

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SECURITY POLICE

The Air Force Security Police perform many diverse missions at a variety of locations throughout the world. Women compose a significant part of this force. The roots of Air Force Security Police date back to 1943 when the position of air provost marshal was established by General H. H. Arnold, commanding general of the Army Air Forces. In January 1948, with the advent of a separate Air Force, military police in the Air Force were redesignated Air Police. In 1967 the term security police was adopted to describe both security and law enforcement in the Air Force.

The security police career field has a distinguished history of 48 years. 1991 marks the 20th anniversary of women in the security police field. Until 1971, the security police career field was exclusively male. That year a proposal to test the use of women in law enforcement was approved. It was successfully concluded in 1973, and the law enforcement specialty opened to women as a general enlistment option.

Another milestone was achieved in 1973 when women were allowed to join the security police officer ranks. In 1985, full integration was realized when the Secretary of the Air Force approved a revised combat exclusion policy, which opened up previously closed positions in the security specialty.

Today every aspect of the career field is open to women. More than 40,000 military, civilian, and contract guard personnel are assigned to the security police worldwide. Women comprise 8% of the approximately 34,500 active duty enlisted security police. Of the 968 security police commissioned officers on active duty, 7% are women. Our total force includes an additional 10,000

women and men serving in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. Enlisted personnel below the grade of MSgt specialize in either security or law enforcement, while senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and officers perform duties in both specialties.

Law enforcement specialists perform traditional police functions, including maintenance of law and order, protection of resources, base and town patrol, entry control and desk sergeant. Selected law enforcement specialists are assigned as military working dog handlers. Other police service includes confinement, corrections, investigations, and traffic services. OSI personnel are normally armed with 9mm pistols, drive a variety of vehicles, and may patrol on horseback.

Duties unique to the security specialty include protection of planes, missiles and other Air Force resources against dissidents, terrorists, saboteurs and enemy military forces. Security specialists protect weapons systems using state of the art electronics to detect and assess the presence of intruders. Security forces are equipped with specially designed armored vehicles, machine guns, and grenade launchers.

Male and female commissioned police officers perform supervisory duties in all aspects of the career field, ultimately with the opportunity to be a commander or chief of security police. Officers, senior NCOs, and security and law enforcement specialists are designated for worldwide deployment as base defenders.

In this role, they are armed with machine guns, grenade launchers, light antitank weapons, mortars, Stinger missiles and pyrotechnics to defend a base against attack by

enemy ground forces. All receive rigorous tactical training including land navigation, patrolling and counterattack.

This intensive training has paid big dividends in performing our mission during the past decade. Security police women have participated in key deployments. In 1983, five security police women deployed to Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury. These women were part of a larger security police contingent responsible for guarding enemy prisoners of war (EPW) while in transit from Grenada to Barbados, where the EPWs were returned to Cuban custody.

Women security police performed search and clear operations on former Panamanian Defense Force facilities, extracted US citizens trapped in uncleared areas and provided security escorts for newly appointed Panamanian government leaders.

Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm saw the greatest participation of women security police in a military operation to date. Sixty-two women security police (officers and enlisted) deployed to various bases throughout the theater. They performed the same duties as the men - resources protection, perimeter defense, aircraft and VIP security. They also processed and secured Iraqi EPWs and worked with host nation forces to provide internal security for bases throughout the region.

Career advancement and job opportunities for women in the USAF security police field are unlimited. In the last 20 years, women have made great strides and lasting contributions to a career field with a distinguished history.