters an organizational structure reflective of the relative priority of ground combat to the Air Force mission. Force protectors do not work for the "air boss", but are subordinate to various intermediate commanders or functional areas, depending on organization levels. Regardless, the individual most responsible for security has little direct control over the forces, an untenable situation. Resources are similarly allocated, with the implication that force protection is a collateral, even unnecessary, Air Force function.

The Khobar Towers bombing appears to have had an eerily positive effect. New Department of Defense (DOD) mandates in the planning, programming, and budgeting system may reduce the impact of some of these impediments, but will not solve the problem. Air Force force protection remains a mission lacking institutional acceptance.

Notes

[1] Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol. 1, March 1992, 16.

[2] Ibid, 15.

[3] AFM 1-1, vol. 2, 140.

[4] AFM 1-1, vol. 1, 18.

[5] Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 53-54.

[6] Ibid, 53-54.

[7] *RAF Regiment in Action*, 6.

[8] *Royal Air Force Air Power Doctrine AP 3000*, 2nd ed., 1993, 11.

[9] Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, September 1997, 8-19.

[10] Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: the Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 8.

[11] William R. Perry, Secretary of Defense to the President and Congress of the United States, letter, subject: Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad, 16 September 1996.

[12] Bryant Jordan, "On Guard! How the Air Force is Making Force Protection 'A Way of Life", *Air Force Times*, 26 January 1998.

[13] SMSgt Victor J. Kemens, Jr., 66th Security Forces Squadron, Hanscom AFB, MA, informal telephone interview by author, 14 January `1998.

[14] Statement of Wing Commander H. Reed-Purvis, in Major Jesse W. Gill, *USAF/RAF Exchange Program End of Tour Report "The Major Differences between the Royal Air Force and U.S. Air Force on the Issue of Airfield Defence*, (U), April 1979, attach. 2, 1. (Confidential). Information extracted is unclassified.

[15] Security Forces Directorate, Headquarters United States Air Force, USAF Force Protection and Security Force Requirements: A Vision for the 21st Century, white paper, June 1997, 5.

[16] Bell, 11.

[17] Col Joseph S. Bleymaier, Jr., "Air Base Air Defense—An Air Force Commitment?", Research Report no. 84-021 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, 1984), 7.

[18] Security Forces Directorate, USAF Force Protection and Security Force Requirements, 12.

Notes

[19] Lt Gen James F. Record, "Independent Review of the Khobar Towers Bombing, Unclassified Part A and B without attachments", 31 October 1996, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 31 January 1998, available from http://www.af.mil/current/khobar/recordf.htm.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

> *Field Marshal Erwin Rommel defined risk as a chance you take; if it fails, you can recover. A gamble is a chance taken; if it fails, recovery is impossible.*
>
> —AU-8, The Army into the Twenty First Century

"Secure bases are a prerequisite for airpower operations; ensuring that they are available should therefore be a primary responsibility of USAF leadership."[1] Force protection is critical to employing air and space power, but is hampered by institutional bias against the necessity for providing for its own defense. The Air Force is certainly on the leading edge of air and space technology, but does so at a price. "The Air Force concern about the adequacy of its forces becomes acute only if their technological superiority is threatened,"[2] opines the service places technology over less sophisticated, but very important support roles, and thus has little regard for defending that power until after an event takes place. Clearly, the key to effective force protection is to eliminate the leadership reaction cycle by institutionalizing the program. Unfortunately, similar recommendations date to 1942, but went unheeded due to institutional bias. Sadly, the catalyst for today's much-needed organizational transformation appears to be the Khobar Towers tragedy.

DOD reaction to the Khobar Towers bombing, as recorded by the Downing Assessment and the Record Independent Review, simultaneously acknowledges a lack of

emphasis on force protection while indicting the structure that permitted it to occur. Secretary Perry admits "putting force protection up front as a major consideration along with other mission objectives around the world will require a fundamental change in the mindset with which we plan and carry out operations. It also requires structural changes in the Department."[3]

The resulting public dissection of Air Force force protection after Khobar generated mixed reviews. The service was severely criticized for its overall force protection approach, including a lack of emphasis and institutional bias. "In the aftermath of the Khobar Towers bombing, it is extremely prudent to review exactly how, and to what degree, the Air Force needs to improve the way it prepares forces for joint and combined operations in a rapidly and ever-changing world…in an effort to overcome these vulnerabilities, the Air Force must institutionalize a completely different force protection mindset. The Air Force must inculcate this new mindset into every service member through all levels of education and training, from accession to separation. Further, an enduring organizational structure must be established that will ensure Force Protection remains on course through frequent reviews which address threat dynamics."[4] The easy fixes were done quickly. Security Force leaders were simply permitted to implement previously suppressed aspects of force protection, but now with the full support of senior Air Force leadership. Long term fixes, those actions necessary to remove bias and institutionalize force protection within the Air Force, are much harder to do.

"The USAF has historically expected to operate from bases reasonably far behind enemy lines in friendly territory and expected the U.S., allied, or host nation's army/police force to protect them in the unlikely event they came under attack…this

doctrinal mindset placed an artificial limit on the range of options."[5] Air Force doctrine is correctly oriented to its air superiority conviction; RAF airpower doctrine is very similar. However, USAF doctrine traditionally ignored ground defense whereas the British embrace it as integral to their operations. This simply cannot continue. DoD mandated changes in joint doctrine to strengthen CINC responsibilities for base defense and the newly published AFDD 1 includes, for the first time, force protection—actions taken in reaction to Khobar. Security Forces are also now part of the newly formed Air Force Doctrine Center. Apparently, the first steps toward integration have begun, but the toughest challenge lies ahead.

Air Force cultural bias against force protection has historical support. Even though the service took heavy losses in Vietnam, there is little history of attack against USAF (or RAF) bases. Convincing leadership aggressive force protection is a critical mission area when, through two world wars and several major conflicts, they never had to protect themselves is a formidable challenge. Therein lies the major difference between the USAF and RAF—the British live under constant threat of terrorism, Americans do not. Perhaps American aviator bravado equates the need for air base defense with lacking air superiority, a condition counter to the Air Force "fly and fight" culture. RAF aviators are equally bold, yet recognize "…ground attacks on airfields in past conflicts cannot be dismissed as a quaint subfield of military history."[6] By calling for cultural shifts toward increased self-defense, senior leadership reaction to the Khobar Towers bombing has been recognizing change is necessary to ensure the future of the Air Force force projection mission.

Air Expeditionary Force force protectors are the 820th SFG. Their concept of operations closely resembles the highly successful Operation SAFESIDE (Test) and incorporates various elements of RAF Regiment organizational structure. The challenge is to build similar units throughout the Air Force ready for immediate deployment, while retaining home station security force capabilities. To do so will require an increase in resources rarely seen in today's smaller Air Force and the unwavering support of senior Air Force leaders.

"One central idea—that the Air Force organizes within the principle and tenet of centralized control and decentralized execution—underpins the way the Air Force organizes"[7] does not appear to apply to force protectors. Structurally, Air Force force protection is still oriented to base support and not the operational mission. This convoluted structure begs inefficiencies because of the layers of control, fragments ground defense forces and their direction, while hampering their response to critical airpower mission areas. The Air Force must organize, train, and equip its force protectors as it expects to fight. To do so requires wing and numbered air force Security Forces alignment under the "air boss" and divesting peacetime only security force collateral missions. Only then will "an appropriate balance between Force Protection and other competing mission requirements"[8] be struck.

In closing, force protection must not be an afterthought. General Record said, "Force protection in the ground environment is now an additional essential element of the equation that leads to mission accomplishment. Force protection is an absolute requirement…for example, force protection at the source of sortie generation is as essential to successful mission accomplishment as is force protection over the battle area.

If the sortie never leaves the ground, then the force projection mission cannot be accomplished."[9]

Notes

[1] 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), xvii.

[2] Builder, 157.

[3] Perry.

[4] Record.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Vick, xx.

[7] Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2 (Draft version 7), *Global Engagement: Air and Space Power Organization and Employment*, 10 October 1997, 11.

[8] Record.

[9] Ibid.

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