Air Base Defense in the Twenty-First Century

A Monograph

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Abstract

AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY by Major Glen E. Christensen, USAF, 43 pages.

Through its history, the United States Air Force has struggled with the most efficient and effective way to provide for its own air base ground defense. This monograph submits a solution intended to end the debate.

In an effort to provide the most comprehensive answer possible, the method used to develop this monograph contains two key aspects. The first of these aspects is a historical study of the Air Force's air base ground defense dilemma. Included is a look at the US Army Air Forces' attempts to solve the problem in World War II. The initial history is followed by a study of the US Air Force's continuing efforts to solve the dilemma starting with a study of air base defense issues in Korea and continuing through the current Global War on Terrorism. The second key aspect is a historical case study of two Air Forces that faced similar issues. The first of these is the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force and the second is the German *Luftwaffe* of World War II. Each employed different methodologies and subsequently achieved different results.

The results of the analysis contained in this monograph provide a clear answer. To finally solve the air base ground defense problem, the US Air Force will have to accept risk with regards to resource constraints in order to mitigate risk to expeditionary operations. Failure to embrace the capability necessary to engage and defeat threats to deployed airmen and resources in the future will have a direct impact on the US Air Force's ability to sustain global reach and global power in the Twenty-First Century.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Five years into the on-going struggle against worldwide terrorism, the US Air Force continues to transform itself with regards to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership capabilities and education, personnel, funds and facilities. As part of the US Air Force's (USAF's) macro effort, the service's leadership also directed an evolution in security operations. Competing viewpoints and interests, however, combine to preclude a universally agreeable solution, which has stalled transformation efforts.

At issue is the fact that today's military planners have grown accustomed to American air superiority as a given in the current operating environment. Furthermore, the increasing sister-service reliance on joint fires places air power at a premium. These factors, together with a potential adversary's inability to compete with American airpower, highlight the increasing vulnerability of airpower assets while on the ground. As Italian Army General Giulio Douhet observed in 1921, "It is easier and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nests and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air."[1] Subsequently, the need exists to solve the expeditionary base defense problem currently facing the USAF.

Historically speaking, the USAF's struggle with determining the most effective method for protecting its personnel and resources pre-dates the existence of the USAF as a separate service. Early leaders such as General of the Air Force Henry H. "Hap" Arnold and Major General Frederick Martin (Chief of the Air Service from 1927 to 1931 and Commander of the Hawaiian Air Force during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor), debated the role of airmen in

[1] Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983 (originally published in 1921), 53-54.

defending themselves against direct ground attack.[2] From the Second World War to present day, US Army Air Force and USAF units have been organized, trained and equipped for the defense of American air bases during the country's multiple armed conflicts. At the end of each conflict, however, first the Army and then the USAF determined the units unnecessary and disbanded them. Even today, in the midst of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), personnel trained to conduct peace-time law enforcement and security operations are being assembled into temporary squadrons and groups, put through last minute pre-deployment training and sent to the various combat zones. It is not hard to understand the desire to embrace this approach. The USAF cannot ignore the finite nature of resources. USAF leaders, both past and present have embraced an approach that focuses the support elements of the service more on day-to-day, steady-state functions rather than expeditionary contingency operations. It is understandably hard for many in the USAF to accept the existence of support units that do not execute a mission a preponderance of the time, regardless of whether or not that mission requires a higher level of expertise and therefore a higher level of training.

With the notable exception of Vietnam, the USAF predominantly operated from relatively safe locations for the first 50 years of existence. This fact validates the methodology outlined in the preceding paragraph. Were it not for the changing environment, the view held by the USAF would most likely not only suffice, but be most appropriate. The problem is, however, that the environment is changing. More and more, the USAF operates from bases increasingly closer to enemy activity. For this reason, the time has come to re-evaluate the USAF's approach to expeditionary base defense operations.

In the end, regardless of how the USAF ensures the protection of its expeditionary bases, the need for protection cannot be ignored. To that end, two basic options exist for USAF consideration. The USAF can either continue to embrace an ad hoc approach to conducting air

[2] Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1961-1973,* Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1979, 1-2.

base defense operations or shift to an expeditionary mission focused approach. Based on preliminary research, the effectiveness of the former approach appears limited. The expeditionary mission-focused approach, on the other hand, provides a solution to the base defense problem but creates problems with regards to resources. The underlying question that must be answered is which is more effective, to live within resource constraints and accept risk in the expeditionary environment or embrace expeditionary operations and develop solutions to the resource constraints. Research indicates that working around resource constraints is less problematic than continuing to live with an institutionalized solution to the air base defense problem. For this reason, the USAF should organize, train and equip forces dedicated to providing for expeditionary air base defense.

To lay the necessary foundation, it is important to understand the contemporary air base defense debate. A key to this debate is the change to the current operating environment, which places USAF expeditionary bases closer to potential adversaries. Equally important, the SF community continues to face a high deployment operations tempo as well as an on-going manpower shortage. Admittedly, these last two issues focus on only the SF aspect of the expeditionary environment. While the SF community cannot provide the complete answer to this solution alone, they are currently the airmen most directly tasked with providing for the protection and defense of USAF personnel and resources. Any solution to the expeditionary base defense problem will also have to resolve the strain the deployment requirements and manpower shortage create. Other keys to the "Current Debate" are the reasons for the lack of change in the USAF's approach to the expeditionary base defense. Current USAF and SF leaders do not agree on which school of thought, traditional or expeditionary, provides the best answer. This lack of consensus more than hinders attempts to resolve the issue once and for all.

With the current situation properly framed, a review of the USAF's air base defense history demonstrates the need for an inherent expeditionary capability. The decisions made from World War II up to and including the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and the reasons behind

those decisions underscore that the air base defense problem is not new. As eluded to earlier, the argument is older than the USAF itself. Most importantly, multiple solutions have been formulated and executed throughout the course of the argument's evolution. Failure to address previous solution pitfalls and capitalize on previous successes precludes an optimal solution and anything short of the optimal solution would relegate this research effort to the graveyard of failed attempts to develop an institutionalized answer to the air base defense issue.

In addition to the USAF's own history with the expeditionary base defense problem, Air Forces from other countries have also encountered difficulties ensuring the defense of their bases in an expeditionary environment. Two such Air Forces in particular stand out as notable. The first of these is the German *Luftwaffe* of World War II. Both in North Africa and across Europe, the Germans experienced mission degradation resulting from attacks against their air bases. Similarly, as early as 1942, the British RAF experienced attacks against their personnel and resources. At a minimum, understanding the problems encountered by the Germans and British provides insight into the rationale behind specific methodologies each chose and the effectiveness experienced. Understanding what did and did not work for the *Luftwaffe* and the RAF is critical to developing the solutions that will form the proposed road ahead.

Identifying the problem and previously attempted courses of action embodies only a partial solution. Only with a proposed road ahead can an institutionalized approach to the USAF's expeditionary base defense dilemma be formulated. The basic elements of doctrine, organization and training offer a framework to develop a proposed transformation road map. Using these elements to address the current problem, this monograph delineates a course of action directed at resolving the expeditionary base defense problem and incorporating both US and non-US lessons learned.

The challenges confronting the US military in general and the USAF in particular are complex to say the least. Further, given the critical nature of American airpower, the evolving expeditionary base defense dilemma ranks high on the list of challenges the USAF must resolve.

By creatively working through resource constraints and subsequently taking a mission-focused approach, the USAF can develop a force capable of expeditionary base defense. Once formed, this force can then help facilitate the USAF's continued air dominance by ensuring the security of American airmen and their resources when and where they face the most dangerous threats.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CURRENT DEBATE

Prior to embarking on a study of the history of this issue, case studies and possible solution sets, it is first important to establish the necessity for change. Equally important, the USAF's inability to embrace change points to an element of the Service resisting an expeditionary transformation. The tension between these two viewpoints calls attention to why the USAF has been unable to conceive and implement an institutionalized answer to the air base defense Quandary.

Three areas, the current operating environment, extensive SF deployment requirements and an on-going SF manpower shortfall, comprise the driving force behind the mandate for a change in the USAF's approach to defending its airmen and resources in the expeditionary environment. Gone are the days when the USAF enjoyed the luxury of operating from bases well away from enemy activity. Forward operating bases such as Balad, Kirkuk, Bagram and Khandahar now join cold war holdovers like Osan and Kunsan. These two Korean air bases once represented the exception to the rule. Unlike the preponderance of American air bases, which existed primarily in the United States and Europe, the threat of infiltration and attack existed and still exists daily on the Korean Peninsula. The same can be said for the installations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Admittedly, the threat is higher in the latter locations, but that does not mitigate the fact that the threat still exists in places like Korea. Subsequently, the increased threat faced by more forward deployed airbases drives the need for a more robust approach to expeditionary defense.

The best illustration of the current expeditionary dilemma took place in late 2004 and early 2005. Serving in dual roles as both 9th Air Force Commander and Central Command (CENTCOM) Coalition Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC), Lieutenant General Walter E. Buchanan, III was both the USAF force provider and senior Coalition airman for the

Southwest Asian portion of the Global War on Terrorism. In the latter role, General Buchanan became increasingly concerned with the threat to Coalition airmen and aircraft supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The General's misgivings peaked in the summer of 2004 when a rocket attack against Balad (AB) killed four and wounded 20 coalition personnel.[3] Feeling the need to execute a more aggressive base defense plan, General Buchanan lobbied for and received permission to organize, train and equip the USAF's first ever offensive ground combat Task Force.[4] Dubbed Task Force (TF) 1041 as a tribute to its Vietnam forbearer, the 1041st Combat Security Police Squadron (Test), the unit assumed control of Balad's northern-most sector replacing the 1-77 Armor Battalion, the armor battalion assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

Although only in existence for 120 days from mission approval to mission completion, TF 1041 successfully met General Buchanan's success requirements. In addition to eliminating seventeen 2 BCT high value targets, 98 other insurgents and eight major weapons caches, TF 1041 reduced the number of northern sector stand-off attacks against Balad to "nearly zero."[5] Perhaps the greatest testament to TF 1041's success came from the Brigade Commander who tactically controlled the TF during combat operations, Colonel Randall "Randy" Dragon. At the ceremony in which Colonel Dragon awarded TF 1041 the 1st Infantry Division Combat patch, he stated the TF had, "Done the Nation proud [by filling] a very important gap in the security requirements [and capturing] a number of caches, a number of high value targets."[6] In short, Lieutenant General Buchanan became the first USAF senior leader to identify the evolution of the USAF's current operating environment and take action to address the new challenges. Moreover,

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[3] Rebecca Grant, "Safeside in the Desert," *Air Force Magazine*, February, 2007, 45.

[4] Colonel Bradley Spacy, interview by Glen Christensen, 20 November 2005.

[5] Bradley Spacy, "The Future of Security Forces In Combat," *Air Force Print News Today*, 24 January 2006.

[6] Speech of Colonel Randal Dragon to Task Force 1041 during Combat Patch Award Ceremony [ca. February, 2005]. Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Air Force.

through Task Force 1041, he demonstrated the USAF's ability to provide for its own defense in the new environment, an important point to note as the transformation debate unfolds.

In addition to the current operating environment, SF deployment requirements provide the second reason behind the mandate for change. Requirements routinely necessitate SF airmen to endure a one-to-one rotational dwell. In other words, for every month an average SF member is home, he or she is deployed a month. Given the preponderance of the USAF is deploying for 120 days in a 20-month cycle, the impact on the SF community is certainly dramatic. According to USAF Director of Security Forces, Brigadier General Mary Kay Hertog, SF first-term retention plummeted to 32 percent in FY 2006.[7] The 55% retention rate enjoyed by the USAF in 2005 highlights the reason for increased concern both inside and outside the SF specialty.[8]

Further complicating the deployment situation, the need for manpower to backfill the severely stressed US Army continues to increase. These requirements, referred to as "In Lieu Of" (ILO) forces add to obligations already placed on the Air Force by the Department of Defense. A concept employed after the initial invasion of Iraq, ILO forces are members from one service used to fill roles traditionally supported by another service. In this specific case, the Department of Defense directed the USAF to provide SF members to supplement strained US Army Military Police forces. According to numbers provided by the Director of SF's office, the Air Force deployed almost 8,000 SF personnel in support of ILO taskings from June 2004 to June 2006. The problems the manpower issues create when an already stressed career field is further tasked for support are obvious. What is not so obvious is the fact that while the ILO taskings may seem within the realm of SF core capabilities, they are not. As an example, most ILO SF personnel perform prison security duties despite the fact that the USAF is the only branch of the Armed

[7] Bryant Jordan, "Security Forces Commander Eager to Reduce Op Tempo," *Air Force Times,* 18 December 2006, 30.

[8] Lawrence Knapp, *Recruiting and Retention—An Overview of FY 2004 and FY 2005 Results for Active and Reserve Component Enlisted Personnel* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 30 June 2005).

Forces that does not operate a prison. The fact that this skill set does not inherently exist within the SF community both extends deployment time so adequate training can be provided and diverts attention from core to non-core competencies.

The third element mandating change, the on-going manpower shortage, embodies perhaps the most difficult and longest standing challenge of the transformation issue. Although an exact date is difficult (and probably unnecessary) to pin down, April of 1998 stands out as significant with regards to the on-going SF manpower crisis. Three years before the events of 9/11 would create a severe shortage in the community. Support for continuing operations such as NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH so strained SF that the Commander of Air Mobility Command (AMC) directed multiple measures to relieve AMC manpower shortages.[9] Temporary in nature, the relief plan was not institutionalized and therefore had only a short-lived impact. Over time, as base commanders sought to return the services reduced in AMC's message the operations tempo endured by security forces returned to its pre-relief message level. Moreover, as the name implies, the AMC relief plan only applied to units within AMC. The security requirements generated after 9/11 (e.g. increased base entry control requirements, increased number of base security patrols, increased presence in Southwest Asia, etc.) made a bad problem worse.

Fundamentally, the need for change certainly exists. The change in the USAF's operating environment, deployment operations tempo and continuing manpower shortage provide the requisite support for this assertion. Moreover, calls from senior USAF leaders to expand the USAF's expeditionary security and base defense capabilities continue to make their way across the Air Staff. The question, then, is what is holding up the mandate for change?

With regards to SF roles and functions, the key decision makers within the Air Force divide into two camps. The first of these camps places a majority of USAF base defense

[9] General Walter Kross, Message to all Air Mobility Command Wings, April 1998, Scott AFB, IL.: Headquarters, Air Mobility Command.

responsibility on the USAF itself. This approach, heretofore referred to as the "Expeditionary approach," stresses mission primacy in that it requires emphasis on executing a mission the USAF is not currently resourced to conduct. Moreover, to implement the expeditionary approach, the USAF would either have to increase the manpower and funding dedicated to air base defense or redistribute existing resources. In either case, the USAF accepts increased risk with regards to resources in that these resources would be diverted from the other missions the service executes.

For his part, the current USAF Chief of Staff clearly delineated his views in a January 2006 letter to the Air Force in which he advocated SF, "'Go outside the wire' and get their arms around the threats to our airfields and facilities."[10] He further advocated, "Our Security Forces must be proficient in Security Operations, providing active and defensive measures to protect, defend, and 'fight' our air bases."[11] Similarly, in the report he submitted at the end of his tour the previous USAF Director of SF advocated:

The overarching DOD and AF strategic guidance for capabilities based forces and relevancy to war fighting drives the SF transformation. Therefore, SF must present itself as capabilities based with a primary contribution to the AF's war fighting capability and power projection. Failure to adjust the force as a war fighting capability will mean continued lack of focus on the war fight, nuclear security, combat readiness, fixed base security and policing needs. Without direct validation of required capability, the SF will continue to be torn between the demands of the security for the war fight and the static demand of installation policing.

Regardless of whether simply increasing resources or redistributing existing resources proves to be more effective, the USAF's top airman and the former force protection executive agent clearly advocate evolving the Services's role in defending itself.

[10] General T. Michael Moseley to all USAF Major Command Commanders, 8 January 2006, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Air Force.

[11] Ibid.

The leaders comprising the second camp with regards to base defense roles and missions subscribe to a more conventional methodology. The proponents of the "Traditional approach" support remaining within the current resource constraints and either accepting the risk inherent to the evolving expeditionary mission or finding other ways to mitigate the risk such as using the US Army to assist with deployed based defense. Chief among the traditionalist's concerns is the impact the increase in USAF roles and missions will have on the total force. Not only will accepting the expeditionary mission divert funds away from other USAF programs, it will also necessitate additional manpower. Given the USAF recently embarked on a five-year, 40,000 airmen end strength reduction to off set the costs of fleet recapitalization and emerging technologies it is not hard to understand the traditionalists' hesitancy to commit to such a proposition.[12] Furthermore, in addition to resource concerns, traditionalists argue that the ground combat aspect of air base defense is most probably best left to the ground combat experts, the US Army.

Chief among the traditionalist advocates is General Ronald Keys, Commander, Air Combat Command. During a November 2006 interview with the Air Force Times, he lamented, "…I'm out there buying things to defend my forward air fields, buying things to equip a light infantry…I don't want to be spending what money I do have on non-core missions."[13] General Keys' viewpoint sums up the issue at hand. How does the USAF accept what equates to a new mission given the current constraints working against the Service?

Additionally, it is important to note that the air base defense debate raging within the USAF exists within the USAF security forces community as well. Much like the USAF senior leadership, SF senior officers divide into two camps. Some, like those responsible for Task Force 1041, advocate the Expeditionary Camp's approach. Others firmly believe USAF SF should

[12] Lisa Burgess, "Air Force Plans to Trim 40,000 Personnel," *Stars and Stripes*, 23 December 2005.

[13] General Ronald Keys, "Air Force, Army must talk 'roles and missions'," interview by Bryant Jordan (Air Force Times, 2 November 2006).

remain focused on current core missions. Either way, the SF community's inability to provide a unified recommendation hinders debate resolution at the greater USAF level. Without a cohesive service-wide strategy, the USAF is unable to address potential resource and sister-service support issues at the Department of Defense level.

In the end, regardless of whether one agrees with the traditional or expeditionary camps, the fact remains that defending airfields does not fall within the purview of the US Army or outside the purview of the USAF. On the one hand, the point that to accept this mission would involve an expansion of current USAF roles and missions is certainly valid. Moreover, it is true that by accepting responsibility for its own defense the USAF would be accepting a change in doctrine and more importantly an increase in manpower and equipment requirements. On the other hand, however, the question left unanswered if the USAF does not accept the mission is who, if anyone, will ensure the protection and defense of forward deployed airmen and their associated resources? Unfortunately, as the next chapter highlights, the inability to develop an institutionalized solution is a problem that has plagued the USAF throughout its history.

CHAPTER THREE

USAF HISTORY

In the years between the two world wars, the US Army's air component aggressively fought training airmen in basic infantry tactics. As early as 1921, Brigadier General (then Lieutenant Colonel) James E. Fetchet, the Army Air Services Chief of Training, argued, "Since their duties were entirely different from those of the Infantry, they should receive only that portion of infantry training which would permit them to move in a military manner from place to place." In the event airmen should need the tactical skills necessary to defend themselves, General Fetchet went on to say, "Enlisted men of the intelligence usually found in Air Service organizations could be quickly instructed and equipped to perform their part creditably."[14] Senior leader attitudes in the AAF did not change much as the winds of the Second World War approached. Specifically, Major General Martin protested vehemently when Lieutenant General Walter C. Short, Commanding General of the Hawaii Department, directed the training of airmen to defend themselves and their airbases.[15] So it was as the war started, the airmen of the United States military remained unable to provide for their own protection and defense.

The first sign of the inaccuracy of views such as those held by Major General Martin came in February 1942. As part of their overall effort to remove British forces from the island of Crete, the Germans Luftwaffe attacked and defeated the British Royal Air Force operating at *Maleme* Airfield.[16] The British response to the attack on *Maleme* represents a key piece of the case study portion of this monograph and therefore will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. For now, the German attack on Crete emphasizes the need for a solution to the air base ground

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[14] Howard D. Williams, *Basic Military Training in the AAF, 1939-1944*, Maxwell, AL: Air Force History Office, 1946, 2.

[15] Frederick L. Martin to Henry H. Arnold, 3 November 1941, Air Force History Office, Maxwell AFB, AL.

[16] Raymond E. Bell, "To Protect an Air Base…" *Air Power Journal*, Maxwell, AL: Air University Press, Fall 1989, 8.

defense problem. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill clearly stated his opinion when he directed that all British airmen be trained "to fight and die in defense of their airfields:…every airfield should be a stronghold of fighting air-ground men, and not the abode of uniformed civilians in the prime of life protected by detachments of soldiers."[17] As a direct result of the attack on Crete, the RAF established the RAF Regiment, created solely for air base defense purposes, the Regiment not only defended RAF personnel and resources, they also as well as trained the remainder of the RAF on basic base defense skills.

At the exact same time the RAF was formulating its air base defense strategy, the US Army Air Forces were also experiencing a change of heart. As a direct result of the stunning German successes against the British on Crete, and the French as well during the fall of France, the AAF began to form air base security battalions. The battalions were never fully organized, trained and equipped and when the fortunes of the war changed limiting the Axis Power's ability to project offensive operations, the AAF dissolved the battalions.[18] Because of this action, the AAF would emerge from World War II without a coherent air base ground defense strategy. Unfortunately, the situation would not change between World War II and the Korean Conflict.

In 1948, the newly established Department of Defense facilitated the Key West Agreement. Designed to clearly delineate roles and missions for the US Army, US Navy and US Air Force, the Key West agreement failed to address the concept of air base ground defense. In fact, the issue was never even a topic of conversation. Without any discussion, developing an inter-service support agreement was obviously impossible. Lacking sister-service support, the USAF also failed to establish the capability to provide for its own defense. Consequently, the USAF entered its first armed conflict unable to protect itself against ground attack. Fortunately,

[17] Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War,* Volume III, *The Grand Alliance,* Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1950, 692-93.

[18] Bell, 8.

although guerilla forces existed in the North Korean military, they did not attempt direct attacks against American or United Nations airbases during the Korean conflict.

Were it not for two notable activities during the conflict, the Forgotten War would be little more than a footnote in USAF air base ground defense history. The first of these activities was the method with which the USAF attempted to address the potential airbase threat at the beginning of the conflict. Lacking a clear doctrine, the USAF's senior leadership threw manpower and money at the problem. Most notably, the size of the Air Police force expanded to four times its original size to 39,000 airmen. At the same time, the Air Force exerted great effort to obtain as many armored cars, machine guns, recoilless rifles and other ground-defense weapons systems as possible.[19] In the midst of a war, the USAF developed an ad hoc organization to address airfield threats. As the Korean front stabilized, the threat to air bases did not materialize. As a result, the importance of an air base ground defense capability was again de-emphasized. The focus shifted away from developing a coherent air base defense strategy spread throughout the Air Force with one important exception, General Curtis E. LeMay and Strategic Air Command.

In October of 1952 as the Korean Conflict raged on in Southeast Asia, Strategic Air Command (SAC) published SAC Manual 205-2. In the manual, SAC's leadership, to include General LeMay, acknowledged that the burden of protecting USAF airmen and resources. During a personal interview conducted during the last year of his life, General LeMay was asked why he dedicated so much to the protection of SACs resources. The General replied, "I was getting most of the defense budget on new jet tankers and bombers, by God I was going to look after them."[20] According to General LeMay's interviewer, Brigadier General Richard Coleman (USAF, Ret.), under General Lemay's leadership, SAC developed the first directives for base protection which

[19] Ibid, 9.

[20] Curtis E. LeMay, Interview by Richard A. Coleman, 21 and 25 January 1990, *USAF Air Bases: No Safe Sanctuary,* Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1990, 8.

helped professionalize the security forces.[21] General LeMay's actions resulted in more than simple weapons system security. The lack of sister-service presence coupled with the remote location of some of SAC's bases drove a more expeditionary approach to base protection.

The 1942 battle for Crete represents the watershed event for the establishment of the British RAF's modern-day air base defense doctrine. Similarly, Vietnam symbolizes the beginning of the USAF's first concerted effort to develop a coherent, long-term, force wide air base defense doctrine. Unlike the two previous, during Vietnam, American airmen finally experienced direct attacks against their airbases. According to Alan Vick, author of *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest* and co-author of *Check Six begins on the Ground:*

> More ground attacks on air bases were recorded in Vietnam than in any other conflict. VC (Viet Cong) and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) forces attacked USAF main operating bases 475 times between 1964 and 1973. Those attacks destroyed 99 US and Vietnamese aircraft and damaged another 1,170.[22]

The success of these attacks proved ad hoc solutions to base defense were no longer feasible. The attacks also sparked debate as to whether the mission of defending air bases fell to the US Army or the USAF.

In the aftermath of the initial North Vietnamese and Viet Cong successes, the USAF once again began questioning the need for dedicated air base defense forces. As the war expanded in 1964, the USAF operated under the assumption that US Army forces would defend American airbases in Vietnam. At the core of this assumption was Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's promise that defense of major and minor bases held first and second priority.[23] Despite Secretary McNamara's promise to the contrary, Lieutenant General John L. Throckmorton, Deputy Commander of United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (DEPCOMUSMACV) adamantly refused to dedicate US Army ground forces to the airbase defense mission. According to General Throckmorton, "There is no intent to secure air bases with US troops such as the

[21] Brigadier General Richard Coleman, interview by Glen Christensen, 26 March 2007.
[22] Alan Vick, *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest,* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1995, 68.
[23] Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1961-1973,* Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1979, 26.

Marines are doing at Da Nang," because "we could use up all the US troops assigned to RVN."[24] General William Westmoreland, COMUSMACV supported his deputy's position:

> I expect that our combat battalions will be used primarily to go after the VC and that we will not be forced to expend our capabilities simply to protect ourselves…Therefore,…all forces of whatever service who find themselves operating without infantry protection…will be organized, trained and exercise to perform the defense and security functions.[25]

In short, General Westmoreland and Lieutenant General Throckmorton felt airmen should defend themselves. At the very least, they felt RVN forces would suffice in cases when the USAF leaders requested external base defense support.[26]

In what would become a recurring theme, senior Air Force leaders disagreed with the Army's assessment. Specifically, the Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Air Forces, General Hunter Harris, Jr. expressed dissatisfaction with General Throckmorton's proposals directly to the Air Force Chief of Staff General John P. McConnell. In his remarks to General McConnell, General Harris expressed concern over the lack of a unified and cohesive base defense concept of operation. Further, based on conversations with COMUSMACV and the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), General Harris conveyed a pessimistic outlook and suggested the need for the USAF to develop its own base defense force along the lines of the Royal Air Force Regiment. Again, in what would become a recurring theme, General McConnell resisted the call for such a force and instead insisted on holding the RVN and US Army forces to the task.[27] General Harris had already identified the inability of RVN forces to adequately provide for the defense of American airbases. Additionally, General McConnell attempted to hold the Army to a mission it had never signed up to execute. General McConnell's efforts proved fruitless leaving the Air Force with General Harris's original suggestion, the development of an inherent airbase defense capability.

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[24] Ibid, 26.
[25] Ibid, 11.
[26] Ibid, 27.
[27] Ibid, 26-27.

In an effort to handle the growing airbase threat, the USAF implemented multiple programs to enhance airbase survivability and defensibility. Among these initiatives, the USAF organized, trained and equipped units closely resembling the aforementioned RAF Regiment. Dubbed Operation SAFE SIDE, the 1041st Combat Security Police Squadron (test) followed by the 821st, 822nd and 823rd Combat Security Police Squadrons deployed to Vietnam. With the deployment of these squadrons, the USAF provided the first units since World War II specifically dedicated to the defense and protection of American airbases. Unlike the USAAF's security battalions, however, the units of SAFESIDE were not only fully activated, but also actively deployed for the expressed purpose of protecting USAF personnel and resources.[28]

Analysis of attacks against USAF airbases does not conclusively support or reject the success of airbase defense initiatives in general or Operation SAFE SIDE specifically.[29] In his end of tour report, however, Colonel Milton T. Pollen, 7th Air Force Director of Security Police noted:

> [The combat security police squadrons] made a significant contribution to the air base defense mission. Of all the Security Police forces in country the CSP squadrons alone possessed a tactical organization and the desired proficiency in the employment and maintenance of crew-served weapons. In every instance, they were capable of timely response to deployment requirements, in some instances with no more than one hour prior notification.[30]

Despite the success identified by the senior security police officer in Vietnam, the Air Force re-deployed the last SAFESIDE squadron from Vietnam in 1971 and terminated the program. The lingering threat and remaining need to defend USAF air bases notwithstanding, pressure to reduce the US Presence in Vietnam terminated the USAF's first program to defend itself on the ground. The end of SAFE SIDE left the USAF once again looking for a solution to its air base defense problem.

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[28] Ibid, 110-114.
[29] Vick, 72.
[30] Milton T. Pollen, *End of Tour Report, 7 June 1969.*

As part of the Reagan era military build-up, senior leaders in the Department of Defense closely monitored each services effort's to prevent or eliminate redundancies and inefficiencies in capabilities, roles and missions. To meet the Defense Department's intent, the Chiefs of Staff of the US Army and US Air Force signed a memorandum of agreement directed at facilitating increased cooperation between the two services. The memorandum outlined 31 areas of potential cooperation or conflict and provided associated recommendations. The concepts contained in the memorandum, fell into one of three categories: initiatives that eliminated duplication of effort or combined complimentary programs, initiatives that defined roles and missions and initiatives that called for joint action and cooperation on specific aspects of combat, doctrine and funding.[31]

Most important for this monograph, the eighth and ninth initiatives specifically addressed the roles each service would play with regards to air base ground defense. Initiative eight emphasized the airbase defense roles and missions directly. According to the initiative, the US Army would provide air base ground defense outside the installation perimeter. More importantly to the Air Force, the Army units assigned to this mission would be under the operational control of the senior air commander. For its part, the USAF would assume responsibility for securing interior airbase security.[32]

Initiative nine directed the Army to provide USAF personnel, specifically security policemen, with initial and sustainment (proficiency) combat skills training.[33] The Army and USAF Chiefs of Staff agreed, that the Army, as the primary ground combat force, would be the logical choice to provide fundamental combat skills training to the Air Force.[34] In the actual memorandum, the Chiefs approved 1 October 1985 as the initial transfer date. From that date

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[31] Richard G. Davis, *The 31 Initiatives,* Washington, D.C.: The Office of Air Force History, 1987, 1-2.

[32] U.S. Departments of the Army and Air Force. *Joint Service Agreement 8.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1985.

[33] U.S. Departments of the Army and Air Force. *Joint Service Agreement 9.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1985.

[34] Davis, 53.

until almost 10 years later, the US Army trained USAF Security Police personnel at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The establishment of this ABGD School precluded the need for the USAF to develop its own ABGD training facility. It also mitigated the need for establishment of USAF ABGD regional training centers aimed at providing recurring ground combat skills training.

Initiatives Eight and Nine achieved mixed results. Initiative Eight never truly came to fruition. At no time from 1985 to present day did the US Army assign operational control of ground combat forces to an air commander. Further, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing into the 21st Century, the Army and USAF could not agree on the level of support required to defend an airbase. The Services were also unable to develop a systematic approach, in case of conflict, to determine the number and types of units needed by the USAF for air base defense. The lack of concurrence led to the return, of the Operation SAFE SIDE squadrons.

Prior to addressing Initiative Nine, it is important to outline the importance environment played on the execution of Initiative Eight. In the 1980s and 1990s, the evolution of the USAF's strategic bombing capability enabled the USAF to strike targets anywhere in the world from permanent bases in Europe, Japan, Korea and in some cases even the United States proper. Moreover, the end of the cold war led many to estimate the threat to American airbases diminished as well. Even in operations such as NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH, where the USAF had aircraft stationed throughout the Southwest Asia and Turkey, a threat like that faced in Vietnam never materialized. For these reasons, support for the need to solve the USAF's air base defense problem all but evaporated.

Unlike Initiative Eight, initiative Nine did enjoy early success. As eluded to earlier, the Army established and ran a school for training airmen. In 1995, however, the USAF withdrew from the Army school and established its own institution in San Antonio, Texas. According to Brigadier General Richard Coleman, Air Combat Command Director of Security Police at the time, in the midst of the post-Cold War drawdown, the Army no longer wanted to dedicate resources to training the USAF, which prompted the USAF to establish its own air base defense

school.[35] The return of the SAFE SIDE squadrons and the dissolution of the Army ABGD School started a process that the Army and USAF Chiefs of staff completed in January of 2005. At that time, Generals Schoonmaker and Jumper both signed a memorandum formally abrogating the two initiatives.[36] While the new memorandum ended the cooperation between the two services, in reality the level of cooperation had all but ended in the mid 1990s. It is for this reason, the USAF and its security forces find themselves in a familiar position yet again, struggling to establish a cohesive air base defense doctrine.

From its inception as a part of the US Army to this day, the USAF continues to struggle with the air base defense problem. As the USAF's history highlights, despite multiple attempts to implement a multitude of solutions, tough questions remain with regards to the doctrine, organization and training necessary to develop a successful approach to the air base defense problem. Experiences like those encountered during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War etc. provide insight into possible options that may or may not contribute to a final solution. Fortunately, the USAF's experiences are not unlike those of the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force throughout its history or the German *Luftwaffe* in World War II. With a firm grasp of the history behind the USAF's dilemma at hand, the next step is to analyze the experiences of the RAF and *Lutwaffe* in an effort to identify strengths and weaknesses and subsequently solidify a road ahead for future USAF air base defense operations.

[35] Brigadier General Richard Coleman, interview by Glen Christensen, 26 March 2007.

[36] The Departments of the Army and Air Force. *Abrogation of Joint Security Agreement 8.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2005.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GERMAN *LUFTWAFFE* AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

Prior to piecing together potential solutions to the USAF's current air base defense dilemma, two historical air base defense solutions merit consideration. The first of these, the German *Luftwaffe's* experiences during WW II, provides a look at the threats to German airpower and the subsequent set of solutions they conceived and implemented. During World War II, the *Luftwaffe* certainly faced their share of air base defense challenges. Two specific instances, however, best highlight the challenges associated with *Luftwaffe's* methodology. These specific cases include the defense against attacks by the British Long Range Desert Group in North Africa and the challenges faced on the Eastern front as the German's fought the Soviet Armed Forces at Stalingrad.

The second historical case, the development and subsequent evolution of the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force (RAF) Regiment, represents perhaps the most successful answer to the air base defense problem. The British established the RAF Regiment in 1942 with the aim of making the RAF responsible for air base defense. This solution, they hoped, would transform RAF airmen into a force capable of providing for its own protection. Senior British leaders also hoped establishing the RAF Regiment would alleviate command and control issues. During the course of the Second World War, the British learned lessons that formed the basis for their doctrine, training and organization after the war. Armed with these concepts, the RAF Regiment continued to evolve such that they continue to play a critical role in the British Armed Forces to this day. Of the many combat actions the RAF Regiment participated in since 1942, three stand out as most notable in the context of this monograph. Two, the defense of Meiktila and the Battle for North Africa underscore the Regiment's contributions to protecting RAF personnel and resources during WW II. The third, the crisis in Malaysia, illustrates how the RAF Regiment used

its own lessons learned to institutionalize the doctrine, training and organization necessary to ensure the on-going protection of RAF personnel and resources.

The concepts embodied in the German and British approaches to the problem of air base defense and air power force protection provide a solid background from which potential USAF solution sets can be explored in the next chapter.

The *Luftwaffe's* experience in WW II provides significant insight to the doctrine, organization and training challenges inherent to the air base ground defense problem. The Germans certainly had their share of difficulties protecting and defending air operations as the allies moved across first Eastern Europe and North Africa and eventually Western Europe as well. Two locations in particular, North Africa and Stalingrad, best highlight the *Luftwaffe's* air base defense efforts in World War II.

In the early months of 1942, German successes in North Africa put the *Luftwaffe* in position to attack the strategically important island of Malta. Using this to their advantage, the *Luftwaffe* relentlessly attacked until Malta faced an imperative need for re-supply. To ease the pressure, the British decided to employ the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) and recently created Special Air Service (SAS) to attack the airfields and disrupt German air operations. Riding a wave of success after their first combined operations against airfields in Sirte, Tamet, El Agheila and Agedabia, the LRDG and SAS planned and executed operations against the German forces on Crete and in North Africa.[37] Although the first round of attacks did not significantly interdict *Luftwaffe* efforts against Malta, the British did demonstrate the capability to stealthily move in, destroy aircraft and successfully depart. From June to September 1942, they destroyed a total of 241 German aircraft while they were still parked on the ground.[38] Although this number may not seem daunting, considering the near equality of capability between Axis and Allied airpower in North Africa, the impact cannot be denied. For their part, the Germans considered the

[37] Alan Vick, *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1995, 48-49.
[38] Ibid, 57.

airbase threat significant enough to attempt to pursue the British Special Forces units.[39] Unfortunately, as the term implies, the pursuit took place after the damage had been done.

One of many attacks conducted by the LRDG and SAS, a coordinated attack against the reserve airfields at Sirte and Tamet indicate the fundamental elements of the problem facing the *Luftwaffe*. Exploiting gaps between *Verhmacht* and *Luftwaffe* defenses, the British dropped LRDG and SAS teams within a few miles of the airfields at Sirte and Tamet. The teams moved undetected to each installations' perimeter. A posted sentry detected the Sirte raid party requiring the party to withdraw.[40] The Tamet raid party, however, experienced much different luck. After breaching the perimeter undetected, the team quickly moved to the living quarters and killed the German airmen. The team next moved to the aircraft, set explosive charges and destroyed twenty-four aircraft and the fuel dump. Once finished, the team departed the airfield, again undetected.[41] In short, without adequate personnel to detect and engage the British raid party, the *Luftwaffe* lost effective use of the airfield in less than 30 minutes.[42]

Fundamentally, the Germans faced three problems in their attempts to stop the British attacks against their aircraft and airfields in North Africa. The first was that air base defense fell under the purview of the *Luftwaffe* while rear area security remained the mandate of the *Wehrmacht's Afrika Corps.* Next, the *Wehrmacht* and the *Luftwaffe* existed under separate chains of command, which thwarted the close coordination required to make such a relationship workable. Finally, *Luftwaffe* personnel lacked adequate personnel and training to execute a robust base defense operation.[43] These problems resonate today as the USAF faces doctrine, organization and training challenges similar to those experienced by the *Luftwaffe* in 1940.

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[39] Ibid, 62.

[40] David Lloyd Owen, *Providence Their Guide—The Long Range Desert Group 1940 - 1945*, Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 1980, 76.

[41] H.W. Wynter, *Special Forces in the Desert War 1940 – 1943*, Bury St. Edmunds, UK: Bury St. Edmunds Press, 2001, 114-115.

[42] Owen, 71.

[43] Vick, 63.

From a European perspective, no battle played a more pivotal role in the fall of the Third Reich than the battle for Stalingrad. More than just a turning point in the war in the East, Stalingrad also served as a pivotal turning point for the Luftwaffe. Up to the battle for Stalingrad, the Luftwaffe had contributed significantly to the German Sixth Army's advance. As the battle progressed, however, the Soviets cut off all but radio communication between the German ground and air arms. This action severed an almost symbiotic relationship between the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe, a relationship that formed the crux of the blitzkrieg concept.[44] Additionally, Soviet forces advancing from Stalingrad began the process that forced the *Luftwaffe* to consider its own ground defense.

As Soviet forces advanced, *Generalfeldmarschall* Wolfram Freiherr von Richtofen, commander of *Luftwaffe* forces supporting Operation BARBAROSA, quickly realized not all air fields could be evacuated prior to Soviet arrival. To counter this, von Richtofen ordered hasty defenses established. The most prominent example of *Luftwaffe* forces assembled for ground defense took place at Obliskaya where *Oberst* (Colonel) Reiner Stahel, Commander of Flak Regiment 99, assembled field police, kitchen, supply, maintenance and signal battalions into *Kampf-Gruppe Stahel* (Combat Group Stahel).[45] Under Stahel's charismatic leadership, the hastily assembled ground combat force proved so effective they held a critical portion of the *Chir Front* for over a month.[46] Emboldened by this success, other Luftwaffe elements followed Stahel's example.[47] However, these units did not enjoy similar success because Stahel's achievements resulted from his own personal charisma, expertise and leadership. Stated another way, Stahel's approach could not be replicated across the Luftwaffe because it relied solely on the Colonel's personality and not on a systematic approach to training and organization.

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[44] Joel Hayward, *Stopped at Stalingrad, The Luftwaffe and Hitler's Defeat in the East, 1942-1943,* Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998, xvi.

[45] Ibid, 231.

[46] Ibid, 281.

[47] Ibid, 231.

The loss of the airfield at Crete initiated the development of the RAF Regiment. Specifically, as he reviewed RAF policies and procedures, British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill expressed disappointment with what he found. Churchill felt far too many RAF personnel existed without a true combat role.[48] He also identified flaws with regards to air base defense command and control as well as unclear lines of responsibility. The creation of the RAF Regiment in 1942 solved each of these problems.

First and foremost, HM King Geroge VI's Royal Warrant establishing the Regiment made the RAF fully responsible for its own defense. To provide this defense, The Regiment was authorized a total end strength of 79,000 officers and airmen. The officers and airmen comprised 240 field and light anti-aircraft squadrons deployed to RAF airfields worldwide.[49] Secondary to their air base defense duties, the RAF also assigned Regimental airmen the task of providing cursory training to the rest of the RAF. The intent was not to create ground combat experts. Instead, senior RAF leaders intended the Regiment to train the average airmen to provide for their own individual defense. Lastly, the Regiment's establishment abolished the confusion created by the multi-service division of roles and responsibilities. No longer was the senior airman responsible for air operations and the senior Army ground commander responsible for air base ground defense. Churchill's actions clearly placed the air base defense mission at the RAF's doorstep. As a result, in addition to directing air operations, with the Regiment at his disposal, the senior airman now also commanded ground defense operations.

Perhaps their most notable effort, from a defensive perspective, took place in World War II Burma during the Battle of Meiktila in 1945. The Burma campaign's objective was to open supply lines in order to facilitate the flow of petroleum, oil, lubricants (POL) and other supplies

[48] Winston Churchill, The Second World War, Volume III, *The Grand Alliance,* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950, 693.

[49] Kingsley M. Oliver, *The RAF Regiment at War*, Catterick, UK: Pen & Sword Books Limited, 1970, 6-7.

into China.[50] Meiktila was considered key terrain to that objective because the Japanese positioned their main supply bases, hospitals and supply depots there. From a transportation perspective Meiktila also contained five or six airfields as well as the convergence point for most of the roads and railways coming from the southeast and west of Burma. In his memoirs *Defeat into Victory* British Field Marshall the Viscount William J. Slim referred to Meiktila as the "Main administrative centre of the Japanese Fifteenth and Thirty-Third Armies."[51] For these reasons, Slim ordered 4 Corps to seize the city from Japanese control. Realizing the importance of this loss, the Japanese 33rd Army moved to recapture the area. The initial Japanese advances severed crucial British supply lines increasing the importance of Meiktila East Airfield. In essence, the only way the British could re-supply its forces was through airlift. The Japanese sought to eliminate this remaining source of re-supply and subsequently attacked the RAF Regiment stationed at Meiktila East.[52] Fortunately for the British, however, the RAF Regiment had already begun to fortify the installation and provided reinforcements to the defense force.

With an RAF Regiment headquarters already in place, the British quickly added additional squadrons to the defensive scheme of maneuver. The quickness with which these forces were added provided the necessary capability to thwart Japanese advances on the airfield and on March 15, 1945, the attacks began. The initial Japanese artillery barrage closed the airfield. The guns were eventually silenced by RAF air strikes, and the airfield re-secured by Regiment personnel. At nightfall, the Japanese infantry attacked Regiment ground forces directly. Acting in conjunction with the air strikes, the Regiment field units eventually repelled the Japanese who retreated but only as far as the runway. The Japanese hoped to hold their position until daybreak and then surprise unsuspecting Regiment units working to ensure the runway was clear for air operations. The next morning Regiment flights moved to secure the runway and ran

[50] William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, London, UK: Cassell and Company Limited, 1956, 373-47.
[51] Ibid, 393.
[52] Oliver, 137.

into the Japanese forces. Although initially surprised, the Regiment flights continued to press the attack and maintained a foothold from which a British Army quick reaction force of tanks and light infantry were able to launch a counter-attack and eventually clear the entire Japanese from the surrounding area.[53]

In the end, despite the efforts of tenacious Japanese forces, Regiment Airmen defended and counter-attacked to prevent the loss of the Meiktila airfield. During the engagement, the Regiment demonstrated the importance of training and organization. Had newly arriving units not been trained to the same exacting standards as the initial Meiktila forces, they would not have been able to adequately augment the preliminary units. Further, had it not been for Regiment's organizational concepts, a formalized construct for adding the additional forces would not have existed.

From an offensive perspective, the Regiment's first and perhaps most significant service occurred in North Africa as part of the British contribution to Operation TORCH. Pressed into service a mere nine months after King George VI signed the authorization order, the Regiment first saw service in North Africa as the allies pushed out from El Alamein. In addition to providing convoy escort for advancing forces, they seized abandoned Nazi airfields, in some cases without infantry support, to expedite the airfields' use by RAF aircrews.[54] In the course of their Advance, the Regiment encountered snipers and isolated enemy teams and successfully navigated multiple minefields, booby traps and unexploded ordinance. So swift and decisive was their movement that in one particular case, the seizure of El Daba airfield, the Nazis were forced to leave behind approximately 50 aircraft in various stages of disrepair.

Allied airpower played a significant role in the North Africa campaign. In addition to providing air support to advancing armies, the combined British and American Air Forces also

[53] Ibid, 138-139.

[54] Norman MacMillan, *The Royal Air Force in the World War*, London, UK: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1949, 189.

interdicted German supply routes, destroyed German aircraft, and sank German ships attempting bring much needed reinforcements of men and Materiel to the *Afrika Corps.*[55] For their part, the RAF Regiment certainly facilitated the RAF's success. Before departing for North Africa, the senior Regiment officer, Lt Col H.M. Salmon unified the 1600 Regiment personnel who had been dispersed throughout other RAF units into Regiment squadrons and flights.[56] Upon arrival on the African continent, Salmon requested and received permission to use the Regiment in an aggressive fashion. Perhaps the most critical moment came in February 1943 when advancing German forces threatened a key airfield at Zribet Hamed. Having soundly defeated American Forces at Kasserine Pass, the Germans continued to press the attack. Initially the senior RAF commander decided to completely withdraw from the airfield but based on the RAF Regiment's presence, later changed his mind and removed only the bomber force stationed there. Once the aircraft departed, he pressed the RAF Regiment and remaining service and support personnel into action to prevent the advancing Germans from capturing the airfield. With the Regiment units in the lead, the unified force ensured the airfield remained in allied hands while the British 1st Army drove the Germans back into Tunisia.[57]

The RAF Regiment continued to play a key role in the Royal Air Force's desert advance all the way to Tripoli. In keeping with the British Eighth Army Commander's intent, the Royal Air Force maintained the offensive each time British Forces moved forward thanks in no small part to the use of airfields first seized and then defended by the RAF Regiment. In every instance, the Royal Air Force preserved the initiative thereby facilitating the British Army's continued advance across North Africa.[58]

The RAF Regiment's lessons in WW II emphasized the importance of training and organization. Understanding this, the RAF focused on the development of two types of air base

[55] John, Strawson, *The Battle for North Africa*, Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 1969, 194.
[56] Oliver, 35.
[57] Ibid, 42.
[58] MacMillan, 190-194.

defense units. The first of these units, the field squadron, emphasized the ground defense of RAF airfields. The second, anti-aircraft flights, focused on air defense. Regardless of unit however, Regiment airmen were first trained on fundamental infantry skills.[59] This arrangement not only ensured continued combat proficiency, but also versatility of the kind demonstrated in the Burma.

After the end of the Second World War, the Regiment continued to demonstrate its utility. Their first post-war test came in Egypt at the Suez Canal base in the 1950s. As the Suez crisis escalated and the threat to RAF personnel and resources in the area increased, the need for force protection also increased. Subsequently the RAF dispatched squadrons to provide force protection and air base defense. Simultaneously, Regiment units continued to serve in Northern Ireland until a declining security situation on the disputed island of Cyprus mandated the re-deployment of three Regiment wing headquarters and five squadrons. In all cases, the Regiment's inherent flexibility ensured the RAF's ability to project air power in two very diverse locations.[60]

Among other things, the conclusion of the Second World War initiated a significant draw down in British Imperial forces. As the United Kingdom withdrew from it's empire around the world, so too did their armed forces decrease significantly in size. The Regiment was not immune to the force reduction and subsequently lost major amounts of manpower authorizations. The reduction limited the ability to maintain a significant presence outside the United Kingdom proper and as the preceding paragraph indicates, the Regiment initially projected its capabilities from the home islands.

A crisis arose in 1959 that severely tested the RAF's force projection capabilities and ultimately resulted in presence re-establishment in Asia. Specifically, an uprising on the British Maldives possession necessitated forward deployment of RAF airmen and aircraft. Three years later, in response to the establishment of the Malaysian Federation, Indonesia attempted to siphon

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[59] Kinglsey Oliver, *Through Adversity: History of the Royal Air Force Regiment,* Bury St. Edmunds, UK: RAF Regiment Fund, 1997, 176.

[60] Ibid, 187-88.

off parts of Eastern Malaysia. The Malaysian Crisis provides the second air base defense case study.

To ensure the defense of the newly established Federation of Malaysia, the RAF dispatched three light anti-aircraft squadrons to provide air defense against possible Indonesian aggression. By the time these three squadrons arrived, a fourth squadron, specializing in ground combat, had already arrived. In fact, the unit, 15 Squadron, had already been involved in combat operations to put down a coup attempt directed at the neighboring government of Brunei. With Regimental security in place, the RAF deployed fighter and bombers squadrons to preclude any Indonesian attacks against Malaysia. Furthermore, Regiment personnel were forward deployed to dispersed helicopter landing zones in order to facilitate helicopter operations in the dense Malaysian jungles. The ability to operate from austere locations enabled the British to seek out Indonesian infiltrators in the most inhospitable environments. The Regiment's organization and training enabled it to assume these myriad of tasks, directly contributing to British overall campaign success.[61]

Prior to concluding, it is important to point out that the Regiment's efforts in support of the Malaysian Federation came at a price. The short notice nature of the Malaysian crisis combined with the reduction in Regiment force structure required creative solutions. The air base defense forces were stretched thin, especially in Eastern Malaysia. Moreover, in more than one instance, Regiment NCOs who normally specialized in ground combat had to be retrained with little or not notice, to provide air defense. This shortage of properly trained personnel required a daunting. It was common for Regiment airmen to receive only a four-month reprieve in the United Kingdom before being deployed back to the Malaysian theater of operations.[62] Ultimately, the British were successful, but at a cost. Their inability to ensure adequate RAF Regiment force structure required creative solutions. Instead of lowering training and

[61] Ibid, 226-27.
[62] Ibid, 228.

organization standards, the British simply increased the commitment required by those who had the skills necessary to ensure success.

The approaches to air base defense taken by the British and the Germans during World War II were very different. The Germans chose to pursue more short-term, ad hoc alternatives. The British approach, on the other hand, emphasized an institutionalized solution, providing a dedicated and trained organization to conduct air base defense. The longer-term solution developed by the British centered on solving doctrinal, organizational and training problems. Following the war, the British continued to employ the Regiment successfully in operations where the RAF's assets were threatened. Understanding the different approaches the British and Germans took and the subsequent results provides key information crucial to developing potential alternatives for the current USAF air base defense dilemma.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROPOSED USAF ROAD AHEAD

Developing a course of action that can be implemented furnished the catalyst for this research effort. Accomplishing that goal mandates addressing certain key issues. Normally, the DOTMLPF provides the construct for debates such as this and while the materiel, leadership capabilities and education, personnel as well as funds and facilities pieces are certainly important, they are beyond the scope of this monograph. The doctrine, organization and training elements, however, provide the elements necessary to successfully address the concerns uncovered in the course of studying the USAF's own history as well as that of the RAF Regiment and the German *Luftwaffe*. Doctrinal issues must be resolved to proceed with conversations on organization and training. In this particular case, the training required to accomplish the prescribed doctrine drives the requisite organization. For this reason, the order of discussion encapsulated in the proposed road ahead will flow from doctrine to training to organization.

Doctrinally speaking, the issue has become quite clear in recent years. The abrogation of the JSA 8 eliminated the requirement for US Army Soldiers to defend USAF airmen outside the perimeter of expeditionary airbases. In the abrogation package, the Army and Air Force Chiefs of Staff agreed that emerging joint doctrine would provide the guide for future operations of this nature. The completion and distribution of Joint Publication (JP) 3-10 finalized the emerging doctrine. JP 3-10 states, "The base commander is responsible for security within the base boundary and has a direct interest in the security of the area surrounding the base." JP 3-10 further clarifies that the base boundary is no longer tied to the perimeter:

> The base boundary is not necessarily the base perimeter, rather it should be established based upon the factors of mission, enemy, terrain, and weather, troops and support available—time available (METT-T), specifically balancing

> the need of the base defense forces to control key terrain with their ability to accomplish the mission.[63]

In essence, the USAF faces a fundamental choice. The Service must either adopt an expeditionary approach to doctrine and accept risk in the domestic environment or continue to accept risk in the expeditionary environment and remain focused on domestic law enforcement and security. The USAF's inability to develop a viable long-term solution to the base defense problem combined with the experiences of both the RAF and the *Luftwaffe*, support the expeditionary focus. Equally compelling, this approach supports the current USAF Chief of Staff's call, mentioned in Chapter Two, to engage threats to the USAF mission, beyond the base perimeter if necessary. The current state of affairs, as it pertains to joint service agreements and joint doctrine, leaves the USAF with two possible options. Considering the combined histories of the USAF, the RAF and the *Luftwaffe*, as well as the view of the most senior airmen in the United States, the choice between these options becomes clear. The USAF must doctrinally accept the mission to project ground combat power beyond traditional boundaries in order to ensure the ability to project combat air power, anywhere in the world.

The doctrinal debate decided, the next step is to identify the overarching training requirements necessary to make the requisite capabilities feasible. Accepting responsibility for its own defense presents more than one training problem for the USAF. Far from insurmountable, these problems hinge on solving three key elements: increasing the basic tactical expertise among all airmen; refusing to accept the concept that LE, security and air base defense skills are somehow interchangeable; and increasing the training received by those charged with the ground combat aspects of the air base defense mission. By addressing these three issues, the USAF will be able to successfully neutralize adversary attempts to disrupt American airpower operations on the ground.

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[63] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-10* "Joint Security Operations in Theater," Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006, II-1 – II-2.

Multiple authors have written on the topic of defending USAF airbases. In almost every instance, the authors identified training deficiencies, as they perceived them, and proposed methods to correct the deficiencies. The authors, however, failed to establish why a competent base defense forces requires an increased level of proficiency, and therefore an increased level of training. This monograph seeks to eliminate this shortfall.

In the training arena, one word stands above all others, proficiency. To achieve the level of proficiency, the USAF must commit to three fundamental principles. First, The USAF must demand a higher level of field expertise from all its airmen. Second, the concept that law enforcement and security skills can somehow be transferred into air base defense expertise with minimal additional training must be eliminated. Third, the level of training received by those specifically tasked with ground combat operations must be increased. Any solution failing to address these three principles represents a less than optimal solution.

Mentioning an increased level of field expertise for all airmen attracts negative attention from more than one quarter. The USAF Chief of Staff, however, already directed such a move. During the 2006 Air Force Association Air and Space Technology Exposition, General Moseley extolled, "Our future capabilities depend on building better joint and coalition Airmen. We have extended basic military training so we could now focus more than ever on these expeditionary skills. We have also expanded the technical schools."[64] The key here is not that airmen can or should become ground combat experts. Increased proficiency with their primary weapon to include an understanding of the effects of that weapon coupled with an understanding of how to successfully sound the alarm more than suffices.

With regards to those charged with the expeditionary mission, the skills required to conduct effective ground combat operations in an expeditionary environment do not equate to the skills required to enforce the law and secure domestic airbases. The tasks associated with the

[64] Todd Lopez, "The Air Force Undertakes Transformation Initiatives," *The Air Force Times*, 28 September 2006

domestic mission are different than those associated with the expeditionary mission. For this reason, the Service will have to adopt an entirely different approach to training. No longer will future ground combat airmen be able to split training time between law enforcement (LE), security and air base defense. The "Jack of all trades, master of none approach" leaves both the LE/Security community and the air base defense community lacking in the requisite proficiency. It is common to see airmen assigned to the air base defense units unable to adequately conduct a traffic stop or accident investigation. Conversely, the inability of those primarily charged with LE/security duties to successfully operate in a ground combat environment is also prevalent.

Perhaps more than any other reason, the lack of proficiency addressed above mandates a separation of law enforcement/security functions from expeditionary air base defense functions. According to the 5 May 2006 USAF Security Forces Career Field Education and Training Program (CFETP), the basic airmen is required to have an understanding, to varying degrees, of 91 skill sets. The CFETP uses a qualitative scale to identify the level of knowledge required. Most skills (87 out of 91) must be learned to either the "2" (partially proficient) or "3" (competent) level. Three skills must only be learned to the "1," or extremely limited, proficiency level. Ironically, two of the three, employ hand grenades and fight from defensive fighting positions, relate directly to the expeditionary air base defense mission.[65] In essence, today, the USAF requires only minimal knowledge of two of an expeditionary airman's tasks that are more dangerous. In the past, this level of expertise has proven adequate. If, however, the USAF accepts responsibility for its own defense, current capabilities will not suffice.

The final piece of the training puzzle deals with the level of expertise required of those charged with the USAF ground combat mission. Contrasting current USAF base defense training with the training conducted in the RAF Regiment illustrates the training gap. From an enlisted perspective, initial RAF Regiment training lasts 14 weeks. The USAF dedicates 12 weeks to their

[65] Department of the Air Force, *Security Forces Specialty Career Field Education and Training Plan*, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Air Force, 5 January 2006.

equivalent training. Although only a two-week difference, the problem is exacerbated by the disproportionate balance of general versus specialized training between the USAF and the RAF. Furthermore, the RAF focuses predominantly on air base defense where the USAF takes a more generalist approach. The RAF Regiment follows their initial tactical training with two follow-on training courses. The first of these, directed towards the youngest enlisted, provides advanced field craft training and lasts nine weeks. The second course lasts eight weeks and focuses on NCO leadership in a ground combat environment.[66] There is no USAF equivalent to the first follow-on training course. The closest thing the USAF has to the second follow on course is the ABD NCO course, which lasts just under 4 weeks. Subsequently, the USAF should adopt a more expeditionary training focus and adjust its training model to align more closely with the RAF whose primary mission focus is air base defense.

From an officer perspective, RAF Regiment initial training lasts nine months.[67] USAF officer air base defense training lasts just under 7 weeks. On a negative note, perhaps the largest shortfall in the RAF Regiment's program is their lack of officer continuation training. Experiences such as DESERT SAFESIDE highlight the need for advanced officer training in the USAF focused predominantly on introductory tactical and operational level planning. Such skills do not currently exist in the USAF and subsequently lead to the lack of a standardized approach to both levels of planning. In the absence of an RAF equivalent, the USAF should develop a course using the concepts embodied in the US Army's advanced officers' course. This approach would not only enhance the level of tactical expertise among USAF ground combat officers, it would also introduce planning thereby minimizing shortfalls that currently exist.

Organizationally, there is a single fundamental key to the USAF's acceptance of its own defense. In order to adopt an expeditionary approach to doctrine and facilitate the associated expeditionary training, those tasked with deployed air base defense should be removed from

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

positions not tied to a deployment mission or requirement. Although dramatic, this step would allow USAF SF units to organize, train and equip in peacetime as they operate in war. Failure to do so will preclude any real transformation from occurring. If the USAF continues down the path it has traveled throughout its history, any transformation effort will simply amount to a re-hash of previously attempted solutions to the expeditionary questions. It is also important to note that this is in keeping with DoD directives and Service-wide USAF transformation efforts.

The elimination of military presence in non-deployment positions, speaks directly to the lack of focus on the expeditionary mission. Today, the USAF organizes its security forces to provide security and law enforcement for steady-state bases. When air base defense missions arise, personnel are taken from their home-station bases, organized into squadrons, and then deployed to the expeditionary location. In some cases, the units do not become fully integrated until they arrive at the deployed location. Regardless, unlike other communities within the Air Force, training for combat operations is limited as security forces personnel revert to their home station duties upon return from the deployed mission. Using an aviation analogy, this would be akin to training only airlift pilots day-to-day, then taking these pilots from various bases, organizing them into fighter squadrons, training them for a limited time and sending them to combat. It may work if the threat is low enough, but not in a robust combat environment.

Once removed from steady-state responsibilities, those tasked with the deployed air base defense mission can be organized into units dedicated to training for expeditionary operations. The exact peacetime organization structure should reflect the structure employed in war. The RAF Regiment and TF 1041 provide useful examples for consideration, but the most effective organization requires detailed analysis and should be the subject of further research. Sufficed to say, the ad hoc approach is inappropriate in the current operating environment.

Prior to proceeding, a crucial argument against the organization proposed in this monograph must be addressed. Opponents will argue that creating units such as those proposed in the preceding paragraph will require a manpower increase. Given the budget and manpower woes

the USAF currently faces, on the surface, this does not seem like a palatable option. It is important to remember, however, that the manpower authorizations that would be used to form the expeditionary units would be taken from the pool of bodies the USAF already adds to steady-state units for the purpose of expeditionary operations. They would simply be permanently removed from the traditional SF units to focus solely on expeditionary operations.

An additional problem with the current organizational construct centers on the fact that the basic maneuver elements within a security forces squadron operate differently in the domestic and expeditionary environments. In expeditionary environments, security forces members operate in interdependent four person fire teams, thirteen person squads and forty-four person flights. Domestically, SF airmen operate in a myriad of teams ranging from single-person patrols in some law enforcement cases to two and three person teams in most security arrangements. There are situations, such as nuclear security teams, where SF airmen operate in four-person fire teams, but these are the exception more than the rule. Moreover, there is not a single situation in the domestic environment where any of these teams will come together and function as a 13-person squad. In essence, in addition to deploying in ad hoc organizations, SF airmen also organizationally operate differently in the expeditionary environment.

The remaining question is how to execute the traditional law enforcement and security mission without the use of the airmen traditionally assigned to those roles. The reason this issue exists is because the USAF never developed a permanent solution to the increased security requirements that fell out after 9/11. Instead, they increased the amount of time SF are deployed and/or extended the work schedules of those not deployed. Although the current situation did not come about as part of the expeditionary air base defense discussion, the solution can be part of the overall transformation effort. The simple answer is to follow the example set by the US Navy, the US Army and the Royal Air Force, to name just a few military organizations, and employ a mixture of DoD civilians and contract security guards. For the most part, these organizations do

not struggle with remaining focused on their wartime mission. For this reason, using combat forces for non-combat roles is rarely, if ever, a permanent option.

The road ahead for the USAF in general and its expeditionary mission in particular presents significant challenges to say the least. The chosen path, however, remains clear. Through their words and actions, the USAF's senior leaders state that the USAF will accept responsibility for its own protection and defense. The abrogation of JSA Eight and publication of JP 3-10 clearly support this point. To successfully execute this mission requires a higher level of training proficiency among the airmen charged with expeditionary mission. To facilitate the enhanced proficiency mandates fundamental organizational changes the likes of which the USAF has not previously entertained. The doctrinal, training and organization elements of the base defense dilemma are inextricably linked. Failure to consider one or more of these elements allows for only a partial and therefore inadequate solution. On the other hand, adopting a comprehensive approach would not only capitalize on the lessons learned by others who have faced similar problems, but also prevent repeating mistakes made during the sixty-year struggle to adopt a credible solution. Most importantly, by adopting an expeditionary approach to doctrine, training and organization, the USAF will finally solve the ground combat dilemma, a problem that has plagued the Force for over sixty years.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As the USAF approaches its 60th Anniversary, the ability to project airpower, anywhere in the world, remains a key capability in the United States' arsenal. Similarly, the need to defend the personnel and resources that comprise this capability also remains. Despite years of debate the USAF is still divided on where best to accept risk. There are those who advocate accepting the risk to mission in an effort to maximize resources. Others are steadfast in their belief that the risk to mission is too great and failure to address the issue in a comprehensive manner will lead to disaster sooner or later. In the final analysis, given the current views of USAF senior leaders, the USAF's own history as well as that of the RAF Regiment and German *Luftwaffe*, the answer is clear. The USAF can no longer accept the inherent risk to mission and must therefore dedicate the resources necessary to develop the capability to provide for its own defense.

From a senior leader perspective, the debate is easily understood. The current operating environment most certainly brings with it constraints. Balancing the resource aspect of these constraints with the mission aspect creates a significant problem, especially in the broader context of developing and procuring complex and expensive weapons systems. Unfortunately, in the broader context of the entire Defense Department construct, the decision becomes much more complicated. If the USAF will not provide for its own defense, then who will provide this capability? The other services live within the same resource and mission constrained environment. In other words, the die has been cast. The respective Chiefs of Staff of the Army and the Air Force dissolved the only document that existed to definitively assign this mission to a branch of service. The publication of JP 3-10 solidified the view that providing for one's own security and defense is an inherent need for each branch of service.

Along the same lines as the recent change in agreements between the USAF and the Army, the history of this problem highlights the fact that resource constrained or not, the Army

fails to agree that the USAF needs someone else to provide for its protection. To the US Army, establishing security is always the first priority of work. Moreover, it is the duty of every warrior to provide for his own defense. It logically follows, then, that the USAF should maintain the capability to defend itself in the expeditionary environment.

In a historical context, assuming responsibility for its own expeditionary defense gives the USAF a level of flexibility heretofore unheard of. Unlike past situations when the USAF did not deem the Army's base defense efforts as adequate, the USAF would possess the capability to increase the level of protection provided when deemed necessary. No longer would the USAF have to explain the importance the relative cost of air and space assets places on the base defense effort.

Along with the USAF's own history, further compelling support for the USAF to develop its own expeditionary air base defense capability comes from the experiences of both the RAF Regiment and the German *Luftwaffe*. Although resulting in different outcomes, each provides key insights into the road ahead. The RAF Regiment sheds light on the advantages to having a force specifically organized, trained and equipped to provide the expeditionary air base defense mission. In addition to the advantages a cadre of air-minded ground combat experts can provide to the airpower projection mission, the more institutionalized approach allows for a solution that survives over time. Conversely, the USAF's inability to adopt an approach institutionalized to the level of the RAF Regiment leaves the USAF still searching for an answer. Further supporting the need for an institutionalized solution, the *Luftwaffe's* lack of success speaks volumes to institutionalization. In fact, as outlined in the case study portion of this monograph, the Germans could not capitalize on one particular success story because it relied on personality rather than standardized processes and procedures.

Equally important to accepting the need for such an effective expeditionary air base defense capability is the approach applied to developing the capability. The doctrine is clear in that no one else is going to provide for the USAF's ground defense. Unfortunately, the training

and organization required to enable the USAF to accept this mission does not exist. To become a reality, the USAF must not only increase the level of training proficiency among those charged with the ground combat mission, but eliminate the notion that law enforcement and security tasks can somehow be translated into competency in the air base defense arena. Reorganization must also take place such that those airman charged with the more traditional law enforcement and security roles are separated from those expected to defend expeditionary airbases. The ability to defeat threats to air operations in a combat environment is not an easy task. Without adequate training and organization, the task becomes much more problematic.

The USAF currently stands at a crossroads with regards to defending itself against air base ground defense threats. As in past times, the ability to project airpower in the most lethal and decisive manner possible hangs in the balance. Currently a capability gap exists between the threat to USAF bases and the ability to defend those bases. No longer will the approach taken for more than 60 years suffice in environments such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Forward deployed air bases are real. The current war the US finds itself engaged in is also real. Subsequently, the USAF must stop taking an ad hoc approach to air base defense. By doctrinally accepting responsibility for defending itself, raising the proficiency of those tasked with the air base ground defense mission and organizing a force dedicated to expeditionary operations the USAF will finally resolve the ground combat threat problem. In doing so, the Service will ensure its continued ability to "Deliver sovereign options for the Defense of the United States of America and its global interests—to fly and fight in Air Space and Cyberspace."[68]

[68] The Honorable Michael W. Wynne and T. Michael Moseley, "Mission of the United States Air Force," Washington, D.C.: Department of the Air Force, 8 December 2005.

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