
93d Military Police Battalion: NTC Rotation 09-01



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Tough, demanding, realistic training is a must for any unit preparing for a combat deployment. The National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, provides an excellent opportunity for units to conduct relatively unconstrained training with authentic role players, opposing forces (OPFORs), and professional observer/controllers (OCs). At the NTC, commands and units are forced to perform, putting to use all systems required in combat. When the 93d Military Police Battalion, Fort Bliss, Texas, was deployed in support of 1/1 Cavalry Division (CD), Fort Hood, Texas, we were afforded the opportunity to train at the NTC.

In conjunction with 1/1 CD (a heavy brigade combat team [HBCT]), the 93d Military Police Battalion “War Eagles” conducted NTC Rotation 09-01 from 23 September to 30 October 2008. According to the NTC Operations Group, the 93d (which deployed to the NTC with the headquarters and headquarters detachment [HHD] and the 591st Military Police Company, Fort Bliss, Texas) was the first active duty or reserve component military police battalion HHD to conduct a rotation at the NTC.¹ The NTC training served as a mission rehearsal exercise and provided an opportunity to work with one of the HBCTs that we would be working with downrange. One of the battalion commander’s objectives for the NTC rotation was to build relationships with the 1/1 CD command and staff, and that objective was clearly accomplished.

The focus of the NTC has changed over the years from fighting on traditional, linear battlefields to supporting the War on Terrorism. The structured, “Krasnovian,”² mechanized formations are a thing of the past at the NTC. Soldiers now participate in scenarios designed to replicate situations likely to be encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan. They operate from forward operating bases (FOBs), they are subject to indirect fire attacks, and they must go through entry control points—just as they will downrange.

Iraqi-Americans capable of authentically portraying the language and customs of the Middle East play the

role of key Iraqi Security Force leaders at the NTC. U.S. Soldiers patrol and conduct missions with their “Iraqi counterparts” in simulated urban areas resembling Iraqi towns. The realistic scenarios include authentic shops and stores, traffic circles, mosques, and government buildings. The focus on theater-specific immersion gives Soldiers the feeling that they are actually conducting combat operations rather than just working on another field problem. The Iraqi-American actors, the hundreds of civilians on the battlefield, and the ever-present OPFORs contribute to a training environment that would be impossible to replicate at the home station.

Home Station Training

Because an NTC rotation serves as a validation of the systems and processes put into place before deployment, preparation and training for NTC rotations are critical. To prepare for Rotation 09-01, the 93d HHD conducted several rehearsals—including tactical operations center, digital staff, and division level warfighter exercises with the 8th Military Police Brigade in Hawaii. The 591st Military Police Company took a methodical training approach, training on critical tasks that involved shooting, moving, and communicating, coupled with deployment-related tasks from the mission-essential task list. Soldiers and leaders conducted police transition team (PTT) certification training with the mobile training team from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, squad lanes focusing on high-payoff tasks and PTT, and armored security vehicle gunnery.

Deployment

Many assets from Fort Bliss and Fort Hood were used to ensure a successful deployment to the NTC. In addition, coordination with and cooperation from multiple agencies across installation boundaries were also necessary. Some of the key agencies involved in the successful deployment included movement control centers, directorates of logistics, and resource management organizations.





The 93d was covered under the 1/1 CD rotation cost structure; however, funds needed to be diverted from Fort Hood to Fort Bliss and Fort Irwin (for contractor support). Although the rotation took place in October 2008 (the beginning of Fiscal Year [FY] 2009), it was necessary to pay for many items in September using FY 2008 funds. The crossing of FYs required an extra level of coordination. The battalion supply officer (S4) continually updated the logistical running estimate, capturing the total cost and breakdowns of individual payments by FY.

Two of the key lessons learned during deployment to the NTC were that staff sections must continue to update running estimates to meet the commander's intent and that they need to be flexible enough to change midcourse to meet new mission requirements. For example, a continuous rebalancing of the pre-positioned vehicle draw grid at the NTC and the shipping of home station equipment are necessary. The 93d sent equipment via line-haul from the home station. The rest of the combat power was drawn from the grid set at the NTC. Part of the NTC experience involves generating combat power and taking advantage of pre-positioned equipment.

Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration

The main priorities during reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) are building combat power and setting conditions for onward movement into the training area or "box." The RSOI phase at the NTC began with the advanced echelon arrival. Soldiers arrived on main body flights; attended Army Center of Excellence training and cultural classes; called for close-air support; and drew vehicles, equipment, Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) gear, and ammunition.

Several key tasks occurred during the reception and staging portions of RSOI. The units worked in concert with one another, receiving Soldiers and equipment from the home station as they flowed from railheads and line-haul sites. Units concurrently drew vehicles from the draw yard, conducted thorough preventive maintenance checks and services, and verified the installation of MILES for vehicles and individuals. Logistics are an important part of building and sustaining combat power. Daily targeting meetings with the brigade and Standard Army Management Information System gunnery were designed to sustain combat operations. Reception and combat power building lasted nearly twelve days from the time the advanced echelon arrived until sufficient capability was generated

to conduct operations. The reception and staging phases ended with the onward movement of the BCT, which completed a tactical road march (TRM) from the logistics support area on the main post (the old "dust bowl") out to FOB King—our final destination. FOB King served as our home and the home of the HBCT headquarters for the next two weeks of simulated combat operations.

The TRM was the first full-blown mission conducted by the brigade. The 2/591 was tasked with conducting route security on our portion of the route to FOB King. To facilitate our movement, the 93d built a large sand table representing the entire TRM route. The sand table was used to conduct rehearsals, which allowed other units in our formation to visualize how movement was to occur and alleviated potential shortfalls in our plan. It was also used during backbriefs.

Following the TRM, the battalion began an eight-day situational training exercise (STX)/integration (right-seat ride [RSR])³ training program, which focused on the 591st Military Police Company, but which was closely battle-tracked, resourced, and coordinated by the battalion. The STX/RSR phase of most NTC rotations lasts only six days, while the full-spectrum operations (FSO) phase is usually programmed for eight days. But, in order to meet his training requirements and objectives and still have time to conduct two 72-hour targeting cycles, the 1/1 CD commander directed that more time be allocated to the STX/RSR phase of Rotation 09-01.

The STX training included—

- Host nation leader engagements.
- Iraqi police training.
- Company and platoon level urban mounted patrols. (One STX lane focused on urban operations, reactions to improvised explosive devices, mass casualties, and medical evacuation.)
- Escalation of force and entry control point scenarios.
- A combat patrol (mounted) lane that included working with explosive ordnance disposal units and calling scout helicopters.

The training venues allowed platoons to continue validating and refining their tactics, techniques, and procedures while testing the company's ability to track operations in a controlled environment. The battalion staff rehearsed several battle drills in response to scenarios encountered by the platoons—each building from valuable lessons learned. The battalion simultaneously





conducted key engagements with government officials and Iraqi police leaders, setting the conditions for FSO. This integration training provided the 93d with a great opportunity to rehearse and validate internal battle drills and continue the immersion into the BCT battle rhythm.

Full-Spectrum Operations

Following the RSR phase, the BCT and 93d Military Police Battalion moved into the six-day FSO phase. During this phase, the battalion focused on its wartime mission—the PTT mission.

Seven police stations throughout the NTC training area were staffed with Iraqi police role players. Working within the priority of effort established by the commander, each platoon was directed to partner with specific Iraqi police stations. To simplify coordination efforts, platoon areas of concentration fell into maneuver battalion task force battlespace. Squads and platoons were required to coordinate directly with the joint security station in each town that had an Iraqi police station and to coordinate with other landowners whenever crossing into their battlespace. The direct coordination and Iraqi police leader engagement served as excellent training for squad and platoon leaders. The squads worked with interpreters and Army linguists to conduct specific training, joint patrols, and local operations with Iraqi police. The Iraqi police engagement efforts were coordinated at all echelons from brigade to company level. The synchronization of these efforts was a key factor in remaining in concert with the brigade commander's intent.

More than thirty-five staff battle drills were conducted to facilitate operations; most were validated, but some were deleted.

As the 591st planned and conducted the PTT mission at the seven Iraqi police stations, other key battalion staff leaders were fully integrated with the BCT. Our mission set included conducting more than sixty combat patrols, twenty leader engagements, and multiple reactions to contact scenarios. The 93d Military Police Battalion commander coordinated directly with the Iraqi police provincial commander to build a partnership and develop a joint training and operations strategy between U.S. and Iraqi police forces. This interaction at the provincial level mitigated several potentially competing demands and supported the unity of effort across the BCT commander's line of effort. The battalion commander also chaired BCT detainee review boards, which reviewed and validated cases involving U.S.-captured detainees pending disposition. The battalion executive officer was a member of the BCT Provincial Reconstruction Team and

participated in the project review targeting meeting—another nonlethal targeting method. The battalion operations and training officer (S3) served as the targeting officer; he worked with the brigade fire effects coordination cell, synchronizing battalion missions with BCT concepts of operations. The battalion intelligence officer (S2) participated in the BCT S2 counterthreat working group, where he gained knowledge of the threat and the latest systems and procedures for understanding it. The battalion staff conducted multiple operations and logistics mission analyses.

The FSO phase concluded in a road march back to the logistics support area at Fort Irwin.

Intelligence

One of the classes offered as part of the RSOI Army Center of Excellence training was the Company Intelligence Support Team (COIST) class. COISTs use digital systems to collect and analyze intelligence at the company level and pass it up to the battalion level.

The leader of the 591st COIST was a sergeant first class from the company operations section. This arrangement proved effective in coordinating police intelligence operations information, which led to better patrol prebriefs and debriefs. It also provided units with information for the internal targeting cycle. The 93d S2 conducted detailed patrol prebriefs and debriefs, ensuring that members of patrols were presented with information about route status, enemy threats, and high-value targets in their areas of operations.

The 93d also developed an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) matrix based on the battalion commander's critical information requirements. The ISR matrix, which was specific to each of the 591st Military Police Company platoon areas of operations, focused on events and named areas of interest. There has been debate regarding the use of an ISR matrix in PTT operations; however, the 93d maintains the emphasis on tactical movements to engagement locations and the intelligence collection that occurs on those movements. Opportunities for ISR rehearsals and the incorporation of tactical movements, counterambush techniques, and "every Soldier a sensor" are difficult to realistically replicate in a traditional home station mission rehearsal exercise.

Knowledge Management

The Command Post of the Future was the primary system used to enter significant activities; however, significant activities were also loaded into the Tactical Integrated Ground Reporting Network. Care was taken to





avoid a duplication of effort. Knowledge management is a critical operations function that must be addressed in a standing operating procedure—usually at the brigade level.

Observer/Controller Support

Because the 93d was the first military police battalion HHD to conduct a rotation at the NTC, it was necessary to augment the standard military police OC package beyond the authorized captain and two noncommissioned officers who normally evaluate BCT military police platoons in the brigade special troops battalion. The 89th Military Police Brigade (which has training and readiness authority over the 93d) provided a lieutenant colonel, a major, a captain, a Chief Warrant Officer Three, a Warrant Officer One, and a master sergeant to provide OC support to battalion and company level staffs and provided noncommissioned officers for OC support to squads. Future military police battalions wishing to conduct rotations at the NTC will also need OC augmentation to ensure that they receive the full value of training and constructive feedback.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons were learned in the areas of—

- Synchronizing.
- Working with digital systems not organic to the unit (Command Post of the Future, Blue Force Tracker).
- Working with and nesting systems and planning with an HBCT.
- Conducting patrol prebriefs and debriefs.
- Repeating precombat check/precombat inspection drills and patrol/movement briefs.
- Performing logistical and operational running estimates and planning.
- Conducting detailed mission analysis.
- Processing orders from the battalion to the commanding officer.

The NTC would have served as an ideal environment in which to rehearse language skills. During the FSO phase, there were five interpreters assigned to the battalion, thus providing a valuable opportunity to train skills that required operating with and through an interpreter. Soldiers could have practiced simple, operational phrases (“Stop,” “Come here,” “Put down your weapon,” “Raise your hands”), which are key components in the escalation-of-force continuum.

Recommendations

One of the challenges facing military police battalions training at the NTC—especially those who are there for a PTT mission—is the limited number of available Iraqi police role players and civilians on the battlefield. There were only thirty to forty 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Soldiers and civilians who acted as Iraqi police during our rotation. Additional actors would allow the concurrent operation of more Iraqi police stations and provide additional training opportunities—particularly in the areas of recruitment operations and joint patrols. I recommend that resources be set aside to hire additional role players or that units task Soldiers to act as Iraqi police.

Conclusion

Overall, Rotation 09-01 was a great training event. The opportunity to nest and develop teamwork with one of the HBCTs with which we are now working only enhanced this training. The staff continued to grow and share information during the rotation. Without the 1/1 CD BCT, we would have struggled to replicate this level and quality of training. The 93d is now executing our wartime mission.

Endnotes:

¹The HHD and the 591st are now deployed, performing a police transition mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

²Krasnovia was a fictitious country which served as an OPFOR to U.S. units training at the NTC.

³At the NTC, the term “RSR” is used to refer to integration; the purpose is to maintain a real-world mind-set and prevent NTC training from being thought of as traditional, self-contained, STX lanes.

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