



Policing the Border

By Master Sergeant Patrick V. Garland (Retired)

“The Congress shall have power to . . . declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water; to raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years; to provide and maintain a navy; to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces; to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions; to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the States, respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress . . .”

—Constitution of the United States of America¹

Our founding fathers sought to establish a small, standing army that would be supported by various state militias during times of emergency; this arrangement prevailed throughout history. According to a 1916 description of the New York state militia, “Upon attaining the age of 18, every able-bodied, male citizen becomes ipso facto a member of the militia. It is an important duty of the State to see that, insofar as possible, every male citizen shall reach the age of 18 able-bodied. It is important also that he should be imbued with the ideals of duty to the State.”² These early state militias, which have since evolved into the present-day National Guard, could only be used in the defense of U.S. territories.³ However, that changed with the passage of the *National Defense Act of 1916*.⁴

During the Punitive Expedition⁵ into Mexico in 1916, the “Regular Army” was sent to Mexico and National Guard forces were federalized. The Secretary of War, Mr. Newton D. Baker Jr., ordered the mobilization of the Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona militias on 9 May 1916. Troops from these states were called for service along the American-Mexican border, where they protected against counterattack. A little more than a month later, the militias of the remaining states were also ordered to mobilize for federal service.

The New York Army National Guard was one of the National Guard divisions called up for federal service along the border. The *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State* for the year 1916 states, “Since the last report, the National Guard of the State has been subjected to every test of warfare except the actual clash upon the battlefield. For

the first time in eighteen years, the President summoned it to the national colors to meet a grave emergency. The Guard was assembled almost overnight, recruited, equipped, concentrated in mobilization camps, mustered in part into the federal service, and transported thousands of miles to the extreme southern frontier of the country.”⁶

What does all of this have to do with military police? The commander of the New York National Guard, Major General John F. O’Ryan, received assistance from the following Regular Army officers who were assigned to his command: Major Harry H. Bandholtz as colonel, chief of staff; Captain Daniel W. Hand as colonel of the 3d Field Artillery Regiment; Captain William E. Welsh as lieutenant colonel of the 23d Infantry Regiment; Captain William N. Haskell as colonel of the 69th Infantry Regiment; and Colonel Gordon Johnston as colonel of the 12th Infantry Regiment. Major General O’Ryan had his division mobilized and on the ground in Texas by 6 July 1916. Four days after arriving in McAllen, Texas, Major General O’Ryan issued General Order (GO) 2, which directed the establishment of military police. This order brought the division into compliance with the *Field Service Regulations* of 1914.⁷ He also issued GO 7, “prohibiting officers and enlisted men of the division using alcoholic drink in any form during their service on the border and entering houses of prostitution or places where liquor was sold.”⁸ These orders were enforced by posting a permanent military police presence at the front and rear doors of any establishment where alcoholic beverages were served or prostitution was conducted. Within three weeks, all houses of prostitution within the division sector were reportedly out of business; liquor stores and saloons soon followed.

Similarly, the Illinois National Guard also patrolled the Texas-Mexican border, with Regular Army officers assigned as inspector-instructors. One such officer was a young lieutenant who had just graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point a year earlier. On one dark summer night, the lieutenant was leading a military police patrol down Matamoros Street—a Mexican red-light district in San Antonio. People were milling about, and everything seemed normal. Suddenly, a sergeant grabbed the lieutenant and jerked him backward as a shot rang out and a bullet “zipped by” the lieutenant’s nose. The patrol rushed the darkened doorway where the shot originated, but the door was slammed shut and bolted. The shooter was never located.⁹ The lieutenant who narrowly escaped casualty status that night was Dwight D. Eisenhower, who went on to become the Supreme Allied Commander Europe during World War II and later the President of the United States.¹⁰

The lack of tolerance for alcohol and prostitution was quite a change from the policies of the Regular Army that had first entered Mexico. In *Blood on the Border*, Clarence C. Clendenen describes a camp at Colonia Dublan, Mexico, where there were “numerous Mexican prostitutes who followed the troops,” explaining that “To prevent the men from leaving camp, [General John J.] Pershing had the prostitutes rounded up and placed under guard in a specially created, barbed wire stockade. Soldiers wishing to visit the stockade were required to show the guard on duty that they had the necessary fee that was regulated by the provost marshal. After completing business with one of the visiting ladies, a Soldier was required to take a prophylactic provided by the Army. The result of this strict sanitary measure was one of the lowest venereal disease rates an army has ever known.”¹¹

To handle the expected refugees and prisoners of war, the Army established detention camps in various locations, such as Camp Bliss, Texas. These camps were manned by military police and provost guards.

The New York Division Trains and Military Police continued to serve on the border until after most of the other New York units had returned home. The military police did not make it home until early 1917, but shortly after mustering out, the New York Division was again called to federal service—this time for actual warfare. The division was reconfigured to match the conformation of a Regular Army division, renumbered as the 27th Infantry Division, and sent to Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina, for additional training. The military police were renamed the 102d Division Trains and Military Police and later the 102d Military Police Company.¹² The unit returned to New York in 1919. Today, the 102d Military Police Company remains assigned to the New York National Guard.

Acknowledgements: Mr. Andy Watson, U.S. Army Military Police historian, and Captain Sam Reinert, 545th Military Police Company Association founder and historian, contributed to this article.

GO 2

- I. A detachment of military police is organized to police the towns of Pharr, McAllen, and Mission and the roads connecting the same. The detachment will be organized and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert McLean, 7th Infantry, and will consist of three lieutenants of the line, one medical officer, four noncommissioned officers and fifteen privates of cavalry, [and] eight noncommissioned officers and fifty privates of infantry, three of whom shall be provided with motorcycles.
- II. Details of officers for service with the military police will be made on recommendation of the commanding officer of the detachment. Detail of enlisted men will be made on an equitable basis among organizations at the three stations of the division, by organization commanders after conference with the detachment commander. Enlisted men will be selected for their physical bearing, judgment, and previous experience. The personnel of the detachment will mess with their organizations and will be changed in part from time to time.
- III. In addition to the functions prescribed for military police, Article VII, [*Field Service Regulations*], the detachment is charged with reporting violations of all camp orders and, where the offenses warrant such action, to arrest Soldier offenders. The detachment will cooperate with the civilian police authorities.
- IV. Officers and enlisted men of the military police, when actually performing their duties, will wear a blue brassard on the left arm, halfway between the elbow and shoulder, bearing the letters “M.P.” in white.
- V. In cases of emergency, the military police may call on any troops to assist them. All persons belonging to the military service are required to give every assistance to the military police in the execution of their duties.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL O’RYAN:

EDWARD OLMSTED,
Major, Assistant Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:
FRANKLIN W. WARD,
Major, Assistant Chief of Staff

Source: “O’Ryan’s Roughnecks,” 27th New York Division, 107th Regiment Web page, <<http://www.oryansroughnecks.org/index.htm>>, accessed on 29 June 2010.

Amendment to GO 7

- I. Par. III, GO 7, New York Division, is amended to read as follows:

Officers and enlisted men of this division are directed not to use, or have in their possession, alcoholic drink in any form during their service on the border, except on prescription of a medical officer given in the line of duty.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL O’RYAN:

H.H. BANDHOLTZ,
Colonel, Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:
FRANK E. BAMFORD,
Major, 28th U.S. Infantry, Acting Adjutant

Source: John F. O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, Wynkoop Halckenbeck Crawford Company, New York, 1921, Vol. II, p. 574.

Endnotes:

¹*Constitution of the United States of America*, Article 1, Section 8, 17 September 1787.

²Charles S. Whitman, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State*, New York, 31 December 1916.

³Patrick V. Garland, *A Forgotten Soldier: The Life and Times of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz*, Infinity Publishing Company, Pennsylvania, March 2009, p. 23.

⁴*National Defense Act of 1916*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1918.

⁵The Punitive Expedition into Mexico was a 1916 American attack on northern Mexico in retaliation for the slaying of several U.S. Soldiers and civilians during a Mexican attack (led by General Pancho Villa) on Columbus, New Mexico.

⁶Whitman.

⁷*Field Service Regulations*, Article VII, "Military Police," U.S. Army, 1914.

⁸Report of Major General John F. O’Ryan, Commanding Division, National Guard, Appendix A, 31 December 1916.

⁹There are other various accounts of this incident, including one which describes the shooter as a National Guard lieutenant who was detained by military police (Carlo E’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life*, Henry Holt & Company, 4 June 2002, p. 113).

¹⁰Alden Hatch, *General Ike: A Biography of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1944, p. 56.

¹¹Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1969, p. 330.

¹²John F. O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, Wynkoop Halkenbeck Crawford Company, New York, 1921.

Master Sergeant Garland retired from the U.S. Army in 1974. During his military career, he served in military police units and criminal investigation detachments and laboratories. At the time of his retirement, Master Sergeant Garland was serving as a ballistics evidence specialist at the European Laboratory. He remained in this career field until retiring from civilian law enforcement in 1995.
