

**“JOINED to Fight! Joined to Fight!”**

The words echoed over Hawaii's Schofield Barracks as the Air Force's elite 1041st USAF Security Police Squadron double-timed smartly down the road.

The 1041st is unique. It is the heart of an Air Force test program called Operation Safe Side. Its purpose? Form, equip and train a US Air Force Security Police force with the ability to secure air bases located in hostile environments against all forms of enemy ground action.

With greater mobility, more advanced detection equipment, reinforced training, and heavier fire-power than is normally found in a security police squadron, the 1041st, currently 200 men strong, is undergoing six months of field evaluation.

The idea for the unit was conceived in 1965 as a result of Air Force experience in Vietnam where heavily guarded air bases were being attacked by the Viet Cong. Obviously, new procedures for internal base security were needed. Although Air Force Security Police plans against sabotage were basically sound for most bases throughout the world, a study in Vietnam proved that no single existing system or technique provided sufficient security to thwart the Viet Cong guerrillas in their own environment.

Based on the situation in Vietnam a new base security concept, unlike any in Air Force history, was designed. Evolved under the supervisory eye of Lt. Gen. Glen W. Martin, Air Force Inspector General



In the lush Hawaiian countryside, air policemen practice combat tactics. Crew fires a .50 caliber machine gun at a simulated enemy target.

The Airman



# ***Operation Safe Side***

by MSgt. S. J. CHRISTALDI

Hq PACAF



Trainees are schooled in the art of camouflage. Properly garbed, they are almost impossible to spot. See the M-16 aimed directly at you?

until February 1967, the proposal was presented to and accepted by Chief of Staff, General John P. McConnell and the Air Staff. The name Safe Side was assigned to the development of the new concept.

Because of his experience in the field of internal security, Lt. Col. William H. Wise was appointed project officer for Operation Safe Side.

Discussions were held with the US Army, Marine Corps, and Royal Air Force regarding ground combat training courses which would best suit the needs of this new program. The US Army Ranger Course at Fort Benning, Ga., was selected. In addition to being realistic and tough, it also developed the individual's self-confidence, and leadership abilities, as well as his skill in ground combat tactics.

A training plan was written, based on Army Ranger experience, and a number of Air Force Security Police officers and NCOs were screened for instructor duty. Twenty-three were finally selected for Ranger training.

Next, the call for volunteers went out to security policemen. The requirements were stiff. Not only did applicants have to be highly motivated, but their last five proficiency reports had to be in the top 10 percent! Naturally, applicants also had to be in near-perfect physical condition. One hundred seventy men were chosen.

The 1041st USAF Security Police Squadron was activated in September 1966. It then had 225 men, including trainees, instructors and support personnel. All its combat members were, and still are, volunteers. Virtually all had been Air Force Security Policemen.

"During the first few weeks, trainees were given a lot of physical conditioning and many hours of drill," said a training NCO. "We had to get them in shape as quickly as possible. The drills were good for their coordination. We wanted them to see everything, think quickly and clearly, to react instantaneously and to shoot straight. All of these are important in combat," explained the veteran security policeman.

Schofield Barracks in Hawaii was selected as the training site because of its terrain, housing, and other facilities. An obstacle course was not available at Schofield, but the instructors built their own, patterning it after the one at Fort Benning.

Training was in a jungle environment, and included night infiltration tactics. Scout dogs were included in the program. Air Force personnel conducted all phases of training.

This is the first time a complete Air Force unit has been trained for defensive ground combat.

"Local base security forces are responsible for the internal protection of air bases," Colonel Wise stated. "They have been very effective against attempted penetrations by saboteurs. But when hostile groups overtly attack our base perimeters in large numbers, it's too late!

"With units such as the 1041st on the scene, the enemy would have a rough time getting in close enough to the base without being detected," he continued. "We are equipped with modern electronic devices and scout dogs to alert us when someone penetrates our area of responsibility."

Personnel of the 1041st are highly trained in all phases of ground combat, with special emphasis on tactics relating to perimeter and internal security protection. Their basic weapon is the M-16 rifle, but they also have, and are highly skilled in the use of, a wide variety of other weapons which make the unit fit a high firepower organization.

The dogs of the 1041st are unique within the Air Force. They are scout dogs trained primarily not to attack an enemy, but to detect his presence, even when he's hiding in water.

A comparatively new system of hand-to-hand combat measures is used by the unit. It includes self defense with and without weapons. It is designed to kill or incapacitate an enemy whenever physical con-

tact is made. All assigned Air Force Security Policemen are skilled in hand-to-hand combat.

To check on physical and combat proficiency, periodic tests were given. These included the 40-yard low crawl, horizontal ladder, dodge run and jump, grenade throw, and one-mile run. Trainees were required to score a minimum of 300 for all five events.

When training began, the average physical condition score per student was 311 points. Six weeks later the average score had jumped to 381 — indicating the significant improvement in physical conditioning. More than 20 of the men clad in fatigues, combat

boots, web belt, and canteen were able to run the mile in six minutes or less.

Midway through training the men were subjected to escape and evasion tactics. After being "captured" by the instructors, trainees were marched to an "enemy" compound. The students were held "captive" overnight — about 20 hours in all. "It was a harrowing experience," explained one of the men. "I'll never be taken prisoner," stated another.

"It was all made very realistic," said CMSgt. Robert C. Frink, squadron sergeant major. "We harassed them, insulted them, and did all the things we think

The Airman





Trainees hit this chest-high log under a lull head of steam; somersault over it with weapons in hand. This obstacle is called, appropriately enough, the "belly buster."



When students become proficient at crawling under the barbed wire at this height, it's lowered a little. This is only one of 14 challenges in the tough obstacle course.



Many obstacles must be negotiated at a dead run. Course is like Ft. Benning Ranger School.

the enemy would do to humiliate them. They were very uncomfortable. I don't think they got any sleep at all that night. Now, they have a better idea of what it means to be captured."

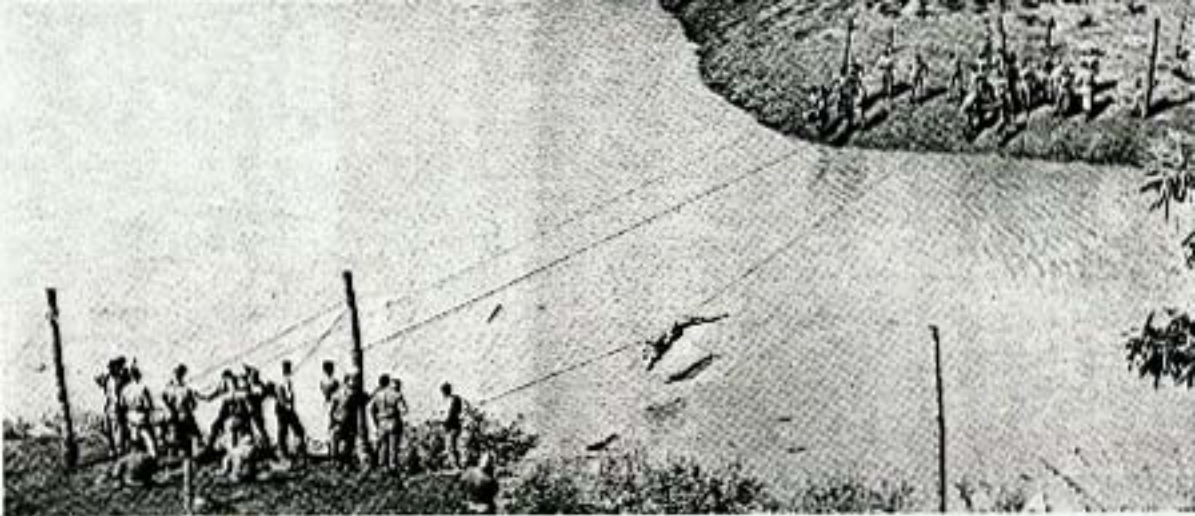
Sergeant Frink speaks from experience. During World War II he was captured by the Germans, but escaped 18 days later.

During their 16 weeks in Hawaii, ending in mid-December, the men went through combat training as rough as any ever taken by an Air Force unit. Their day began at dawn and ended long after dark. Many of the veteran instructors who completed the Army

Ranger Course at Fort Benning rate Safe Side training as tough, and in some respects tougher than that at Benning.

Highlight of training came at the end of the ninth week. At this point the students received the unit's distinctive symbol, the "blue beret." General Martin, who had seen the project through from its beginning, presented the berets. From then on the trainees and instructors worked as a unit to form a flexible, highly mobile security police force. The men who had "Joined to Fight" were now "trained and ready to fight."





Combat members of the 1041st Security Police Squadron must be ready to surmount any obstacle they meet. Here they span a 20-meter river using a single rope technique known as the Swiss seat. A slip here means a refreshing dip in the stream.



Here's one way to what (or not) your student's enthusiasm.  
Travis goes off the board likefolded, then going to show.



Finally through their training, these air policemen are ready for combat. Not one ditch and heavier weapons.





## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the initial involvement of the USAF Security Police units in the Vietnam insurgency, internal security of remote and vulnerable air bases continued to be carried out under the long existing concept of providing internal protection against the covert threat of sabotage. Internal security was geared to detect, capture or destroy a small enemy raiding party attempting to sabotage or destroy aircraft and other priority resources.

Well planned attacks by organized guerrilla raiding parties on three of the major air bases in Vietnam forced the USAF to redirect its attention from internal security to providing a well trained and well armed, highly motivated combat security police force capable of repelling raids by experienced enemy sapper units, before such units could bring their weapons to bear on sensitive base areas. Under the direction of the USAF Inspector General, a security survey was conducted in the Republic of Vietnam in November, 1965 and the results of that survey were presented to the Chief of Staff, USAF, with the recommendation that a test unit of highly trained Combat Security Police be formed to initiate a new concept in ground defense at a designated site in the Republic of Vietnam. This new concept, known as "Active Defense," is a technique of in-depth defense in which the defenders occupy temporary positions and utilize certain offensive tactics (i.e., attack, counter-attack, patrolling, ambush, etc.) Field fortifications or natural protection are utilized. The defensive posture changes continuously as the intelligence situation dictates. The positions are changed on a predetermined but random basis.

Obviously, the development of tactics to support an active defense program would require knowledge of infantry tactics not common to normal security police operations.

## 2. HISTORY OF THE TEST UNIT

With Chief of Staff concurrence, recruiting for the special program began in CONUS in early 1966. After careful consideration, the U.S. Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia was selected as the training course for the original cadre of the test unit. Personnel selected through personal interview were sent to Fort Benning and began the first class of Ranger School to include USAF personnel on 4 May 1966. Designated by the code name "OPERATION SAFESIDE", the 1041st USAF Security Police Squadron (Test) was formed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and prospective trainees began arriving at Schofield from throughout the CONUS and PACAF. On 1 September 1966, the arduous, rigorous and

somewhat hazardous individual training program began. Based on the new concept of operations, with emphasis on waspops, each trainee was evaluated on his small unit leadership ability through his reactions to emotional, physical and mental stress while performing as a student leader in the field. A 6 week unit training program began on 10 November 1966 during which the unit was welded together as a functioning combat organization composed of cadre and former students. Upon completion of the specialized training, the unit conducted extensive field exercises under conditions that it was known would be faced by the unit in the Republic of Vietnam. The successful conclusions to these field exercises clearly indicated the unit was ready for combat.

On 13 January 1967, the 1041st USAF SPS (T) arrived at Phu Cat Air Base, an essentially bare base operation in the Central Highlands of Vietnam whose runway was still under construction. During the period of 13 Jan to 4 Jul 1967, the 1041st secured its Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) of 9.3 square miles of jungle and rice paddies with active defense tactics developed during its training phase at Schofield Barracks. These tactics included daylight recon patrols, forward observation posts during the day and listening posts at night, operation of tactical motor patrols with gun jeeps, sweep and clear operations, relocation of areas of population, and the use of the primary tactic in active defense operations: The ambush patrol.

Ambushes conducted at Phu Cat provided the most tangible enemy contacts. Ambush patrols of fire team size, and less, were conducted at different locations within the established curfew zones of the 1041st on a nightly basis, their locations constantly changing. Night ambushes resulted in the death of the VC Commissioner of An Whon Province and Chief of the VC Security Assault Forces. A VC courier was killed by a sniper ambush team, resulting in the capture of many documents of high intelligence value to Free World Forces operating in the area. Sweep and Clear operations carried out by 1041st patrols at hamlets within the TAOR netted 71 suspect VC, of which 6 were later confirmed to be Viet Cong, with 22 others further detained as strong suspects. Two deserters from the Army of Vietnam were also detained.

The 1041st prepared for its departure from Vietnam by training a specially organized flight of volunteers from the 37th Security Police Squadron at Phu Cat Air Base in the application of active defense tactics. Most of the special application combat equipment and vehicles were left in Vietnam for use by 7th Air Force Security Police units. The special flight trained by the 1041st has amassed impressive results in applying the tactics taught them. This has resulted in the acceptance of active defense tactics by many units throughout 7th Air Force.

On 4 July 1967, the 1041st was airlifted from Phu Cat to its temporary bed down site at Fairchild AFB, Washington. On 21 January 1968, the 1041st was placed under the operational management of the Tactical Air Command (TAC). The Combat Security Police program received official approval from the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Air Force on 1 July 1968. However, prior to that date, due to an urgent request from Hq 7th AF for more Combat Security Police units in the Vietnam theatre, the unit was redesignated the 82nd Combat Security Police Wing and on 8 March 1968 was sent TDY to Schofield Barracks to establish a training site for two CSP units on an immediate basis. The 821st Combat Security Police Squadron was formed and received an accelerated training course and then deployed to Vietnam. A second unit, the 822nd Combat Security Police Squadron was also formed, trained and deployed from the Schofield site. Upon completion of the training of the 822nd CSPS, the 82nd Combat Security Police Wing and the USAF Combat Security Police School were transferred to the permanent location at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

UPDATE: The 821st CSPS was deployed to Phan Rang AB, RVN on 13 April 1968 and relieved a Battalion of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and took over their Base Camp. In August 1968 the 821st was relieved by the 822nd CSPS and airlifted to its bed down base at Forbes AFB, Kansas. During the summer of 1969 the 821st was sent TDY to Fort Campbell, Kentucky to finish their training (an additional 3 months). Prior to this the 823rd CSPS had been formed and trained at Fort Campbell by the 82nd CSP Wg., and in February 1969 relieved the 822nd at Phan Rang. In August 1969 the 821st returned to Phan Rang and relieved the 823rd. During its second tour in the RVN the 821st established the 7th Air Force Weapons and Small Unit Tactics School at Phan Rang. In January 1970 the 821st was returned to Forbes AFB, Kansas and the men of the unit re-assigned to various Squadrons throughout the world. The 82nd CSP Wg was inactivated on 24 November 1969. Inactivation dates for the 822nd and 823rd are unknown but took place sometime in 1969. The 821st manned by some members of the original cadre and augmented by 7th Air Force Security Police personnel carried on at Phan Rang until inactivated on 15 January 1971. The Stateside bed down site for the 822nd was Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina. The bed down site for the 823rd was England AFB, Louisiana.



CAREY STARK  
TSGT, NCOIC "B" Flight Heavy Weapons Section  
821st Combat Security Police Squadron  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Safeside Association, Inc.

### Safe Side Program

The last major step in shaping USAF ground forces in SVN was the introduction of a combat security police squadron as a permanent independent, mobile, countrywide, quick reaction unit. The Seventh Air Force Commander took the initial action on 18 February 1968 by requesting

that one Safe-Side squadron be deployed immediately to Phan Rang on a TDY basis. The squadron [it] to come under the direct control of my Directorate of Security Police for further deployment and utilization as the situation dictates.<sup>19</sup>

Impelling his request were the telling battalion-size attacks by the VC/NVA on USAF bases during 1968 Tet. He visualized the combat security police squadron as a backup in high-threat periods and a potent and variable day-to-day counterthreat.

The Chief of Staff approved the Seventh Air Force request and designated Tactical Air Command as the single manager to implement the Safe Side Program, which had been marking time since completion of the RVN 6-month test phase in July 1967.<sup>20</sup> On 1 March 1968 the Air Force Chief directed a 2-part program. The first part called for organizing and deploying a "500-man Security Police unit" on temporary duty to SVN, after 30 days of intense training accenting the M-16 rifle, M-60 machinegun, and ground defense tactics. The second part required that a "fully, properly trained Combat Security Police Squadron" replace the hastily trained unit before the latter exceeded the 179-day statutory limit on TDY.<sup>21</sup> Clearly this was a crash program.

<sup>19</sup>At this time, there was no room under the USMACV manpower ceiling to permit assignment of the combat security police squadrons to SVN on PCS. Hence

Within 2 weeks following the Chief of Staff's directive, Headquarters 82d Combat Security Police Wing (CSPWg), the USAF Combat Security Police Training school,<sup>22</sup> and the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron were activated. Manned by TDY personnel, these units were organized at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, where the Army made facilities and housing available.

The 821st and other combat security police squadrons were organized with an authorized strength of 21 officers and 538 airmen. (See page 111.) Each contained three tactical flights of 6 officers and 161 airmen, responsible for high firepower, mobility, surveillance of base perimeters, and defense and security of internal base areas. Command and operations comprised 3 officers and 4 airmen, headquarters flight, 51 airmen. The latter took care of squadron administrative, food service, medical, and supply functions, together with the maintenance of vehicles, weapons, and communications.

The hurried training of the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron kicked off by 15 March 1968, and on 15 April the unit was in place at Phan Rang AB. The 822d CSPSq was next organized at Schofield Barracks, manned with trained TDY personnel from nearly 100 units. In line with the rotation plan, the 822d in August 1968 replaced the 821st CSPSq which returned to CONUS. The third and last of the combat security police squadrons, the 823d, was organized at England AFB, La., in October 1968. Its personnel, most of whom were permanently assigned, were trained at Ft.

they were deployed on TDY and rotated home before the 179-day limit was up.

<sup>22</sup>This school operated under the 82d CSPWg. Together, they organized and trained the combat security police squadrons.

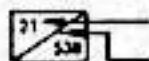
## Combat Security Police Squadron Organization

Campbell, Ky., where the CSP Training School had been relocated since August 1968. The 823d took over from the 822d CSPSq at Phan Rang in March 1969 and was in turn relieved by the 821st in August 1969. At this point, the rotation cycle ceased. Because of the progressive withdrawal of U.S. forces and ensuing budget cuts, the Safe Side Program was discontinued in December 1969 and all its CONUS units inactivated. The 821st CSPSq stayed in South Vietnam at a reduced strength of 250 until February 1971 when it too was inactivated.<sup>81</sup>

How well did the combat security police squadrons fit into air base defense operations in South Vietnam? What did they contribute? First off, Safe Side was a crash program of fast-paced actions. Regular staff procedures were by-passed. Refinement of requirements went by the board as did formal implementing directives. Operational concepts firmed up as the program evolved. And from the very beginning, the location of Safe Side at Schofield Barracks made it difficult to communicate with CONUS-located higher headquarters.

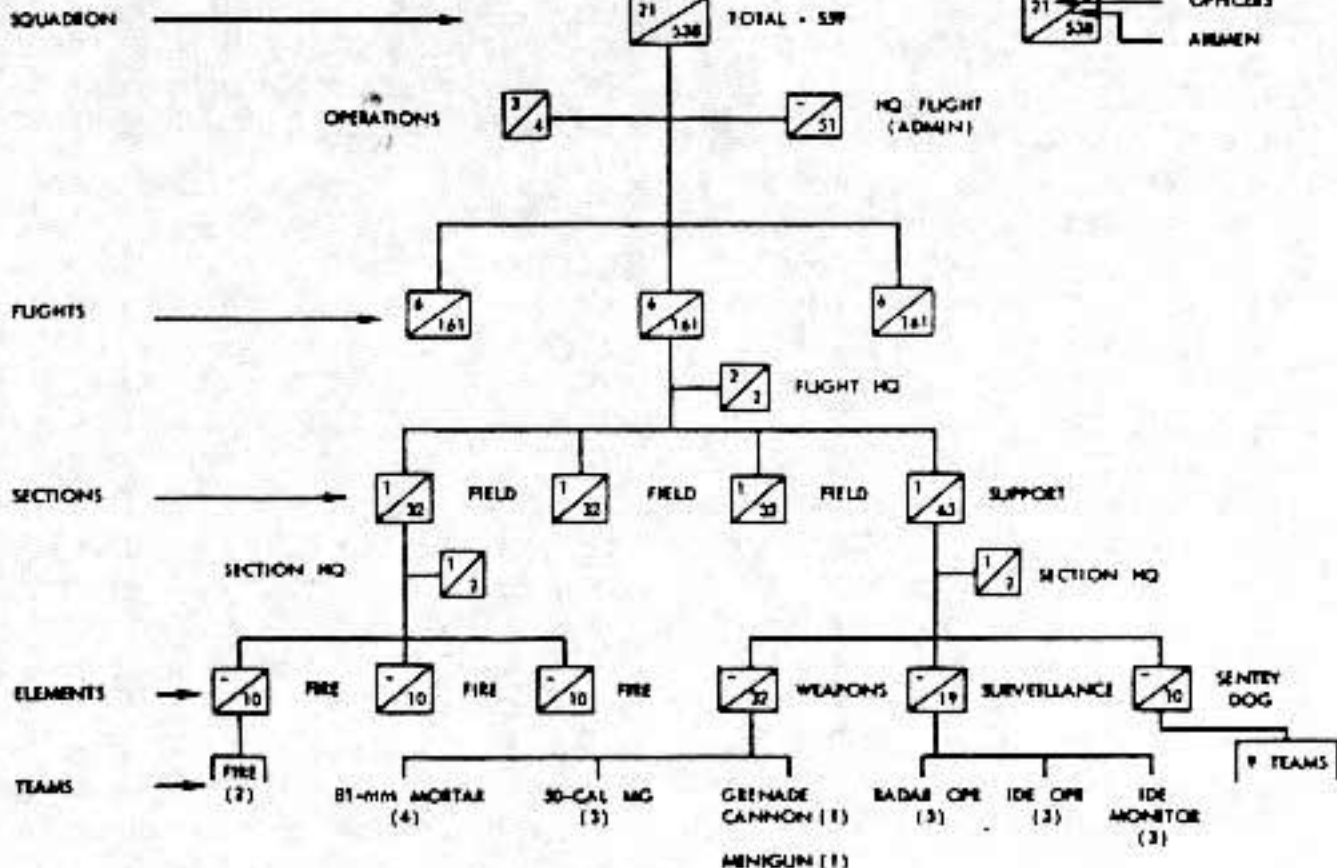
# Combat Security Police Squadron Organization

LEGEND



OFFICERS

ARMEN



The problems of haste cropped up in the program's training. Because they were at hand, former members of the Safe Side test unit\* were pressed into service en masse as instructors. Yet few of these men knew how to teach. All of them were oriented toward U.S. Army Ranger operations and not to the small unit tactics and theory of static defense. Ranger training taught a man "to survive, move and fight at extended distances behind enemy lines." Slight wonder, then, that a sizable chunk of Safe Side instruction dealt with land navigation, long-range ambush and reconnaissance patrols, stream crossing, rappelling,† and like subjects. The teaching of air base defense operations as actually conducted by security police in South Vietnam was neglected.

Consequently, combat security police trainees came to SVN with but a dim and distorted grasp of the mission they were to perform. The most widespread misconception was that the combat security police would furnish external defense for air bases by manning ambush sites and going on long-range patrols. Armed with this ignorance and a superior attitude, some of the new arrivals sparked friction with men of conventional security police units.‡ By the end of 1968, however, many of these problems were smoothed out.

\*The 1041st USAF Police Squadron (Test) functioned as a Safe Side evaluation unit at Phu Cat AB from January to July 1967.

† Descending (as from a cliff) by means of a rope passed under one thigh, across the body, and over the opposite shoulder.

Security police using an M-113 armored personnel carrier while developing defense tactics

Seventh Air Force Oplan 533-69 covered the use of combat security police squadrons in South Vietnam. In general the in-country unit acted as a mobile, ground defense contingency force, deployed as the Seventh Air Force Director of Security Police saw fit. This took place as a rule in the course of a heightened threat, a significant change in the enemy/friendly order of battle, or a weakening of in-place defense forces (due to a personnel shortage or exhaustion from prolonged duty during an advanced security alert condition).

The combat security police squadron was supposed to operate as one unit, but in practice the section (1 officer and 32 airmen) was the basic tactical element deployed in SVN. At the deployment base, CSP elements came under the operational control of the local security police commander. But being elements of a theater-wide contingency force, they were often re-deployed without prior warning to bases with a greater need. Security police commanders were therefore reluctant to put CSP elements in charge of an entire sector. To cushion the shock of a no-notice withdrawal, they preferred to use men from the elements as fillers. This shredding of unit integrity was the source of the bitterest complaints from CSP officers and non-commissioned officers. In addition to

