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The Pentagon Force Protection Agency

Protecting Those Who Protect the Nation

BY **ERIC TEGLER** - APRIL 2, 2019

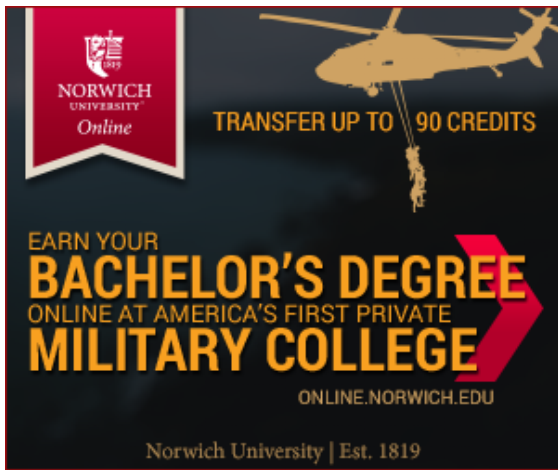


The Pentagon Force Protection Agency's (PFPA) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit uses one of its robots to move a simulated suspicious package during a presentation in the Pentagon Center Courtyard. PFPA's EOD team is one of the assets the agency has to respond to reported suspicious packages. pentagon force protection agency public affairs photo

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The notion that the United States military needs protection is not one that routinely pops up in the popular imagination. But the need to protect the people who protect America is a reality, nowhere more so than at the nerve center of the armed forces.

As its history demonstrates, the Pentagon is the ultimate command and control center, a news-maker, policy-generator, political football, landmark, and symbol of the nation. Its role in American and world affairs brings with it the attention of those who would aim to disturb, disrupt, or destroy it.

But every day, the Pentagon draws a vastly greater number of Americans and guests of America who simply wish to visit and better understand the international icon. They too need assistance and protection,

and their interest is equally vital to the men and women who protect the institution: the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA).

FROM GENERAL SERVICE TO FORCE PROTECTION

PFPA oversees the daily protection and safety of a population of about 26,000 military, Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, and contractors on the Pentagon Reservation. Its work goes on in the midst of the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, home to approximately 6.1 million people, according to the 2016 U.S. Census.

Like the D.C. metro area population, the number of people dedicated to securing the Pentagon has expanded dramatically over 75 years. But as their numbers have grown, their focus has changed.

When the federal General Services Administration (GSA) was established in 1949 it, in turn, established the United States Special Policemen (USSP) to protect and secure a variety of institutions in Washington, D.C., and the Pentagon.

Initially, USSP managed and executed a relatively straightforward “guard-watchman” operation at the Pentagon, focusing on the protection of property. As the Pentagon grew in stature and American foreign policy gained increasing attention in the decades that followed, the building became a tourist attraction in its own right, drawing crowds to its grounds and inner courtyard.



Paramedics from Fairfax County, Virginia, Fire and Rescue move a casualty from a gurney to a stretcher for transportation to a local hospital during Exercise Gallant Fox outside of the Pentagon. The purpose of Gallant Fox

was to enable the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) to exercise emergency response units in a real world scenario and provide valuable training for PFPA to better serve occupants of the Pentagon.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Eugene Clarke

The Pentagon Reservation also became the scene of a variety of increasing public free-speech and clandestine actions. With the United States' increasing commitment of resources and forces to the Vietnam War came public opposition. In October 1967, approximately 35,000 antiwar protesters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial and marched across the Memorial Bridge toward the Pentagon.

They were met by more than 2,000 federal troops and USSP personnel in and around the building. When the crowd pressed toward the structure, soldiers repelled them with tear gas and fixed bayonets. The protest and associated clashes continued overnight with many arrests. However, there were no deaths and not a single shot was fired.

The antiwar movement continued to ferment, and in May 1972 a group called the Weather Underground placed a bomb in a women's restroom inside the Pentagon. It detonated at 1:00 a.m. No one was injured and the \$75,000 of damage done was relatively minor, but viewed through 21st century eyes, it is arguably the first high-profile act of terrorism against the Pentagon.

The Weather Underground bombing, protests, and other incidents forced the GSA to take another look at Pentagon security. The existing focus on protection of property was expanded to include comprehensive protection of the Pentagon Reservation and its personnel. The change was manifest with the establishment of the Federal Protective Service (FPS) in 1971. FPS continued the USSP Pentagon mission with the new, expanded emphasis.

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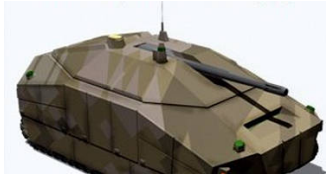
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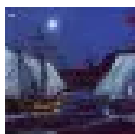


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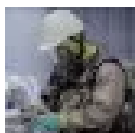
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