

Vanguards of Justice:

The Activation of the Army Corrections Command

By Mr. Andy Watson

A new era for military police Soldiers began with the activation of the Army Corrections Command on 1 October 2007. Whereas military police confinement specialists had operated under the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Europe, or U.S. Forces Korea, they now operate under a single command structure.

The beginning of this new era was marked by an activation ceremony in which the new colors were uncased and presented to a crowd gathered at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The featured speakers included Lieutenant General James L. Campbell, director of the Army Staff; Brigadier General Rodney L. Johnson, Provost Marshal General of the Army; and Colonel Arthur Rovins, commander of the Army Corrections Command.

The speakers provided historical information and insight into the establishment of the Army

Corrections Command. The command concept evolved from a need recognized through several Army efficiency studies. As the result of a special study in May 1970, the creation of a corrections command was recommended, but did not materialize. Another study conducted in 2000 also recommended the formation of such a command; again, it did not occur. Then, Major General Donald Ryder, former Provost Marshal General of the Army, recognized the need for a corrections command and realized the benefits it would provide to the Army. He initiated the concept and realignment planning for the corrections command; and under his direction, the proposal was analyzed and staffed. On 29 July 2005, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army approved the concept plan and directed the alignment of the command under the Office of the Provost Marshal General. On 27 December 2006, Department of the Army



Brigadier General Johnson (right) passes the unit colors and command to Colonel Rovins as Command Sergeant Major Jeffrey N. Plemmons looks on.

Headquarters approved the corrections command concept plan; and on 8 June 2007, Mr. Pete Geren, acting Secretary of the Army, signed letters notifying Congress of the establishment of the Army Corrections Command as a field operating agency.

At the activation ceremony, Brigadier General Johnson said, "Today's establishment of the Army Corrections Command might be the most significant change to the Army Corrections System since June 1874, when Major Thomas F. Barr convinced Congress to authorize \$125,900 to remodel buildings and establish the U.S. Military Prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas."¹ Colonel Rovins echoed this statement, adding, "For the first time in its history, the Army will have an Army Corrections System led by a single headquarters."

The Army Corrections Command serves as a field operating agency under the Office of the Provost Marshal General, exercising command and control, operational oversight, and support of the Army Corrections System. Six regional correctional facilities are managed by the command. These facilities are located at Fort Leavenworth; Fort Lewis, Washington; Fort Knox, Kentucky; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Mannheim, Germany; and Camp Humphreys, Korea.

The divestiture of the regional correctional facilities from the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Europe, and U.S. Forces Korea eliminates command layers and promotes standardization of the corrections function. The consolidation also assists in the development and continued specialization of professional confinement operations. Brigadier General Johnson stressed this point in his speech by stating, "[Military confinement] is not a job that receives much praise or recognition, but it is very, very important that we do it right. These special Soldiers, through their training and experience, ensure [that] we get it right every day." He also noted the importance of the corrections system for the

Army as a whole. "The military cannot have a justice system without a corresponding corrections system. Military justice depends on and is integrally linked to an equally professional military corrections system," he said.

Colonel Rovins also spoke about the excellence of the command and its Soldiers. "I have been overwhelmed with the quiet professionalism of the civilian and military personnel associated with the corrections and confinement mission. A prime example is our regional correctional facility in Korea. The American Correctional Association recently accredited this facility with a 97 percent 'pass' rate. This is one of the highest scores ever in the 'small jail' category," he said. Colonel Rovins also indicated that the Army Corrections Command would continue to work on achieving accreditation goals. "Maintaining accreditation is a significant endeavor, as the organization and its staff must meet the requirements detailed in over 500 standards including safety, physical plant operations, prisoner treatment, security, and staff training," he said.

The activation marked the beginning of the Army Corrections Command and its many responsibilities. Reorganization, consolidation, and continued adherence to high standards are just a few of the many challenges faced by the command. Despite the adversity and new structure, the overall objective of the command was well defined by Colonel Rovins. "The ultimate goal of our activities is to prepare military prisoners to be productive, law-abiding, tax-paying members of society after their release," he said.

Endnote:

¹Brigadier General Barr (a major in 1874) is considered the father of the U.S. Military Prison. His recommendations to Congress resulted in the funding and construction of the first permanent U.S. Military Prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The prison was transferred to the Justice Department in 1895; however, the military regained control in 1906. Regarding the turn of events, Barr remarked, "I looked upon the abolition of the prison as a calamity to the Army, and I am glad that it is vitalized.

No institution ever more nearly served the purposes for which it was created." The U.S. Military Prison at Fort Leavenworth was renamed the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks in 1915.

Mr. Watson is the U.S. Army Military Police historian.



**Army Corrections Command
Distinguished Unit Insignia (Crest)**

The hexagon represents the six correctional facilities under the control of the Army Corrections Command. The double-ward key represents operational and administrative control over the six correctional facilities. The scale of justice represents the goal of the command to enforce the law.