

# *The 519th Military Police Battalion Continues to Strike Hard!*

*By Captain Rob Rodock*

U.S. Army Military Police have a long legacy and proud tradition as the Army's Force of Choice. The 519th Military Police Battalion "Vipers" embody that heritage as our Nation's Warrior Police. Despite a long history that spans more than six decades and support to all of the country's combat operations, the 519th does not rest on its laurels. Instead, today, the Vipers continue to stand ready to assist, protect, and defend our Army and our Nation through innovative training that incorporates our Corps' most lethal fighting systems, legacy programs that sustain and improve law enforcement expertise and proud traditions.

The War on Terrorism has taxed Viper Soldiers—more than 900 Soldiers have provided necessary military police experience in the Military District of Washington, Cuba, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq (with many Soldiers conducting multiple deployments). Before, during, and after each tour, Viper Soldiers serve with distinction and keep with the

finest traditions of the Military Police Corps. Today, in a rare time in the recent history of the 519th, four of its five companies are home conducting training to prepare for future deployments while one of its companies—the 209th Military Police Company—expands the battalion's heritage in the blistering sands of Iraq. To support the ongoing—and oftentimes relentless—training program devised by the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Bradley W. Graul (with the support of his company commanders), the Vipers capitalized on the unique training opportunities presented at the premier training site for the U.S. Army—the Joint Readiness Training Center.

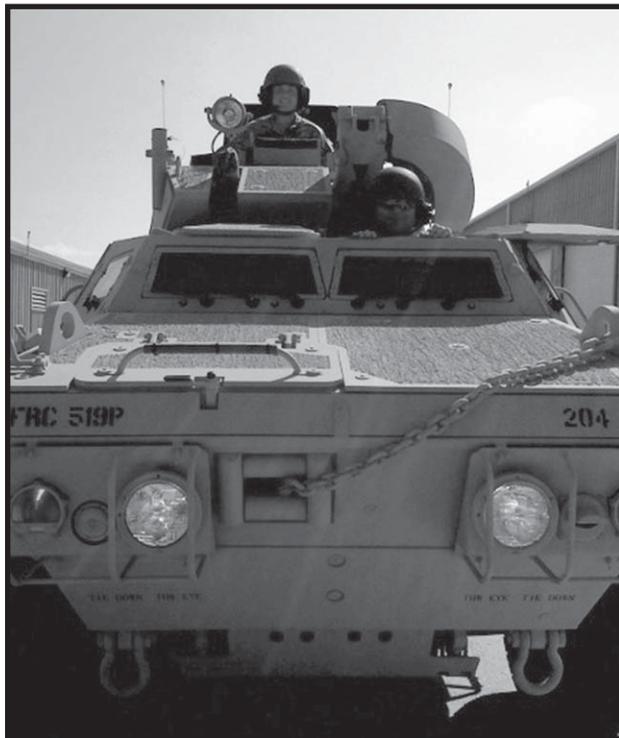
The multiple rotations of brigade combat teams through the rigors presented at opposing forces training (Geronimo) allow Vipers to hone their warfighting skills and provide consistent support to maneuver brethren preparing to fight the War on Terrorism. Most recently, the battalion shared its experience and keen understanding of the police transition team



**Soldiers conduct a lane-training exercise before deployment.**

mission with the Soldiers of the 194th Military Police Company. Recently, Viper Soldiers served as observers/controllers for military police from Fort Campbell, providing them with the “tools to succeed” that served the battalion so well during its deployment to volatile east Baghdad. However, the Vipers do not train to fight the last war; instead, leaders have developed and are conducting pioneering training programs to ensure the success of the battalion in future combat operations.

In August 2007, the 519th Military Police Battalion was selected to receive M1117 Armored Security Vehicles (ASVs). The ASVs provide improved protection and firepower and present the intimidation factor necessary to complete military police security missions. The vehicle, although not new to the Vipers, is novel to many newly arrived battalion Soldiers. In keeping with the Viper standard of excellence, the battalion massed its efforts to thoroughly train, comprehensively evaluate, and formally certify crews on the ASV. Gunnery exercises served as the culminating event to the training, although the concepts and training requirements to conduct gunnery exercises were new to Viper leaders. However, three factors—teamwork, dedication, and Viper pride—enabled battalion Soldiers to build the necessary unit and crew bonds (an absolutely essential building block for future training). Additionally, the battalion instituted a driver training program to ensure the safety, use, and maintenance of the ASV.



**Soldiers train on the ASV.**

In conjunction with sharpening its warfighting abilities, the Vipers consistently polished law enforcement skills to complete the watchwords “Warrior Police.” The Viper battalion continues to provide critical law enforcement mission support to the Directorate of Emergency Services (DES). Daily leader and Soldier commitments in support of road patrols and the sections that fall within DES ensure a safe living and working environment for the Soldiers, Family Members, and civilians who work and reside at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The infusion of military police Soldiers has created a balanced team that provides quality law enforcement operations. Although the cornerstone mission of the battalion law-and-order detachment remains law enforcement, the detachment continues to conduct Soldier readiness training in preparation for future deployments. The K9 section has shown its strength through aggressive live-fire training, combat detection operations, and medical evaluation (for Soldier and K9 care). The Vipers have internalized the moniker “Warrior Police” in aggressive preparation for combat and dedicated adherence to policing functions, understanding that both are essential to maintaining the traditions of the military police.

A wise man once said, “You can’t figure out where you’re going unless you know where you’ve been.” Elemental to Viper progress is understanding, remembering, and honoring the traditions and values of the Military Police Corps. Under Command Sergeant Major John Williamson’s guidance and direction, the 519th strives to preserve the military police and Army way of life. Command Sergeant Major Williamson understands that, regardless of the best training in the world, a Soldier needs to realize and internalize the importance of leadership and military police values to be trusted to make life and death decisions every day. To build great military police Soldiers, the Vipers take time to focus on the traditions that demonstrate and make tangible the importance of being a military police Soldier. On 18 September 2007, Command Sergeant Major Williamson hosted a ceremony that highlighted an example of merging history with operations of today. With Regimental Command Sergeant Major Jeffrey Butler as the guest of honor, the Vipers welcomed more than 30 Soldiers, from junior enlisted to noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks, to an induction ceremony marked with the traditional “crossing the line”—a symbolic step that bears the responsibility and professionalism required of all NCOs. At the ceremony, Command Sergeant Major Butler commented on the importance of and the strength gained from actively remembering the history and traditions of the Corps to yield better Soldiers in the future.

On 26 September 2007, the Viper battalion dedicated time to honoring past and present military police on the Regiment's birthday. Following a moment of silence during a retreat ceremony for the Vipers who lost their lives in support of the War on Terrorism, Lieutenant Colonel Graul remarked on the historical significance of Military Police and the dramatic push for increased forces. Specifically, Lieutenant Colonel Graul emphasized how the sacrifices of our fallen Soldiers should inspire and strengthen the resolve of today's Soldiers as we move into the seventh year of the War on Terrorism. The military police Soldier in the Viper battalion is a strong professional who understands the long legacy of the Military Police Corps and stands ready to fight our Nation's battles today and tomorrow.

The hallmark watchwords of the Viper battalion are present in the vision statement of the Military Police Corps Regiment:

*The Military Police Corps provides values-based Soldiers and units that are highly trained, versatile, and multifunctional. These Soldiers and units will provide the Army with flexible firepower, innovative leadership, and critical situational understanding.*

The leaders of the 519th Military Police Battalion strive every day to live this vision. The progressive training, dedication to law enforcement and its intricacies, and reverence for military police history and traditions build an outstanding Viper team. Additionally, the Vipers focus on building complete family teams within its ranks. In this present time of multiple deployments, the strength of family is paramount to the success of the Soldier. Recently, the Viper battalion welcomed a family readiness support adviser. Her recommendations, coupled with Lieutenant Colonel Graul's guidance, have flourished to build outstanding family programs and support within the battalion. To date, the Vipers have hosted a "Shadow Day" in which families were able to spend a day with their Viper Soldier and learn the basics of being a member of the Viper battalion. The event culminated with a barbeque and numerous smiles. In keeping with the initiative to build Viper family teams, the battalion hosted an "Order of the Crossed Pistols" event in which Viper spouses competed to earn a crossed-pistols brooch or key chain by demonstrating knowledge of Viper skills and completing practical exercises. The unique family-oriented event allowed Soldiers to include their spouses in a uniquely military

police, hands-on experience, thus strengthening the Viper concept of team.

Our current chief of the Military Police Corps Regiment, Brigadier General David Quantock, has focused his vision for the Military Police Corps on eight "big rocks." The Vipers of the 519th Military Police Battalion carry all of those rocks in their rucksacks. The battalion has strived to build a multifunctional, progressive Viper team that is fully capable of bringing the fight to the enemy. Through aggressive training, the maintenance of our unique military police law enforcement functions, the understanding that history and tradition are building blocks for future success, and the construction of strong family teams, the Vipers continue to be the Force of Choice for the Military Police Corps.

---

*Captain Rodock is the commander of the 204th Military Police Company.*



**Soldiers conduct strategic response training to hone their policing skills.**