STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

FORCE PROTECTION AFTER NEXT

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ABSTRACT

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The 1996 Khobar Towers Bombing brought renewed emphasis on terrorism in the Air Force and the subsequent Force Protection efforts to defend against it. This paper argues the Air Force must implement more fundamental changes than currently planned in order to adequately protect resources against Khobar Towers-type attacks in the future and enhance combat sustainability. It explores the bombing and its lessons learned (documented and undocumented) and existing Air Force documents on Force Protection. It analyzes current and planned Force Protection requirements and ways to provide a more viable Force Protection program for the 21st century.

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PREFACE

This paper examines Force Protection in the United States Air Force. Its scope is centered on the June 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia and the subsequent actions taken to enhance protection of Air Force assets worldwide. The Khobar Towers attack had a significant impact on Force Protection within the Department of Defense. At the center of the DOD effort is the Air Force because the attack was against Air Force people. Beyond DOD, the national response was focused more on finding the culprits than identifying and fixing systemic weaknesses in our security programs.

There were numerous inquiries and investigations into the Khobar Towers attack. Within DOD there were three separate investigations. This author was part of the second investigating team formed by the Secretary of the Air Force in February 1997. What followed were nearly six months of intensive examination of nearly every facet of Khobar towers, the host unit and other applicable organizations. From this experience came the desire to examine Force Protection as a whole. The title "Force Protection After Next" comes from "Army After Next", and is designed to help focus this work toward Force Protection in the Air Force for the mid 21st century.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

EXPLOSIVE WAKE UP CALL

A terrorist truck bomb exploded outside the northern perimeter of the US portion of the Khobar Towers housing complex, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on 25 June 1996.[1] The explosion killed nineteen airmen and wounded approximately 500 others.[2] Most of those killed resided in building 131, an eight story apartment complex. The explosion defaced the front of the building and created a crater measuring 20 feet deep as shown in figures one and two.[3] The extensive damage to building 131 served as a wake up call for US forces worldwide regarding terrorism and Force Protection.

Figure 1, Khobar Towers Building 131

US response to the bombing was quick and multifaceted.[4] Within three days the Secretary of Defense directed a DOD inquiry

into the bombing. Known as the Downing Assessment, this report included 26 recommendations for improving Force Protection within the department.[5] Other actions included diplomatic discussions with the Saudi government, arrangements for the Federal Bureau of Investigations to help find the culprits, and a number of actions by the Air Force.[6]

Figure 2, Crater created from the bombing

The Air Force relocated the 4404th Wing to another location in Saudi Arabia within days of the attack.[7] Subsequent actions included beefing up security forces in the region and tightening physical security procedures. Located in the middle of the desert, the new location afforded maximum warning of an approaching threat. It would later follow with almost complete implementation of the recommendations in the Downing Assessment

Report.[8] However, the immediate and programmed enhancements to Force Protection may be insufficient to meet the demands of the future.

The Air Force must implement more radical changes than currently initiated or planned in order to protect its forces from a Khobar Towers-type attack of the future and enhance its expeditionary capability. This thesis will be examined by first looking at a brief historical backdrop explain how Force Protection in the Air Force had developed prior to Khobar Towers. Then, an analysis of the doctrinal, organizational, and training concepts implemented after Khobar Towers will identify areas subject to improvement. Finally, this document explores possible options for improvement and concludes with recommendations.

HISTORICAL BACKDROP

The US Air Force became a separate service in 1947 via the National Defense Act of that year.[9] Its previous association with the US Army served as the foundation for most of its activities. Consequently, security of Air Force people and resources grew out of the Army experience. One notable distinction was the air-minded focus of Air Force leaders as opposed to the ground fixation of their Army counterparts.[10] This is considered a natural outcome of creating a separate organization to focus on the medium of air.[11] Does this focus weaken Air Force ability to secure its organic assets on the ground? History suggests otherwise. Air Force experience shaped its philosophy toward the security of its assets and what we now call Force Protection.[12]

The first conflict the Air Force became involved in as a separate service was the Korean War. This war allowed the Air Force to reinforce its operational doctrine and refine fighter employment concepts.[13] Located well behind friendly lines, Air Force units were not constrained by ground threats or other significant security problems. Senior Air Force leaders placed little emphasis on security of aircraft and ground equipment beyond standard military police functions.[14] Our British Royal Air Force counterparts had suffered devastating consequences for failure to secure their aircraft at Crete in 1942. Saboteurs

destroyed a significant number of aircraft, which resulted in a substantial organic ground defense capability.[15] Some conclude the American Air Force experience in the Korean War is the foundation of Force Protection practices in-place during the Khobar Towers Bombing. However, Air Force experienced its greatest force protection challenge in Vietnam.

The Vietnam conflict posed an even greater challenge to Air Force bases. Between 1965 and 1973, 10 air bases in South Vietnam experienced over 400 attacks.[16] These bases contained primarily theater air assets, which included fighter, reconnaissance, airlift and the support aircraft, and communications facilities. Most attacks were mortar and small arms fire from just outside the base perimeter.[17] A lesser number of attacks were sapper and saboteurs. The senior Air Force command (7th Air Force) realized the serious situation it faced in 1965 and asked for Army support in securing its bases.[18] After being denied Army troops to secure these bases, the Air Force implemented its own program. Operation SAFE SIDE provided combat-ready ground troops (airmen) skilled in offensive operations with an array of weaponry.[19] SAFE SIDE units provided additional capability for commanders to mount offensive operations against enemy attacks. The Air Force discontinued operation SAFE SIDE in 1973. A recent Air Staff White Paper on Force Protection described Operation SAFE SIDE as follows:

> "In 1965, General Westmoreland directed each service be responsible for protecting their bases in Vietnam. The

> Air Force instituted the Safe Side Program and formed the 1041st Combat Security Police Squadron (CSPS) and deployed them to Phu Cat AB in Sep 1966. After the Tet Offensive of 1968 three additional CSPS were formed. The 821st CSPS was deployed to Phan Rang AB in April 1968. At the end of the Vietnam war this successful program was terminated.[20]"

Toward the mid to late 1970s, Air Force ground security began to focus more closely on nuclear weapons. The 1973 Munich Olympic massacre had ushered in new concerns about terrorism and the deadly consequences associated with terrorists and nuclear weapons.[21] New Department of Defense physical security standards for nuclear weapon sites mandated an abundance of manpower, facilities and equipment.[22] Through reprogramming actions, the Air Force shifted security force manpower from lesser priority aircraft systems and facilities to meet the new DOD requirements. By the early 1980s, physical security criteria for the majority of Air Force fighter and bomber aircraft not on alert or associated with nuclear weapons had few dedicated security forces per wing.[23]

Issues related to Force Protection in the mid 1980s included refinements in security force deployment packages and a Joint Service Agreement (JSA) with the Army. During this period the Air Force refined security force deployment packages into 13-person squads and 44-person flights.[24] Typically, a 13-person squad would deploy in support of a squadron of fighter aircraft. Recognizing the need to reduce duplication with the other

services, the Air Force signed a JSA with the Army on a number of initiatives.[25] Two of these initiatives related to ground defense of Air Force bases. The first was JSA number eight which essentially made the Army responsible for defending air bases against threats greater than battalion size.[26] The Air Force was responsible for its own internal security of air bases and acquiring the capability to defend against threats up to battalion size. The second initiative made the Army responsible for providing Air Base Ground Defense training to Air Force security forces.[27] The Army and Air Force did implement this initiative. The Army trained Air Force security forces at Fort Dix through 1994, when the agreement ended. However, neither service showed much interest in the first initiative after the agreement went into effect.[28] Failure to properly implement this initiative would prove troublesome in the next decade as the forces of change complicate challenges in the 1990s.

The end of the Cold War, coupled with a shrinking overseas base structure and increasing deployment demands provided new challenges for the Air Force in the 1990s.[29] The operations and personnel deployment tempo picked up as some flying units were deployed overseas on a routine basis. Security forces deployed with flying units to protect aircraft and their personnel tempo increased significantly.[30] Typically, stateside units had to surge to 12-hour shifts for extended periods to compensate for unit members on deployment. Shortly before the Khobar Towers

bombing, the Air Force began developing an Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) capability. The AEF is intended to provide a rapid, responsive, and reliable airpower that can be tailored to the specific needs of the situation.[31] Units or parts of units are organized into a package that provides specified capabilities. Shrinking overseas base structure and increasing demands for US-based Air Force assets led to the AEF concept. Protecting AEFs will have a significant impact on their flexibility, size and deployment speed.

FORCE PROTECTION AFTER KHOBAR TOWERS

The Air Force took a series of deliberate actions after the Khobar Towers attack to improve its Force Protection posture. These actions were in addition to relocating the unit in Saudi Arabia and beefing up its defenses. They included conducting an internal investigation, implementing the recommendations made by the Downing Assessment Task Force chartered by the Secretary of Defense, and working other initiatives to improve Force Protection within the Air Force.[32] The review centered on Air Force implementation of the 26 findings and recommendations cited in the Downing report. It also examined how the Air Force organizes, trains, and equips in order to support forces deployed to combatant commands. The team developed its own recommendations on how the Air Force should proceed to correct findings in the Downing report.[33] A few of these initiatives deserve comment here:

- Designate a general officer-led Air Staff organization to oversee Force Protection. Since Force Protection involves several different specialties, one multi-functional staff would have oversight.

- Develop an Air Force instruction (AFI) supplementing DOD guidance on Force Protection. While it is appropriate to supplement higher level directives, there was no requirement to check the validity of the DOD guidance. As we will see later, even the definition of Force Protection used by DOD is problematic in execution.

- Assign, when appropriate, Air Force Intelligence personnel to the Security Police (SP) along with counterintelligence personnel to complete a tactical SP ground intelligence cell within security police units. The Downing report took issue with the existing arrangement where intelligence personnel were assigned at wing-level. It cited the necessity for organic intelligence within security police units.[34] A difference between Army and Air Force philosophy accounts for this recommendation.[35] The Army-oriented Downing team made this recommendation because intelligence is organic to most line Army units. In Air Force wings, one centrally staffed intelligence organization serves all units.

In addition to setting up an Air Staff organization with multiple specialties to oversee Force Protection, other agencies were also set up.[36] Security police were functionally

redesignated as security forces to emphasize their base defense and deployment functions. The name change also de-emphasized the law enforcement function they perform on air bases. The Air Force activated a Security Forces Center at Lackland AFB to serve as the center of expertise for security force operations. The 820th Security Forces Group was activated in March 1997. Its mission is to provide a first-in, rapidly deployable Force Protection capability. Security police, intelligence, Office of Special Investigations, civil engineering, transportation, logistics, communications and medical specialists make up the unit.[37] A Force Protection Battle Laboratory was also set up at Lackland AFB.[38] Finally, Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) Antiterrorism Specialty Teams will provide a rapid, global, counterintelligence capability. These organizations are the foundation of the renewed Force Protection emphasis in the Air Force. Despite the aggressive actions of the Air Force, Force Protection strategy in DOD has been hampered by weak policy and lack of an objective definition. Notwithstanding these initiatives, certain DOD actions are necessary to provide the appropriate policy foundation.

DOD ACTIONS AFFECTING THE AIR FORCE

The term "Force Protection" did not exist in the Air Force lexicon before Khobar Towers except for the Foreign Internal Defense (FID) program and an AFOSI Instruction.[39] An Air Force FID Instruction provided procedures to assist a friendly nation

with insurgencies. Also, the AFOSI instruction cited Force Protection as one of their wartime tasks.[40] While many programs that contribute to Force Protection were in effect, they were not cited this way. For example, the Air Force Physical Security Program contains security force, facilities, equipment and procedural requirements to protect people and assets. yet there was no indication it was related to Force Protection. DOD defines Force Protection as follows:

> "(DOD) Security program designed to protect soldiers, civilian employees, family members, facilities, and equipment, in all locations and situations, accomplished through planned and integrated application of combating terrorism, physical security, operations security, personal protective services, and supported by intelligence, counterintelligence, and other security programs.[41]"

The Air Staff considers this definition too broad and the author agrees. As written, it implies we must protect all people from all things at all locations all of the time.[42] This is a condition that is physically impossible because resources are finite and DOD assets must often be exposed to threats to be effective. As a result, the Air Force is experimenting with redefining the term.[43] The foundation of this definition difficulty is the lack of effective DOD policy and guidance.

DOD Force Protection policy and guidance to the services did not exist before the Khobar Towers attack.[44] DOD publications consisted of 2000.12 series, which is essentially a handbook on how to avoid and minimize acts of terrorism. As cited above,

Force Protection involves several different specialties. Yet the DOD Combating Terrorism Handbook became directive on the services as Force Protection requirements.[45] The Air Force Antiterrorism instruction to provide Force Protection guidance to its commands. To complicate matters more, the Secretary of Defense divided Force protection responsibilities between the JCS Chairman and the service secretaries.

The Secretary of Defense designated the JCS Chairman the principle advisor and the single focal point for Force Protection activities.[46] This split in responsibilities between the services, the combatant commands, and now the joint staff will require careful coordination to avoid duplication. The issue is whether Force Protection is an organize, train or equip function of the services or a combatant function. The Air Force has not changed its guidance in this area but the Air Staff now work more closely with the Joint Staff on Force Protection matters.[47]

FORCE PROTECTION AND THE FUTURE

The Air Force is developing requirements for the Force Protection it will need in the early 21st century.[48] Three related initiatives have begun to shape Air Force policy and programming requirements for the future. The first is a White Paper titled, "USAF Force Protection and Security Force Requirements: A Vision for the 21st Century." The second is a Force Protection Requirements Roadmap document that outlines

relevant projects through the year 2010. The third initiative related to the future is the new Air Force Doctrine, which addresses Force Protection in terms of ground defense and the vulnerability of Air Force assets.[49] A brief discussion of these initiatives follow.

The Air Staff developed the Force Protection White Paper to help focus the leadership on Force Protection challenges for the early 21st century. It outlines a vision of how the Air Force should be organized, trained, and equipped to meet future Force Protection challenges.[50] Key concepts under "organize" include the need to expand the size and lethality of the security force; making the task of defending the base everyone's duty; being able to operate outside the legal perimeter of the base; and increasing organic security forces in deployable wings.[51] Making base protection everyone's duty is addressed as follows:

> "The idea that security forces hold sole responsibility for defending the base must end. Every Marine and Army soldier is trained as an infantryman capable of closing with and destroying the enemy. The Navy produces a sailor who can keep the ship in the fight. The Air Force produces specialists, most of whom are not prepared to "fight the base." With an active force under 21,000, augmented by less than 10,000 from the reserve components, security force personnel cannot meet the threat against air bases without assistance. Everyone must have a role either in generating or sustaining air and space power under all conditions. Ultimately, the Air Force must understand every airman is a force protector.[52]"

Key concepts under "train" suggest the Air Force must make fundamental changes in training in order to meet Force Protection

challenges in the 21st century.[53] It recommends that Air Force basic training programs change focus so trainees learn more about combat small arms skills. The discussion about training in basic Force Protection skills make these points:

> "Air Force basic military training should be restructured to train all airmen in the common military skills needed to defend and operate an air base in a hostile zone. These skills include: basic soldiering, self-aid and buddy care, NBC defense, and survive to operate training. This training should be a unifying force which makes every airman understand they are a critical member of the Air Force warrior team.[54]"

The White Paper's discussion about equipment maintains Air Force investment in Force Protection should be threat based and programmatically sustained, rather than episodic.[55] Historically, the Air Force has tended to increase funding for security programs after an incident. When the focus went away, so would the funding. The white paper also recommends the Air Force invest in high technology security equipment and heavier weapons for air and ground defense tasks.[56] While the White Paper sets up key concepts for future Force Protection in the Air Force, it does not address programming for resources. The Force Protection Requirements Plan is the Air Force document designed to wrestle with programming and budgeting.

Ironically, this plan begins with a discussion about the difficulty in programming for Force Protection against such an ambiguous definition discussed earlier.[57] It characterizes the situation this way:

> "The broad definition and the range of subjects covered by the joint view of Force Protection illustrates its over arching characteristic. It also leaves planners, programmers, and commanders with an open ended task and insufficient measures of effectiveness. To move forward from the joint view we need a working definition of Force Protection. This definition must be one which provides focus and can be used to develop operational objectives and examine applicable functional areas and their relationships, yet broad enough to encompass the contributing mission areas, actions, and tasks.[58]"

The plan divides Force Protection into three areas; passive Force Protection, active Force Protection, and offensive Force Protection.[59] It defines these three levels of Force Protection as follows:

> "Passive Force Protection negates or reduces the effects of hostile acts on uncommitted combat power. Active Force Protection is action taken to defend and, if necessary, engage to deny, defeat, or destroy hostile forces in the act of targeting uncommitted combat power. Offensive Force Protection is action taken to engage and deny, defeat, or destroy hostile forces whose intent is to target uncommitted combat power, but who currently are not committed to direct hostile activity.[60]

With this introduction the plan focuses on a listing of tasks and programs with the eventual goal of enhancing Force Protection. Included is a consolidated Roadmap for active Force Protection.[61] It lists equipment requirements by priority through the year 2010. This roadmap represents the coordinated work on the Air Staff to develop a practical method of investing in Force Protection over time.

The latest version of Air Force Basic Doctrine is relatively new, with a publication date of September 1997. It is more

streamlined than in the past and is linked to Joint Vision 2010, a joint doctrine developed by the Joint Staff.[62] The new Air Force doctrine makes an important statement relative to Force Protection that did not appear in earlier versions. This statement follows:

> "Gaining or maintaining control of the air, space, and information mediums provides friendly forces a significant advantage. Airpower is most vulnerable on the ground. Thus, air base defense is an integral part of airpower deployments. Bases not only must withstand aerial and ground attacks, but also must sustain concentrated and prolonged air activities against the enemy.[63]

This statement is important because it acknowledges airpower vulnerability on the ground and challenges commanders to do something about it. A previous version addressed the necessity to provide ground defense for air assets. Acknowledging this vulnerability allows Air Force units to find innovative ways to mitigate it. It also provides a baseline for planning without the need to identify a specific threat.

These three initiatives, the Force Protection White Paper, the Force Protection Requirements Roadmap and new provisions in Air Force doctrine provides a starting point for addressing Force Protection requirements for the near future. The White paper provides innovative ideas oriented toward terrorism and ground defense. The Force Protection Roadmap contains a logical outline of near-term future investments with a clearly defined methodology. Finally, the new Air Force Doctrine Document

provides a doctrinal foundation to better incorporate Force Protection in Air Force activities than previous versions.

ANALYSIS OF ACTIONS TO DATE

In analyzing Air Force efforts to establish a viable Force Protection program, one must consider how the individual actions will work to create a better environment in the future. Also, one must consider what will be needed in the future. The following analysis takes these points into consideration.

The Air Force took aggressive action to implement most of the recommendations in the Downing report. However, some of the recommendations proved problematic for Air Force implementation because it takes more than the Air Force to complete them. For example, the recommendation to assign intelligence personnel to security police units assumes the lack of dedicated unit intelligence was a problem. Subsequent findings show the intelligence issue at Khobar Towers centered on the lack of timely, responsive human resource intelligence.[64] The April 1997 Air Force investigation reported the following:

> "The importance of timely, responsive human resource intelligence (HUMINT) collection and reporting to operationally deployed forces was underscored by the Khobar Towers bombing. Although intelligence furnished a good picture of the broad threat facing US forces in Southwest Asia, neither HUMINT nor counterintelligence provided specific tactical details on the threat which might have enabled the wing commander to better prepare his force and facilities to prevent or blunt the effectiveness of the terrorist attack.[65]

Thus, the issue of providing an organic intelligence capability to security forces would not have mitigated the attack.

A second issue is the recommendation to supplement DOD guidance on Force Protection. As cited earlier, the very definition of Force Protection provided by DOD is problematic. Thus, the Air Force point of departure to structure a credible program was affected by less than adequate DOD guidance. As we will discuss later, the policy foundation of the Air Force (and DOD) Force Protection program requires more debate to insure they are practicable.

The DOD definition of Force Protection requires modification in order to provide focus and allow for the development of operational objectives.[66] As cited in the Air Staff Force Protection Roadmap, the DOD definition essentially means, "protect everybody from everything, all the time.[67]" This is an admirable goal politically but not very realistic. In addition, the nature of military operations require that forces sometimes be exposed to vulnerabilities to achieve a greater purpose. In his 15 September 1996 report to the President regarding the Khobar Towers attack, Defense Secretary Perry noted the following:

> "The task of protecting our forces would be easy if we were willing to abandon or compromise our missions, but that is not an option. We have global interests and global responsibilities. Those require our forces to be deployed overseas to protect our national security interests. And our troops cannot successfully complete

their tasks if they are required to live in bunkers 24 hours a day.[68]"

The Air Force definition comes closer to providing some degree of operational focus. It includes three related subfunctions of Force Protection; passive, active, and offensive.[69] These subfunctions focus the effort differently depending upon the status of the forces needing protection. They allow the assets to be prioritized and risks accepted by placing emphasis on mission accomplishment.[70] Despite this obvious improvement over the DOD definition, there is still doubt about both definitions in general.

Both definitions assume Force Protection is a program to be applied for an end result. The term appears more descriptive of an end in itself. In other words, Force Protection is the end result of having done things to protect the force. This author maintains that Force Protection is a condition resulting from the proper application of passive and active measures to secure forces and key equipment from an adversary, consistent with the operational risk. Perhaps a model would best illustrate this definition and the various Force Protection subfunctions.

Figure 3 is a diagram intended to show how one could view Force Protection as an end rather than a means to an end. The umbrella is symbolic of protection from inclement weather. As used here, its purpose is to represent the end result of applying the right programs and methods. For the purpose of

understanding, visualize whatever forces needing protection immediately under the umbrella. The shaft divides the umbrella canopy. The left side represents passive measures and the right side; active measures. Now, list those security programs under

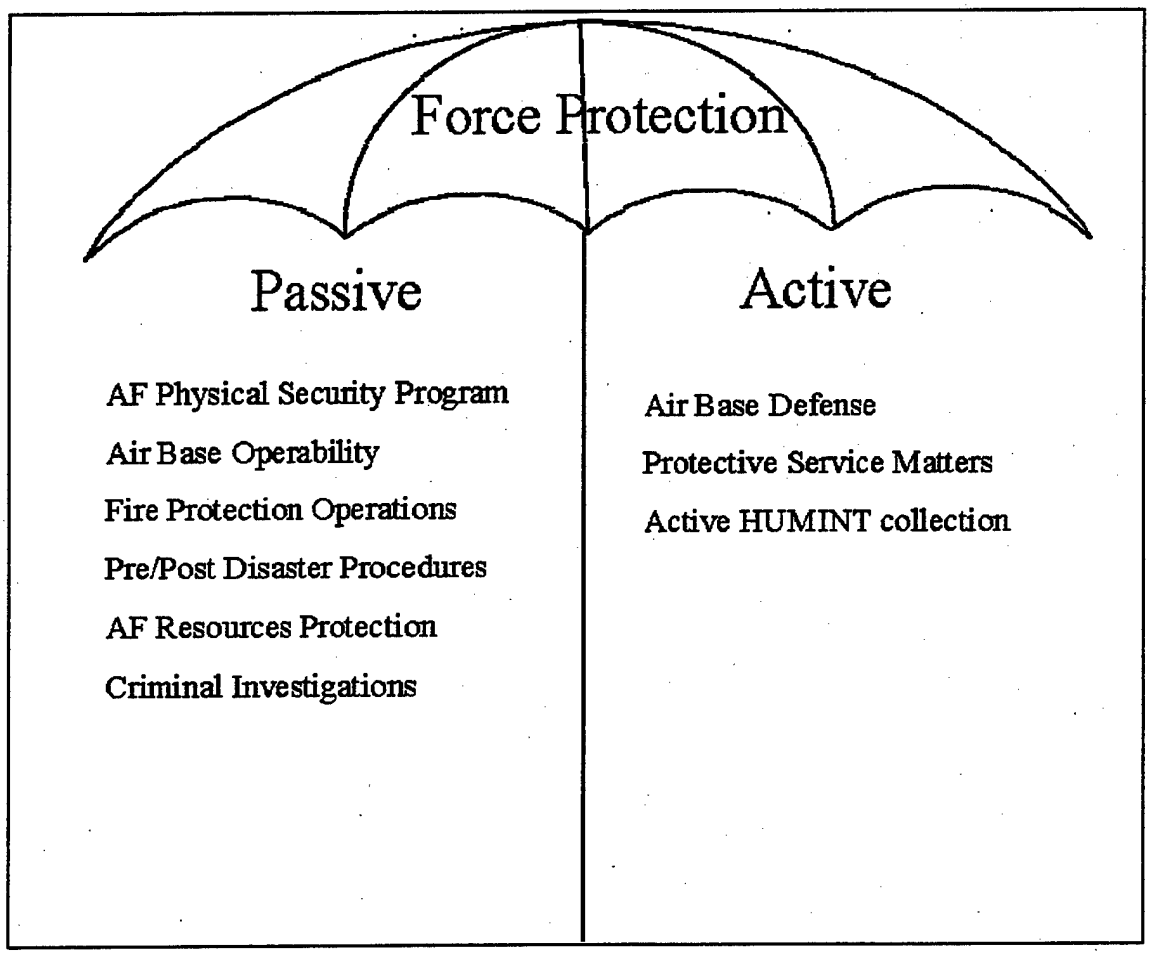

Figure 3, Force Protection Umbrella

the words "passive" and "active" which contribute accordingly.

The author took the liberty of listing some Air Force programs which contribute to each. The list is not a complete one, nor is it cast in stone. In fact, it would be prudent to change the list based on the operational mission and risk

acceptance level of the force. This model can serve as a broad foundation to reopen the debate on Force Protection as used in DOD. As the Air Force programming experience suggest, there must be a solid policy framework from which to proceed.

Unfortunately, DOD Force Protection policy is rather ambiguous and based on a questionable definition and guidance intended for another purpose - terrorism. While ant-terrorism requirements are important, they cannot solely mitigate all forms of force protection threats. While the Khobar Towers attack was an act of terrorism, Force Protection must also address other external and internal threats. Therefore, the DOD policy should take into consideration an expanded definition and broad policies that place existing security programs under the Force Protection umbrella. The overall guidance should tie these programs together by relating them to the commander's operational objectives and associated risks. The Air Staff Force Protection White Paper begins this process for the Air Force.

The White Paper is a significant step in the right direction when it comes to Force Protection for the very near future. However, the paper falls short in some organize, train and equip concepts when looking at the 21st Century environment. While there is discussion about the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF), the paper does not focus enough on the AEF as a central theme for the future.

The Air Force Scientific Advisory Board Believes the AEF will be the central contribution of the Air Force through the early years of the 21st century.[71] It argues the following culture change centered on the AEF:

> "AEF thinking should, and can, pervade the Air Force without adversely impacting current tasking. Most future operations will be AEFs if the NCA has that option. Non-AEF operations will often start as AEFs. The Air Force can provide the NCA and CINCs enhanced military capabilities through the AEF if it focuses on the AEF; develops commanders with broad backgrounds including C2, logistics, and force protection; and organizes the Air Force for rapid deployment."[72]

Clearly the AEF will likely be the single most important expeditionary contribution of the future Air Force. For this reason the USAF White Paper should emphasize it more and stress the importance of changing Air Force Culture. Not only must the overall Air Force culture change from garrison to expeditionary, so must its view on Force Protection. Since the AEF will be as lean as possible, each person must be multi-talented in skills which enable mission success. This suggests streamlining the AEF concept to identify critical skills and making sure the entire force can support them. For example, one could argue some key AEF tasks are munitions handling, force protection, and rapid runway repair. All AEF members should have some capability to contribute to these tasks. All airmen deploying with an AEF should be capable of doing more than one thing. In addition, all should be trained in weapons and limited small unit tactics. As a result, less security forces would be needed for the sole

purpose of "protecting the force." The Air Force must abandon its garrison-derived notion that Force Protection is a security force mission. In the Air Force of the future, Force Protection must be part of everyone's duties. Like Winston Churchill said over 50 years ago, "Every airfield should be a stronghold of fighting air-groundmen."

CONCLUSION

The truck bomb explosion at Khobar Towers had a significant impact on Force Protection within DOD and the Air Force. The subsequent inquiries, investigations and reviews that followed ushered in a fundamental change in the way the Air Force views and responds to Force Protection issues.

Historically, the Air Force has treated lightly its Force Protection needs primarily because of experience. The Korean War offered secure bases from which the Air Force made significant contributions. Even in Vietnam where the heavy ground threat resulted in over 400 attacks, the Air Force preference was Army support vice an organic capability. It acquired an organic ground defense capability only after being denied Army protection, and only for a short period. The Late 1970s and 80s saw much emphasis in nuclear weapon security. The Army and Air Force also entered an agreement during this period to streamline Air Base Ground Defense responsibilities and training. The increasing operational tempo and decreasing force size are the hallmark of the 1990s Air Force.

The aftermath of Khobar towers saw significant improvement in USAF Force Protection investment and attention. Two internal Air Force investigations examined every facet of the bombing and events on both sides. Nonetheless, the key to Air Force response has been the Downing report sponsored by the Secretary of Defense. Air force initiatives to stand up a Security Force organization, a Force Protection Battle Laboratory and reorganize the Air Staff will have a significant impact on Force Protection in the future. However, its most fundamental change is realizing that Force Protection involves more than just security forces and assigning people from other specialties to contribute to the effort.

Analysis shows that DOD guidance is premature and problematic. The definition of Force Protection and the renamed Combating Terrorism handbook needs refinement in order to provide the right policy framework to accommodate programming and facilitate operational focus. This author offers a different way to define and baseline Force Protection. The view that Force Protection is a condition resulting from the applying security is a radical departure from the DOD position. The prevailing premise here is Force Protection is an end, not a means to an end.

The Air Force future view of Force Protection appears to limit the potential of the AEF concept. While the Air Staff White Paper on Force Protection advances revolutionary ideas to

better protect the force, it misses an opportunity to focus on the AEF and its multi-functional needs. Analysis of the AEF has great potential to change the culture of the Air Force from its current garrison mentality to an expeditionary one.

This author contends the Air Force must implement more fundamental changes than currently initiated or planned in order to protect its forces from a Khobar Towers-type attack of the future and enhance its expeditionary capability. An analysis of the doctrinal, organizational, and training concepts implemented after Khobar Towers shows areas subject to improvement.

Now is the time for the Air Force to take a serious look at its future contribution to the joint warfighting team. Circumstances suggest the AEF is the modus operandi of the future Air Force and Force Protection must be an integral and decisive part of it. The new Air Force culture must embrace the expeditionary nature of the future and be prepared to contribute to the Force Protection mission.

Word count 5757

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