

To my fellow *Defenders of the Force* - past and present,

As you are aware, the Security Forces Museum was closed on 15 August 2014 after 35 years (1 Nov 1979). Over 300 Security Forces personnel were present for the lowering of all flags. All were present to show support for the preservation of our history, a distinct reflection of the value that they place on the Security Forces Museum, and also a tribute to the Museum where AP/SP/SF Defenders, as well as many visitors, learned what the Security Forces' career field is all about, especially what it takes to be a "*Defender of the Force*."

Decisions were made and the museum closed without anyone from the Air Education and Training Command (AETC) coordinating with the present Security Forces staff, not even the USAF Top Security Forces General or his staff.

Many of our Brothers in Arms have said that this is a "slap in the face" to our career field. I, for one, am not happy. As the President of the Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (VSPA), I and several other members of different associations put together a white paper with talking points that could be used to contact members of Congress. The talking points started the ball rolling in an effort to help save the Security Forces Museum.

Some other facts have come to light on the reason the Museum was closed due to budget constraints within AETC. You may not be aware that Lackland AFB has two Museums. The consolidation of the Security Forces Museum with the Enlisted Heritage and Character Development Center is really not the answer we wanted to hear, but is a band-aid fit to a growing problem across the entire USAF, as well as the DOD.

The US Air Force tells everyone that they "Aim High" and "*Fly, Fight and Win*" as stated in The Airmen's Creed. The USAF song says almost the same thing to, "...*fly and fight or go down in flames*"! The problem with those sayings, and since the beginning of the USAF, is that the Military Police, Air Police, Security Police and now Security Forces *do not fly*; they fight on the ground and protect others so *they may fly*. Emphasis has never been placed on air base defense or how we "*Serve and Protect*" everyone on any air base anywhere in the world. We seem to get lost in the big picture of the USAF and ignored until they are under attack or need us to perform some protection duties.

We must remember that "*Defenders of the Force*" have a job to defend all the air bases so that the maintenance crews can get their planes ready to fly and fight, that the POL and supply folks must also be protected to so that they can get what is needed to get those planes ready for their missions. What everyone seems to forget is that at the very foundation of the pyramid that leads to the top and the opportunity to "Fly, Fight and Win" is the Security Forces Defender, the gate guards, patrols, alarm monitors, CATM, Military Working Dogs, Pass & ID and a host of other "*Defenders of the Force*" who work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to ensure the pilots and crews get their aircraft up in the sky to fly, fight and win!

Yet, these personnel do not really want to see or talk to Security Forces unless all hell breaks loose on their base and then they want the Security Forces folks there ten minutes before it happened! Those of us who have served and worked in the career field know that feeling and I

also know that sometimes it's hard for our Defenders to see a bigger picture when everyone else is looking down on them, or criticizing their actions from behind a desk. But that comes with the job and we take the oath to defend everyone and every base.

The VSPA has a saying that sums it all up in a simple motto: "*We take care of our own.*" Our motto and how we live that commitment to each other has been seen and demonstrated for many years, and is always true. Out of the Vietnam War the VSPA rightfully says that, "*No air base protected by an Air Policeman or Security Policeman was ever over run by the enemy*" and even today, the Security Forces have held their ground to make certain that this will never happen during their watch!

Over the last several weeks, since the announcement of the closing of the Security Forces Museum, many former retirees and active duty personnel have come out and said this closing is wrong and should not have happened, but it did. Now, we all must work to ensure that it is revived again, that our history is preserved to become even better than before. Yes, to also make certain that those who do not know about Security Forces or our history become aware of what we stand for, and that the pride of every Defender of the Force is reinforced when they walk thru their museum to see their history and heritage.

Many disgruntled Veterans have turned in their shields and Museum Life Membership cards because of the museum closure. That in itself is very sad. I, for one, will not be turning in anything because I am still a "*Defender of the Force*" at heart and feel that we will someday have our Museum back in what we call "Hallowed Ground" for us and for current Security Forces Defenders to see their history and heritage! To see the names of Defenders on the "Wall of Honor," who gave their all to ensure *our* planes and crews fly and fight another day or night, validates the critical duties of our career field. For the AETC to say that they are just going to close the Museum is wrong because I do not believe those folks really understood what it meant to all the "*Defenders of the Force*", both past and present, or that it had a valuable role in shaping the future!

Lackland AFB is called the "*Gateway to the Air Force*" and there are thousands of men and women who complete basic training each year. When they graduate, their family members and friends come to see them and visit the museums on base. The Defenders in the Security Forces Tech Schools and their families have a similar, more refined experience as they see and become part of their heritage. Now is the time for USAF Leadership to take command and demonstrate what they preach by instilling "pride, character and resilience through use of interactive exhibits, reenactments and special guests to inspire and instruct students". At the same time, they also need to talk about the Vietnam War and all the other wars we have been involved in so those students have a better idea of what the USAF and especially Security Forces do to ensure we are the best Air Force in the world.

Sometimes, *lessons learned* are forgotten when not talked about, and then we forget the many lives lost of those who stepped up to defend those bases during those wars. That is very sad because those Defenders, both men and women, stood tall and did their job so that others could remain in their barracks, sleeping safe and sound.

Finally, now is the time for us to step up to the plate and make sure that we “*Defenders of the Force*” past, present and even the future do not take a step back. We cannot afford to say, “Who cares since the Air Force is going to do what it wants to do anyway.” We must all be PROUD of what we did, whether it was four years or twenty-four or more years of service in the USAF. We must always remember the old saying, “once an AP/SP/SF, always an AP/SP/SF.” Our Brotherhood is only as strong as its members who stand and talk to each other, who work together as we have seen happen during this situation and many others. *Stay strong. Be proud. Be professional*, and fight for our history.

If the AETC will not reopen the same building, then we must fight to save our history and make certain those historical artifacts and documents are preserved for the new facility and the Security Forces Academy. We must let them know that our history cannot become lost in some unknown crate and unknown warehouse. Our history must be available for our Veterans, current Defenders, and the students in the Security Forces Academy. Most importantly, we must be professional in our conduct and communication. We must remember that our Security Forces leadership and the museum foundation had nothing to do with this closure. Write to Congress. Provide information from our talking points, but *do not* attack our people or our curator who lost her job with the closure of the Security Forces Museum. She did an outstanding job for us and your Security Forces Commanders have fought for years to keep the museum open. We must support them as they continue the fight to preserve our history. That support does not include personal attacks and negative comments that embarrass the VSPA on Facebook or on our Bulletin Board. Do not give away our honor by attacking those who stand with us. We must live by our motto and *take care of our own*. I have faith in all of you and will always remember that the toughest fighters in the Air Force fight on the ground WITH HONOR.

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