

# Today's Security Forces - Expeditionary

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379th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

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Twelve-hour patrols in 100-plus degrees with sandstorms whipping into their faces. Convoy operations across the desert. Personal security detail for four star generals. Today security force's career barely resembles its own air force specialty code a decade ago.

"In the last 10 years we've gone from a force that would deploy to conduct installation and flight line patrols to one that's involved in convoy operations, off-base patrols and detainee operations at military prisons," said Capt. Michael Gallucci, 379th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. "A decade ago deployments were rare compared to today's ops tempo; I can remember volunteering for a TDY (temporary duty assignment) by putting my name on a sign-up sheet in the unit break room."

The officer in charge of the 379th ESFS S-4 has seen the change first hand. He joined 13 years ago as an airman basic, serving as a security policeman at Minot Air Force Base, N.D. At that time, overseas deployments were rare.

"We still have the same team unity we had back then," said the captain, referencing the tight cohesiveness among security forces Airmen. "But we've grown into an expeditionary combat force supporting global contingencies."

The expeditionary security forces Airman of today deploys for six months at a time, serving at air bases, Army camps and detention facilities throughout the AOR. The captain is a typical example of the expeditionary Airman; in addition to stateside locations and bases in

Korea, he's served in Iraq, Afghanistan and several countries in the combat theater.

While the aggressive six-month deployment schedule of security forces isn't for everyone, some young Airmen select the career field for this very reason.

"I consciously chose to go into security forces," said Airman 1st Class Thia Schuh, a 22-year-old who joined the Air Force with hopes of deploying around the world. In just two and half years, the security forces specialist is already serving her second rotation in Southwest Asia. During her travels, she's provided personal security detail to some of the most powerful military leaders in the world, including Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command. She's also worked security for convoys in Southwest Asia, protecting people and supplies moving across the desert.

"Airman Schuh's experience is typical," said Senior Master Sgt. Juan Thomas, 379th ESFS operations superintendent. "Today's security forces Airmen can expect to fight the war on terrorism directly in the combat zone. They prepare a month before deployment at a regional training center, mastering convoy security procedures, base defense strategies and urban terrain tactics."

Indeed, the career field has rapidly evolved to the combat expeditionary force of "quiet professionals" since Operation Desert Storm.

Lt. Col. Richard Neal, 379th ESFS commander, recalls joining the Air Force as a second lieutenant 16 years ago. At that time, his flight only deployed for training exercises. Today he commands a squadron of several hundred security forces deployed to Southwest Asia.



# Security Combat Airmen in Southwest Asia

Colonel Neal said the security forces defense posture has changed significantly.

"In the last 10 year's we've taken steps to increase the lethality of our Airmen," said the colonel. "We embrace the principle of aggressive defense, and have increased our offensive skill sets to ensure we can defend the resources and Airmen under our protection."

The 379th ESFS Airmen he commands in Southwest Asia possess a myriad of capabilities unheard of in security forces 20 years ago. While most have experience shooting weapons like M-16s, 9mm and M-4s, some possess specialized skills like close precision engagement, a type of counter sniper defense.

Senior Airman Dominic Buzzelli, 379th ESFS, is serving his third deployment in the war zone. He joined the Air Force in January 2003, just two months before Operation Iraqi Freedom kicked-off.

Deployed from Hanscom AFB, Mass., the 23-year-old thinks he joined in the middle of the security forces transformation.

"It's an exciting time to be in the field," said Airman Buzzelli, who helps secure the flight line, base entry control points and the munitions storage area here. "It takes a special

kind of person to be in security forces. We need to be mentally agile, flexible and postured to deploy on a moment's notice."

With a "6-months on, 6-months off" deployment schedule typical of security forces, Airman Buzzelli hopes his next deployment takes him to Afghanistan.

Airman Schuh, in contrast, hopes her next deployment is serving on a Fly Away Security Team (FAST). Each rotation, the 379th ESFS hand-picks a group of Airmen to serve on these elite security teams.

The FAST provides security to aircrew while protecting aircraft and cargo. The team members typically fly on C-130s headed to hot spots around the AOR.

Master Sgt. Anthony Mullins, 379th NCOIC of special security, said FAST missions last anywhere from one day to two weeks, and the Airmen are responsible for flight deck denial, ground security, anti-hijacking measures and detainee operations.

The link between security forces and successful air power has never been more defined, extending well beyond the role of FAST.

"We're essential to the ability to project air power all over the world," said Colonel Neal. "Be it defending a base, protecting convoys, running prisons or providing point defense at austere air fields, security forces provide the Air Force one of the best and most versatile defense forces on earth."



Pictured are Airman 1st Class Joshua Hurley and Airman 1st Class Ashley-Marie Wilson, both with the 379th Security Forces Squadron.