

Joint Staff and Operations Training and Orientation: A Future Necessity for Junior Military Police Leaders

By Major Clifford F. Buttram, Jr.

The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has operationally and tactically affected the training and educational requirements of military police company grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Reserve and National Guard units, as well as individual augmentees, now play major roles in critical missions at Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The GWOT also has quickened the Army's—and specifically the Military Police Corps'—need to operate jointly to capitalize on the strengths of each service. In many military arenas, the future of American warfare will rely on joint commands and task forces to achieve full battlefield effect.

As the deputy information operations officer and subsequently the current operations officer for Joint Task Force-Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO), I saw the need to ensure that our junior military police officers and senior NCOs were well-versed in joint staff planning and operations. JTF-GTMO has a unique mission in which active duty, Reserve, and National Guard military police units combine to accomplish the mission through coordinated technical and tactical efforts. However, the operational environment is truly joint, encompassing all services, to include the Coast Guard. Key staff positions, especially those in the operations sections, must possess certain position prerequisites, such as Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3) for officers and the Battle Staff Course for NCOs, to ensure a seamless integration of forces and mission execution. Several of my junior staff officers and senior NCOs (some from different services) learned these vital joint operations tasks through on-the-job training. It quickly became evident that the ability to function on a joint staff depends on understanding and executing joint relationships.

As the force of choice, military police officers and senior NCOs are routinely assigned unique and challenging duties. One of those duties can be to serve as a primary, assistant, or special staff officer in a joint task force. Basic knowledge of service

capabilities, organizational structure, and rank identification is critical to ensure joint staff interoperability. However, the sign of a well-rounded staff officer in our current global environment is the ability to understand joint terminology, implement joint doctrine (such as plans and operations orders), and execute joint missions. The importance of understanding the basics of joint operations cannot be overstated. Although an in-depth study of these types of operations may be conducted at CGSC, CAS3, and the Sergeants Major Academy, at least four hours of basic studies should be incorporated into the US Army Military Police School's advanced courses for officers and NCOs. Knowledge of joint terminology and operations will provide a firm foundation and will enhance the junior leader's professional preparedness.

“The US Army demonstrates commitment to joint interdependence by its significant support to other services through execution of mandated joint responsibilities for logistics, ground lines of communication, engineering, control of prisoners of war, and other responsibilities. Similarly, unique ground capabilities in the areas of aviation, health, military police, ground security, and construction further support the entire joint force.”¹ Joint operations will become increasingly critical and strategically, operationally, and tactically relevant during future operations and planning. Service on a joint staff is

now probable, and junior military police officers and senior NCOs must possess a base of joint operations knowledge.

“Leader development for the Army Future Force will also contribute to joint operations and campaigns by orchestrating the assignment and education of soldiers at every level, from private to general, to embrace joint theory; doctrine; history; and tactics, techniques, and procedures.”² The Military Police Corps is one of the Army’s most deployed and versatile branches. Our company grade leaders and senior NCOs deserve and require basic joint doctrine and knowledge well before they find themselves in a potentially critical joint position.

Endnotes

¹ Major General Michael A. Vane, Colonel Robert M. Toguchi, “*The Enduring Relevance of Landpower: Flexibility and Adaptability for Joint Campaigns*,” Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, October 2003, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.