

Marine Corps Security Forces

Discussion

During 1998, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Chief of Naval Operations agreed to reorganize Marine Corps Security Forces to dramatically enhance naval anti-terrorism/force protection globally and bolster the Department of the Navy's reputation as anti-terrorism/force protection experts. The Marine Detachments (MARDETs) afloat, previously serving aboard aircraft carriers, were disestablished in order to form a second Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FAST) Company within the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion. The establishment of the Second FAST Company provided an additional five platoons, bringing the total number of FAST platoons to eleven.

Recognizing the capability that FAST provides to Navy forces and installations overseas, the Marine Corps recommended the establishment of the FAST Deployment Program (FDP). The FDP provides select Fleet Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) and/or Fleet Commanders forward deployed FAST platoons on six month unit deployments. There are three deployed FAST platoons participating in the FDP year round. One each is assigned to COMUSNAVCENT, CINCUSNAVEUR, and CINCPACFLT. The utility of the FDP was recently highlighted when two of the three platoons were called upon to provide security in the aftermath of the East African embassy bombings. The platoon from NAVCENT deployed to Nairobi, Kenya, and the platoon from NAVEUR deployed to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Their utility was further highlighted during 1999 when the platoon from Naples deployed to the American Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia, in the face of hostile local nationals and a deteriorating Balkan security situation.

Marine Corps Position

Highly skilled and responsive security forces are the best solution to today's volatile asymmetric security environment. Rapidly deployable and well-equipped FAST platoons, such as those of the FAST Deployment Program, can be deployed in advance, or in response to, a crisis and provide a significant enhancement to the force protection capabilities of the Fleet CINCs. The Marine Corps remains committed to supporting naval security as we prepare to face the security challenges of the 21st Century.