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United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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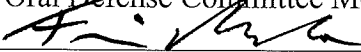
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AUTHOR:

Sergeant Major Stephen A. Griffin, USMC

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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Francis H. Marlo

Approved: 

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Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr Paul D. Cooper

Approved: 

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Executive Summary

Title: Security at US Diplomatic Facilities: Evaluating and Optimizing the Effectiveness of Embassy Security Forces

Author: Sergeant Major Stephen Griffin, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: Although having a Marine detachment assigned to an embassy enhances its security posture, Marines are not needed at facilities assessed as having a low security threat; therefore, permanently assigned Marine Security Guard detachments at the majority of US diplomatic facilities is an inefficient employment of Marines, and the assignment and training process should evolve to more accurately reflect current physical threat assessments.

Discussion: There are currently 192 active or planned Marine Security Guard detachments protecting US diplomatic facilities. An overwhelming majority of these detachments are protecting facilities that are assessed as low threat posts while the most dangerous posts have only a rifle squad-sized detachment for protection. Marine Security Guard detachments have a broad security mission including a historical focus on protecting classified information in addition to the protection of embassy personnel and facilities. The allocation of security resources to protect US diplomatic facilities is a task characterized by risk assessment and a calculated balance of resource distribution to mitigate risk. While too little security causes a vulnerability, too much security needlessly monopolizes resources. Flexibility and the diversification of security resources affords a scalable approach to security, tailored to current situations. For example, at a post classified as low threat, hiring local nationals to provide routine external security functions allows the post security officer to focus on the management of the post's internal security plan. If the security situation gradually begins to deteriorate, a Marine Security Guard detachment from the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit can deploy to increase security until the situation stabilizes. Once the situation is stable, a permanent security arrangement is established based on the current threat situation. If the situation rapidly deteriorates, a quick reaction force from a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SP-MAGTF), Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FAST), or a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) can respond with force and speed to rapidly increase an embassy's security posture.

Conclusion: Marines are not needed at facilities assessed as having a low security threat; therefore, assigning Marine Security Guard detachments to the majority of US diplomatic facilities is not an efficient employment of Marines. The assignment and training process should evolve to consider and more accurately reflect current physical threat assessments rather than continue to allocate Marines to areas of low threat or continue to have a mission focused on the protection of classified material.

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Preface

The ideas in this report are based on experiences over the course of six years serving on the Marine Security Guard Program. My viewpoints on how to best protect US diplomatic facilities began to develop during my first tour as a Marine Security Guard in November 1996, assigned to the US Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Although Argentina has a recent history of social and political unrest, including terrorist attacks, the threat level to the US Embassy in Buenos Aires required me to dedicate more time to preparing for semi-annual command inspections and raising money at embassy social functions than to protecting the embassy from security threats. While on duty, I primarily focused on administering embassy security policies such as checking badges, issuing keys, and conducting interior security inspections. During a second tour, at the US Embassy in Beijing, China it was evident that the duties I performed in the protection of classified information were necessary due to the critical counter intelligence threat in China. However, what was not clear— then or currently— is how Marines are inherently the best choice for safeguarding classified information when it could be done by members of other military branches or professionally trained civilians.

My tour as a Marine Security Guard Detachment Commander assigned to Sanaa, Yemen began in 2004, after the East-African embassy attacks and the September, 2001 terrorist attacks. In spite of the fact that in the seven years since beginning my tours on the Marine Security Guard Program, the threat environment had changed significantly, the selection, training, and equipment used by Marine Security Guards had not. The focus on protecting classified material remained even though the amount of classified material held at embassies steadily reduced with the increased use of digital media storage. Moreover, the Marines that I led at the US Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen and subsequently, the US Embassy in Bern, Switzerland had met the same

selection criteria, received the same training, and had generally the same equipment available to protect diplomatic facilities in vastly different threat environments.

Experience protecting four embassies in vastly different threat environments made it obvious to me that a one-size-fits-all approach to embassy security does not adequately provide protection to all critical threat posts and simultaneously wastes security resources on low threat posts. My opinion is that Marines are absolutely the best choice to protect some diplomatic facilities while they are not needed at all at others.

Library reference and database materials sourced for this topic include periodicals, books, official reports, and archived student works on the subject. Additionally, the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group headquarters provided insight into the history of the Marine Security Guard Program as well as the selection process and training of Marine Security Guards. Furthermore, Headquarters Marine Corps, Manpower and Reserve Affairs Division assisted me with framing the significance of efficiently using the Corps' most precious resource. Finally, two subject matter experts— a senior Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Marine Security Guard Branch, and a senior Marine who served as a Marine Security Guard, a Detachment Commander, and an Instructor at the Marine Security Guard School— contributed first-hand knowledge and professional expertise regarding the challenges of securing nearly 200 uniquely different diplomatic facilities.

The need for standardized security at US diplomatic facilities became apparent as World War II ended and the Cold War began. The Department of State commonly employed private US citizens and local nationals as guards to protect embassies, legations, and consulates. These guard forces were not well-paid and were generally older persons with limited education, experience, and physical endurance. Furthermore, the guard forces suffered from problems of unprofessional conduct, poor performance, and issues with pay and benefits and were susceptible to pressures from the host nation government, making them untrustworthy. It is no surprise that, “By 1947, it became evident that existing arrangements for embassy guards did not meet the minimal needs of the Department, and the Department decided to ‘overhaul’ the embassy guard system.”¹ The overhaul formalized a relationship between the Department of State and the Marine Corps that developed into the current Marine Security Guard Program.

Throughout its history, the Marine Corps has served alongside US diplomats advancing US national interests overseas—from the Battle of Derma, Libya in 1804 to defending the International Legation Quarter in Beijing, China during the Boxer Rebellion. The enactment of the Foreign Service Act of 1946 mandated a major organizational change in the Department of State. As a result, the Department of State and the Marine Corps signed a Memorandum of Agreement on 15 December 1948 establishing the Marine Corps Embassy Security program in its current form. The Memorandum of Agreement outlined the duties of Marine Embassy Security Guards as well as who was responsible for training, equipping and funding the specific aspects of the Marine Security Guard Program.² On 28 January 1949, the first Marine Security Guards were assigned to the US Embassies in Bangkok, Thailand and Tangier, Morocco. The provision for Marine Security Guards in the Foreign Service Act of 1946 has since been replaced

with Title 10, United States Code 5983 and the memorandum of agreement was most recently updated in 2016.³

The Marine Corps was not the first choice of the Department of State— but nonetheless was chosen— because the Foreign Service Act of 1946, Section 562, stated that “The Secretary of the Navy is authorized, upon the request of the Secretary of State to provide enlisted men from the Navy and Marine Corps to serve as custodians under the supervision of the senior diplomatic officer at an Embassy, Legation or Consulate,”⁴ and because the Marine Corps was very interested in an embassy guard program for reasons of inter-service politics and institutional survival.⁵ Although the Marine Corps’ struggle for institutional survival during the post-World War II drawdown and reorganization led them into the embassy security business, their performance and reputation for excellence resulted in a steady expansion of their role and their permanent presence at the majority of embassies and consulates around the world, whether their presence was a crucial security need or the result of a symbolic “want.”

Much of the growth in the number of US embassies and consulates around the world is attributable to a need for diplomatic relations with countries that were recently liberated, newly established, or had gained independence from colonial powers. Not only was there a rapid expansion of US diplomatic facilities and personnel overseas, the threat posed by espionage was rapidly becoming the front-line fight to contain communism. Thus, the focus of the Marine Security Guard Program and embassy security was preventing the theft of classified information from US diplomatic missions around the world by the Cold War spies.

The rise of terrorism (1983), the end of the Cold War (1991), the transition to the digital age (2000), and increases in armed assaults (2005) have changed the nature of the threat to US diplomatic missions around the world and, in turn, the optimal way to defend against it. For

instance, the rise of terrorism, beginning with the bombings of the US Embassy in Beirut, has necessitated a greater need for the physical security of buildings and compounds to counter the threat posed by vehicle-borne improvised explosives devices. Although the end of the Cold War and its skirmishes over spheres of influence meant that the threat of espionage in many remote and formerly contested nations around the world declined, the digital age has brought about a change in the threat to US national security information. The threat of foreign agents stealing documents by drilling safes and operating listening devices has evolved into an external threat to US digital information systems that a Marine Security Guard cannot protect against while standing post at the entrance of a building. Although having a Marine detachment assigned to an embassy enhances its security posture, Marines are not needed at facilities assessed as having a low security threat; therefore, permanently assigned Marine Security Guard detachments at the majority of US diplomatic facilities is an inefficient employment of Marines, and the assignment and training process should evolve to more accurately reflect current physical threat assessments.

The most recent evolution in the threats to US diplomatic facilities has produced complex armed assaults such as the attack on the US Consulate General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and the diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya. Terrorist groups recognize that bombing an embassy, assassinating an ambassador, or taking hostages has a greater impact and requires less resources than stealing and capitalizing on stolen classified information.

Leo J. Daugherty III summarizes:

The rescue of American diplomats, American citizens, and foreign nationals in Mogadishu in January 1991 presaged the types of threats that Marine Security Guards faced throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century. Indeed, as events of the 1990s and early 21st century have demonstrated, there has been no letup in the war on terror, as Marine Security Guards have found themselves on the front lines. Despite the problems and scandals of the mid-1980s, the Marine Security Guard Program demonstrated its resilience and adjusted very well to the changing nature of the threats to embassy security.⁶

The Marine Security Guard Program has expanded and demonstrated the resilience Daugherty describes, but changes in the form of the threats outpaced and exceeded drastic changes in the way Marines provide security to US embassies and consulates. For instance, focus on the prevention of another Beirut or Benghazi has included procedures to prevent vehicle borne improvised explosive devices from being an effective weapon, as well as erecting anti-vehicle barricades and increasing standards for building standoff distances from street. However, an overemphasis by the Marine Security Guard Program on the protection of classified information remains. This focus is a potential distraction from the Marine Security Guards' ability to protect their facilities from armed assaults and bombings and could result in facilities not in need of physical security being allocated Marine Security Guards that would be better allocated elsewhere. Not only is protecting classified material a distraction from the immediate danger that violent actors present but it is a threat that Marine Security Guards have little ability to mitigate. Marine Security Guards can undoubtedly stop an adversary from penetrating a US diplomatic facility and removing US national security information and equipment, but they are powerless to stop an individual with an Internet connection from penetrating classified information systems and extracting classified information from anywhere in the world.

Marine Security Guards provide the most significant and recognizable protection of US diplomatic missions around the world. Their mission, selection process, training, and employment provide a highly visible show of strength as a deterrence and a delaying force against an attack in order to give host nation forces time to respond in defense of the US diplomatic facility.

The assigned mission of Marine Security Guard detachments worldwide, first written in the original Memorandum of Agreement in 1948, remains largely unchanged and states:

The MSGs' primary mission is to provide internal security services at designated U.S. Diplomatic and Consular facilities to prevent the compromise of classified information and equipment that is vital to national security of the United States of America. The secondary mission of the MSG is to provide protection for U.S. citizens and U.S. Government property located within designated U.S. Diplomatic and Consular premises/facilities during exigent circumstances that require immediate aid or action.⁷

The mission was most recently updated in 2013; however, the common theme remains that Marine Security Guards protect classified material, embassy personnel, and facilities. The 2013 version of the mission delineated the wording, removing the words primary and secondary and puts “protection of mission personnel” before “preventing the compromise of national security information” in an attempt to prioritize or at least give equal weight to the protection of people, classified information, and facilities.⁸ Furthermore, it adds the statement that “Marine Security Guards will be prepared to execute plans for the protection of the mission and its personnel.”⁹

The official mission of Marine Security Guard detachments does not mention a major unofficial but accepted function of Marine Security Guards which is to serve as “Ambassadors in Blue,” the representatives of the United States of America and the United States Marine Corps throughout the world. This tradition and function is reinforced and perpetuated by the selection process for Marine Security Guards and Detachment Commanders, by the curriculum of the Marine Security Guard School, and continually, while Marines are serving at embassies and consulates around the world. The image of a Marine in the Dress Blue uniform at the entry of a US embassy is a symbol of US diplomacy that most Americans and many people around the world have come to expect.

The Marines selected to serve as Marine Security Guards within the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group can be grouped into three categories: watchstanders, Detachment Commanders, and members of the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit. The Marine Security Guard watchstanders make up the vast majority of the Marines assigned to the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group. As their name implies, watchstanders are the Marines who are on duty at US embassies and consulates around the world to provide a constant security presence and carry out all routine security functions while on duty. Even when they are not on duty they are subject to recall to form the post's quick reaction force.

An all-volunteer force screened and selected from the active duty ranks of Lance Corporal to Sergeant, Marines serving in every Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and not restricted by gender are eligible to volunteer to become Marine Security Guard watchstanders. However, the list of minimum requirements along with the current manning strength of their primary military occupational specialty significantly limit the eligible population of Marines who are qualified to serve as Marine Security Guard watchstanders. According to information from the Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department (M&RA), forty-seven percent of Marines in the ranks of Lance Corporal through Sergeant meet the minimum requirements to serve as watchstanders; however, that number does not take into account whether the Marine who meets the requirements is currently available for assignment outside of their primary MOS.¹⁰ Some of the most restrictive minimum requirements are:

- Cannot be married or a single parent with sole custody
- Must be a US citizen able to qualify for a top-secret security clearance
- Must be financially stable

- Must have a minimum General Technical score of ninety on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
- Must have a first-class Physical Fitness Test score
- Must have a minimum of average proficiency and conduct marks while in service of 4.2/4.2¹¹

Allowing only single Marines in the ranks of Lance Corporal to Sergeant to volunteer not only is the largest disqualifying factor, it also discourages Marines from volunteering who are not willing to make a thirty-six-month commitment to remain unmarried. The reason for the restriction is that Marine Security Guard watchstanders all live in a common residence—the “Marine House”— and accommodating Marines accompanied with dependents during tours as watchstanders is not practical.

A Detachment Commander leads each Marine Security Guard Detachment. Detachment Commanders are qualified to stand post, but their primary role is to provide leadership and to supervise the day-to-day operations of an embassy or consulate’s Marine Security Guard Detachment. Detachment Commanders are screened and selected from the active force ranks of Staff Sergeant to Master Gunnery Sergeant, excluding First Sergeants and Sergeants Major, serving in all military occupational specialties and also not restricted by gender. The restrictive minimum requirements and the current manning strength of many military occupational specialties at the Staff non-commissioned officer level makes the available population of Marines who can serve as Detachments Commanders even more limited than the population of qualified watchstanders. The most limiting requirements for Detachment Commanders are:

- Must have a minimum General Technical score of 100 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

- Must have a first-class Physical Fitness Test score
- If married, cannot have more than four dependents, and their wife and children must be US citizens or dual citizens of the US and another country¹²

The minimum requirements to volunteer to become a Marine Security Guard Watchstander or Detachment Commander alone makes the pool of eligible Marines small. Once at school, they will be further screened and tested, particularly for the intangible skills that cannot be recorded in their military personnel file like maturity, judgment, leadership, professionalism, self-discipline, and high moral character. The intent of the aptitudes screened for in the assignment and selection of Marines to serve as Marine Security Guards is to ensure that the best Marines are selected for embassy duty. However, a large portion of the screening, selection, and training of Marine Security Guards and Detachment Commander are in the interest of choosing and equipping Marines for the protection of classified material and the requirement to integrate into an embassy community to serve as Ambassadors in Blue.

The Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit was formed after the terrorist attack on US diplomatic facilities in Benghazi. Based out of Quantico, Virginia, it is a rapid response force that can augment the existing security at a US diplomatic facility during periods of increased threat and also provides a boost in manpower to protect national security information and equipment during overseas trips by the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense. The Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit is primarily made up of Marines who began their tours as watchstanders or Detachment Commanders and were subsequently reassigned to the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit upon completing at least one of their three overseas postings for watchstanders or one of their two overseas postings for Detachment Commanders. However, married Sergeants who would

otherwise not be eligible to serve as a Marine Security Guard because of their dependents status may be assigned directly to the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit for their full thirty-six-month tour with the Marine Security Guard Embassy Security Group.

Although it is possible that the presence of the “Ambassadors in Blue” goes beyond symbolic and actually provides a credible deterrence against threats to the majority of facilities they adorn, it is not likely. Ambassador Pamela Hamamoto, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, in her 2015 speech preceding the Marine Corps Birthday Ball ceremony in Geneva, briefly recognized, “I take comfort in the fact that, day in and day out, you are watching over our Mission, and I commend you for your professionalism and valor”¹³, then went on to describe what the Marine Security Guard Detachment had accomplished in the preceding year. She mentioned their volunteering at a local hospice, helping Boy Scouts earn merit badges, and investing in their own education and trade and further described their commitment to the embassy “community events like Easter parties, 4th of July, and Halloween.”¹⁴ Ambassador Hamamoto’s speech perfectly captures the contribution of Marine Security Guards to low threat posts— a part of US foreign service communities— as much, if not more, than they are the first line of defense in a crisis. The restrictive requirements to volunteer to become a Marine Security Guard watchstander or Marine Security Guard Detachment Commander and the high standards on personal conduct that are screened for at Marine Security Guard school— limiting the pool of Marines eligible to protect US diplomatic facilities— has more to do with them serving as Ambassadors in Blue than it does with defending a facility and its personnel from attack.

The nature of the Marine Security Guard Program including the official mission, the selection criteria, training standards, equipment, and employment around the world is codified in

the memorandum of agreement endorsed by both the Department of State and the Marine Corps. As the security and law enforcement provider for the Department of State, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security is “responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy,”¹⁵ and each mission employs security programs that are created and administered by Diplomatic Security Service. A Diplomatic Security Special Agent is assigned to each diplomatic post as the Regional Security Officer, responsible to the Chief of Mission for the security of the post and all personnel. The Diplomatic Security Service relies heavily on the Marine Security Guard Program as a highly visible representation of security at US embassies and consulates. While performing their official mission of protecting classified information, post personnel, and facilities, Marine Security Guards are tasked with the enforcement of mission security policies under the supervision of the Regional Security Officer. For example, it is a common security procedure at US diplomatic facilities for all personnel to visibly display a security badge at all times. Although all post personnel are expected to follow and enforce post security policies, the Regional Security Officer depends on Marine Security Guards to enforce the post’s security policies. It is the responsibility of the post’s Regional Security Officer, along with the Detachment Commander, to ensure that their Marine Security Guard Detachment is managed and employed in accordance with the most recent version of the Memorandum of Agreement.

Since the first two detachments were activated in 1949, the number of detachments has grown to 177 as of February 2017, with 15 more planned to activate.¹⁶ The growth in the number of detachments has risen steadily over time and demonstrates visible spikes tied to specific events. For example, the number of detachments sharply increased during the Cold War in countries where influence was contested and in turn Marine Security Guard Detachments were

created to protect the classified information at these facilities. Other expansions in the number of Marine Security Guard Detachments occurred after the 1983 bombings of the US Embassy in Beirut, after the nearly simultaneous attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 8, 1998, and most recently, the expansion following the attack on US occupied compounds in Benghazi on September 11, 2012.

The trend to steadily add detachments worldwide over time, coupled with these occasional reactionary spikes after specific events or incidents, is unnecessarily stretching the manpower resources dedicated to the Marine Security Guard Program thin and has created a broad but shallow capability to accomplish the mission assigned to the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group. When the US Embassy in Beirut was bombed, there were 114 Marine Security Guard detachments and by 1998, when the embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were attacked, the number of posts protected by a Marine detachment had grown to 134. In 2012, when the Benghazi compound was attacked, the number of posts had grown to 143 detachments. Since that attack, the number has again spiked to the current number of 192, a 70% increase since the first significant terrorist attack on a US diplomatic compound.¹⁷ Furthermore, the minimum size for all detachments was increased from five watchstanders and a detachment commander, to seven watchstanders and a detachment commander at low and medium threat posts. The 29 posts assessed as having a high or critical threat level have a minimum manning of twelve watchstanders and a detachment commander.¹⁸

The Department of State's reaction to an increased threat or events in one area of the world is to increase the number of Marine Security Guard Detachments and Marines worldwide even though it is not at all clear that more guards equates to better security. In fact, in September 2014, the Department of State's Office of the Inspector General found that "DS did not

demonstrate that it had formal, documented procedures to guide the identification and selection of overseas posts that should be afforded new MSG detachments or to guide any reconsideration of whether existing MSG detachments should be reallocated among posts.”¹⁹

With the exception of the attacks on the US compounds in Benghazi, most significant terrorist attacks against US diplomatic missions have had Marine Detachments. The bombings of the US Embassy in Beirut, the bombings of the US Embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and the armed assaults in Jeddah, and Sanaa, Yemen suggest the need for more robust detachments or viable quick reaction forces at high threat posts. Therefore, the addition of detachments to diplomatic facilities not assessed as high threat in the aftermath of attacks elsewhere, does not represent a logical or necessary response. For instance, following the embassy bombings in East Africa, new embassy detachments were activated at several low threat posts including Munich, Germany, Vilnius, Lithuania, and Bratislava, Slovakia.²⁰ The manpower allocated to these posts could instead strengthen higher threat posts elsewhere.

Moreover, negative media attention and politically-motivated demands for answers in the aftermath of events at diplomatic facilities has resulted in an equally political response that assigns Marine Security Guards everywhere to protect personnel— from the Ambassadors all the way up the chain to Washington, D.C.— from losing their jobs in the aftermath of a crisis, as much, if not more, as they are there protecting lives. Although allocating security resources such as Marine Security Guards involves risk management and is not an exact science, current Marine Security Guard Detachments’ employment around the world demonstrates an assignments process that is overly risk averse and favors the broad allocation of Marine Security Guards. For example, Marine Security Guard Detachments are active or planned at 192 US diplomatic facilities worldwide with inadequate consideration of the general security situation at the

particular post or its current threat levels. Of the 192 active or planned Marine Security Guard Detachments, 163 of them are classified as low or medium physical security threat.²¹ In total, more than 85% of Marine Security Guard Detachments are protecting posts assessed as having low or medium physical threat. As a result, no less than 1,304 Marines are currently on guard at facilities where they are not likely to be needed to protect the lives of American diplomatic personnel. Such a broad allocation of security forces is unacceptable in light of the 2014 OIG finding that the Department of State's expansion of MSG program numbers has made only "modest contributions to strengthening security for personnel" in the most dangerous posts with the highest threat levels.²²

Furthermore, the reactiveness of the Department of State when it comes to providing security at overseas mission facilities has spread resources thin and only symbolically added to the security capability at its most dangerous posts. The onslaught of political blame that came after the September 2012 Benghazi attack has made the Diplomatic Security Service and Department of State risk averse to the point that reducing security anywhere in the world is, politically, a risk not worth taking, even if done in an effort to enhance security at a more critical site. The broad resistance that would come from making a change that included removing whole detachments from specific overseas diplomatic facilities would be difficult to overcome.

In addition, the blanket strategy of adding more Marine Security Guards or opening new Marine Security Guard detachments where none existed has not been easy to sustain and a "department initiative for the MSG program expansion, referred to in the ARB report, included the proposal to establish new MSG detachments at 50 additional high and medium threat posts by 2014."²³ Hindrances ranging from budgetary restrictions and infrastructure concerns to difficulties receiving host nation approval resulted in a reduction in the number of proposed new

posts to 25; and as of January 2017, only 18 new posts have been activated since the Benghazi attacks in 2012.²⁴ Similarly, the directive to add more Marine Security Guards has also not been met. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 authorized a Marine Corps end strength increase of 1,000 Marines,²⁵ which if assigned would have doubled the size of the Marine Security Guard Program at that time. However, simply increasing the total number of Marines does not correspondingly increase the size of the Marine Security Guard Program. As the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Manpower Division points out, adding 1,000 Marines to the end strength is not the same as adding 1,000 Marine Security Guards because less than 50% of Marines meet the minimum requirements for Marine Security Guard duty and even fewer are available for assignment because they lack the required contractual time to complete the tour.²⁶ Therefore, in order to add 1,000 Marine Security Guards, the Marine Corps would require an increased end strength of more than 2,000.

The tendency to preserve the strongest and most capable force to meet the most dangerous threat is instinctual. However, recommending the closure of more than 150 detachments and revamping the selection process and training of Marine Security Guards, when combined with a natural resistance to change, makes obtaining support for the obvious and practical mission-focused argument difficult. This opposition to change is due in large part to the fact that both the real and perceived value of Marine Security Guard Detachments goes well beyond their ability to protect mission personnel and prevent the compromise of national security information and equipment. The versatility and reliability of a Marine Security Guard detachment provides Regional Security Officers with a tool to accomplish many necessary but administrative security functions with little supervision or oversight. Marine Security Guards maintain accountability of keys and security badges, keep detailed records of events in official

security logbooks, maintain visitor and access rosters, physically control doors, gates, and barriers, and are the primary communications point of contact for the embassies during an afterhours emergency.

Additionally, as much as the Marines have the potential to be a crisis response force for all Americans in that particular country, they are also valued members of the embassy community, a visual representation of American strength and professionalism and the caretakers of US Embassy traditions that boost the morale of the post's personnel and families. Without exception, the annual celebration of the Marine Corps Birthday at US embassies and consulates around the world is one of the most significant social events of the year. In 1957, Lieutenant General Victor H. "Brute" Krulak, in response to a written question from then Commandant, General Randolph McCall Pate, on why America needed a Marine Corps, wrote: "The United States does not need a Marine Corps. However, for good reasons which completely transcend cold logic, the United States wants a Marine Corps."²⁷ Although ambassadors, the Department of State, the Diplomatic Security Service, and the Marine Corps want a Marine Security Guard Program, they do not necessarily need one that places Ambassadors in Blue at every foreign post regardless of its threat level. Reasons for having a Marine Security Guard Detachment that do not go deeper than creating symbolic status or fear of criticism in the event of an attack at a post without Marines are not compelling enough to deprive high-threat posts the protection that they need.

Recommendations

Rather than a one-size-fits-all directive, current intelligence threat assessments of US diplomatic missions should determine where it is necessary to have Marine Security Guard Detachments as well as the size of that detachment. In order to ensure the most efficient use of

manpower resources allocated to the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, the number and size of Marine Security Guard Detachments should be re-evaluated using a holistic approach that is entirely threat-based and directed only by 'need.' This departure from the current broad but shallow approach to the allocation of manpower will result in the most effective use of Marines to provide increased embassy security worldwide.

If Marine Security Guards from all posts that are assessed as "low physical threat" are removed and the number of detachments considered medium threat are reduced, the manpower could be reallocated to reinforce the highest threat posts, to increase the strength of the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit, or be returned back to the operating forces for use as Marine Corps Crisis Response forces. For example, Marines removed from Tokyo could be reallocated and used more efficiently to bolster the capabilities of the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit. Additionally, reducing the size of a detachment somewhere considered medium threat could provide needed manpower to a high threat post such as Jeddah. While the removal of Marines from low-threat posts might frighten the risk-averse, the value of reinvesting the saved resources would have a tangible impact on the security posture of higher threat posts. The reallocation would free Marines to provide a more robust and capable response at higher threat posts that possess a demonstrable link between being protected by Marines and being safer for the personnel serving at them. Rather than having one or two Marines on post at a time and relying on the remaining off duty Marines as a reaction force, creating a larger detachment would facilitate a contingent in a ready posture able to respond immediately to a threat with enough force to confront it.

Removing Marine Security Guard detachments from low and medium threat posts does not equate to the Marine Corps relinquishing responsibly for the protection of those facilities;

rather, it would reinvest the manpower savings from closed detachments into other existing response forces oriented toward a specific threat and a specific region. In the case of a slowly developing threat such as political instability in a country, a deployment of Marines from the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit could be tasked to address the situation until resolved or until a permanent adjustment to the security posture is made. In a rapidly deteriorating security situation, a contingent of Marines from one of two pre-positioned, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Forces (SP-MAGTF), a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), a Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FAST), or a US-based rapid response force is capable of deploying on short notice depending on the situation and geographic location.

In addition, the requirements to request assignment to the Marine Security Guard Embassy Security Group should begin to reflect a greater emphasis on qualification and experience valuable to the defense of a post from a terrorist attack and place less emphasis on protecting national security information. In the way that Marine Security Guards are currently employed, they do not need access to Top Secret material to perform their duties— and would need even less— if they were repurposed with a focus on external physical security threats. Furthermore, adding enough Marines to the detachments that need them based on threat levels would eliminate instances of Marines standing posts alone in facilities containing Top Secret information, reducing the risk of a single Marine being compromised. Holding a Top Secret security clearance does not guarantee serving in a mature, professional manner and is not a necessary attribute of a Marine who can defend a diplomatic facility against an armed attacker or respond with force to secure a facility following an attack. However, proven past performance during a deployment with the Marine Corps Operating Forces is ample evidence of a Marine's ability to serve in an overseas operational environment. Setting a requirement that a Marine

complete at least one operational deployment is a more fitting criterion for serving as a member of a US diplomatic facilities' defensive force than being single, a US citizen and having a minimum GT score of ninety.

The functions that Marine Security Guards perform at posts assessed as low or medium threat could be performed by a professional, non-military security force, thereby freeing a large majority of Marine Security Guards to safeguard the most dangerous or austere posts. If Marine Security Guards from low threat posts are reallocated to higher threat detachments or elsewhere, they could potentially be replaced with an increased number of Diplomatic Security Service Uniformed Division Officers who are already trained and performing many of the same routine security functions that Marine Security Guards perform at Department of State facilities and foreign diplomatic missions in the United States. These same low threat posts could transition to "lock and leave" facilities after hours rather than requiring a Marine or Diplomatic Security Service Officer to stand duty in an empty, locked-down building in the middle of the night in places like Ottawa, Canada and Auckland, New Zealand.

Analysis must demonstrate that Marine Security Guards are a crucial component of safeguarding national security information or that duty should be removed from their mission and become a responsibility of the originating agency's leadership and the individuals who originate, process, and distribute the classified information. Assigning Marine Security Guards as enforcers of internal or administrative security policies directs their attention to mission personnel and distracts them from identifying external threats. Additionally, the practice of issuing security violations to embassy staff members can negatively impact the career of the violator and place Marine Security Guards at odds with the personnel they are protecting rather than unite a community focused on the same mission. In the instance that a twenty-two-year-old

Corporal at his first post is tasked with ensuring a career Foreign Service officer follows post policy rather than focusing on external threats to the facility, a Regional Security Officer would be better served by adjusting the security culture at the post to make the protection of national security information a team effort with individuals and supervisors responsible for internal safeguards and the Marine Security Guards focused outward.

Finally, when determining where to assign Marines or where to remove Marines and instead increase the allocation of Diplomatic Security Service Agents, reliance on the host country government to provide security for US diplomatic facilities should be considered. According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, Article 22 para 2., “[T]he receiving state is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission from any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.”²⁸ This agreement clearly requires host nations to provide for the security of US diplomatic facilities in their country in the same way that the United States provides protection to Foreign Missions in the United States in accordance with its obligations under the convention. Although it is understandable that some host nations do not have the capacity to provide the level of protection that the United States expects, host countries must make a concerted effort to provide security for US diplomatic facilities, particularly in countries that have emergency response capabilities that are comparable to US standards, for example, all of Western Europe, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Canada.

Conclusions

Marines have evolved to become more like members of the foreign service community than the last line of defense in a crisis at many posts, a fact that stands out when considering the 2014 findings that the most dangerous posts have only experienced modest increases in security

despite increased MSG program numbers. Marines are not needed at facilities assessed as having a low security threat; therefore, assigning Marine Security Guard detachments at the majority of US diplomatic facilities is not an efficient employment of Marines. The assignment and training process should evolve to consider and more accurately reflect current physical threat assessments rather than continue to allocate Marines to areas of low threat and focus on the protection of classified material. This evolution, reorganization, and reallocation will allow for greater security at high threat posts that have a recognizable, documented need for it. Increased MSG program numbers must directly correlate to increased security at the most dangerous posts rather than the current allocation that has demonstrated little more than increased manpower at a larger number of embassies.

It should not take a violent attack with American lives lost at a high threat post that could have benefitted from a larger number of Marine Security Guards to recognize that there are facilities that need extra Marines much more than others need any at all. Ambassador Richard J. Griffin, in 2006, described how since 1949, Marines have done what the State Department needed of them and noted that “[w]e only have to think of Marine Sgt. Manual Matos, who served with the Marine Security Guard detachment at the U.S. consulate in Jeddah. When five heavily armed al-Qaeda terrorists attacked the consulate in 2004, Sgt. Matos immediately secured the building. His quick thinking- and action- probably saved the lives of 150 employees.”²⁹ Marines are undeniably an asset to such high-threat posts and situations will continue to arise which require Marines to adapt and react to threats to embassy security; garnering them praise such as that given by Ambassador Griffin. However, should a Marine Security Guard detachment face a threat that demands more Marines to confront it than their post has been assigned, it should be very difficult to justify the allocation of Marines to low threat

posts that remark of their Marines, “[f]or the kids at our mission, you can bet that having a U.S. Marine paint bunny whiskers on their cheeks before the annual Easter egg hunt at the Marine house is a thrill they will never forget!”³⁰

¹ US Department of State. *History of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security of the United States Department of State*. (Washington, DC: Global Publishing Solutions, October 2011), 101.

² US Department of State. US Department of State to US Marine Corps. Memorandum of Agreement, 12 FAM 430, June 20, 2016. <https://fam.state.gov/fam/12fam/12fam0430.html>

³ Marine Corps Embassy Security Group “MCESG History” January, 2017. <http://www.mcesg.marines.mil/About/MCESG-History/>

⁴ *Foreign Service Act of 1946*, Public Law 724, 79th Congress, amended January 1, 1956. (Pub.L.No 112-239 § 404, 10 U.S.C. 5983 note, 126 Stat. 1632, 1708. January 2, 2013.

⁵ US Department of State. *History of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security of the United States Department of State*. (Washington, DC: Global Publishing Solutions, October 2011), 101.

⁶ Leo J. Daugherty III, *The Marine Corps and the State Department: Enduring Partners in United States Foreign Policy, 1798-2007*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 326.

⁷ US Department of State. US Department of State to US Marine Corps. Memorandum of Agreement, 12 FAM 430, December 15, 1948.

⁸ US Department of State. *Audit of the Department of State Management of the Marine Security Guard Program and Plans for Program Expansion*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Inspector General, September 2014), 9.

⁹ US Department of State. US Department of State to US Marine Corps. Memorandum of Agreement, 12 FAM 430, June 20, 2016. <https://fam.state.gov/fam/12fam/12fam0430.html>

¹⁰ Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Manpower and Reserve Affairs: MSG Qualification Data*. email to author, February, 6 2017.

¹¹ Marine Corps Embassy Security Group “MCESG Requirements” January, 2017. <http://www.mcesg.marines.mil/Become-a-MSG/Requirements/>

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Hamamoto, Pamela “Ambassador Hamamoto’s Remarks at the 240th US Marine Corps Birthday Ball” (Speech. Geneva, Switzerland, November, 2015). <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2015/11/23/ambassador-hamamotos-remarks-at-240th-us-marine-corps-birthday-ball/>

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ US Department of State, Under Secretary for Management “Bureau of Diplomatic Security” January, 2017. <https://www.state.gov/m/ds/>

¹⁶ Robert F. Kelty, Branch Chief Marine Security Guard Program, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, email to author, February 13, 2017.

¹⁷ US Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, “Marine Security Guard Detachments: Activation/Deactivation Dates” July 8, 2015.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ US Department of State. *Audit of the Department of State Management of the Marine Security Guard Program and Plans for Program Expansion*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Inspector General, September 2014), 2.

²⁰ US Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, “Marine Security Guard Detachments: Activation/Deactivation Dates” July 8, 2015.

²¹ Robert F. Kelty, Branch Chief Marine Security Guard Program, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, email to author, February 13, 2017.

²² US Department of State. *Audit of the Department of State Management of the Marine Security Guard Program and Plans for Program Expansion*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Inspector General, September 2014), 3.

²³ *Ibid*, 1-2.

²⁴ Robert F. Kelty, Branch Chief Marine Security Guard Program, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, email to author, February 13, 2017.

²⁵ National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 authorization act of 2013

²⁶ Robert K. Williamson, Manpower Management Sergeant Major, interview with author, February 22, 2017.

²⁷ Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*. (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1984), xv.

²⁸ “Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations” April 18, 1961. United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 5000, 95.

²⁹ Richard J. Griffin, “Ambassador Griffin Lauds Diplomatic Security/Marine Corps Partnership,” (speech, Washington, DC, September 14, 2006), US Department of State Achieve. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/m/ds/rls/rm/72266.htm>

³⁰ Hamamoto, Pamela “Ambassador Hamamoto’s Remarks at the 240th US Marine Corps Birthday Ball” (Speech. Geneva, Switzerland, November, 2015). <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2015/11/23/ambassador-hamamotos-remarks-at-240th-us-%09marine-corps-birthday-ball/>

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