

# Vigilance is everyone's responsibility

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On June 25, 1996, a fuel truck loaded with a large amount of explosives pulled up along the perimeter of Khobar Towers, Saudi Arabia. The explosion took the lives of 19 military members.

On Sept. 20, 1983, the Palestine Liberation Organization claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing at the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. Among those killed was the entire command structure of the Central Intelligence Agency staff who had gathered for a weekly meeting concerning threat data. These meetings were held each week on the same day and at the same location.

Then U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Robert Neuman made the remark, "fasten your seatbelts, there will be more."

A short time later, the barracks housing the U.S. Marines in Beirut received a similar type suicide car bomb, killing more than 200 Marines.

Terrorism is in the news almost weekly now. Terrorists are no longer hitting overseas targets, but rather they are now actively gathering intelligence about targets within the borders of the United

States. Remember the World Trade Center bombing in New York City and the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

No person, facility, installation or city is completely safe, yet we believe a terrorist will never strike us, thus maintaining a false sense of security. Many countries, including the U.S., have been pouring billions of dollars each year into both antiterrorism and counterterrorism.

In 1999, the Department of Defense spent nearly 6.6 billion dollars in the antiterrorism program. Charleston AFB spent several million dollars in antiterrorism and force protection. Changes included video cameras on the flight line, improved lighting, alarm systems and the new fencing around the base perimeter.

Several base agencies have received or will soon receive upgrades encompassing force protection initiatives as well.

However, money alone will not solve the problem. The solution lies in constant and pervasive emphasis on awareness and education pertaining to what the threat actually is and what can be done to defend against it. Officials hope awareness of the members will increase, their interest will peak and they will be motivated

and dedicated to continue a personal program of awareness, education and compliance concerning basic protective measures and a high security profile.

The motto of the security forces is "defensor fortis," or defenders of the force. The security forces cannot act as a stand-alone agency in combating terrorism. It takes an integrated team effort -- From the troops on the flightline to the

personnel in the offices and buildings on the installation who challenge personnel in their area, to our residents in the housing areas who call about suspicious people.

To make Charleston AFB a safe place to work and live, members are asked to do their part, remain vigilant and practice sound security measures.

For information, call your unit anti-terrorism monitor.



*courtesy photo*

**Nineteen Air Force members were killed when a fuel truck loaded with a large amount of explosives exploded in front of Khobar Towers, a military housing facility, at Dhahran AB, Saudi Arabia, June 25, 1996.**