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SECURITY PROTECTION FOR PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT

By

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The 1254th Air Transport Squadron was activated in October 1948 to provide air transportation to senior military and civilian government personnel. The Office of the Provost Marshal was transferred from Headquarters and Headquarters, Military Air Transport Service (MATs), to Headquarters 1254th Air Transport Service to provide protection for the aircraft assigned to the 1254th ATS. The Office of the Provost Marshal was originally composed of 30 military personnel with a limited number dedicated to guarding the President's aircraft. This paper will describe the original composition of the Provost Marshal personnel; the Presidential aircraft they protected; their transfer from Washington DC's National Airport to Andrews AFB; changes in security as a result of new aircraft additions to the Presidential fleet; and finally, the increased security provided by the Emergency Services Team. First of all, a look at where it all began.

Originally, the Office of the Provost Marshal was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters, MATs, and provided routine military police duties at National Airport. On 23 November 1948, Headquarters and Headquarters, MATs, issued Special Order Number 77 establishing the Provost Marshal as a part of Headquarters, 1254th Air Transport Service. (6:48) The effective date of this transfer from Headquarters and Headquarters, MATs, to Headquarters, ATS, was 1 December 1948. The first unit history of the Provost Marshal after this transfer lists the total composition of personnel as one (1) officer, seven (7) airmen as Presidential guards, and twenty-two (22) airmen as Air Policemen. (6:49) This was the first designation of air policemen dedicated to guarding the President's aircraft. Now, the aircraft they guarded at Washington DC's National Airport.

The Presidential guards assigned to the Office of the Provost Marshal protected a variety of Presidential aircraft, all propeller driven, during their tenure at National Airport. The first aircraft they protected was a C-54, nicknamed *Sacred Cow*, used by President Harry S. Truman. Wherever this aircraft flew, regardless of whether the President was on it or not, Presidential guards accompanied it to provide protection for the plane. (6:48-49) After President Truman's re-election in 1948, a new Presidential aircraft, a DC-6 nicknamed *Independence*, entered the fleet. In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President and, after his inauguration in 1953, the Presidential guards protected another aircraft, a VC-121A nicknamed *Columbine II*. Later, the President flew on an upgraded version of this aircraft, a VC-121E nicknamed *Columbine III*. In 1961, after President John F. Kennedy's inauguration, the last propeller driven aircraft, an Aero Commander, was assigned as the Presidential transport. However, the days of maintaining Presidential aircraft at National Airport were coming to a close.

On 1 May 1958, Headquarters USAF notified Headquarters, 1254th Air Transport Group that three Boeing jet aircraft, VC-135As, were ordered to provide Special Air Mission transportation. Since the runway and facilities were inadequate to support these aircraft at National Airport, they would be stationed at Andrews AFB, Maryland with anticipated deliveries beginning in April 1959. (1:105) This required a dedicated security force be stationed at Andrews AFB to protect them. Later, an upgraded version of this aircraft, a Boeing VC-137C, was ordered for the Presidential fleet. It would require the transfer of the Presidential guards from National Airport to Andrews AFB. On 1 August 1962, the 1254th Air Police Squadron was activated at Andrews AFB. (1:129) Their mission was to provide security for the Special Air Mission aircraft and the impending delivery of the first Presidential jet. Just as Presidential aircraft have changed over the years, so have the various organizations that supported them.

The 1254th Air Transport Service has been redesignated the 1254th Air Transport Group; the 1254th Air Transport Wing; and finally, the 89th Military Airlift Wing on 8

January 1966. (1:155) In addition to the wing redesignations, the supporting units also shared in the numerical changes. (1:155) Another major change affecting the Presidential guards occurred later in the year. On 10 May 1966, three (3) Presidential guards were reassigned from the 89th Air Police Squadron to the Headquarters Squadron Section, 89th Military Airlift Wing (Presidential Pilots Office) to align all personnel associated with the Presidential aircraft under one office. (1:157) This increased the responsibilities of the Presidential guards by (1) involving them in the process of determining security requirements with the United States Secret Service based upon destination and (2) coordinating the uniform requirements for that location through the Military Assistant to the President. (5:--,4:--) The 89th Air Police Squadron was redesignated the 89th Security Police Squadron on 8 March 1967; the 76th Security Police Squadron on 15 July 1978; the 1776th Security Police Squadron on 9 December 1980; and finally, it was redesignated back to the 89th Security Police Squadron on 1 July 1991. (1:163,2:--,3:--,4:--,5:--) As the unit designations at Andrews AFB changed, the aircraft protected there have changed as well.

The introduction of jet aircraft in the Presidential fleet required new security measures to protect it. On 10 October 1962, the first VC-137C was delivered. (1:129) In order to provide the best possible protection for this aircraft, a new security area was established. The Presidential aircraft parking area was established in Hangar 6. The first sensor and camera system scheme was coordinated by CM5gt Richard Miller. (4:--) A second VC-137C was delivered in 1972 and became the primary Presidential aircraft. This aircraft was maintained inside Hangar 6 with the back-up aircraft. (4:--) Although President Lyndon B. Johnson frequently used a smaller, VC-140 Jetstar for domestic travel, it was never fully designated as the primary Presidential aircraft and, as a result, was not included in the Hangar 6 area. (4:--) During President Ronald W. Reagan's tenure as the President, two new aircraft were ordered for Presidential transport. These aircraft, modified versions of the Boeing 747, designated VC-25As, required an all new

hangar facility. CMSgt Hoyt S. Gamble worked directly with the design and acquisition boards for the new hangar, the aircraft designers, and the Electronic Security Division to coordinate all aspects for protection of the new aircraft. (2:--,4:--,5:--,7:--) In the 1980s, the increase threat of terrorist organizations required additional security measures for the Presidential aircraft.

The rise of terrorism in 1979, resulting from the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, required an increase in protection for the Presidential aircraft. In October 1980, MSgt Roger D. McCrady, Field Supervisor for the 1776th Security Police Squadron's Emergency Services Team (EST), CMSgt John J. Kelly, Superintendent of Presidential Support, and the United States Secret Service met to determine how the EST could increase the protection provided by the Secret Service during Presidential arrivals and departures from Andrews AFB. (4:--) Initially, the EST would respond to any facility the Secret Service's "Hercules" sniper team specified to conduct a sweep for suspicious personnel. After the assassination attempt on President Reagan in March 1981, the EST's involvement increased dramatically. (3:--) The EST provided a mobile response force to sweep the wooded areas adjacent to the Presidential aircraft parking area on departures and the wooded treeline adjacent to the end of the runways on arrivals. (3:--) In addition to this mobile force, a dedicated counter-sniper/observer team was available to support the Hercules Team. (3:--) Presently, the EST and Secret Service maintain a close working relationship and provide outstanding support in protecting the Presidential fleet. (5:--)

The role the security police play in protecting the Presidential aircraft continues to evolve over time. Since the inception of a Presidential guard section in 1948, the mission has changed with every new aircraft. In the beginning, the Presidential guards reported to the Office of the Provost Marshal, then to the Chief of Security Police, and finally, to the Commander of the Presidential Pilots Office. Their mission began protecting propeller driven aircraft based at Washington National Airport and continues to this day

protecting the most modern jet aircraft at Andrews AFB, Maryland. Although the unit has gone through several redesignations and structural changes, the mission itself has remained the same--providing outstanding security for the Presidential aircraft. When the threat from terrorist organizations rose, the Emergency Services Team was readily added to security measures to provide the increased protection necessary. This is an ongoing mission with major contributions provided by the enlisted members. CMSgt Gamble, CMSgt Miller, and MSgt McCrady all made significant contributions in providing dedicated security for the President's aircraft. As the current Chief of Presidential Aircraft Security, CMSgt William P. Laramie continues this fine tradition. Enlisted members have played a vital role in this critical mission and will continue to do so in the future.

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