
Military Police Battalion S5: Warranted and Needed

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The Military Police Corps is in the middle of a transition. The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has emphasized an urgent need for change from the size of the Corps to its force structure and new equipment. Change has begun and will continue for the next several years. Most of these changes will enhance the warfighting capabilities of the Military Police Corps. One change, the creation of a military police battalion civil affairs (S5) section, will not only enhance warfighting abilities but will also benefit stability operations and operations at the home station. Both Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have shown the need for a military police battalion S5 section. A battalion S5 section can be crucial in the success of a unit and its wartime mission. This article discusses why an S5 section is warranted and needed in a military police battalion.

Battalion S5 Background and Roots

Traditionally, there has not been an S5 section at the battalion or brigade level in the Military Police Corps or in any other branch. However, there is an assistant chief of staff, civil affairs (G5) section at the division level and the battalion S5 section derives from it. The G5 section generally has three main missions:

- Host nation support, which involves the coordination, liaison, and negotiation needed to ensure that a US unit has the foreign nation support necessary to meet mission requirements.
- International relations, which involves meeting and relating to foreign military and civilian officials in a way that maintains a positive attitude toward the command.
- Support to operations and exercises, which involves full engagement with other US Army unit staffs and commands.¹

Civil affairs units also provide some roots and background for the S5 section. Civil affairs units help commanders by working with civil authorities and civilian populations in the commander's area of operations, lessening the impact of military operations on civilians during peacetime, contingency operations, and declared war. Civil affairs can also assist and support the civil administration in the area of operations.² Because of the history of both civil affairs units and G5 sections, there is a solid background that helps emphasize the importance and many

contributions that an S5 section could provide to a military police battalion. Many of these attributes are clearly evident in current operations, such as Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. However, the S5 section can also be widely used at home station between deployments.

Military Police Battalion S5 at Home Station

A military police battalion S5 section would obviously be very useful at overseas duty stations. From host nation liaison to building international relationships, the S5 section would be essential in the process of working with host nation military police and local law enforcement personnel in supporting the status of forces agreement, local laws, and even customs. There are many functions that occur at these overseas duty stations that would more easily be accomplished if the military police battalion had the capabilities and assets of the S5 section. At continental US duty stations, the need for a military police S5 section would be equally important.

Military Police Battalion S5 During Operation Iraqi Freedom

During OIF, a military police battalion was deployed to Iraq. One of the battalion's missions was to stand up, train, equip, and monitor a number of Iraqi highway patrol stations throughout the area of responsibility (AOR). Before the actual deployment, the command team conducted a predeployment site survey. Members of the unit being replaced told the survey team that a battalion S5 section was

not only useful, but almost necessary. “Winning the hearts and minds” of the people was not just a catchphrase but was a serious endeavor. Numerous resources were dedicated to this mission.

The three main missions for the military police battalion S5 section during that phase of OIF were centered on the Iraqi highway patrol and the schools and medical clinics in the AOR. The brigade commander had made these missions top priorities, so they became the battalion’s top priorities, which were quite a job for the tiny S5 section.

The S5 section’s AOR covered three different provinces and included several different commands. The long distances and the language barriers made coordination very difficult and time-consuming. It would have been almost impossible to accomplish the missions without the dedicated asset of a battalion S5 section. Without it, the battalion commander would have had to use other sections or units to fulfill this capacity. With a dedicated S5 section in the battalion, an S5 officer who is part of the battalion commander’s staff can easily offer advice and recommendations to the commander and the operations officer on civil affairs issues. This was accomplished almost daily because of the nature of the Iraqi highway patrol, which was being trained, equipped, and made ready to execute its mission.

Roles and Efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom

The battalion S5 section was heavily engaged in several different endeavors throughout the deployment. The Iraqi highway patrol was the main effort, but schools and clinics were also monitored and assisted. Several programs were developed to provide support to schools. The “Adopt a Pen Pal” program allowed students from the United States and Germany to write kids in Iraqi schools. Another program was called “Clothe the Iraqis.” This program gave churches, schools, and charitable organizations the opportunity to donate numerous boxes of shoes, coats, and clothing to be distributed to needy Iraqi school kids. There were also several initiatives where the battalion, the brigade, and medical units visited schools to conduct physicals for school kids and teachers. During every visit, the S5 section always handed out personal hygiene articles, stuffed animals, blankets, or candy.

These humanitarian gestures may have played a part in US forces receiving tips and information from the Iraqis about weapon caches and the locations of possible insurgent cells. Since the S5 section visited the highway patrol stations or schools almost daily, these visits allowed close interaction and helped

build trust with the Iraqis, which enabled a good flow of information. Without a battalion S5 section, this relationship and trust would not have occurred so easily.

Summary

The military police battalion S5 section is a much-needed entity within the Military Police Corps. Although the S5 section does not have a long history, it has roots in civil affairs units and the division G5 section, both of which have proven their worth throughout the years in various operations and missions. The S5 section does not only have a wartime mission supporting the battalion in the GWOT, but it is a viable mission in peacetime or at home station. The unavoidable contact between civilians and the military, either at home or abroad, requires a close working relationship. During various deployments in support of both OIF and OEF, the military police battalion S5 section has earned the right to be part of the battalion staff. The S5 section has played a key role for the commander and has improved the unit’s capabilities.

Conclusion

A military police battalion S5 section is a much-needed position within the Military Police Corps. The position brings many tangible and some less obvious advantages to the commander, enhancing not only stability operations but warfighting as well. The battalion S5 section has proven itself during operations and will continue to prove its worth.

References

¹ Boehme, Michael (2005), “21st TSC G5 Overview,” Retrieved 2 December 2005, <<http://www.21tsc.army.mil/aerco/g5whatdowedo.htm>>.

² Field Manual 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations*, Chapter 3, 14 February 2000.