

STANDING GUARD : A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Major A.W. Kendall

The employment of security guards in Canadian missions abroad has taken many forms over the years. During the war, 1942-45, the Canadian Army Liaison Establishment Provost Detachment was attached to the Canadian Joint Staff in London and Washington. Duties varied, ranging from security services to providing escort for the Canadian Prime Minister's visits. After the war, the RCMP provided a limited number of personnel, but were unable to expand their services to cover the growing number of missions where guards were required.

In 1952, it was necessary for the Department to establish its own civilian guard unit, with personnel belonging to the protective and custodial services group, classified as GS-PRC. Their primary task was the protection of classified material. Since then, the PRCs have assumed more responsibilities and developed certain new and specific skills. Coincidentally with this increase of responsibility, the Department implemented a series of austerity measures resulting in a reduction in the PRC establishment. This reduction made it necessary for the security bureau to review and rationalize its resources so that in 1979 the security manager concept was introduced with a sophisticated security system (CIDAR). The security manager concept has been implemented at 21 missions where one security guard is posted.

Not only has the military been involved in our mission security since the nineteen-forties, they have also been involved in Indo-China, between 1954 and 1974, and at the Canadian High Commission in Cyprus in 1966/67.

In early 1976, the Canadian Embassy in Beirut was taken over by an expatriate Lebanese Canadian who held the staff hostage for four days. As a result of this incident, DEA requested the Department of National Defence (DND) to provide military security guards (MSGs) to protect the Embassy and its staff. In 1979 an MSG team was sent to the Embassy in Tehran until it was closed in 1980.

Based on these experiences, and the increasing risks to our embassies, it was decided that the military, as is the case for many other nations, could provide the most effective means of ensuring security at a number of Canadian missions. Lengthy negotiations between DND and DEA culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) being signed in June 1982, which authorized the conversion of all multi-guard missions to MSG status as the person years became available. To date, with the exception of Washington and Bucharest, all multi-guard missions have been converted. Washington will receive MSGs in the Summer of 1990, and Bucharest, which had been converted, but changed back to PRC status, will retain PRCs for the foreseeable future.

