



The 4th Infantry Division (4ID) (Mechanized), the Army's first digitized division, deployed as Task Force Ironhorse in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the deployment, the military police contribution was wide-ranging, covering long distances and battlespace that expanded far beyond its doctrinal capability.

From Fort to Port

Within 12 hours of receiving notification of deployment, the 4th Military Police Company had combat-loaded its modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) and had its vehicles staged and ready for movement to the deployment ready-reaction field (DRRF). At the 96-hour point, the company had completed DRRF, rail, and port operations and had all cargo loaded on ships.

The initial plan called for 4ID to attack northern Iraq through Turkey. The unit loaded all equipment inside vehicles for immediate access at the seaport of debarkation (SPOD), anticipating that there would be limited assets in Turkey to support reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration (RSOI) operations. Even though 4ID ultimately deployed through the more established port of Kuwait, the decision to combat-load MTOEs paid dividends as the unit moved into its first combat encounter in almost a quarter of a century.

Moving the Division

The basic concept of maneuver and mobility support operations is the swift and uninterrupted movement of combat power and logistics forward,

laterally, and across the battlefield in support of the maneuver commander's intent. The 4ID commander retained the 4th Military Police Company under division control because of the mission importance and the fact that there was no military police company to augment the division. With only 41 high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) systems (combat platforms) assigned to the company, it faced a monumental task. Another factor making the operation even more challenging was the lack of sufficient maps of Kuwait and southern Iraq, since initial deployment plans had been based on entrance through Turkey. Fortunately, the company had soldiers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who had recently redeployed from Kuwait as part of Operation Desert Spring. That knowledge, coupled with the discipline and technical and tactical proficiency of the unit's soldiers and junior NCOs, set the stage for the 4th Military Police Company's first combat support mission since Vietnam.

The main body of Task Force Ironhorse arrived in Kuwait on 2 April 2003. That night, with only half of its vehicles unloaded and only enough time to perform quick preventive-maintenance checks and services, the unit loaded radios, mounted weapons,

and began moving personnel, equipment, and ammunition to base camps in northern Kuwait.

This rapid movement was possible because the unit had combat-loaded equipment at Fort Hood, Texas, and placed it early in the equipment and force flow of the task force. The company based its 1st and 2d Platoons at the aerial port of debarkation (APOD) in Kuwait, where they were responsible for moving personnel and equipment from the APOD to their base camps and back to the SPOD. The 5th Platoon operated out of the Kuwaiti Naval Base and escorted convoys carrying the division's authorized basic load to Camp Udari, covering an average of 200 miles during the 16-hour round trip. Squad and team leaders assumed a great deal of responsibility in not only securing the convoys but in navigating and communicating with local national support personnel. The military police became a great asset to convoy commanders since they were able to provide valuable information on the status of routes and the local population. In many cases, the convoy commanders handed the reins of the convoy to the military police. Junior NCOs were also called on to demonstrate initiative during long escorts, coordinating for Class III supplies wherever possible.

The company headquarters and the 3d and 4th Platoons moved to Camp New Jersey to conduct integration tasks and begin preparations for the division's movement into Iraq. The rest of the division was located in one of four base camps. The maneuver elements began their push into Iraq 14 days after their arrival at Camp New Jersey.

Conditions for this movement improved greatly as map sheets of Kuwait and Iraq were loaded into the Force XXI Battle Command-Brigade and Below (FBCB2) System. The FBCB2 System gave squad

and team leaders the ability to create route overlays and e-mail them to other vehicles in the convoy—including the convoy commander's vehicle. It also allowed teams to maintain situational awareness and conduct text messaging when escorting large convoys that were out of radio range.

The first element of the 4th Military Police Company to cross the line of departure was 3d Platoon. Its mission was to provide in-transit security for the Task Force Ironhorse advance party as it moved to Tactical Assembly Area Ironhorse, just south of Baghdad. There, 3d Platoon provided area security as units downloaded combat platforms from heavy-equipment transporters and then secured their convoys up to the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) battle handoff line. In addition, 3d Platoon escorted convoys that were moving elements north to Taji, Samara, Baquba, Tikrit, Bayji, and Kirkuk.

The 4th Platoon secured the movement of the Task Force Ironhorse tactical command post and continued to provide area security when it established operations at Baghdad International Airport and later at the Tikrit Palace complex. The remainder of the company provided convoy escorts for the rest of Task Force Ironhorse, from the base camps to Tactical Assembly Area Ironhorse. Squad and team leaders were continually put to the test as they escorted convoys—ranging in size from 100 to 250 vehicles—on a 550-mile round trip that took 48 to 60 hours to complete. By the end of the movement, the 4th Military Police Company had escorted more than 30,000 soldiers and 14,000 pieces of equipment more than 600 miles without a single accident. Each platoon averaged 13,000 miles during the 3-week period, and only two vehicles in the company suffered non-mission-capable deficiencies during the operation.

NCOs—The Backbone of the Army

*"No one is more professional than I, I am a noncommissioned officer, a leader of soldiers. As a noncommissioned officer, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored corps, which is known as the **Backbone of the Army.**"*

These words from the NCO creed are well known to NCOs, but they may be less familiar to officers. One thing is certain—it is still all about the backbone of the Army when it is time for mission execution. In Iraq, our great NCOs have lived that creed day in, day out.

The 4th Military Police Company performed exceptionally. NCOs, staff sergeant and below, executed nearly every mission. Their decisiveness, initiative, stamina, and care of soldiers were remarkable. We should never forget the contributions these soldiers have made to our nation. It is clear that we have the best NCOs in the world. Our officers are fortunate to be carried by these great American heroes. We must continue to focus on what makes them so effective by providing the time, training, and tools they need to practice during peacetime so they can deliver again on the next battlefield. NCOs, thank you for your care, and watch over your soldiers and officers!



Soldiers from the 4th Military Police Company provided security escorts for 4ID.

Five days into the movement, the 978th Military Police Company was attached to Task Force Ironhorse and took over the remaining escorts and security operations for the division support element. This allowed the 4th to move the rest of the unit to the Tikrit Palace complex and begin security operations.

Area Security

In Iraq, the 4th Military Police Company began conducting operations to secure the main command posts of Task Force Ironhorse and its senior leaders. The company developed a force protection plan for the Tikrit Palace complex, which incorporated mounted military police patrols, static access control points, a mechanized quick-reaction force, air defense artillery sections, engineer boat patrols, and tower guard forces. The company command post served as the command and control for the force and coordinated the force protection effort. During the mission, the integrity of the command posts was never compromised.

The company also developed a comprehensive counter-reconnaissance zone plan for the city of Tikrit by establishing a strong military presence. The plan consisted of mobile military police patrols used to enforce curfews and establish order and discipline. The patrols were also successful in confiscating

many weapons and other contraband. A coordinated raid with the 1st Brigade Combat Team quick-reaction force led to the capture of a 60-millimeter mortar round, several AK-47 assault rifles, and ammunition. Counter-reconnaissance zone patrols enabled the task force to saturate the city of Tikrit with a military police presence, never allowing the enemy freedom of movement to coordinate attacks.

The 4th Military Police Company also provided a protective services detail (PSD) for the 4ID Commander, the Assistant Division Commander for Support, and the Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver. These PSDs provided senior leaders around-the-clock protection during ground and air movements. The company also provided a PSD for the Army Chief of Staff, General Eric K. Shinseki, during his visit to Task Force Ironhorse.

In addition to providing site security of command and control nodes and personnel, the company also received a no-notice mission to secure two downed CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 101st Airborne Division. Within an hour of the aircraft touching down, the company had a platoon on-site to provide 360-degree security. The military police flawlessly executed the 3-day security mission, in an area sympathetic to the Ba'ath Party, without incident. A large portion of the company's success can be linked to the use of the FBCB2 System. Platoons were able to communicate with the company command post from the aircraft site,



Soldiers conduct nighttime checkpoint operations.

75 kilometers away, using text messaging. Additionally, they could provide status and situation reports as they occurred.

After the security of the task force was well established, the commander was able to release direct-support military police platoons to their respective brigade combat teams. Direct-support military police platoons continued to provide the brigade combat team assets for area security, as well as critical convoy escorts, flash checkpoints, and raids. Once in place, the soldiers of the 4th provided support in every major area of Task Force Ironhorse operations—an area of more than 40,000 square kilometers.



Soldiers from the 4th Military Police Company travel on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to pick up high-value detainees.

Internment/Resettlement Operations

In addition to providing the task force freedom of movement and area security, the 4th Military Police Company also established and operated the central collection point to manage the large number of captured enemy prisoners of war (EPWs) and civilian internees (CIs). The unit developed a “team EPW” concept. This consisted of a military police platoon (the 5th Platoon) designated to run the central collection point and provide EPW escorts; transportation assets from B Company, 704th Division Support Battalion; and CI interrogators from the 104th Military Intelligence Battalion. More than 800 EPWs/CIs were processed, interrogated, and evacuated during the first 45 days of the operation, including several Ba’ath Party members and Saddam loyalists. Despite a challenging mission, team EPW had no incidents, uprisings, or escapes.

Transition to Stability Operations and Support Operations

As the company transitions from combat to stability operations and support operations (SOSO),

the greatest lesson they have learned is that they did it right. Too often soldiers, NCOs, officers, and leaders relate their “significance” in an operation to the number of enemy killed. Significance is more accurately measured through mission accomplishment. Although the company had several armed engagements with paramilitary forces and inflicted casualties upon them, the most junior to the most senior soldier in the unit understands how military police best support the division. The 4ID has more than 40 maneuver companies, whose primary mission is to close in and destroy the enemy. It has only one military police company—and that company was ready when it was needed. More than 30,000 soldiers and 14,000 pieces of equipment were moved; three main command posts and their leaders were secured; and more than 800 EPWs/CIs were processed, interned, and evacuated. Without a doubt, the 4th Military Police Company distinguished itself as a combat multiplier and confirmed the key role military police will play in future operations.