

# **FORCE PROTECTION BATTLELAB**

## **MISSION**

Force Protection Battlelab mission was to identify innovative concepts for protecting Air Force personnel, facilities and weapon systems, and rapidly measure their potential for advancing Air Force core competencies and joint warfighting by using field ingenuity, modeling, simulation, and actual employment of exploratory capabilities in operational environments. The Force Protection Battlelab was implemented to identify innovative concepts to protect Air Force people, facilities and weapon systems from terrorism and other tactical threats.

## **LINEAGE**

## **STATIONS**

Lackland AFB, TX

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Maj. Gen. George Stringer, Air Force deputy assistant secretary (budget), will activate the Force Protection Battlelab here 11 a.m., June 23. The battlelab was triggered by Khobar Towers," said Lt. Col. Donal Collins,

the battlelab's commander. "The closer we looked at Khobar the clearer it became -- we're facing a new and different threat." To defeat that threat, the battlelab will use innovative ideas to bring about systemic changes in the force protection business. Dedicated to help the Air Force stay one step ahead of the terrorist threat, the battlelab will work hand-in-hand with industry, other battlelabs and the other services to test a variety of concepts and get them to the troops in the field quickly. Some testing will be done through modeling and simulation and then inserted into exercises. An example of the type of initiative the Force Protection Battlelab will be looking at is using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to detect the threat and defeat it. "If we can detect the vehicle laden with explosives a long way out -- and can stop it -- we stand a better chance of preventing another Khobar Towers," said Collins. The battlelab will be manned by 25 people from security forces, intelligence, office of special investigation, civil engineering, communications, flying, medical and contracting specialties. "Our folks will examine every conceivable issue relating to force protection, from blast protection, detection, imaging, biological agents, communications, training, doctrine and more," Collins added.

10/3/2007 In a reunion-like setting, current and past members of the Air Force's Force Protection Battlelab gathered at the Air Force Security Forces Center here 28 Sep 2007 to mark the end of an era in force protection, the inactivation of the battlelab. Presiding over the ceremony was Col. Bob Tirevold, AFSFC commander and the battlelab's final commander. Three of the four former commanders, retired Cols. Don Collins, Tommy Dillard Jr. and Mike Vendzules, were present as was retired Brig. Gen. Dick Coleman, former AFSFC commander and director of Air Force security forces. Also attending the ceremony were some of the key contributors to the success of the battlelab including former staff scientists Col. Debra Niemeyer and Col. Jim Swaby, and Jay Flaherty and Don Lowe, who were with the battlelab since its inception in 1997. The mission of the Force Protection Battlelab was to identify, evaluate and recommend innovative concepts for protecting personnel, facilities and weapon systems by rapidly measuring their potential through modeling, simulation, assessment and operational employment. This was accomplished in a dynamic, multi-disciplinary environment of 12 career fields. What made the battlelab unique, Col Tirevold said, is that, "people with many functional Air Force specialty codes worked out of here; a number of disciplines providing a genuine team effort to ensure mission effectiveness and success." In highlighting the impact of the battlelab on force protection, Colonel Tirevold reviewed the 18-month initiative cycle used to take an idea, turn it into a concept, and prove or disprove it as a solution to an existing or emerging problem. He also recounted the impact of some of the more than 200 projects completed since the battlelab opened, including pathogen detection devices, lauded by the Air Force surgeon general for saving thousands of lives around the world; the publication of the Vehicle Bomb Mitigation Guide; numerous robotics advances; pioneering work in small unmanned aerial vehicles; and the joint improvised explosive device neutralizer. The newly-formed Force Protection Innovation Division, led by Col. Mike Trapp, "Will keep moving forward, partnered with the surgeon general's office, looking for innovative force protection solutions for the warfighter," Colonel Tirevold said in closing, "This continued capability, as an integral part of a prestigious organization, will continue to support our great Air Force with a focus on protecting our people, our resources, and executing our mission."

In June 1997, the Force Protection Battlelab, commanded by Colonel Donal Collins was created to explore and integrate technology, tactics, and training to increase Force Protection readiness. The

battlelab was a multi-disciplinary organization integrating Security Forces personnel with experts from the OSI, civil engineering, communications, aviation, medical, and contracting fields. The battlelab focused on finding off-the-shelf items that could play a role in Force Protection rather than developing new systems: —chasing ideas not technology. Ideas from the troops actually performing the security mission were actively solicited.

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Sources  
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.