



POLICY PLANNING

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

26 FEB 1981

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT

SUBJECT: Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism, 25 February 1981

The Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism (IG/T) met from 1430 to 1600, 25 February 1981 at the Dept. of State. I represented OSD. The purpose of this IG/T was to review draft papers associated with the interagency review of US counterterrorist programs and policies directed by the President.

In preparation for the next meeting of the IG/T (4 March 1981) which will discuss policy concerning Embassy Security and Defense, I reiterated DoD's concern for a more aggressive posture concerning the security of our Embassies. The Dept. of State defers to our Ambassadors and Chiefs of Missions to determine the degree of lethal force to be used when Embassies are threatened. However, there has been no declaratory policy from Dept. of State to our Ambassadors concerning what is expected or what deterrent measures should be taken. The IG/T agrees with my recommendation that policy guidance should be provided to Ambassadors concerning internal defense planning so that they understand that they have a strong obligation to protect their missions against assault and the importance of not surrendering a mission.

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Date: FEB 25 2019

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Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
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EMBASSY SECURITY AND DEFENSE

I. Background

- A. There are 252 diplomatic posts overseas. Marine Security Guard (MSG) Detachments are assigned to 119 of the above posts.
- B. MSGs are generally assigned only to the Chancery, however, most posts have several additional installations, i.e., USAID, Commerce, MAAG, SESO, etc. For example, Manila has 17 installations.
- C. MSG Detachments consist of no less than five watch-standers and an NCOIC, however, only a few exceptional Posts have more than seven watch-standers. The mission of the MSG is two-fold:
 - to protect classified material
 - to protect personnel and property

Their duties are defensive in nature and entail protection of classified materials and the provision of an "in-house" deterrent to counter small-scale acts of violence directed against our personnel and facilities.

In the event of large-scale riots and demonstrations directed against US diplomatic installations, the role of the MSG is to delay entry of the hostile group long enough to allow for the destruction of classified material and to aid in safeguarding the lives of American and locally hired personnel.

MSGs have authority to use lethal force if their lives or the lives of other Embassy personnel are in direct and immediate danger. In dealing with a mob or group of persons intent on penetration of the embassy, the decision to display or discharge weapons in defense of the embassy rests with the Chief of Mission, or in his absence, the senior American officer present and so designated by the Chief of Mission. Obviously, the Chief of Mission must assess whether the use of lethal force in a mob situation will increase or decrease the risk to the entire mission. On the basis of such larger considerations the COM makes the decision on whether the post stands and fights, or surrenders.

MSGs are currently equipped with .38 caliber service revolvers and pump shotguns as standard watch-standing equipment. Depending on the situation and the presence of RSOs, some posts are also equipped with 9mm submachineguns. Shotguns and revolvers are also provided to posts without MSGs and familiarizational training for these weapons is provided by the responsible RSO.

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- D. Most Chanceries have some sort of guard system-local contract guards, host country police, or a combination thereof. Local guards, in most cases, are marginal. One armed policeman provides limited visible deterrence but may be of value in obtaining host government response in an emergency.
- E. The over-all responsibility for the security program overseas rests with the Ambassador or Principal Officer. This responsibility is executed by the Post Security Officer with guidance provided by a professionally-trained Regional Security Officer (RSO). Currently, there are 102 RSOs strategically located overseas who, in most cases, are required to cover several countries.

II. What we have done prior to Tehran

The following was designed to improve the chances of our embassies to survive hostile actions and to destroy classified material and to protect our people.

Since 1974, the Department has:

- augmented its professional security staff by 190 positions (includes domestic and overseas positions).
- strengthened the physical security posture of our official installations and private residences abroad through added security barriers, closed-circuit television and electronic alarm coverage of perimeter areas, additional and improved lock hardware, and an increase in coverage provided by US Marines and locally hired guards.
- improved and augmented voice communications networks linking our employees and installations with security control centers at many posts.
- purchased additional defensive weapons, riot control agents, bomb detection equipment, body armor and other devices to enhance the protection afforded our overseas personnel and installations.
- purchased additional fully armored vehicles for the protection of senior American officials in threatened areas and security follow cars to transport the security forces protecting the officials.
- implemented a partial armor program for vehicles, to insure that each overseas post is provided with at least a minimum capability of protecting American lives against the threat of street attack.

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-- improved our security training and indoctrination programs for the education of all official Americans serving abroad, with emphasis on training those known to constitute the highest risk from terrorist attack and those American guard forces on whom the ultimate defense of our installations depends.

One of the major efforts was placed in the construction of public access controls in our Embassies and Consulates. This is an on-going project with roughly half the work yet to be done. The bulk of the measures taken or underway were in response to the international terrorist threat, in which we needed the capability to screen visitors to our office buildings and the ability to deny them access to the buildings proper if they did not pass the screening process, or initiated violent acts to neutralize the security guard in the lobby. Our PAC projects relied heavily on remotely controlled doors, a walk-through metal detector and a security guard sitting behind a bullet resistant barrier. Key to our philosophy of public access controls was the belief that we only needed to deny access to a terrorist for a brief time, just long enough to enable the host country to send in a neutralizing force.

The events in Tehran, Islamabad and Tripoli demonstrated our vulnerability to mob violence, particularly when the host government, for whatever reason, ignores our requests for assistance or delays response until the damage is done.

III. What we have done since Tehran

Shortly after the incidents in Tehran and Islamabad, all posts were directed to:

-- review and update contingency planning relating to the protection of personnel and property.

-- reduce non-essential classified file holdings to an absolute operational minimum.

-- contact host government for assurances of their intention to provide protection if the need arises.

As a result of deliberations at the Washington level, we were provided an FY-1980 supplemental and an FY-1981 budget amendment for an extensive security enhancement program to upgrade physical and document security at our high threat posts. This effort is directed primarily at strengthening our office buildings to withstand mob violence in situations in which prompt host government assistance is not forthcoming.

The immediate program consists of comprehensive surveys of 36 high-threat posts to be completed by September, 1981. The surveys will focus on:

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- improvement of perimeter security.
- impeding of forced entry into the building.
- installation of (a) non-lethal access denial systems such as generated aqueous foam and "smoke cakes"; (b) interior barriers; and, (c) self contained "safe havens" that will provide protection for approximately 12 hours.

The "security enhancement program" is a long-term venture and will require major funding by the Congress and a strong commitment by both the Congress and the Department of State.

In addition to the on-going public access controls program, the main objectives of the security program for the 1980s must be:

- to better cope with the threat of mob violence and large scale attacks.
- to reduce the possibility of our Embassies being destroyed and our personnel being taken hostage or killed.
- to eliminate the compromising of national security information through rapid and efficient destruction measures.

To accomplish those objectives we have decided to:

- improve our threat analysis capability.
- expand our concepts of public access controls to embrace a more comprehensive three-tier defensive system (outer perimeter, main building and safe havens).
- develop and purchase non-lethal activated access denial systems to be employed against mob violence.
- improve internal defense planning based on worst case scenarios.
- make structural improvements to provide a more secure environment.
- provide adequate storage and retrieval of classified materials.

IV. From recent experience we have learned several important lessons. These include:

- A. The need to be quicker at reducing staff when public order appears fractured and the ability/intention of the host government is in question.

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- B. The need to define, communicate and exercise emergency reaction chain-of-command.
- C. The importance of ensuring that hostage survival training includes techniques to deal with captors and to communicate with fellow hostages as well as others external to the crisis zone.
- D. The critical importance of reducing classified holdings to bare essentials in a volatile political environment.
- E. The need to formulate and communicate guidelines for employees caught in hostage situations.
- F. The need to ensure that internal defense plans and internal destruction plans are clearly formulated and supported by frequent live drills involving all post personnel.

V. Policy Issue

There has been much public discussion of the need to revise instructions to the Marine guards regarding the use of lethal force when Embassies are under siege. Because circumstances vary from country to country, there is no single rule of engagement which would be applicable to all posts. However, in some situations a more aggressive posture, including a publicly stated willingness to use lethal force to defend an Embassy (as was done in El Salvador) could have an important deterrent effect.

In providing guidance to Ambassadors about internal defense planning, there may be a need to reiterate to them the importance of not surrendering an Embassy. They should be asked to review existing Embassy defense plans, including instructions to Marine guards. They should also be urged to consider adopting a more forward defensive policy. When such a policy is adopted at a particular post, it should be communicated to Marine guards and other mission personnel with security responsibilities. Plans which involve a higher defensive profile should be tested and reviewed regularly. In all cases, Ambassadors should understand that they have a strong obligation to protect their missions against assault and that, in consequence, they may have to accept certain risks short of embarking on rash or suicidal courses of action.

VI. Recommendations

That the lessons learned and set out in Section IV be promptly converted into guidance to the field and that Ambassadors be provided with revised guidelines relating to the use of lethal force.


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MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

NOTE TO MR. WILLIFORD ^{Signal} 3/26/81

Per our conversation.


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Military Assistant

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