



PENTAGON FORCE PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PRESS RELEASE

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Pentagon Force Protection Agency at Night

Story and Photos by Paul Taylor, PFPA Public Affairs

On the evening of March 4, 2010, an armed gunman approached the Pentagon's metro entrance and opened fire.

"Everybody knew what they needed to do, and they just did it," said Officer Christie Bolton.

Bolton, an officer with the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) Fourth Platoon had just come on duty for her 12-hour overnight watch and was in the process of turning over with the off-going shift.

"Even though we don't necessarily work with these guys on an everyday basis, we were able to work together easily to respond to the incident," she said.

Seven months later, shots rang out again. This time they came from the area of the Pentagon's south side. As was the case in March, the Pentagon Police Department (PPD) jumped into action. The platoon on duty – PPD's overnight shift, Bolton's Fourth Platoon, professionally set about the business of securing the 280-acre reservation, making sure there were no injuries, and searching for the source of the shots.

If anyone believes the night shift at the Pentagon is a quiet time, Bolton says recent history demonstrates otherwise. Capt. John Kinnard, her platoon commander, agrees but is quick to point out that while there are similarities between the day shift and the night shift, there are also significant differences.

"We're still doing security of the Pentagon and DoD facilities," said Kinnard. "We're still responsible for the protection of the people, and this place is still as much a terrorist target in the middle of the night as it is at mid-day."

"I've worked both day shift and night shift," he said. "During the day, this place attracts people in tin foil helmets. We have a few of those, but not as many as the day shift. We don't have protests at night like they do on days. We still stop people from suspicious activities like day shift – we just don't have the volume they do."

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Kinnard said another telling difference can be found in the number of police reports each shift completes.

“There might be 26 to 30 reports written a day in the agency for things like stolen property, traffic accidents, medical problems, directed patrols, security checks. Maybe two of them are generated by the night shift.”

But what the night shift lacks in volume, it makes up for on the court docket.

“A majority of the cases on the court docket stem from midnight reports,” he said. “Because of the hour of the day, alcohol is a factor in most of the people we encounter, so my guys are encountering the arrestable offenses; things like disorderly conduct, some trespassing charges, DWI’s, and drunk in public. On day shift, their court docket looks like protestors or a couple of disorderlies. They also do a lot more involuntary mental committals for 72-hour evaluations.”

While he’s proud of his team’s work, Kinnard is also quick to point out that PPD is only part of the overnight presence that makes it possible for PFPA to successfully accomplish its mission and to respond to situations like last year’s shootings.

The nerve center that aligns and focuses the efforts of PFPA’s overnight team is the Integrated Emergency Operations Center (IEOC). On the overnight shift, IEOC Assistant Supervisor Patrick Meister oversees the center.

“The IEOC controls all the PFPA operations in the building,” said Meister. “We have cameras throughout the Pentagon so anytime an event happens on the reservation I can record it for evidence, or monitor it for officer safety, or ask for back up. The team also monitors emergency management communications for the Washington area and can use that system to reach out to the 200 emergency response agencies within the NCR. We also monitor FAA communications so we can listen to aircraft that are coming our way. These are all capabilities we didn’t have on 9/11.”

The IEOC watch team also includes a section from PFPA’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) Directorate. On most nights, Dexter Hudson serves as the CBRNE section’s shift operations supervisor.

“Our mission here in the CBRNE section of the IEOC is to monitor the various sensors,” said Hudson. “We have chemical, biological, and radiological sensors internally and externally on the reservation. If they go off, they’ll light up on our monitors here, and we have protocols for notifying leadership at higher levels.”

Monitoring the vast array of physical alarms in the DoD leased facilities throughout the National

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Capital Region (NCR) is another function performed by the IEOC staff.

“It gets really busy sometimes with the alarms,” said IEOC Operations Specialist Janira Fernandez. “If somebody doesn’t secure their spaces we have to send someone out there to make sure the space is secure, and we have to call in a security manager to secure the space.”

Also on duty through most of the night is a special agent from the threat investigation section of PFPA’s Investigation and Threat Directorate.

“We deal with all the threats that come in to the Pentagon and delegated buildings whether it’s by e-mail, phone calls, or walk-ups,” said Special Agent Neil Raftery. “It’s important to look into them all but a lot of the people that we deal with have mental health problems. We try to get them help by either working with Arlington County to get them committed if they fit the criteria, or if charges are appropriate, we do that as well.”

Although the building’s population at night drops to between 1,000 and 1,300, the facility itself and the people within remain tempting targets, so the overwhelming majority of PFPA’s presence overnight comes from one of PPD’s two overnight platoons – fourth and second.

With stationary posts throughout the reservation, roving patrols, traffic enforcement, and access control points, PPD has officers spread across the reservation and leased facilities.

Ensuring they have everything they need to perform their functions and overseeing their training and professional development is a dedicated group of seven sergeants. The entire team is commanded by Kinnard who is assisted by three lieutenants.

Speak to any member of the fourth platoon about their job and the word vigilance comes up over and over again.

For Officer Troy Massey, it is essentially his entire job providing perimeter security at the Pentagon’s Remote Delivery Facility.

“I’m watching the gate and doing roving patrols because if someone jumped over that fence, they might be able to get to the Pentagon. It’s really just being vigilant,” said Massey.

Bolton said vigilance helps her guard against complacency. “I just constantly think of things that can happen and how I would react,” she said. “I can say that in the past two and a half years that I’ve been on night shift not one arrest or situation that I have come across has been the same. So I’m constantly running scenarios through my mind.”

As it is with the day shift, training is important. However, the reduced population at night makes

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it possible to train in a more active way.

“Exercise, Exercise, Exercise,” squawked the police radio of Sgt. Eric Glover, a shift supervisor with the platoon, at about 11:30 p.m. on March 22. “Male victim complaining of chest pains in the vicinity of corridor three.”

Within moments, Officer Jason Bookstaber rushed from corridor eight to the side of the victim lying on the floor between the escalators in Apex 3-4. As he began assessing the victim’s condition and communicating with the IEOC, three more officers arrived on the scene and began to assist.

As they tended to the needs of the patient, Glover’s radio squawked again, “Exercise, Exercise, Exercise: Delta Surge! All units respond to Delta Surge access control points and secure the reservation.”

Outside, police cruisers across the reservation fired up their flashing blue lightbars and raced to their delta surge points to stop traffic from entering or leaving the reservation.

Sgt. Richard Thomas, the outdoor shift supervisor, drove from post to post checking on the officers at each access control point. At the third one he found Bookstaber manning the post.

“It’s a rush!” exclaimed Bookstaber. “Running from halfway across the building from corridor eight to corridor three for a medical emergency, then back out to my car in center court and out to the 110 South – that’s a lot of running around! It’s definitely good practice and an essential skill to quickly locate a victim anywhere in the building and then quickly jump to another incident. In the event of a possible mass casualty type event, you’re not going to be in one place for very long.”

Glover, who oversaw the exercise, says training scenarios like this are essential.

“We don’t want people to become complacent or in a routine,” he said. “Plus you have to be flexible. These guys have to be able to do everything because, for instance, they have to be paramedics until the paramedics get here. They wear a lot of hats, and it’s my job to make sure they have their hats with them.”

According to Officer Toni Kennedy, another side affect of the night watch is the sense of camaraderie in the platoon.

“We work well together, and we know each other real well,” she said. “On days there are more people and platoons on duty, but on nights we get to chat more and interact with each other. You see the relationships build real fast. It definitely makes a difference.”

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Officers of the night shift also have the occasional opportunity to simply appreciate the historic significance of the building they protect.

For Field Training Officer Travis Gilmer there's a piece of history with a direct family connection hanging on the wall of the Navy corridor: a portrait of distant relative Thomas Walker Gilmer, the 15th Secretary of the Navy.

"It's pretty neat!" exclaimed Gilmer. "That and knowing there's history being made in this building even as we speak.

Seeing the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs coming and going, knowing that they're making history and I'm part of that. Just being here is pretty cool!"

Glover agrees.

"This is an important building," he said. "You know it's funny; I was in the military and I used to work here -- I was one of the tour guides, one of the guys that walks backwards. To me this is *the* Department of Defense. This is it! When you're overseas and you get your orders, this is where you're getting them from. So it was a big deal for me to come back and work here and to be a sergeant in the Police Department? Yeah that's a big deal. It's great and I love my job!"

- PFPA -

NOTE TO MEDIA: Below is a sampling of photos that are available as high-resolution .jpg files upon request.

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Sgt. Derrick Freeman briefs PFFA's Fourth Platoon as part of the roll call that begins the overnight shift.

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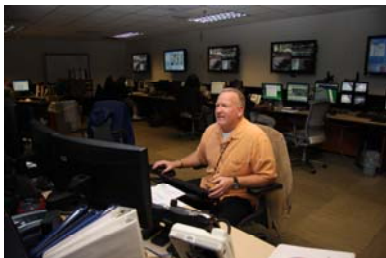
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Officers Johnnie Boynes, Arthur Garrelts, and Jason Cummiskey begin the night shift with the retiring of the colors from the Pentagon's riverside flag poles.



Officer Tom Cross monitors activity at the Pentagon metro stop. A firm believer in community policing, Cross said, "I'm pretty pro-active; I like to get out and walk around and interact with people and I carry some of the memorial brochures in my bag and hand those out to them if they're headed down that way."



IEOC Asst. Supervisors Patrick Meister enjoys working at PFPA and said, "If you're a person who likes to stay busy, this is the place to be!"



Some say the Pentagon Memorial looks even more breathtaking at night than it does during the day. As a result, it is a popular night-time destination for visitors.

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Field Training Officer Travis Gilmer enjoys working in a building steeped in history. For him, there's a piece of family history hanging on the wall of the Navy corridor: a portrait of distant relative Thomas Walker Gilmer, the 15th Secretary of the Navy.



Officers Kyen Kill, Ricky Hunt, and Jason Bookstaber administer first aid to Officer Antonio Wright as part of a medical emergency response exercise.



A PPD officer mans an outdoor access control point during an exercise to secure the reservation.

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