

The 3d Military Police Company Supports EPW Operations in Iraq

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The 3d Military Police Company had the honor of leading the charge for our Military Police Corps Regiment to support 3d Infantry Division (3ID) (Mechanized) during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The leaders of Marne team are very proud of the young men and women who met the challenge and performed under very austere conditions. They are truly at the “tip of the spear”! Not one soldier was lost during combat operations or accidents—which is a tribute to our officers and noncommissioned officers and the equipment and training provided at the unit and the U.S. Army Military Police School.

Preparing to Deploy

In the spring of 2002, 3ID was assigned as the Crisis Response Force in Kuwait as a defense against possible Iraqi aggression. The division tasked the 3d Military Police Company to provide direct and general support to the mission using 6-month platoon rotations. The 2d and 4th Platoons deployed to Kuwait with the 2d Brigade Combat Team (2BCT) in September 2002.

In November, before receiving the mission for the main body deployment, the division deputy provost marshal (DPM) and his staff deployed to Kuwait. For 2 months, they planned Operations Lucky Warrior and Victory Warrior training exercises among the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), V Corps, and 3ID.

In December, 3d Military Police Battalion staff began the military decision-making process and planning phase for additional personnel support, as military police force flow operations would not support the doctrinal attachment of a corps military police company. The division provost marshal (PM) cell was increased from 7 to 21 personnel to support planned tasks, including a protective services detail (PSD) for general officers. With additional personnel, the battalion formed a military police tactical operations and law and order cell. The 30th Military Police Detachment (Criminal Investigation Division [CID]) direct-support element from Fort Stewart, Georgia, provided 11 soldiers to support operations.

In January 2003, the 3d Military Police Company and PM cell deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Simultaneously, two military police companies at Fort Stewart received deployment orders—the 293d Military Police Company deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan, to

conduct detention and other military police operations, and the 549th Military Police Company deployed to Kuwait in preparation for hostilities with Iraq. Elements of the 179th Military Police Detachment also deployed in support of both operations. By the middle of March, the majority of military police and CID assigned to Fort Stewart had deployed, so Army Reserve units—the 304th Military Police Company from West Virginia and the 3220th Garrison Support Unit from Florida—were assigned to conduct installation force protection.

In February 2003, the PM cell planned and led an enemy prisoner of war (EPW) exercise to train and evaluate the ability of the 3d Military Police Company to perform internment operations. The field-training exercise focused on capturing, transporting, and processing prisoners; establishing forward and division central collection points (DCCPs); performing sustainment operations; and learning the “five S’s” (silence, search, segregate, speed, and safeguard). These invaluable lessons were incorporated into the company’s tactics, techniques, and procedures and the division training plan. The training incorporated headquarters soldiers and CID personnel to assist with in-processing procedures, to prepare for the expected large number of EPWs.

While the majority of the division trained and prepared for conflict, the 3d Military Police Company performed security operations. During reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration (RSOI) operations, the company provided more than 125 convoy security escorts from the port and Camp Doha to the four camps—located approximately 25 kilometers south of the Kuwait-Iraq border. The company also provided traffic and accident support.

Mission and Task Organization

The 3d Military Police Company was tasked to conduct all military police battlefield missions in support of the division's scheme of maneuver. Key tasks included supporting breach and berm-crossing operations, establishing forward collection points (FCPs) along the battlespace, establishing multiple DCCPs, conducting route signing for the march north, and performing convoy security operations.

The doctrinal application of military police within 3ID consisted of three direct-support platoons aligned with each BCT. The division DPM worked in the division main command post and the battle captain/operations sergeant major worked from the division rear command post. Due to the magnitude of the mission, the division PM colocated with the PM cell, company headquarters, general-support platoons, and other members and units in the task force. Before crossing the berm, the company was task-organized to best support all aspects of EPW operations. Many hours of brainstorming and planning went into what leadership referred to as "Task Force EPW," a combination of forces brought together to address the issue of sustaining EPW operations over several hundred miles of battlespace. Ironically, after the task force was formed, the former PM of the 82d Airborne Division presented the 3ID PM with an article he had written after Desert Storm. The article described the same mission challenges and similar personnel requirements.

After weeks of brainstorming, planning, and briefing division leadership, the 3d Military Police Company received resources to accomplish its mission. To support all aspects of EPW operations, additional units were assigned to the 3ID PM. The following personnel and units—which made up Task Force EPW—joined the company before moving into attack position:

- 546th Area Support Medical Company (ASMC) (from Fort Hood, Texas)
- 274th Forward Surgical Team (FST) (from Fort Bragg, North Carolina)
- 703d Main Supply Battalion (provided three 5-ton trucks and four drivers)
- Embedded reporter from *The Orlando Sentinel*
- Contracted linguist/interpreter
- Tactical human intelligence team
- Mobile interrogation team
- Staff Judge Advocate advisor

Crossing the Berm

When President Bush announced the beginning of combat operations with Iraq on 19 March, Task Force EPW began marshalling for movement. The task force linked up with 3BCT and moved to the initial attack position to support EPW operations within the berm-crossing area. Early in the morning of 20 March, the task force began the slow movement through near whiteout conditions (sandstorm) to the attack position, approximately 10 kilometers from the Iraqi border. The initial briefing called for 3ID to be in the attack positions for 36-48 hours; however, the Iraqis began launching Scud and other missiles into Kuwait. Missiles not intercepted by U.S. Patriot missiles missed their target and inflicted minimal damage. That evening, orders came to increase to mission-oriented protective posture 1 (MOPP 1) status, and obvious signs that the mission was a "go" were seen in the waves of cruise missiles headed to targets, Patriot missile battery counterfire, and radio transmissions between aviation and field artillery assets as they prepared the battlefield for the attack.

Task Force EPW moved into Iraq on the morning of 21 March. Two general-support platoons established the division's first FCP, centrally located at two exit lanes through the 17-kilometer crossing site. The platoons were supported with FSTs and ambulances from the 546th ASMC to treat wounded EPWs. The division expected to capture approximately 100 EPWs within the berm complex. The task force was prepared to use the 5-ton dump trucks to transport captured EPWs north to the first DCCP, as coalition forces were not able to establish a corps holding area (CHA) because the Kuwaitis would not allow EPWs on their soil. But the estimates were wrong. No EPWs were captured at the border, because most guards were killed in the artillery attack and aviation barrage, and the remaining personnel fled.

Task Force EPW continued north to the second planned FCP. Mobility was exceptionally difficult through the route; the desert sand was deep and soft, and most of the trucks and high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) towing trailers got stuck. After what seemed like hours spent conducting self-recovery operations, Task Force EPW found hard ground at an abandoned airstrip where it waited until morning before moving forward to help the direct-support platoons. The task force placed the company commander in advance of the main body and other elements to relieve the direct-support platoons of the EPWs received from the maneuver units in the division's first fight near An Nasariyah.

Shortly after the main body of Task Force EPW arrived at the FCP, 3BCT contacted the company commander to report that it was holding a significant number of EPWs in the vicinity of Tallil Air Base. A small element was immediately dispatched to the air base, and the main body started out a few hours later. One platoon and the FST were left behind to guard wounded EPWs and then transport them forward to the DCCP to be established at Tallil Air Base. There was no evacuation to the rear, as the CHA had yet to be established.

Tallil Air Base (DCCP No. 1)

Late in the afternoon of 22 March, the advance party arrived on Tallil Air Base, near An Nasariyah. Due to stiff resistance, the complex selected in the plan to be the first DCCP had not been cleared. Task Force EPW moved onto the airfield as a temporary measure and to relieve Task Force 1-15 of responsibility for 16 EPWs. That evening, the 3BCT commander requested that 3d Military Police Company relieve one of his companies that was guarding EPWs a few kilometers from the airfield, so two platoons spent the night safeguarding approximately 160 EPWs. The night passed without incident, and the next morning, Task Force 1-30 cleared the area. Part of Task Force EPW performed guard duties while the remainder moved into the built-up area and began clearing operations. Within 4 hours, CHA Tallil was established and operational. That afternoon, the tactical operations center (TOC) from the 709th Military Police Battalion arrived, along with a subordinate company. The PM and the commander of the 709th arranged for relief operations to occur the next morning so Task Force EPW could continue to support the 3ID fight—which had moved to An

Najaf. On the morning of the 24 March, more than 220 EPWs were transferred to the 709th and moved out once again.

An Najaf (DCCP No. 2)

After being relieved of the EPWs, Task Force EPW started out on “pipeline road” toward Objective Rams. Movement was slow and occasionally stopped, as 3ID and V Corps units jockeyed for position. The convoy separated on more than one occasion and finally stopped—after 15 hours—at the convoy support centers along the main supply route. Early on 25 March, movement continued, and 2d Platoon reported 14 EPWs at its FCP. The first unit stopped to relieve 2d Platoon of its EPWs, and the division PM had his first opportunity to contact the division main command post since crossing into Iraq. The task force had once again caught up to the fight; combat actions in the area were visible.

The division operations, plans, and training staff (G3) ordered the task force to immediately construct DCCP No. 2 at an ammunition storage facility northwest of An Najaf. But 20 kilometers from the next stop, the afternoon sky turned orange and then black as night. There was no choice but to halt the convoy and ride out the storm. To further complicate matters, they were moving through an escarpment, and the drop-off along the road at some points was several hundred meters. Security for the convoy was the primary concern, as visibility was zero. When the storm subsided, the convoy continued to the site of the next collection point and, by nightfall, had nearly 200 EPWs in custody.

With the potential of having to provide for hundreds of EPWs, logistical requirements immediately became a concern for Task Force EPW, as they were



EPWs were transported from the DCCP daily.

positioned well forward of the logistical trains. The first concern was the evacuation of the EPWs to CHA Tallil; the second—but no less important—concern was acquiring essential supplies. And the problem of how to deal with wounded EPWs—with varying degrees of injuries—still remained.

The evacuation of EPWs was conducted by air and ground transportation. When the unpredictable weather would not permit flight, internal and attached truck assets were used to transport prisoners to Objective Rams, 40 kilometers south. Soldiers from the company loaded EPWs into CH-47 Chinook helicopters (used to transport critical supplies to the division support area) and transported them to CHA Tallil. When aircraft was not available, elements of the 18th Military Police Brigade provided escorts. From 25 March through 3 April, 3ID captured and Task Force EPW evacuated approximately 628 EPWs and civilian internees (CI) to CHA Tallil.

Division maneuver units moved so fast toward Baghdad that supplies were difficult to obtain. Task Force EPW had a small amount of Class I and Class IV supplies but not enough to maintain sustained operations. Leaders in the task force were creative in their approach to solving these problems. The water shortage problem was solved after company mechanics were able to start a Russian-made water truck left on the garrison. In addition to providing one meal, ready-to-eat (MRE) daily, EPWs were also given rice, beans, and tea discovered in local storage areas. Prisoners even volunteered to prepare and cook a daily supplement using confiscated cookware and propane.

Because the 546th ASMC and the 274th FST remained at Tallil Air Base, the task force arrived at An Najaf with only organic medical support. After a few days, a small element from the 566th ASMC

and the 934th FST arrived to provide assistance. This significantly decreased the burden placed on the main support and forward support battalions, whose medical companies had limited space and were required to care for Americans and Iraqis. Soon, medical evacuation aircraft landed with increasing frequency, dropping off wounded EPWs and providing overflow facilities for friendly casualties.

Logistics Support Area Dogwood (DCCP No. 3)

On 4 April, Task Force EPW moved north through the Karbala Gap toward a location south of Baghdad and west of the Euphrates River. Reconnaissance of the two locations revealed unsuitable facilities. The division PM contacted the assistant division commander for support. A suitable location in the division support area—an excellent location close enough to Baghdad to support combat elements but located near the division's logistics base—was identified. Additionally, the new DCCP also had a large and open area that could accommodate hundreds of EPWs and provide overhead cover during the increasing desert temperatures. The area also had numerous buildings for command posts, barracks, and a hospital.

By this juncture, EPW operations were running smoothly. The task force had fine-tuned processing, sustaining, and safeguarding EPWs and had coordinated evacuation procedures with the 18th Military Police Brigade. However, a considerable number of noncombatants and displaced civilians were being brought to the DCCP, creating yet another challenge. Many people were wounded, requiring medical treatment for a wide spectrum of injuries. Family members often accompanied the wounded, so the task force began to work extensively with civil affairs units to ensure the safe return of civilians to their homes.

The 3d Military Police Company and supporting units were ordered to Baghdad two days after Baghdad International Airport was seized. On 10 April, advance elements of Task Force EPW moved north to the airport, and the last elements arrived the next day. The 566th ASMC and 934th FST remained at Logistics Support Area Dogwood to support the 720th Military Police Battalion, which conducted a relief in place with the company. This area became the location of the second CHA, processing 472 prisoners in 8 days.

Baghdad (DCCP No. 4)

The move to Baghdad saw many changes in the mission. Although the first few days at the airport brought many Republican Guard and regular Iraqi army EPWs, there was soon a drastic change in the



EPWs were transported by CH-47 helicopters.

population. The end of major combat operations resulted in a large number of CIs, mostly looters and criminals. Also, Task Force EPW confined a number of “high-value detainees,” including high-ranking government officials and individuals of vital intelligence value. To assist in the mission, the division attached a platoon from the 92d Chemical Company to perform guard duties and personnel from the 581st ASMC to provide medical care.

On 1 May, the 115th Military Police Battalion assumed all internment operations for the Baghdad area of operations. Operations on the airport netted 771 EPWs, CIs, and high-value detainees—the most prisoners at any site during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In all, 3d Military Police Company safeguarded 2,091 EPWs/CIs during the conflict.

Stability Operations, Support Operations, and CID Investigations

The assistance provided by the 92d Chemical Company allowed the 3d Military Police Company to concentrate on more traditional military police missions, forcing them to quickly learn the streets of Baghdad and become familiar with new enemies—paramilitary forces, common criminals, and looters.

Most of the missions assigned in the Baghdad area revolved around rebuilding infrastructure. The company supported a variety of missions aimed at establishing a safe and secure environment for the city’s citizens, to include providing security to the CFLCC in the forward operating base; guarding civil affairs elements conducting assessments of power plants, engineers conducting assessments of infrastructure, and health specialists assessing hospitals and delivering medical supplies; and protecting trucks supplying fuel for generators. The company also provided PSDs for the Sergeant Major of the Army, Secretary of Defense, Interim Iraqi Minister of Health, and Baghdad Station Chief. Additionally, the 3d Military Police Company supported the 4th Infantry Division (4ID) forward passage of 3ID lines with route reconnaissance, route signing, and traffic control points. The company was also charged with securing more than \$775 million of U.S. currency found on the grounds of the Presidential Palace complex.

The direct-support element of the 30th Military Police Detachment provided an exceptional amount of support to Task Force EPW throughout the war. It participated in planning in the rear, deployed with the company, provided investigative support in Kuwait, crossed into Iraq with the first CID element, assisted the military police in the execution of EPW operations and, most importantly, became a vital part



Soldiers guard a pallet of \$328 million of U.S. currency seized from the Presidential Palace complex.

of stability operations and support operations (SOSO). The direct-support element supported 3ID in investigating war crimes and mass grave sites, as well as crimes committed by soldiers. Most notably, a member of the task force was solely responsible for locating the last 3ID soldier missing in action. This soldier went home as a result of outstanding attention to detail and the investigative prowess of one Task Force EPW soldier.

Follow-On Mission in Al Fallujah

Just when the 3d Military Police Company thought it was heading home, 3ID received a follow-on mission to move to Al Fallujah, about 35 kilometers west of Baghdad, to secure the area. The division reattached the 1st and 2d Platoons to the 3d Military Police Company and placed the company under the operational control of 2BCT. The company conducted law and order and police intelligence operations through joint patrols with the Iraqi Police Force (IPF). In addition, the company assessed the status and capabilities of the existing force and detention facilities; established liaison with senior IPF officials; and assisted the IPF in standing up a viable police infrastructure by providing expertise, training, weapons, vehicles, uniforms, and other logistical support. The end state was to ensure that the IPF was able to shoot, move, and communicate and was legitimate in the eyes of the Iraqi people.

Conclusion

Operation Iraqi Freedom was an event that members of the “Marne police” will never forget. The 3ID moved with lightning speed across the desert, faster than any other mechanized force in history. Soldiers

and leaders proved flexible in their support of a rapidly changing plan and agile in their ability to conduct multiple tasks simultaneously. The members of the 3d Military Police Company and Division PM cell were proud to serve their country, Army, and beloved Military Police Corps Regiment.

“Rock of the Marne”



CID personnel investigate a possible mass grave site just outside of Baghdad.