Concept of Use

PACAFM 207-25 stated that defense forces would be used to defend the bases in essentially four areas. The base's exterior would be defended within a 16km area from the perimeter by Free World Military Forces (FWMF) other than USAF personnel. In Thailand this role fell to the RTA, RTAF, RTN (U-Tapao RTNAF), BPP, and TPP.

The base defenses themselves were divided into sectors in order to provide better command and control within each area, as well as to permit the forces within a given sector to be more familiar with the terrain and defenses around them.

Each sector had three lines of defense: (1) an exterior perimeter fence where detection and containment of enemy forces was expected; (2) a middle, secondary defense with roving security alert teams (SATs), working sentries and patrols dogs to detect any penetration of the base; and (3) a "close-in" site defense with defensive positions, roving patrols, and sentries posted with the aircraft. There was one sentry per eight aircraft in daylight hours and one per four at night except for B-52 and KC-135 aircraft, for which the coverage was doubled. Careful circulation control to prevent sabotage was to be maintained by restricted entry points manned by guards who were to deny access to unauthorized personnel.

The figure on the following page illustrates the application of these concepts.
Base Analysis

This section will briefly examine base defense personnel problems and programs in light of PACAFM 207-25 and local agencies. Comparisons between bases are made to illustrate common areas of concern. Consideration will be given to: (1) available defense personnel as of mid-1972, both RTG and USAF/TSG; (2) coordination and cooperation between RTG and USAF units; (3) special base programs to increase effective utilization of those forces; (4) emphasis on defense in the petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) area, the MMS area, and the flight line area; and (5) circulation control in these areas. The main emphasis is on the first six months of 1972.

Korat RTAFB. This base was in a "low threat" area and had not undergone an attack as of June 1972. USAF security strength as of 15 May 1972 was 277 assigned SPs (155 authorized) including 39 SP K-9 handlers, 484 TSG, and 25 TSG (K-9) with 63 dogs. A total of 312 augmentees were available but except for an initial six-day training period and periodic retraining, they had not been used before the aircraft deployment. Then, a few manned extra posts until an addition 48 TDY SPs arrived. Korat had the highest ratio of TSGs to USAF SPs of any base in Thailand.

The RTG presence was very pronounced. On one side of the perimeter was Fort Suranari, the headquarters and camp of the 2d Army (RTA). Camp Friendship, an RTA fort and training center for several hundred TSGs, bordered Korat on another section of perimeter. The RTAF's Wing 3 was
Typical One Sector Operation

Typical One Sector Operation

FIGURE 4

UNCLASSIFIED
KORAT RTAFB

1. POL area
2. On-Base MMS area
3. Off-Base MMS area, 4.5 miles
4. RTAF area

FIGURE 5
between them. The RTAF had a 1,000-man combat infantry regiment on its portion of Korat. The TPP 3d Region Headquarters was also located nearby in Korat City. It had a special TPP 50-man Special Actions Force (SAF).

The chief of the 388 SPS characterized RTG and USAF cooperation and support as "highly motivated, but largely untried." Joint Base Defense Exercises had been held with great success. The Base Defense Security Center (BDSC) was located in the RTA Fort and was manned jointly by USAF and RTA personnel 24 hours a day.

Thai Provincial Police provided five patrols consisting of two to three men each during the critical-threat hours of darkness within a 5km area outside the perimeter. The TPP SAFs also maintained a 50-man reaction force on call to respond to incidents occurring during critical-threat hours within a 16km radius outside the perimeter. Five more TPP were on alert at the USAF CSC for dispatch to any suspicious activity observed around the perimeter. The RTA maintained a full RTA company on "alert" at Fort Suranari during the night.

Only the RTAF support was considered deficient. Unfortunately, the RTAF area comprised a large section of the perimeter which was not defended by the USAF. The RTAF agreed to provide security for that area, but only during daylight hours.

The only USAF security was provided by sentry dog teams in that area and patrolling SAT jeeps, unsupported by any in-depth defenses.
Intelligence-gathering efforts appeared to be spotty. The Ground Combat Intelligence (GCI) section received little meaningful information. They were confident, however, that this was due to the low threat, friendly environment. Once a week, GCI would make a daylight tour of the perimeter in an HH-43 fire-alert helicopter. More frequent day and evening patrols were not conducted because of the "low threat."  

The security forces at Korat deviated significantly from the "three rings of defense" concept set forth in PACAFM 207-25. The perimeters shared with RTG forces were under surveillance but were generally undefended. The middle line of defense was almost non-existent. The close-in, site defense was concentrated around the outside of the aircraft parking areas, but there were few sentries among the aircraft. This was especially critical in the KC-135 parking area closest to the perimeter and the open RTAF section of the perimeter.

The MMS and POL areas received strong sentry and K-9 close-in defense with the RTAF providing most of the POL security. This was significant in light of the fact that POL was in the RTAF sector and the main MMS area was four and one-half miles off-base. However, it was clear that POL and MMS defense was considered secondary to the resources on the flight line.

One particularly unique agreement between the RTG/RTAF and the USAF existed at Korat. Gate entry control on most bases was performed by the RTAF, as has been previously discussed. By a 1969 order of the Thai Prime Minister, the USAF base commander was given exclusive control over entry
on the USAF "side" of Korat RTAFB, including the right to stop and search anyone. This aided USAF defense personnel in their efforts to counter any internal sabotage threats.

Nakhon Phanom RTAFB. This base was considered to be a "high threat" area because of its proximity to Laos (14km) and the high level of CT activity in nearby villages.

In April 1972, USAF SPs numbered 354 and TSGs numbered 379. The RTG had committed an RTAF infantry battalion to the base area for defense. There were 151 TPP in the NKP District, and they provided three, six-man foot patrols nightly within a 16km circle around the external base perimeter. Both the RTA and RTAF also provided regular day and night external patrols. RTG support and cooperation were good, although their actual effectiveness was difficult to judge.

HH-53 helicopters from the local Rescue Squadron enabled the GCI personnel to conduct twice-nightly, three-hour reconnaissance patrols within an area 16km from the perimeter. GCI personnel utilized night observation devices to increase the effectiveness of the patrols. Close coordination between RTG ground forces responding in base-defense roles and the HH-53 had been practiced and was highly effective.

The base employed the "three-ring" defense concept, with K-9 patrols supplying the majority of the middle line. The "close-in" site defense of all vital resource areas was, however, inadequate. The lack of close-in
defense left the POL area extremely vulnerable. Circulation control in the flight-line and MMS areas consisted of entry control which required Thai nationals to be escorted into the areas. Once in the areas, however, supervision was lax. Thais with no close supervision were observed in close proximity to aircraft. Also, no one maintained any numerical accountability of Thai personnel in the MMS area, and, thus, there was no way of ascertaining whether some had remained hidden within the area at night. In light of the high risk of internal sabotage, the lack of effective circulation control and intensive "close-in" defense created a potentially serious threat to the defense posture.

Takhli RTAFB. As mentioned previously, Takhli was closed to USAF operations from 8 April 1971 until early May 1972. Special contingency forces from within Thailand and, later, from other PACAF bases provided initial defense support for the newly-deployed F-4 wing and the KC-135 squadron. On 14 May, SPECS units from other bases were deployed to Takhli. By 30 June 1972, there were three permanently-assigned SPs, 340 SPs were there in a TDY status, and the base had 22 sentry dogs. There were no TSG forces at Takhli.

The RTAF had a 1000-man infantry unit in training at the base, and they provided the only perimeter security for the base. The TPP could not provide external support due to a lack of transportation equipment.

At that time, there was no Joint Base Defense Plan, but the RTAF and USAF had nevertheless decided that RTG forces would be responsible for
MACHIN PHANOM RTAFB

1. FUM Area
2. MMC area
3. Task Force ALPHA

FIGURE 6
1. Joint POL area
2. Joint MMS area
3. Road making inner defense line