



Jacks and Jills of All Trades

By First Lieutenant Amanda Newsom

“Today, the real test of power is not the capacity to make war but the capacity to prevent it.”

—Anne O’Hare McCormick

Military police Soldiers and their ability to move in small units (occasionally while maintaining an organic company structure) have been a valuable asset to the military community during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. For the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) Military Police Platoon (“Ripcord”), there is no operation that interferes with its ability to maneuver tactically on the battlefield.

On 8 June 2006, the Soldiers of the 173d Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), Bamberg, Germany, were officially notified to don maroon berets and activate as part of the new 173d ABCT. These Soldiers marked their legacy within the Military Police Corps by becoming the first built-in military police platoon in the battalion.

Who are these unique conglomerates of experience, background, and skill that configure the Ripcord platoon? In early June 2006, Staff Sergeant Matthew Hom and First Lieutenant Amanda Newsom welcomed the first wave of Soldiers. By late September, the platoon was reinforced with Soldiers possessing a mixture of mechanical, administrative, medical, and law enforcement skill sets. In October 2006, Staff Sergeant Hom led the way for the military police by performing jumpmaster duties for the first airborne operation. Within the same time frame, five military police Soldiers graduated from the Basic Airborne Course and one military police Soldier graduated from the Pathfinder Course at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The training exercises in Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, Germany, in late January and early April 2007 only solidified the foundation of the Ripcord element—focus on leader engagements and mounted

and dismounted tactics. This new breed of Soldiers is ready for the tasks that lie ahead.

On 5 May 2007, eleven months after activation, the 173d Special Troops Battalion deployed to Afghanistan. Immediately upon arrival at Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan, the military police became actively engaged in a battle handover (relief-in-place operation) with the 10th Mountain Division Military Police. Now, almost two months later, the 173d ABCT Military Police Platoon has helped pave the way for all future operations in the Nangarhar Province. During this short period of time, the platoon accomplished the following:

- Established 14 district police centers across a 120-mile radius with more than 900 combined members of the Afghan National Security Force.
- Augmented force protection guards, personal security detachments, and route clearance packages.

These Soldiers have proven to be the go-to men and women—the “Jacks and Jills of all trades.” Tactically sound and mentally capable, the 173d ABCT Military Police Platoon is ready for any task that lies ahead.

Albert Einstein once said that “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.” Vigilance and dedication to mission accomplishment will be the only way to see an end to the war in the Middle East. By understanding the Afghan culture and continuing to train and mentor Afghan leadership and the Afghan National Security Force, there is reason for hope and continued support.