



Military Police Support for the 172d Stryker Brigade Combat Team

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The idea of military police supporting a maneuver brigade is not something new. However, the story of military police providing support for the 172d Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, was important for several reasons. First, SBCTs have no organic military police assets beyond a provost marshal (PM) and a military police operations noncommissioned officer (NCO) who work on the brigade staff under the direction of the brigade operations and training officer. This is in contrast to both the infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs) and the heavy brigade combat teams (HBCTs), which are authorized a military police platoon and a three-person provost marshal cell. The fact that the 172d SBCT was successfully supported by elements from four different military police units is significant because it identified lessons learned to support Army transformation and future changes to the SBCT modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), namely increasing organic military police

support to SBCTs. Since the supporting units came from both the Active Army and Reserve Components, the Total Army Concept was also demonstrated. Last but not least, this JRTC rotation was also the mission rehearsal exercise to prepare the 172d SBCT for its deployment to Iraq.

To fully understand the groundbreaking actions that occurred at Fort Polk in May 2005, we must first delve into some background information about the SBCT. There are only two military police Soldiers assigned to each SBCT. The SBCT PM's job is very diverse and includes—

- Being the subject matter expert and advisor to the brigade commander on all military police and law enforcement matters.
- Anticipating and planning the proper employment of military police to support the SBCT.
- Acting as a liaison with host nation, allied, foreign, and local stateside law enforcement entities and with higher and subordinate US

military police units within the chain of command.

- Battletracking attached military police elements during training events.

In short, anything that “smells, sounds, looks, or tastes” like a military police mission is the PM’s responsibility. The SBCT military police operations NCO helps the SBCT PM to accomplish this mission. It is a demanding job for two Soldiers, but it is also very rewarding.

The military police units supporting the 172d SBCT at the JRTC consisted of personnel from the Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment, 519th Military Police Battalion, from Fort Polk. The battalion executive officer/operations and training officer was in charge of this group, which assisted the SBCT PM with military police planning and battletracking. The 204th Military Police Company, also from the 519th Military Police Battalion, provided two platoons and a small company headquarters. The 220th Military Police Brigade (from the Reserve Component) provided Soldiers from Detachment 1, 324th Military Police Battalion, to process and secure detainees at the brigade internment facility (BIF). The 220th also provided the 88th Military Police Company (-).

The exercise lasted from 2 to 26 May 2005. Military police were initially focused on conducting reconnaissance in their areas of responsibility to identify key items, such as police stations, fire stations, prisons, hospitals, and improvised explosive device emplacements. Additionally, they assessed Iraqi police (IP) stations in towns throughout the brigade’s area of operations (AO). During the police assessments, they looked into the manning, operations, training, pay status, and logistics of the IP. This information was then fed to the SBCT intelligence officer for further analysis.

The 204th Military Police Company was located in the west and the 88th Military Police Company was in the east. Both provided general support (GS) to the brigade until D+2. Then, the 204th was tasked to establish a police partnership program (joint operations and training with the IP), conduct detainee transfers, establish traffic control posts (TCPs), and provide dignitary security. The entire company provided GS to the brigade. On D+2, the 88th also was tasked to provide two squads and a company commander for direct support (DS) to the 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry Regiment, focusing on police partnership, police intelligence operations (PIO), cordon-and-search operations, raids, detainee transfers, and TCPs. Squads from the 88th provided

DS to the 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment; the 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment; and the 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment. Their focus was on PIO, cordon-and-search operations, raids, detainee transfers, and TCPs.

As insurgent and terrorist activity increased, both the 88th and the 204th Military Police Companies were given fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) to conduct additional missions, including escort/security for humanitarian convoys, civil affairs teams, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams, and the funeral procession of an Iraqi dignitary. The 204th was then given a FRAGO to provide one platoon to conduct personnel searches, building searches, detainee processing, and detainee transfers in support of the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment’s cordon-and-search operation. Military police participation in this operation was significant because it was the 172d SBCT’s main effort.

Detachment 1 processed and secured detainees at the BIF throughout the exercise, accounting for every detainee that came under brigade control. Detainee processing was conducted using the Biometric Automated Toolset Systems (BATS), which is used to take digital photos, fingerprints, and iris scans to create a database of information on both detainees and locally hired personnel. BATS can then crosscheck all personnel in the database and share the data throughout an AO. Military intelligence (MI) screening was conducted by a human intelligence interrogation team, which was colocated with Detachment 1 at the BIF. Both military police and MI elements supported the detainee mission.

The SBCT PM section anticipated military police requirements and missions, planned and produced staff estimates and annexes, battletracked three subordinate military police units, and conducted surprise inspections at the BIF and battalion level detainee holding areas. All military police missions were conducted in an exemplary manner, prompting the brigade engineer plans officer to state how impressed he was with the military police Soldiers. He was especially impressed by their ability to roll out of the forward operating base at a moment’s notice to support the EOD security mission.

One need that became obvious during the exercise was that the Army should train more on detainee operations, especially on filling out the required detention paperwork. All the Soldiers participating in this operation did their best to fill out the paperwork properly, but there were still

training shortfalls on both the maneuver force and military police sides. If we do not get this right, the “bad guy” we detain today will be back out on the street taking shots at US Soldiers or innocent Iraqis again tomorrow.

The major lesson learned during this JRTC rotation was that an SBCT has a valid need for military police support. In my opinion, each SBCT should have at least an organic military police platoon, like the one authorized for each IBCT and HBCT. Ideally, an SBCT should have a combat support military police company, since the SBCT is very mobile and will have a large battlespace in any conflict in which it is involved. Additionally, this military police unit should be equipped with armored

security vehicles to put it on par with the Stryker variants. Organic military police Soldiers should be digitally equipped, they should train with and provide constant support to SBCT maneuver forces year round, and they should know SBCT standing operating procedures and norms, making them an effective force immediately when called upon to perform an SBCT mission. The SBCT PM section also needs to be larger. A military police operations officer and a corrections NCO also should be added to the SBCT PM section MTOE. That would allow the PM and the corrections NCO to plan and the military police operations officer and operations NCO to battletrack organic or attached military police elements within the SBCT AO.