

Major General Mary Kay Hertog is an Affiliate Member of the Vietnam Security Police Association whose father, VSPA Life Member Don Reeves, was one of our commanders in Vietnam. She is so much more than a Major General who was our Top Cop. Mary Kay Hertog is one of us and lived through her father's time as a Security Policeman at Phan Rang Air Base. She spent 27 of her almost 34 years in SP/SF, with the remaining time spent as a group and wing commander at Lackland AFB, as well as a Numbered AF Commander. Even during her command time outside the career field, she was deeply involved in all SP/SF matters as the SF Academy and all SF training fell under her purview. She has fought for our history, to make certain that our legacy and that of her father was not lost. She remembered what it was like to be the daughter of a Security Policeman and made certain that the families of our deployed Defenders were looked after in a manner that made them part of the Security Forces family. She consistently lived our motto, "We take care of our own" and made certain that her commanders and staff knew and taught the hard lessons learned in Vietnam and Thailand so that they were not forgotten. Now, she has provided us with some history and insight into the current problem with the Security Forces Museum. More importantly, she has provided the real cost of budget cuts in context with the mandatory loss of Security Forces personnel, men and women who have devoted their careers to air base defense as Defenders of the Force, who are being forced out of the Air Force. Below are her comments about the closure/consolidation of the Security Forces Museum.

Maj Gen Hertog's Message:

"I have received many emails from people about the Museum closure, along with the AF SF Association emails, and I wanted to make a few comments. I'm sorry to hear SF was given zero prior notice about this decision--that was a foul. But I have to tell you this has been coming for years. I, with the help of others, intervened several times to stave off the closure as far back as 12 years ago. I believe it was Pat Bowden who came up with the great idea to change the SF Basic Apprentice course to have our new Airmen in training spend an hour in the Museum to learn about their heritage. This brought up our visitor numbers in a huge way and justified keeping the Museum open. Lackland is the only installation in the AF that supports two museums, and if one had to close, it will usually be the one with the least amount of visitors.

When I was the Director of Security Forces I was contacted about AETC not being able to keep both museums open because they couldn't afford the salaries of two curators. I made the offer to AETC to pay our curator's salary out of SF funds. They agreed to that and that has kept the museum open for a few more years. In my group and wing commander positions at Lackland and as the Top Cop and 2AF/CC, I was able to keep tabs on the museum and its status.

But it's a very different and difficult time now and the AF, as well as the other Services, are in dire fiscal straits due to sequestration and other issues. The AF is taking drastic measures to save money and continue it's missions. Much of the cuts are coming from big personnel reductions such as selective early retirements--(4 SF colonels this year have to leave early), reduced accessions in basic training; changing high year of tenure

rules to get more people out; requiring majors and lieutenant colonels in certain year groups to meet retention boards, and oh by the way, if an officer successfully makes it past a board this year it doesn't guarantee they are exempt from future boards). And there is so much more the AF is trying to do to save money and gain efficiencies, all painful to someone.

So I would ask everyone to think about the people losses versus the buildings that we are going to lose. We may not have our original museum building anymore, but we will never lose our identity as a career field. Our proud heritage and current performance of our outstanding cops around the world will never allow that to happen. But we are part of the AF and therefore we are going to be subject to sacrifices, too.

I understand we will have displays in other locations. I've heard it's the Base Library and I've also heard it may go into the new Enlisted Heritage and Character Development Center. If it's the EHDC that's great news because thousands of people (parents and our graduated Airmen) will pass through that building every Thursday and Friday during the weekly BMT grad ceremonies and that will expose a huge number of people to SF.

There have been some very negative and downright nasty posts on Facebook from people who don't have the full story of what the AF is having to do just to accomplish our mission. Frankly I'm disappointed by that kind of unprofessional reaction. This is not a personal attack against the SF career field and I hope you can help me spread the word on the very tough fiscal environment the Services are operating in and why these decisions are being made. And the fiscal picture isn't getting any better. There will be even greater changes coming to the career field in the near future which will cause great concern too, but there's no doubt in my mind SF will make the necessary transition and continue to excel in the tremendous missions we do around the world.

Mahalo--
Mary Kay Hertog, Maj Gen (ret)"

We asked General Hertog to clarify a couple of points about the current facility and Museum funds. In the interest of brevity, we have paraphrased both the questions and her comments. Nothing has been deleted that changes the context of the questions or General Hertog's responses.

Q: What will happen with the current facility? Will it be used for Academy Classrooms, where some exhibits may be displayed?

A: These are all very valid questions about the building's final status and I'm going to contact the AETC and ask why there was no notification to SF that this was coming up fast.

Q: What will happen with the funds maintained by the SF Museum Foundation? Can they be used to construct world-class displays in the temporary facility?

A: As for the funds in the Museum Foundation, that is not controlled by the wing or AETC from what I remember. I believe that totally falls under the control and management of the SF Museum Foundation. I know as a wing commander at Lackland, I never had access to those funds.

Q: Do we have your permission to share your comments with the VSPA, Safeside Association, Thailand Dog Handlers Association and SAC Elite Guard Association and AFSFA members, so they will have a better understanding of the issues involved with the closure of the Museum?

A: Please feel free to resend my email to all of the SF related associations. I am trying to calm things down because now there are petitions being generated on Facebook and the tone is getting worse because folks just don't know what's going on behind the decision (because no one shared it with the most affected group)! You are so right in saying that if the right people had been notified, up front, alternatives could have been discussed and the command could have had SF support vice recriminations.