

IN THE NEWS

'We're not leaving,' Cohen says of U.S.- Middle East Ties

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Terrorist attacks such as the Oct. 12 bombing of the destroyer USS Cole will not chase the United States out of the Middle East nor undermine U.S. military security agreements with nations throughout the region, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen said.

Cohen said the U.S. will remain engaged globally. "Our security depends upon it. We intend to take whatever measures are necessary for force protection, but also to apprehend those responsible and hold them accountable. So, we're not leaving."

The secretary is on his ninth trip to the Middle East, where he will visit with U.S. troops and meet regional leaders to discuss bilateral security issues, according to senior defense officials. A Charleston-based C-17 supported the trip.

Cohen praised the effort of U.S. service members worldwide and said, "I want to thank them for their service, remind them that we understand ... they are moving, operating in a very dangerous region of the world."

Security Forces modify beret wear policy

Six members of the 437th Airlift Wing security forces squadron have turned in their berets for other headgear as a result of a new Air Force policy.

Only trained security forces members are now authorized to wear the distinctive blue beret, reversing a more inclusive policy in effect at security forces units for the last three years.

The beret, which has been a sym-

bol of police authority in the Air Force since 1975, was authorized in 1997 for wear by all members of security forces units, including non-SF trained persons in support positions.

That change, though, caused some confusion among the base public, according to Brig. Gen. James M. Shames, Air Force director of security forces, and commander, Air Force Security Forces Center, Lackland AFB, Texas.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith

Only members of the 437th Security Forces Squadron who carry the SFS specialty code, like Airman 1st Class Edward Meredith, are now authorized to wear the beret.

"The 1997 policy change was made to address the inclusiveness of all SF unit members, that we are all working toward the goal of force protection — and we are," Shames said. "However, we found that the people on our installations continued to assume those wearing the beret all had the training and authority to arrest or detain people and handle emergency situations. They often thought that the beret still represented what it had in the past, "that

the wearer was an Air Force security forces member, often armed, speaking with the authority of the installation commander."

The change only affects military members of security forces units who do not carry the security forces career field specialty code, such as those in administration, communications, finance and first sergeant positions, according to officials at Lackland AFB.

Those people will now wear the headgear authorized for each uniform combination rather than the beret. Installation commanders will still have the authority to allow locally trained security forces augmentees to wear the beret while they are performing security forces duties.

CAFB augmentees will wear the beret, according to Maj. Matt Eatman, 437th Security Forces commander.

"Bottom line, we've reverted to the original beret policy so that everyone knows the wearer has the authority and skills to enforce laws and regulations and respond to emergencies," Shames said. "This change in no way changes our philosophy that force protection is everyone's mission." (AFPJ -- *Capt. Tracy Velino contributed to this story*)