



Army National Guard Soldiers perform their joint, interagency and multinational mission from the Joint Air Defense Operation Center.

Always On Guard

Army National Guardsmen Defend the National Capital Region from Air and Cruise Missile Attack

by Colonel John Buckley and Colonel Lynn Fisher

“We cannot over-emphasize the importance with which we of the Army staff regard the on-site missile program. These units are unquestionably performing the most important peacetime mission ever assigned to the National Guard. We do not know of any other job being done at the present time, which is more important to the safety and well being of our nation. It’s a job, which must be done perfectly every minute of the day and night, and every day of the year. Any failure here regardless of how slight could mean disaster.”

—Record of Proceeding, 7 September 1960, National Guard Bureau Army Air Defense Conference

Army National Guardsmen wrote the evaluation of the homeland air defense mission that appears above almost a half-century ago, when Guard and active-duty air defenders crewed surface-to-air missile batteries at sites

scattered throughout the continental United States, defending the nation from Soviet long-range bombers. It could just as accurately describe the homeland air defense mission that Guardsmen are performing today. Since 9/11, Air Defense Artillery units from South Carolina, New Mexico, Florida and Mississippi have been vigilant in their mission to protect the National Capital Region and—on order—other high-value assets within the United States from air attacks. Soon, units from the Ohio Guard will take up the seven-day-a-week, around-the-clock vigil.

The threat from the air is real and continues to evolve. The tragic 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers and on the Pentagon dramatically demonstrated the threat posed by hijacked commercial airliners, but each one of the thousands of small civilian aviation platforms operating daily out of hundreds of airports across the country also represent potential threats. The daily specter of



Homeland air defense operations in an urban environment require new employment methods for sensors such as the Army Sentinel radar in an elevated configuration.

land-based, sea-based or air-launched cruise missile attack grows more menacing as cruise missile systems and technologies become more widely available.

To accomplish the homeland air defense mission, Guardsmen are performing three major tasks: command and control, sensor coverage, and shooters. Each one has its own unique challenges associated with deployment within the borders of the United States.

Prior to 9/11, command and control procedures for ground-based air defense within the continental United States were fairly clear. In accordance with Joint Publication 3-01.1, *Aerospace Defense of North America*, published in 1996, “available surface-to-air defense assets are incorporated in the overall defense plan and subjected to the integrated procedures and weapons control measures of CINCNORAD [Commander-in-Chief North American Aerospace Defense Command].”

The events of 9/11 changed the landscape and led to the development and implementation of new homeland air security and homeland air defense policies. These policies have led to an environment in which joint service, interagency and multinational operations are being performed by Guardsmen executing command and control

missions. Joint-service operations require Soldiers to perform side-by-side with members of other services, such as the Air Force and Coast Guard. Interagency operations involve coordination with organizations such as the U.S. Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Homeland Security. Interagency coordination, public visibility and tight rules of engagement create unique deployment, employment and execution challenges for air and missile defense leaders and soldiers.

All homeland air and missile defense operations performed are in the context of a multinational mission conducted by the United States and Canada within the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). As documented by the Directorate of Combat Developments, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School, Fort Bliss, Texas, NORAD’s plan is to support homeland defense by “deploy[ing] tailored task forces” to the United States and its territories as part of a layered joint and interagency integrated air and missile defense network.

The command and control missions performed by the Guard-manned Task Force Osprey at the Joint Air Defense Operations Center, located within the National Capital Region, have met these new requirements head-on. Commanded by Colonel Frank Laudano of the 164th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, Florida Army National Guard, Task Force Osprey is breaking new ground on how Army air and missile defense operates within the United States.

The sensor mission brings new technologies to the Guard air defender. Not only does the homeland air defense mission require the use of traditional air defense sensors, such as the ground-based Sentinel radar, but other non-Army sensors such as the Federal Aviation Administration radars. The elevated Sentinels must be used to provide air defense decision makers the best possible “air picture.”

The challenge involves integrating these diverse sensor systems and using them in urban environments such as the National Capital Region. Army Guardsmen, with the help of other organizations, such as the Air and Missile Defense Command and Control Systems Project Office, Cruise Missile Defense Systems Program Office and the Space and Missile Defense Command, have insured that the Army sensors used for the missions are always mission capable and continually improved with the latest in technological innovation.

For Avenger crewmen and other members of an Avenger battalion (-), the homeland air defense shooter mission poses challenges that require them to push the envelope of the Avenger and manportable Stinger weapon systems. Operations in built-up areas force them to deal with urban traffic and curious civilians while transporting live missiles. Weapons emplacement requires them to deploy and operate their weapon systems from the roof-tops or upper floors of office buildings occupied by civilian workers going about their daily chores. Target identification—distinguishing “good planes” from hijacked planes while watching for cruise missiles—and target tracking





National Guardsmen operate a non-U.S. Army air defense system while performing the homeland air defense mission.

are complicated by the heavy civil air traffic. Skyscrapers, the prominent terrain features of the urban environment, frequently mask approaches. The mission must continue around the clock, day and night in all kinds of weather.

The homeland air defense shooters must also train on a weapon system not currently in the U.S. Army inventory. This system has its own unique launcher and fire-control system, which must be seamlessly integrated into the total shooter environment. The shooter battalion is led by Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Skawski, of the 2nd Battalion, 263rd Air Defense Artillery South Carolina Army National Guard.

The Army National Guard is providing 200-plus soldiers for the 24/7/365 mission to provide defense from air attacks against the U.S. homeland. The importance of this mission cannot be overstated. In an *Aviation Week* article published in September 2004, former NORAD commander, General Ralph E. Eberhart, explained, “If we ever had to [shoot an aircraft down]—the person or people who authorized that decision, their life would never be the same, nor would the life of the—man or woman—who actually

pulled the trigger or released the missile.”

The Guard air defenders of today are meeting these “no room for error” missions with professionalism and competence. It is safe to assume that most air defenders in the Guard will at some time in their career be called to perform this vital homeland defense mission. In a *Joint Force Quarterly* article published in 2004, Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, noted, “homeland defense—the original mission of our militia forebearers when they first settled this continent—has returned to the forefront.”

Our Guard Air Defenders are the cutting edge to that forefront.—Protecting America's Living Heritage.



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SCANNING



Captain Todd Schmidt.

Homeland Air Security A Challenge in Defense Transformation

Today, Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Avenger/Sentinel units play a crucial role in homeland air security. They are tasked to defend the National Capital Region against air and missile attack, a mission ensnarled in a bureaucratic tangle that badly needs unraveling. Read Captain Todd Schmidt's recommendations for streamlining the homeland air security bureaucracy at <http://airdefense.bliss.army.mil/adamag> or go direct to the article at <http://www.airdefense.bliss.army.mil/adamag/March%202006/Homeland%20Air%20Security.htm>.