

Security Forces Museum at Lackland

VSPA Members:

I have asked Don Poss to send this message to all of our active members because I have received a number of calls and emails from members concerning the *possible closure* of the *Security Forces Museum* at Lackland. I am very concerned about this issue as are many of our leaders within active duty Security Forces, the Vietnam Security Police Association, the Safeside Association, Thailand Dog Handlers and the Air Force Security Forces Association. There is a lot taking place in the background by active duty personnel, our TOP COP and other generals who know that the *Security Forces Museum* is not just the history of our service since World War II, but also part of the *Security Forces Academy* curriculum that preserves our history and teaches our values as hard lessons learned in combat.

While others are working in the background, we are faced with either doing nothing or taking a proactive role in trying to preserve our museum. Therefore, I have included some facts and talking points that you may use when talking to your Congressional Representatives. However, there are some specific things you need to know about the VSPA and our members taking this type of political action. There are IRS Rules regarding political activity that impact our tax exempt status, but those rules apply only to the election or defeat of specific people. They do not apply to actions or issues like the potential closure of the *Security Forces Museum* which affects the VSPA and our members, both as individuals and as an organization. We are much stronger as an organization and I *encourage you* to consider contacting your representative in both the House and Senate so that they may express our concern to the Air Force and specifically, the Air Education and Training Command (AETC). Residents of Texas may also contact their State Representatives and members of the Texas Senate using any or all of the following bulleted facts:

- The mission of the Vietnam Security Police Association is to preserve our history and the hard lessons learned in Vietnam and Thailand. Many of our members belong to the *Security Forces Museum Foundation* and have donated artifacts and financial support to ensure that our history is not only preserved but taught to students in the *Security Forces Academy* attended by both officers and enlisted personnel who later serve throughout the world as Defenders of our bases, assets and personnel.
- After many years of talking about the creation of a Security Police Museum to honor those who gave so much to the career field, it finally came about when the present building was dedicated on 1 November 1979.
- The SF Museum was constructed entirely with donations from Security Police personnel from the Active Duty, Reserves, Air National Guard, Retirees and Veterans who served as Military Policemen, Air Policemen and Security Policemen in the United States Air Force. This SF Museum is a living memorial to all past, present and future USAF Defenders of the Force.
- The primary mission of the SF Museum is to preserve the history of the USAF Military Police, Air Police, Security Police and now the Security Forces career field through historical documents for research, photographs, weapons, equipment and other material for

all who visit this SF Museum, especially the students attending the *Security Forces Academy* who not only learn about their heritage, but also about our highly decorated heroes and the many who died in service, both in combat and peace time.

- The collection of historical items in the SF Museum have been donated and maintained as a labor of love to preserve the history and heritage of the USAF Air Police, Security Police and Security Forces since the beginning of the United States Air Force on 18 September 1947 to the present time.
- While the *Security Forces Museum* was built, renovated and maintained through donations from past and present Air Force members, their personal artifacts have been donated from keepsakes and family heirlooms, with the idea and promise that they would be forever preserved and displayed in a location dedicated to Air Police, Security Police and Security Forces, not merely a room or section of another museum. Among the artifacts is the Air Force Cross, our Nation's second highest award for valor, donated by Lt Colonel (Ret) Garth Wright, who was awarded the medal for extraordinary heroism at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam, in 1969.
- There is also the *Nemo's War Dog Heroes Memorial*, a privately funded and constructed fully equipped sentry dog kennel adjacent to the museum building. Closure of the building will effectively abandon the memorial which was reconstructed to duplicate the one that housed Sentry Dog "Nemo," the only wounded Military Sentry Dog to return from the Vietnam War. Nemo was severely wounded during an attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base in 1966. Nemo lost an eye when shot in the muzzle. His actions saved the life of his wounded handler and many others stationed at the air base. His story is told and retold as an inspiration to all who serve in Security Forces as well as those who attend training as military working dog handlers. This memorial was recently rededicated with many Security Forces personnel and Veterans in attendance, including the handler that Nemo saved.
- The *Security Forces Museum* and the dedication of the Southeast Asia Wing was the focal point for the 44th Anniversary of TET, the Battle of Bunker 051 at Tan Son Nhut and Bunker 10 at Bien Hoa Air Bases. Security Policeman and *Air Force Cross* recipient, Captain Reginald Maisey, was killed in action during that attack at Bien Hoa. Hundreds of Vietnam Veterans and Security Forces personnel attended the dedication while base personnel and families attended the Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall.
- The Security Forces career field is the second largest in the USAF with its Active Duty, Reserve and National Guard units as well as Department of the Air Force (DAF) Officers stationed at Air Force Bases and air bases throughout the World. There are thousands of Veterans who served in those units.
- Lackland Air Force Base is known as "The Gateway to the Air Force" and thousands of Airmen NCOs and Officers come there to attend Basic Training as well as Tech Schools each year. At some point the family members of those Airmen, NCOs or Officers also

come to visit their loved ones and spend time visiting the many historical venues on Lackland AFB, which includes the SF Museum and the Nemo War Dog Heroes Memorial.

- During anytime of any given year there will be some Air Force Veteran's organization that will have their reunion or meeting in San Antonio. We know that the Air Force Security Forces Association (AFSFA) comes to San Antonio and Lackland AFB every fourth year so that their members can visit the SF Academy and the SF Museum.
- Several other organizations like the Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc., Safeside Association, Thailand Dog Handlers, and the Vietnam Dog Handlers Association also visit Lackland AFB and the *Security Forces Museum* during annual reunions in San Antonio. They also attend *Security Forces Academy* graduations and meet with the students who are conducting research at the *Security Forces Museum*. These Reunions and meetings are attended by up to 400 visitors, providing reinforced support the museum and the students, as well as a substantial economic boost to the San Antonio hospitality industry.
- The SF Museum houses the living history and heritage of those men and women who wear the Security Forces shield and the Blue Beret, including two Air Force Cross awards, many Silver Stars and Bronze Stars w/V, as well as Airmen's Medal recipients. The names of the recipients are on display for all to see how and what they did to earn those awards.
- There is a list of all the USAF Defenders who have given their lives for their country. Their names are posted on the "Wall of Honor" for all visitors and Security Forces students to see.
- The *Security Forces Museum* is the home for all those we call "Defenders of the Force" and it shows all who visit this hallowed building that those who served as Air Policemen, Security Policemen, Augmentees and Security Forces have stood their ground and did their job to "Protect and Serve" at the bases they have guarded over the years. There, our legacy stands in testimony that *no base protected by these men and women has ever been overrun by the enemy*.
- To consolidate the SF Museum with any other Museum would reduce the amount of space dedicated to our service and careers, and would essentially place our artifacts and documents at risk. Current classroom space would be lost. The ability to conduct research using existing artifacts and documentation would be impacted as they are comingled with other non-Security Forces historical items and maintained by people who do not have the experience or knowledge to incorporate them into the *Security Forces Academy* curriculum.
- While some believe that this is a necessary budget cut within the Air Education and Training Command, the salary for the existing curator is paid by the Security Forces budget.
- The possible closure of the *Security Forces Museum* or consolidation with another museum has been recommended by non-security forces personnel who did not coordinate with a

single member of the Security Forces command structure or the *Security Forces Academy*, and did not consult with a single person on the privately funded *Security Forces Museum* Foundation. This singular act is a distinct sign of disrespect toward the Security Forces career field, and Veterans who strive to preserve our history through personal donations to the *Security Forces Museum*, which is the only SF Museum in the world!

- The *Security Forces Museum* represents the history, courage and sacrifice of the men and women who have defended the Air Force's most vital resources for over 67 years. It is also the sole center of support for the education and training of all Security Forces personnel in the Air Force and should not be consolidated with any other facility or activity. If the proposed consolidation with the Enlisted Heritage and Character Development Center is being done as a cost savings measure, it is a foolish decision that negatively impacts education of Security Forces personnel and will cost more than save, actually chasing pennies with dollars. In the long term, the Air Force's ability to recruit new Security Force members will be affected. Recruiting and training are the Air Force's biggest expenses. Let the *Security Forces Museum* continue its present role in the recruiting effort. The Museum earns its keep.
- For additional information, please refer to the following link to view the presentation and overview of collections in the *Security Forces Museum* (<http://securityforcesmuseum.org/>).

VSPA MEMBERS: As you consider writing or calling your representatives, please keep in mind that we must approach this issue with professionalism and tact so that we not only represent our members but also support Security Forces leadership in their effort to preserve our museum. Thanks for your consideration and assistance in this critical effort.

Pete Piazza, President
Vietnam Security Police Association