

FORCE PROTECTION IN THE WAKE OF THE
DHAHRAN BOMBING

A Research Paper

Presented To

The Research Department

Air Command and Staff College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements of ACSC

by

Major Eugene A. Robinett

March 1997

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-03-1997		2. REPORT TYPE Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (FROM - TO) xx-xx-1997 to xx-xx-1997	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Force Protection in the Wake of the Dhahran Bombing Unclassified				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Robinett, Eugene A. ;				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Air Command and Staff College Maxwell AFB, AL36112				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS ,				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT APUBLIC RELEASE ,					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT In past decades, the Air Force has been a target of terrorism and this trend promises to continue into the immediate and possibly distant future. This research project provides a general historical analysis of Air Force efforts in antiterrorism and force protection policy and programming since the early 1980s. It examines two significant cold war terrorist attacks and resulting Air Force policy and programming changes designed to deter the threat. It then looks briefly at the post-cold war environment, its effects upon antiterrorism efforts, and how it led to the Khobar Towers bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. A review of the main points of the Downing Task Force report (commissioned by the Secretary of Defense following the bombing) provides a look into the facts and deficiencies that surrounded the attack as well as recommendations to improve antiterrorism and force protection. The key element woven into the Task Force report is a new emphasis on joint responsibilities in dealing with force protection. The results of this analysis are designed to provide policy-makers historical trends in antiterrorism programs and to highlight the importance of maintaining these programs in any environment as well as in fiscally austere times.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Public Release	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 38	19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Fenster, Lynn lfenster@dtic.mil	
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified		19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER International Area Code Area Code Telephone Number 703767-9007 DSN 427-9007	
				Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98) Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39.18	

Disclaimer

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

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
DISCLAIMER	ii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iv
PREFACE	v
ABSTRACT	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST AIR FORCE INSTALLATIONS IN THE 1980S ..	4
Ramstein, 1981	5
Rhein-Main. 1985	5
AIR FORCE ANTITERRORISM PROGRAMS IN THE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S..	10
THE KHOBAR TOWERS BOMBING	15
FUTURE ANTITERRORISM AND FORCE PROTECTION IN THE WAKE OF KHOBAR TOWERS	21
CONCLUSIONS	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	30

Illustrations

	<i>Page</i>
Figure 1. Antiterrorism Investment.....	13

Preface

Force protection is one of the latest “buzzwords” to capture the attention of key military leaders and policy-makers in recent months. It stems primarily from the recent terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in which nineteen service members were killed. This tragic event has led to significant changes to military policy, planning, and programming—many of which may have lasting effects on how we view and implement force protection in the future.

I chose this topic because of my own perception that this was an area which only receives attention when a significant event has occurred. My research essentially confirmed this perception to be fairly accurate. Why does it take a tragic event like Khobar Towers to enact such significant changes? In this paper, I pursue an answer to this question by illustrating general trends in antiterrorism policy and programming from the early 1980s to the present and how those trends led to Khobar Towers. The findings of my research will hopefully give planners and programmers an appreciation for the importance of force protection.

I am indebted to my faculty research advisor, Major Karl M. Johnson, for his invaluable guidance and assistance in the completion of this research project. I am also indebted to Lt. Col Robert Hogan, Security Forces Plans and Programs Division, Headquarters, United States Air Force, Washington D. C., for providing crucial

information in order to accurately portray trends in antiterrorism and force protection programs.

Abstract

In past decades, the Air Force has been a target of terrorism and this trend promises to continue into the immediate and possibly distant future. This research project provides a general historical analysis of Air Force efforts in antiterrorism and force protection policy and programming since the early 1980s. It examines two significant cold war terrorist attacks and resulting Air Force policy and programming changes designed to deter the threat. It then looks briefly at the post-cold war environment, its effects upon antiterrorism efforts, and how it led to the Khobar Towers bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. A review of the main points of the Downing Task Force report (commissioned by the Secretary of Defense following the bombing) provides a look into the facts and deficiencies that surrounded the attack as well as recommendations to improve antiterrorism and force protection. The key element woven into the Task Force report is a new emphasis on joint responsibilities in dealing with force protection. The results of this analysis are designed to provide policy-makers historical trends in antiterrorism programs and to highlight the importance of maintaining these programs in any environment as well as in fiscally austere times.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Terrorism continues to be a tactic of choice among certain militant organizations throughout the world. In past decades, the US military has been a frequent target of these violent acts and this trend promises to continue into the immediate and possibly distant future.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Air Force appear to have put various degrees of emphasis on deterring this threat in terms of developing guidance and providing funds for antiterrorism and force protection—but how consistent has the emphasis been? How has the Air Force dealt with antiterrorism in terms of funding, guidance, and organizational support in the light of the changing strategic environment? What have been the key dynamics that have prompted significant changes in policy and funding? What is to be expected in the future as a result of the recent bombing of Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia?

In order to address these issues, two past terrorist actions against Air Force installations during the height of the cold war will first be examined (Ramstein, 1981, and Rhein Main, 1985). From this examination, developments and trends in Air Force antiterrorism policy and funding in the 1980s will be deduced. It illustrates an inconsistent approach to deterring terrorism. Next, the post-cold war environment will be briefly

addressed. The drawdown and a shift in strategic priorities resulting from the end of the cold war caused a lag in antiterrorism efforts and this failure to shift the antiterrorism focus to the context of the post-cold war order set the conditions which led to the Khobar Towers bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Finally, a review of the main points of the Downing Task Force report (commissioned by the Secretary of Defense following the bombing) provides a look into the facts and deficiencies that surrounded the attack as well as recommendations to improve force protection. Future predictions on the course of force protection and antiterrorism will be extrapolated from this review within the context of historical trends.

Just as has occurred in past terrorist events, the ramifications of Khobar Towers will be significant. The resulting actions of this incident have introduced a totally new approach to how DOD, the joint community, and the Air Force will deal with the terrorist threat. For example, the emphasis on force protection in a joint environment reflects a more “total force” approach to dealing with the terrorist threat. The restructuring of the Air Force security force structure and creation of a new force protection division on the joint staff are other examples.

As will be argued in this paper, the actions taken as a result of the Khobar Towers bombing will provide a larger framework in which antiterrorism and force protection are given greater visibility in the planning, programming, and budgeting processes. However, unless the force protection improvements become truly embedded 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. The historical evidence indicates that major changes to antiterrorism policy and funding resulting from one

significant terrorist act is not enough. The erratic nature of terrorism demands a consistent yet flexible approach.

The focus of the research in this paper is limited to developments in Air Force antiterrorism and force protection from the early 1980s to the present. It is also limited primarily to Air Force antiterrorism and force protection issues and how they relate to DOD, the joint community, and other areas. The terms antiterrorism and force protection will be used interchangeably throughout the paper to mean measures to deter the terrorist threat and protect the force. While the terrorist threat is addressed throughout the paper, no attempt to outline a detailed threat assessment is made. It is assumed terrorism will continue to threaten Air Force installations, personnel, and resources in the future.

Chapter 2

Terrorist Attacks Against Air Force Installations in the 1980s

In the 1980s, terrorism was on the rise throughout the world. Embassies, airports, and other prominent hubs of activity all appeared to be at risk. Although not a new form of aggression, terrorism's implications had become more significant as the media projected images of carnage over television screens. The image was one of a world unable to deal with this unpredictable phenomena. As a result, the violence came to be viewed as threatening world stability.¹

Terrorism against the US military was brought to the forefront with the disastrous 1983 vehicle bombing of the Marine Corps compound in Beirut in which 241 Marines were killed. As prominently displayed by the media, this attack brought to light the glaring military deficiencies in defending against the terrorist threat. It also highlighted the changing nature of terrorism. The 1970s' methods of seizing embassies and kidnapping diplomats had given way to large scale attacks in which innocent bystanders could be killed or injured.²

The Air Force was not immune to such attacks in the 1980s. As will be illustrated in the following two examples, terrorists were able to defeat existing security measures and achieve their objective. When compared to the Beirut attack, lives lost and damage to

facilities were negligible. However, terrorists again were able to achieve a clear victory in displaying to the world flaws in military security measures.

Ramstein, 1981

At 0720 on 31 August 1981, a bomb exploded in the parking lot adjacent to the Headquarters USAFE/AAFCE building at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Twelve individuals were injured with extensive damage to the building and surrounding infrastructure. The bomb was located in a parked vehicle and was determined to be a low grade mixture consisting of three propane canisters. Only two of the canisters had detonated. The third was launched into the headquarters building and never detonated. If it had, the possibility of more damage and loss of life would have been even greater.³

The vehicle was a stolen Volkswagen hatchback affixed with stolen US Army Europe license plates. A motorcycle was later found outside the air base and was determined to be the escape vehicle.⁴

Germany's renowned Red Army Faction (RAF) claimed responsibility for the act. In a letter sent to numerous papers throughout Germany, the RAF stated the act was necessary in the "war against imperialism." Further investigation revealed the RAF had known the security practices and knew the physical layout of key facilities.⁵

Rhein-Main. 1985

At 0715 on 8 August 1985, another bomb exploded outside the wing headquarters building at Rhein Main Air Base near Frankfurt, Germany. Two Americans were killed and another 23 German and Americans were injured. Detonated by a timing device, the bomb blew a hole in the ground four feet wide and five feet deep and sent debris flying for

hundreds of yards. Again, the bomb was located in a parked vehicle and packed in gas type cylinders. The vehicle was a 1976 Volkswagen Passat with a forged US Army Europe license plate and was driven on to the base not long before the explosion.⁶

The RAF again claimed responsibility for the bombing through a letter sent to numerous German newspapers. Included in one of the letters was the US military identification card of Army Specialist 4 Edward Pimental, allegedly used to gain access to Rhein Main Air Base. Specialist Pimental was found dead and stripped of all personal and military documents in a forest near Wiesbaden.⁷ Last seen the night before leaving a local bar with a German female, he was beaten and shot in the back of the neck with the same large caliber rounds typically used in terrorist assaults.⁸

The killing of Specialist Pimental marked the first time a lower ranking service member was targeted for his military documents. Previous attacks on military members were directed primarily at prominent civilians and General officers. Local German police were quick to pronounce the killing could signal a more brutal change in tactics by terrorists.⁹

It is relatively easy to see why these two acts were successful when viewed in light of existing Air Force security measures at the time of the bombings. The height of the cold war brought with it ever increasing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. As a result, Air Force security measures in the 1980s placed the largest emphasis on nuclear weapon protection. Most security resources and manpower were dedicated to this function. Operating under the security priority system, security forces and sensor equipment clustered most heavily around weapon storage areas and resources dedicated to carrying out the nuclear mission.

In the European theater, terrorism was a clear threat to the tactical nuclear weapons under NATO control. Loss of a nuclear asset would have staggering consequences. Indications of intent by terrorists to steal nuclear assets were clear as reflected in this interview:

In a 1978 interview, a former member of West Germany's terrorist movement stated that members of the Red Army Faction discussed the possibility of nuclear extortion. The group recognized that possession of a nuclear weapon would provide them with enormous coercive power. Terrorists with a nuclear weapon, said the former gang member, would be able to make "the Prime Minister dance on a table in front of the TV camera. And a few other statesmen alongside him." According to the interview, the terrorists were thinking about stealing a nuclear weapon, not fabricating a device with stolen nuclear material.¹⁰

This reinforced the position that protection of tactical nuclear weapons in defense of Europe was the paramount security issue facing Air Force leadership. Intelligence supporting the terrorist threat toward nuclear assets was substantial. In addition, Defense Planning Guidance cited it as a fundamental concern.¹¹

With the primary focus on nuclear security, the rest of the base (and bases without nuclear weapons) were subject to less stringent resource protection measures (such as perimeter fencing and base entry control practices). Police coverage usually only consisted of random patrols. The threat to remaining Air Force assets did not warrant large expenditures in manpower and security equipment. This left a substantial portion of the base vulnerable.

Terrorism in the 1980s brought a new dimension to the security requirements of Air Force installations. Terrorists could just as easily achieve their objectives by attacking "softer" targets within the air base. Aided by media coverage, the terrorist act made the

military appear inept and unable to deal with a small criminal element. Without the media, the act would lose its political significance.¹²

The Ramstein and Rhein Main attacks are examples of a terrorist organization exploiting the vulnerabilities of air base security. Both attacks possessed many similarities: significant headquarters facilities with minimal security were targeted in both attacks; entry was gained to the installation by a vehicle affixed with stolen license plates; even the explosive devices were similar. The ability of the RAF to conduct these attacks using almost identical methods displayed the inability of the Air Force to deal effectively with the terrorist threat. This lack of focus on the terrorist threat was almost by design—the result of dependence upon a rigid, yet logical, security priority system aimed at protecting the most critical assets first. Everything else was secondary.

As the 1980s progressed, however, the Air Force realized the importance of deterring the terrorist threat. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the Air Force enacted important antiterrorism programs and developed key policy to deter the threat. Resulting mostly from lessons learned from Ramstein, Rhein Main, and other terrorist attacks, these developments set the standard in antiterrorism actions.

Notes

¹Felix F. Moran, *Security Foresight: A National Defense Against Terrorism* (Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1985), 21.

²*Ibid.*, 22.

³*West German Terrorism: The Ramstein Air Base Bombing* (Washington, September 1981), 1.

⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

⁶“Car Bomb Kills 2 on a US Air Base in West Germany” *New York Times*, 9 August 1985.

⁷“Germans Link Slain GIs ID to Car Bomb” *Washington Times*, 14 August 1985.

⁸“Car Bombing, Slaying Tied” *Washington Post*, 14 August 1985.

Notes

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰*New Modes of Conflict*, RAND Corporation Report (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1984), 11.

¹¹Daniel J. Nelson, *The Problem of Terrorism Against American Forces in Germany* (Atlantic Community Quarterly, Fall 1985), 278.

¹²Gary W. Nelson, *Terrorism: The Military Challenge* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 1987), 4.

Chapter 3

Air Force Antiterrorism Programs in the 1980s and Early 1990s

Prior to the 1980s, the Air Force had sporadically encountered acts of terrorism in worldwide locations. Personnel serving in remote locations such as Turkey and Iran experienced bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations.¹

The Air Force attempted to establish a terrorism protection policy through Air Force Regulation (AFR) 124-5, *Protection of Air Force Personnel Abroad from Acts of Terrorism*, 21 October 1977. However, while assigning fairly detailed responsibilities, AFR 124-5 failed to allocate manpower or funding in deterring the terrorist threat. This regulation, although directive in nature, also failed to make an impact upon units overseas. Most Air Force members serving overseas were not made aware of its contents nor were they consistently briefed on the threat and ways to counter it.²

The Ramstein and Rhein Main bombings brought terrorism to the forefront in the 1980s. Faced with a growing threat against the many fixed military installations in the heart of Western Europe, DOD published DOD Directive 2000.12, *DOD Combating Terrorism Program*, in February 1982. In support of the DOD Directive, AFR 208-1, *The US Air Force Antiterrorism Program*, was published in October 1982.³ Its purpose was to provide guidance on the collection and dissemination of timely information, creation of

awareness programs, allocation of funds and personnel, and implementation of defensive measures.

AFR 208-1 provided a more solid foundation upon which an antiterrorism program could be built. It recognized the dynamic nature of terrorism did not require a standardized base-level antiterrorism program for the entire Air Force. Instead, the regional threat essentially dictated how a particular Air Force major command and its installations would respond within the guidelines of AFR 208-1. For example, the threat in Western Europe required a more radical effort in antiterrorism than would be required at most ConUS installations.⁴

An important part of AFR 208-1 was the introduction and directed use of Terrorist Threat Conditions (Threatcons). Threatcons provided a graduated level of security response based upon the terrorist threat. Each threatcon had recommended actions (such as increased traffic control point and building checks) the installation commander could selectively use to deter the threat. However, the most notable aspect of the new use of threatcons was they were designated “JCS-approved” terminology. This reflected an attempt to facilitate joint cooperation and standardization in antiterrorism efforts. The selection of recommended actions, however, was still determined by the installation commander.

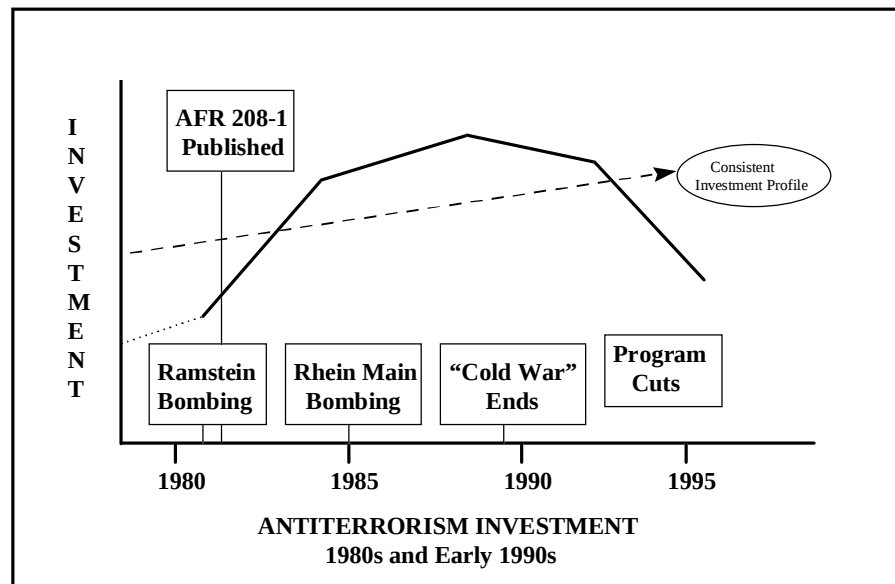
Another important aspect of AFR 208-1 was the establishment of an antiterrorism Program Element Monitor at Headquarters Air Force. This indicated the intent to commit resources (money and manpower) to deter the terrorist threat. While previous policies had focused primarily on personal protection and education, any needed funding or manpower in this endeavor would be taken out of existing resources. AFR 208-1

essentially mandated a funding conduit at the Air Staff (through the major commands) for installations to procure antiterrorism equipment and commence building projects.

As a result, Air Force funding for antiterrorism activities increased substantially from 1982 to 1989. The majority of the funding was primarily directed toward flightline enhancement and antiterrorism programs at high threat bases. Embedded in numerous programs, the funding was applied to military construction projects, procurement, operations and maintenance, and personnel.⁵

Quite naturally, most of the spending was in the European theater due to the largest (and proven) threat. Most of the money was spent on manpower and capital improvements to the main operating bases in USAFE. Key facilities were hardened, walls were constructed, vehicle pop-up barriers were installed at base entry control points, closed circuit televisions were procured, and lighting was improved.⁶ Manpower was increased at the major command and unit levels to execute the antiterrorism effort. What were once considered additional duties became primary duties. Antiterrorism awareness and defensive measure programs became an integral part of unit training.⁷

The emphasis on antiterrorism programs declined with the end of the Cold War. Although existing policy and guidance were still valid, funding was significantly reduced. Antiterrorism manpower, particularly in Europe, was eliminated as the Air Force looked for ways to downsize. Any remaining funds were used toward procuring thermal imagers, cameras, vulnerability assessments, and training.⁸



Source: USAF Force Protection Investment: FY98-03
Antiterrorism/Force Protection Data Call, September 1996.

Figure 1. Antiterrorism Investment

A significant trend had developed in the investment in antiterrorism programs in the 1980s and early 1990s. As displayed in the above graphic, the propensity to fund these programs tended to be in reaction to significant terrorist activities or in response to shifting world events (i.e., the end of the “cold war”) rather than on striving to maintain a consistent investment profile based upon an ever-present worldwide terrorist threat. Funding for antiterrorism was plentiful after the Ramstein and Rhein Main bombings. Conversely, in the quest to find the “peace dividend” from the end of the cold war, programs were cut substantially.

As the Air Force was embroiled in the process of an extensive drawdown and reorganization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, significant shifts in the strategic

environment were occurring. The Soviet threat to Western Europe was gone—the presence of large forces overseas was viewed as fiscally and militarily unnecessary. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991 were clear indicators of what was becoming the new US military strategy—a more mobile military arm capable of reacting to a multitude of scenarios ranging from major regional contingencies to military operations other than war.

The Air Force had already shifted its focus with the publishing of *Global Reach/Global Power* before Desert Shield and Desert Storm.⁹ What had not shifted, however, was its attention to dealing with the terrorist threat in this context. With the Air Force involved in numerous contingency operations worldwide, it had not reformed antiterrorism policy and programming. Antiterrorism was still focused on fixed installations rather than contingency operations. The bombing of the Khobar Towers complex, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in June 1996 was a grim indicator of the Air Force's failure to make the shift to fighting terrorism in a contingency environment.

Notes

¹Billy A. Barrett, *International Terrorism: The DOD Approach* (Washington, May 1983), 24.

²*Ibid.*, 24.

³*Ibid.*, 25.

⁴Andrew J. Ceroni, *Terrorism/Antiterrorism: An Air University Guide*. (Maxwell AFB, Ala., April 1985), 33.

⁵Briefing given by Air Force Chief, Security Forces to Air Force Chief of Staff, subject: USAF Force Protection Investment: FY98-03 Antiterrorism/Force Protection Data Call, Washington D. C., September 1996.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

Chapter 4

The Khobar Towers Bombing

Antiterrorism efforts did not have sufficient priority to posture forces effectively against the threat.

The episodic nature of terrorist acts against the United States did not sustain efforts to enhance force protection measures over time.

—Downing Task Force Report

On 25 June 1996, a fuel truck containing an estimated 3000 to 8000 pounds of TNT exploded outside the northern perimeter fence of the Khobar Towers complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The explosion occurred near a high rise facility housing personnel of the 4404th Wing (Provisional) and other allied forces in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, the coalition air operation over Iraq. Although US Air Force security police detected the attack in progress and proceeded to alert the building's occupants, evacuation of the entire building was incomplete at the time of detonation. Nineteen personnel were killed and approximately 500 were injured. The terrorists escaped.¹

This attack was preceded by a similar attack approximately eight months earlier in Saudi Arabia. On 13 November 1995, a car containing a 220-pound bomb exploded in a parking lot near the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard building in Riyadh. Five US and two Indian nationals were killed. The Department of State conducted an Accountability Review Board and made recommendations to improve

regional security. In addition, the Department of Defense conducted a Department-wide review of antiterrorism preparedness following the November 1995 bombing. The DOD report recommended the enhancement of deployed forces' security posture, training and education, interagency coordination, and improved intelligence sharing. While the State Department and DOD recommendations were immediately implemented, few had a chance to be effective at the time of the second bombing.²

Following the Khobar Towers bombing, the Secretary of Defense directed an investigation into the circumstances and facts of the attack as well as an assessment of the overall security of US forces in the US Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). Secretary Perry appointed retired General Wayne Downing, former Commander-in-Chief of US Special Operations Command, to form a Task Force composed of a multitude of specialties inside and outside of DOD to make its assessment.³

The Downing Assessment Task Force identified eight major findings and recommendations in its report. In addition, numerous detailed findings and recommendations were identified which covered a multitude of areas from communications adjustments to embassy security. Examination of some of the key findings and recommendations outlined below again highlight certain fundamental trends in the Air Force's history of deterring terrorism.

In light of what it viewed as inconsistent force protection practices in the CENTCOM AOR, the Task Force recommended a more comprehensive approach to force protection. While the Task Force recognized that an environment free from all attacks was impossible, commanders must construct a force protection system combining training and awareness, advanced technology, physical security and "location-specific" protection measures to

assure an acceptable level of protection for US forces abroad. Common guidance, standards, and procedures—directed by a single DOD department responsible for force protection policy and resources—would be necessary to ensure this comprehensive approach is carried out.⁴

The Task Force recommended DOD establish realistic force protection standards for construction and hardening of overseas facilities against the terrorist threat. For example, it cited that the destroyed building at Khobar Towers required no stand-off distance or “clear zone” from the perimeter fence be established. DOD established standards would allow commanders to plan for and program proper resources to protect their troops and facilities.⁵

The Task Force recognized the necessity of allowing the joint chain of command to exercise authority in executing force protection measures. It called upon DOD to clarify command relationships in CENTCOM as well as other unified commands to carry this out. It also recognized the importance of consistent command involvement in force protection. Commanders at all levels must emphasize force protection in all operational and support endeavors.⁶

The report cited deficiencies in the theater and national intelligence communities in providing in-depth, long term analysis of intentions, capabilities and trends in international terrorism. In addition, while the intelligence community provided a general warning of an increasing terrorist attack, it was not able to specify when, where, and how. The Task Force cited a lack of human intelligence (HUMINT) sources as a major cause of this deficiency. It recommended the US intelligence community dedicate more time, personnel, and funding to developing HUMINT against the terrorist threat. The Task

Force also recommended providing deployed US Air Force Security Police units with an organic intelligence capability.⁷

The Task Force report restated the important role host nations perform in conducting force protection. It emphasized that commanders must develop sound working relationships with host nation counterparts in order to enhance their force protection effort through selection of installation locations, allocation of host nation guard forces, and other areas.⁸

One critical finding in the Task Force report was force protection requirements had not been given a high priority for funding prior to the Khobar Towers bombing. CENTCOM had not articulated to the services the need to assign appropriate funding priorities to force protection programs. As a result, budget submissions for fiscal years 1994 through 1996 did not identify force protection as a major funding requirement.⁹ This lack of priority for force protection was evident when examining the budget requests for the 4404th Wing (Provisional)—few force protection requirements were reflected.¹⁰

The Task Force recognized that not all requirements could be clearly identified as “force protection” programs. Some force protection enhancements were embedded in other programs such as facility improvements submitted through Air Force civil engineering channels.¹¹ It also recognized that funding provided by the host nation, foreign military sales, and “assistance-in-kind” programs were also utilized to a great extent by all CENTCOM forces. These alternative funding sources greatly reduced the funding amounts needed through DOD.¹²

The main thrust behind the Task Force’s finding on force protection funding was the lack of a “process to clearly identify and communicate force protection requirements for

decision in the DOD Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS).”¹³ The current system was inadequate in identifying force protection requirements and its related budget items to DOD decision makers. A majority of money spent on force protection and antiterrorism tended to be embedded in numerous other programs and projects. This made it difficult to outline a coherent picture of DOD’s overall funding for force protection.¹⁴

As a result, the recommendations of the Task Force on force protection funding were fairly dramatic. The clear intent of the recommendations was to place force protection requirements in a position to compete for service funding on a long-term basis. It recommended that priorities for force protection be clearly spelled out in the Defense Planning Guidance, as well as making force protection a Defense-wide special interest item. Next, force protection should be included in the Joint Warfighting Capabilities Assessment (JWCA) process. A separate OSD-managed program element to fund high priority requirements for antiterrorism should also be established. Finally, combatant commanders should be encouraged to make force protection requirements a high priority in their Integrated Priorities List.¹⁵

The findings and recommendations of the Downing Task Force were clear indicators of the future course of antiterrorism and force protection. The inconsistent force protection standards, measures, and funding identified by the Task Force were products of past antiterrorism programs in which the services were responsible for virtually all aspects of their implementation and sustainment. The Downing report shifted the responsibility to the joint force commander—as well as to DOD—to ensure force protection is in the forefront of mission planning and execution. As will be examined in the next chapter, the

future of force protection in the Air Force (and the US military overall) will be dictated by the Dhahran bombing and the findings and recommendations in the Downing Task Force report.

Notes

¹Department of Defense, *Force Protection: Global Interests, Global Responsibilities: Secretary of Defense Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of US Forces Deployed Abroad* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), 12.

²*Ibid.*, 12.

³*Ibid.*, 15.

⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

⁵*Ibid.*, 6.

⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

⁷*Ibid.*, 7.

⁸*Ibid.*, 8.

⁹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 61.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹²*Ibid.*, 14.

¹³*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

Chapter 5

Future Antiterrorism and Force Protection in the Wake of Khobar Towers

The current emphasis on force protection and antiterrorism results from the recent bombings and may decline without greater emphasis on long-term planning and programming.

—Downing Task Force Report

As illustrated in the preceding chapters, changes in antiterrorism policies and programs were typically in reaction to significant events such as the Ramstein bombing or the end of the cold war. Khobar Towers was not an exception—it was the first major terrorist attack on an Air Force installation in the post-cold war era. If history is any indication, there will once again be a renewed emphasis on antiterrorism and force protection—at least in the near term.

Future Air Force antiterrorism and force protection programs will stem from recently revised DOD policy. Revisions to DOD Directive 2000.12, *DOD Combating Terrorism Program*, is an attempt to establish a more “comprehensive” program as recommended by the Downing Task Force. The changes are essentially aimed at ensuring force protection is a major consideration in mission planning, ensuring the terrorist threat and force protection are evaluated consistently, and giving commanders increased resources and flexibility to adequately respond to the threat.¹

In the past, each service was essentially responsible for implementing and maintaining their own antiterrorism program. Although the initial DOD Directive 2000.12 attempted to standardize certain aspects of antiterrorism DOD-wide (through the use of threatcons, for example), glaring inconsistencies amongst the services were readily apparent. Khobar Towers forced DOD to recognize the importance of clearer lines of authority that go beyond service boundaries when dealing with force protection. As a result, the joint staff and the Combatant Commanders will play a greater role in executing force protection programs.

Immediately following the bombing, the Secretary of Defense specifically designated the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as his principal advisor for all DOD force protection and antiterrorism issues. Upon direction of the Secretary, the Chairman created a joint staff directorate designed exclusively for ensuring force protection is included in every aspect of military planning and operations, including force deployment decisions. The Chairman must also develop joint doctrine and standards that encompass all aspects of force protection, as well as reviewing service doctrine to ensure consistency. In addition, the Chairman ensures the Combatant Commanders' force protection programs are adequately administered.²

The new DOD Directive gives the geographic Combatant Commanders greater responsibilities in the force protection arena as well. It emphasizes that the "CINC is responsible to ensure that all military activities within his AOR are examined against DOD [directives] and a report made to him." In addition, he must "identify to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responsible Service, and cognizant chain of command any military activity that does not meet the force protection standards required in this

directive.”³ The geographic CINC is also responsible for establishing command force protection policies and ensuring threatcons are uniformly implemented.⁴

The most significant step, however, toward ensuring force protection is more enduring and consistent is its inclusion in the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) process.⁵ In accordance with the recommendations of the Downing Task Force, force protection has become an integral part of the DOD PPBS. In support of the JROC, it is now a key capability for review in the JWCA. The Combatant Commanders play an important role in that force protection must now be addressed in their Integrated Priority Lists submitted to the JROC. Moreover, the Chairman is now required to prepare an annual report to the Secretary of Defense summarizing force protection requirements determined by the JROC.⁶ These steps are critically important in that they give force protection programs the necessary exposure when competing for DOD funding.

The Air Force has also aggressively taken actions in response to Khobar Towers. The establishment of a Force Protection Division on the Air Staff was the first step. While the division is primarily made up of security police personnel, it also has members from the intelligence community as well as the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI). This staff will develop Air Force policy for force protection and will be an advocate for force protection programs.⁷ More importantly, it will be the crucial link between the joint staff and the Air Staff on issues related to force protection.

A multi-functional Security Forces Center is in the process of being created as well. Under the command of a single commander, the center’s purpose is to focus on the development of force protection doctrine and guidance, the exploration and integration of

technology, refinement of tactics and training, and execution of the force protection mission.⁸

Under the umbrella of the Security Forces Center, a Force Protection Group will be created to provide a cohesive, trained, and prepared security force ready to deploy a core force protection capability. The Group headquarters staff will also be multi-functional (to include personnel from communications, intelligence, AFOSI, Civil Engineers, and other specialties) and will be highly mobile, self-sustaining for short periods of time, and capable of providing an initial force protection assessment at bases in any environment—when the remainder of the group arrives to carry out the full force protection mission. Also created under Security Forces Center will be the Force Protection Battle Lab which will have the mission of researching and integrating tactics, training, and technology into the force protection program. With these combined functions built into the Security Forces Center, the Air Force hopes to dramatically improve its force protection posture.⁹

As has occurred in past terrorist attacks, the Air Force has also significantly increased funding to pay for this renewed emphasis on antiterrorism and force protection. Fiscal year 1997 saw an increase of almost \$162 million in force protection-related spending. Just like in the past, the money is being spent on new sensor equipment, perimeter security upgrades in high threat areas, thermal imaging devices, and under-vehicle surveillance systems. The Air Force also paid \$85 million just to move the air base from Dhahran to the more isolated Prince Sultan Air Base following the bombing. The spending is projected to increase in the next few years.¹⁰

Khobar Towers prompted a fundamental shift in how the joint staff, the Combatant Commanders, and the Air Force will deal with terrorism. It prompted the alteration of the

joint structure to ensure that planning, programming, and budgeting puts force protection in the forefront. The Air Force has restructured its security force and diverted a large amount of resources back toward antiterrorism and force protection.

While these new approaches reflect the most dramatic changes to date, force protection as a major consideration in deployment and budgeting considerations remains unclear. The unpredictable nature of the world today coupled with the constant battle to cut military costs leaves a real sense of uncertainty as to the future of force protection—will this emphasis continue or will it falter pending the next disastrous terrorist attack?

Notes

¹Department of Defense, *Force Protection: Global Interests, Global Responsibilities: Secretary of Defense Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of US Forces Deployed Abroad* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), 3.

²DOD Directive 2000.12, *DOD Combating Terrorism Program*, September 1996, 4.

³*Ibid.*, 9.

⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

⁵*Ibid.*, 4.

⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

⁷Briefing given by Air Force Chief, Security Forces to Air Force Chief of Staff, subject: USAF Security Forces Update, Washington D. C., January 1997.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Our great nation has witnessed casualties among our fighting men and women many times in our history, and we will undoubtedly witness more casualties in the future. Some of these losses will be to terrorists—no force protection approach can be perfect. Such risks are inherent in the business of defending our freedom and our institutions. Our national security requires us to perform missions throughout the world, and we cannot perform those missions while under cover in bunkers 24 hours a day.

—Secretary of Defense William J. Perry

The expectation of force protection and antiterrorism policies and programs should not be to create a risk-free environment for military members. However, they should create an environment where critical decisions are made at every level in the chain of command to ensure the force is consistently aware of the threat, afforded proper protection, and unnecessary risks are not taken. In order to carry this out, antiterrorism and force protection programs must be constantly evaluated in the light of the changing military strategy and consistently funded—even in the absence of a terrorist attack.

It is a relatively safe assumption that the Air Force programs of the 1980s were successful in deterring terrorism. It is acknowledged numerous factors outside antiterrorism and force protection must be considered when examining the battle against terrorism. However, once Air Force policy and funding were established and a deterrent effect took hold, no terrorist attacks of significance took place.

In contrast, the post-cold war has brought new challenges to the military. A new strategy based upon a joint response by CONUS based forces to worldwide contingencies was logical in the absence of a visible enemy, shrinking budgets, and force drawdowns. However, antiterrorism programs failed to keep pace with the changing needs of the military. While existing policies and measures were still valid, they were written for a cold war force and not readily adaptable to the new contingency environment which emphasized joint operations. Funding was also deficient as a result of the post-cold war drawdown. Force protection was not a primary issue when the bomb went off at Khobar Towers.

The initial changes that have occurred in response to the bombing and the Downing Task Force report have been positive. The responsibility DOD has placed upon the joint staff and the Combatant Commanders is an attempt to institutionalize and standardize force protection efforts among the services—this is important when considering most future operations will continue to be joint. The placing of force protection firmly into the JROC process was also an important step to ensure it remains a visible entity in programming and budgeting. The Air Force is also attempting to provide a framework designed to meet the threat by realigning its staff and security force structure.

It is still too early to determine the effectiveness of these changes, however. While they do ensure the inclusion of force protection in planning and budgeting decisions, it remains to be seen how they will carry down to the tactical levels. For example, when deciding between force protection and quality of life issues, how strongly will a deploying unit consider protecting the force in the absence of a clearly visible terrorist threat? Will funding for force protection be effectively applied to new technologies and resources

geared toward future threats or continue to be spent on equipment aimed at past threats? Will force protection be a major consideration when deciding where to base assets in future deployments? Or whether to deploy at all? Will force protection elements be the first to arrive at deployed locations and will their recommendations be enacted by leadership?

These questions and numerous related others require further research. The changes that have occurred as a result of Khobar Towers provides the staff structure which may investigate better ways to protect the force through improved tactics, advanced technology, and creative planning. However, the real question is whether these tools will be effectively employed despite the lack of a visible terrorist threat—how high of a priority will force protection be considered when competing with other mission demands? Guidance is useful only when it is not ignored and equipment effective only when it is actually employed.

Senior military leadership at all levels must consistently place force protection on an equal footing with other critical mission areas. Force protection should be considered in the same way that tactical airlift, intelligence, or any other major capability is considered. This is not easy to do in the haste which usually occurs during deployments—operational priorities tend to take precedence over support considerations.

As displayed at Khobar Towers, however, the ramifications of not making force protection a top priority are staggering. In an age of “zero tolerance” for military casualties deployed abroad, one terrorist attack may have major implications upon American foreign policy. Absence of an attack may lend credence to the success of existing policies and programs—but it should not lull us into complacency. The

unpredictable nature of the terrorist threat in today's chaotic new world order requires a flexible yet consistent approach to force protection. Military leaders must ensure it is kept in the forefront of all planning and programming decisions.

Bibliography

- Barrett, Billy A. *International Terrorism: The DOD Approach*. Washington, 1983.
- Briefing given by Air Force Chief, Security Forces to Air Force Chief of Staff. Subject: USAF Security Forces Update, Washington D. C., January 1997.
- Briefing given by Air Force Chief, Security Forces to Air Force Chief of Staff. Subject: USAF Force Protection Investment: FY98-03 Antiterrorism/Force Protection Data Call, Washington D. C., September 1996.
- Ceroni, Andrew J. *Terrorism/Antiterrorism: An Air University Guide*. Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1985.
- Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 2000.12, *DOD Combating Terrorism Program*, September 1996.
- Department of Defense. *Force Protection: Global Interests, Global Responsibilities: Secretary of Defense Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of US Forces Deployed Abroad*. Washington D. C.: GPO, 1996.
- Moran, Felix F. *Security Foresight: A National Defense Against Terrorism*. Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1985.
- Nelson, Daniel J. *The Problem of Terrorism Against American Forces in Germany*. Atlantic Community Quarterly, Fall 1985.
- Nelson, Gary W. *Terrorism: The Military Challenge*. Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 1987.
- New Modes of Conflict*. RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, Cal., 1983.
- New York Times*, 9 August 1985.
- Washington Post*, 14 August 1985.
- Washington Times*, 14 August 1985.
- West German Terrorism: The Ramstein Air Base Bombing*. Washington D. C.: September 1981.

DISTRIBUTION A:

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Air Command and Staff College
Maxwell AFB, Al 36112