

1947 - 1959	MP and Air Police Brassard
May 1957	Trial issue of Air Police Shield
1959	Approval of Air Police Shield
1960	Removal of blue enamel
1962	Changed from oxidized silver to silver plate
1966	Changed from Air Police to Security Police
1970's	Cloth shields worn on fatigues
1980's	Miniature Badges for women
1990's	Leather name tag with embossed shield



HISTORY OF THE SECURITY POLICE BADGE

Military insignia of authority have evolved through the centuries from the sash worn by medieval officers to distinguish them from their men, to gorgets worn on chains around the neck, to brassards or armbands, and finally to badges or shields worn on the breast. Since it was temporary duty for all troops in the U.S. military, no uniform insignia for military police was prescribed until the Second World War; prior to that, the many Provost Marshals prescribed their own and they varied greatly through the years from sprigs of plants worn in the tricorne hat during the Revolution to chest badges in the Civil War. In the First World War, however, General Pershing copied the British and prescribed brassards with "MP" in white letters on a dark blue band; this remains the US Army's military police insignia to this day. In 1941 with the Congressional authorization of a Military Police Corps, what had been temporary duty became a professional career field; the MP brassard continued to distinguish the military police from civilian police, who wore badges. When the Air Force separated from the Army in 1947, its police--still called Military Police--continued to wear the old MP brassard, even after the name changed to Air Police in November 1948, but a new brassard gradually replaced the older one. The first AP brassard had yellow letters spelling out "Air Police" on a band of Air Force blue, but before it could be widely distributed, it was replaced by another with dull gray letters on a dark blue band. For several reasons, many in the career field did not esteem the brassard; it wrinkled, slipped down on the sleeve, and twisted to hide the letters. Since Officers of the Day, Airdrome Officers, and other "temporaries" wore similar brassards, the Air Police repeatedly requested a shield to replace the brassard and to underscore their permanency. In their enthusiasm for the idea of a shield, some persons had unofficial ones made and presumably wore them, against regulations. Many examples of these may be found in private collections and at the Security Police Museum at Lackland AFB, TX. We do not always know when and where they were produced nor when and where they were worn, if ever. Nevertheless, the desire to replace the brassard with a shield grew within the career field and finally produced official action. In Oct 1956, the Air Provost Marshal, HQ/USAF requested and received permission to design and field test a shield. By May 1957 this process was completed and units in three MAJCOMS (MATS, SAC, and USAFE) received 400 prototype shields for 60- to 90-day trials. These shields resembled the ones worn today except that they were silver-plated, had blue and white inlays in the Air Force crest, and "Air Police" in the banner under the eagle's talons. Also, the shield was attached to the uniform by three pins and held there by clasps. Unfortunately, the color inlays often chipped and broke out of the crest, which marred the appearance, while the pins bent and broke off. In February 1959, after the redesign eliminated the inlays and the pins were replaced by a safety clasp similar to civilian police badges, the shields were mass produced and distribution began to the units in the field. Until 1960, when the last units received their shields, AP units continued to wear brassards. The Air Police became the Security Police in November 1966 and a new shield had to be designed and manufactured. Presumably to reduce costs, they were made of base silver-colored metal without silver-plating, the new shield resembled the old superficially, but the new banner inscription read "Security Police." During the transition period, however, many continued to wear Air Police shields until the new version finally replaced them by the fall of 1968. The Security Police became the Security Forces in July 1997, but the shield has not been redesigned; so, it retains "Security Police" in the banner. Initially the USAF feared that APs would abuse the authority the shield represented; so, they were issued to Air Police Squadron commanders who were responsible for them as squadron property, each had an individualized serial number stamped on it; and they were checked out with weapons when troops went on duty and turned in when they came off duty. So, initially, at least, shields had much in common with the old brassard: they were worn only when on duty and signified the policeman's authority while on duty. These early metal shields were worn on dress as well as fatigue uniforms, but, by 1975, it had become clear to all concerned that metal shields could not stand up to the rigors of combat; they got scuffed or otherwise damaged from the unintentional abuse they received under combat conditions. In that year, when so many changes occurred to the Security Police uniform, a cloth shield in silver and blue thread replaced the metal one on the fatigue blouse, although the metal shield continued to be worn on the dress uniforms, summer and winter. Also, as a consequence of the cloth shield being sewn on and not removable, the USAF finally rescinded its policy of shields being squadron property and made them individual property; hence, from that date to the present, the shield is worn on all uniforms, on duty and off. In 1979, a subdued cloth shield replaced the first on the fatigue blouse and continued on the

camouflaged BDU blouse after 1981. In 1980, Security Police investigators received permission to pursue their work in civilian clothes; hence, they could no longer wear shields on such clothing. So, the USAF authorized them to use a leather badge holder, similar to the one carried by OSI agents. In 1982, a one-third sized miniature shield appeared for wear on those dress uniforms on which miniature medals could be worn. During Operation Desert Storm, the Security Police began wearing leather name tags on their BDUs with a shield embossed in silver on the left side of the rectangle. Nowadays, loose-leaf notebook covers, portfolios, wallets and other objects have the Security Forces shield embossed, printed, or embroidered on them and are for sale in AAFES stores around the world. The shield provides a distinctive and proud emblem for USAF SF personnel as well as a reminder of the sacrifice and dedication of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who have worn it with honor in the past.

This report was put together in 2004 by Dave Broeker & John Homa