Bishop receives AMC Security Forces Order of the Bayonet

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437th AW Public Affairs

With bayonets affixed to their rifles, more than two dozen members of the 437th Security Forces Squadron stood in formation as Brig. Gen. Robert Bishop, Jr., was presented the Air Mobility Command Security Forces Order of the Bayonet.

The prestigious award is given by AMC enlisted security forces members to those who have made significant contributions to security and ground defense, regardless of their position or rank. The ceremony was held Monday in the Education Center. A citation listing the general's accomplishment was read during the ceremony.

Following the presentation, Bishop addressed the group and said the greatest honor a leader can receive is from the troops.

"To say that I'm humbled by today's experience would be an understatement," said the former 437th Airlift Wing commander. "Forever I shall remember the 437th Security Forces Squadron."

Bishop recounted many of his memories of working with members of the squadron, from the mud of the air base in Tirana to the bicycle patrol keeping watch in base housing.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this honor," he said.

"This is a very prestigious award," said Col. Dennis Hunsinger, AMC Director of Security Forces. "It's not very often we give the award. It's given not for rank but by merit and support of air base and ground defense initiatives."

Past recipients include former Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman and Lt. Gen. John Sams, Jr., 15th Air Force commander.

The general's Order of the Bayonet citation reads:

"Brigadier General Robert D. Bishop, Jr.'s exemplary support and dedication to the protection of the 437th Airlift Wing's global reach mission, at home and abroad, established an impressive standard of excellence. General Bishop's anticipation of, and preparation to meet, the most challenging of threats to our Air Mobility resources ensures our agile and ready mobility force is trained and equipped to detect and counter terrorist activity. His visionary employment of concentric physical security layering provides critical airlift assets assured rings of detection, keeping them safe and ready for worldwide deployment at a moment's notice.

"In 1999, his priority funding of $850,000 for force protection initiatives ensured vital physical security aids were purchased to further protect wing personnel and assets. While deployed in support of Operation ALLIED FORCE, North Atlantic Treaty Organization's response to Serbian aggression in Kosovo, General Bishop choreographed, directed, and led one of AMC's most successful air mobility campaigns in history. Throughout the planning and execution phases of this operation, he continually weighed the risks to AMC's personnel and aircraft, directing effective and efficient mitigation measures to offset the threats. Additionally, his force protection priorities assured the quick deployment and effective sustainment of security forces deployed in support of theater operations.

"His steadfast concern for the welfare and morale of his deployed security forces was evident throughout the entire operation. He routinely visited Rinas International Airport, Tirana, Albania, to see that the needs of his airmen were met. Ensuring the right mix of vehicles and equipment, his actions guaranteed his security forces' ability to defend and protect command resources and personnel from terrorist attack. During Joint Task Force SHINING HOPE, the humanitarian effort to support refugees out of Kosovo, his benchmark force protection leadership ensured the safety and security of over 800 personnel and 550 AMC missions supporting that operation at Tirana, Albania.

"General Bishop positively impacted every facet of his security forces' mission. His infectious enthusiasm and outstanding support have bolstered the pride and confidence of his security force personnel, earning their loyalty and respect. In recognition of this support, we salute General Bishop by bestowing our highest symbol of honor, The Order of the Bayonet."

The bayonet has special meaning to Air Force security forces. The bayonet is a close-in defensive weapon used as a last resort to prevent being overrun by an attacker. The primary wartime mission of security forces is defending air bases and the resources they contain. The security forces member must defeat the enemy close-in to be successful. For this reason, the bayonet is symbolic of the security forces mission.

Senior Airman Jerome Suson

The Order of the Bayonet is the highest honor bestowed by Air Mobility Command security forces.

People First: CSAF's reading program features enlisted pilots

The Chief of Staff's reading program, which began in 1997, is designed to promote personal professional development for all Air Force members, civilian and military.

The program aims to instill both a deeper sense of pride in our rich heritage and a stronger understanding of our role in meeting our nation's security objectives. Each quarter, one of the books from the CSAF's Reading List is spotlighted as the book of the quarter. Air Force members of all ranks and grades are encouraged to read the featured title, which is available in all Air Force libraries.

"It is not the policy of the War Department to train enlisted men in flying aeroplanes."

This quarter's featured book is "They Also Flew: The Enlisted Pilot Legacy, 1912-1942," by Lee Arbon. Arbon traces the history and achievements of enlisted aviators from their earliest days in flight through 1942. From the start, these "sergeant pilots" struggled to earn their wings in a military organization that traditionally reserved pilot positions for commissioned officers.

Arbon argues that enlisted personnel were allowed to earn their wings to offset a shortage of officers entering the Signal Corps Aeronautical Division and later the Army Air Corps. They filled in the gaps when and where they were needed. They flew fighters, bombers, transports, and trainers during wartime, and some paid the ultimate price for their service.

Between the wars, they were involved in airmail operations, aviation races, weather data flights, aerial acrobatic contests, and forest fire patrols. Many became instructor pilots and flight test pilots.

As World War II approached, pilot training resumed for new enlisted personnel as the demand for pilots was at a premium. However, this action created animosity among those who wanted all pilots to be officers.

As a consequence, most active duty enlisted pilots were ordered to extended duty as reserve officers. Enlisted pilots were a dying breed, and in November 1942, the U.S. Army Air Forces concluded that upon graduation, enlisted aviation cadets would be promoted to the rank of flight officer, a new rank equivalent to warrant officer. In early 1943, the Army Air Forces ordered its commanders to promote all their flying sergeants to the new rank.

These men persevered through two world wars enduring bureaucratic discrimination while facing the hazards and dangers of flight. Their selfless acts and outstanding conduct are worth attention; out of their ranks came 17 "aces," 11 generals, and more than 155 men killed in action. Arbon provides a fascinating account of this proud group of aviators, and his book is a "must read" for all Air Force members interested in exploring their heritage.

For more information on this book and others on the CSAF's Reading List, visit the web site at www.af.mil/readinglist.