

Lessons Learned From Company Level DCRF Operations

By Captain Henry Cartagena

On 1 October 2010, the 563d Military Police Company, Fort Drum, New York, assumed a directed response force mission in support of Joint Task Force–Civil Support (U.S. Army North). This means that the unit must be capable of deploying by air, rail, or ground movement within 96 hours of any alert of a national crisis arising from a catastrophic; man-made; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) event in the United States.

Soldiers and families of the 563d Military Police Company “Titans” participated in a critical mission designed to alleviate human suffering in the United States should a CBRNE event occur during unit support to defense chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives response force (DCRF) (formerly known as the CBRNE consequence management response force) operations. This required standing operating procedures, a constant state of unit readiness in fiscal year 2011, and well-rehearsed drills. The Titans recorded several lessons learned in maintaining constant readiness and training appropriately for this type of rapid response mission.

Transitioning From Counterinsurgency to the DCRF

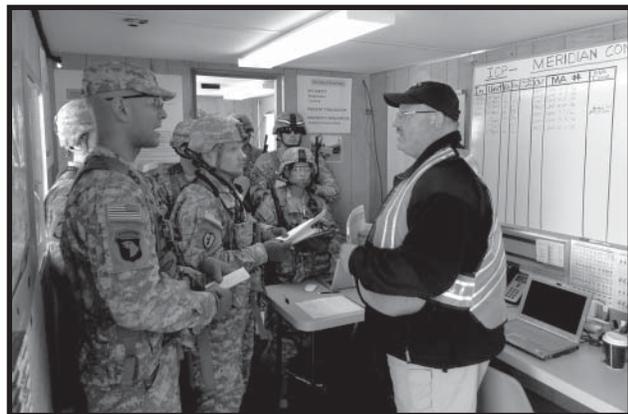
The 563d Military Police Company redeployed from Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2010, where they conducted police transition team operations. Soon thereafter, they were notified of the upcoming October DCRF mission. During the reintegration period, the unit reset and participated in the 91st Military Police Battalion’s Military Police Certification Course. From April to August 2010, they also conducted law enforcement operations at Fort Drum. The reintegration process and participation in community law enforcement operations were critical in the transition of Soldiers from combat support operations to DCRF operations. Soldiers strengthened and refined their interpersonal communication skills while performing the law enforcement operations; this contributed to the mindset and attitude necessary to perform effective DCRF operations.

To ensure that higher headquarters is aware of possible limitations, units must maintain updated shortage annexes at all times. This is especially important when the unit is required to deploy within 96 hours. The 563d Military Police Company acquired packing, blocking, and bracing materials and the tools required to load equipment into containers before assuming the DCRF mission. The company quickly became the most well equipped and

rapidly deployable unit on Fort Drum. It fielded, maintained, and trained with 99 percent of the authorized or “in lieu of” equipment.

The 563d created a “DCRF Family Readiness Guide,” which was issued to the families and mailed to incoming personnel as part of the sponsorship program and the unit integration process. This guide, in conjunction with monthly family readiness group meetings, ensured that family members understood the importance and impact of the DCRF mission.

Although the law enforcement experience gained before mission assumption was a tremendous benefit to the unit, their ability to respond to a real-world incident could have been greatly improved through their participation in a certification exercise (conducted before the directed mission) that focused on a 96-hour, alert-to-deployment drill; wellness checks; and CBRNE defense and lifesaving techniques in a CBRNE environment. U.S. Army North resolved this issue for fiscal year 2012 by conducting the Operation Vibrant Response culminating training event before the beginning of the next DCRF rotation. Toward



Soldiers receive a Federal Emergency Management Agency incident situation brief during an Operation Vibrant Response training exercise.

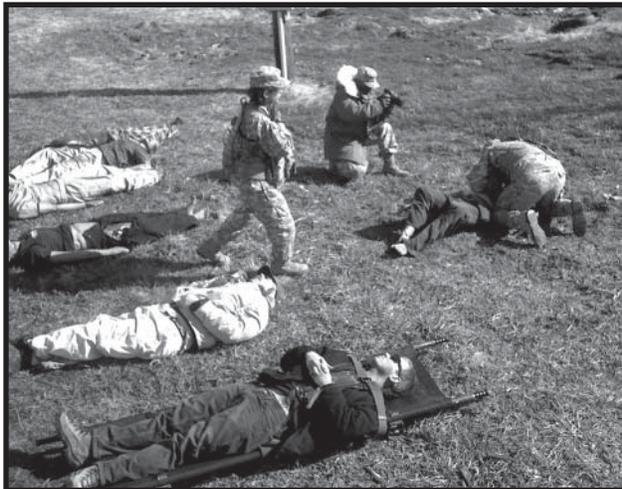
the end of their directed year-long mission, the 563d Military Police Company provided observers-controllers for this exercise to ensure that lessons learned were passed along to incoming units.

Sustaining DCRF Unit Readiness

The 563d Military Police Company conducted monthly unit alerts and deployment readiness exercises every quarter throughout fiscal year 2011. This helped ensure that the staff of the 91st Military Police Battalion was prepared to see that the company received the necessary deployment support. It also helped ensure that assigned company tasks were assumed by other units upon alert. The 93d Military Police Battalion (Task Force 93) and the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (Task Force Operations) ensured that regular guidance was issued to units supporting the DCRF mission throughout the United States.

In October 2010, the 563d Military Police Company participated in the 10th Sustainment Brigade's full spectrum operations culminating training event, which required that the entire unit (along with 40 vehicles) alert, marshal, and deploy more than 300 miles from Fort Drum to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Elements of the unit assisted the New York State Police and Pennsylvania State Police in facilitating the movement of brigade forces en route to Fort Pickett, Virginia. While at Fort Indiantown Gap, the company participated in an antiterrorism and force protection exercise with the installation police force. This exercise demonstrated the effectiveness of Blue Force Tracker (a system that uses global positioning information to provide military commanders and forces with the locations of friendly and hostile military forces) in a defense support to civil authorities situation.

In March 2011, the 563d Military Police Company also supported Operation Vibrant Response 11.1, which was held at Camp Atterbury near Edinburgh, Indiana, and Muscatatuck Urban Training Center near Butlerville,



Soldiers treat role players after a simulated nuclear detonation during Operation Vibrant Response.

Indiana. Before the exercise, the company conducted individual and collective training and certification up to squad level. The training, which was conducted in the challenging winter environment of Fort Drum, went very well; however, it could have been enhanced by increasing the number of role players who required assistance from the patrols conducting wellness checks. The platoons identified a need for the creation of wellness check kits for each team before mission execution. They determined that these kits should include a VS-17/GVX signal panel marker, paint markers, spray paint, tape, and medical supplies such as tourniquets.

The unit contracted for the line-haul support of equipment and aviation support for personnel movement to Indiana. Task Force 93 and advanced liaisons were on the scene before the unit arrived; they safely integrated the company into response operations within 24 hours. Once again, company Blue Force Tracker assets were critical for mission command in a scenario in which there was no use of civilian communication systems from Muscatatuck Urban Training Center to the company command post at the Jennings County Fairgrounds near North Vernon, Indiana. Brigadier General Harry E. Miller Jr., senior commander at Fort Drum, visited the company in Indiana and said, "Always bring everything your unit owns on any type of deployment." (The company brought and used M1117 armored security vehicles, which would be extremely useful in areas where infrastructure had been destroyed.)

The culminating mass casualty event tested all company capabilities and those of elements attached to the company, such as medical and transportation units. The operational experience gained in Iraq was clearly evident in the unit's methodical execution of the search-and-rescue mission. The combat lifesaving and interpersonal communication skills of each Soldier were fully tested in the high-stress environment of the mass casualty event. Based on their experience, the unit identified the need for a long-range acoustic device, incident commander's radio interface, nonlethal capabilities, and lifesaving equipment at the home station before deployment. The focus on Soldier and civilian safety was the key to unit success during the exercise. The ability to communicate in the constantly changing interagency operating environment—which is always a critical component of military police operations—was also vitally important.

The 563d Military Police Company also conducted a DCRF deployment readiness exercise at Fort Drum immediately following the death of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011. The unit had been conducting law enforcement operations at Fort Drum, but was immediately replaced by other military police Soldiers from sister companies. A few weeks later, the 563d provided additional security during U.S. Military Academy commencement events, which were attended by First Lady Michelle Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden. These activities continued to exercise the company's deployment readiness and

individual and collective skills that are essential to the successful execution of a DCRF mission.

Conclusion

The participation of the 563d Military Police Company in the DCRF mission enabled the unit to constantly exercise and refine its deployment readiness processes and procedures. Every command maintenance event, family readiness group meeting, training event, and alert conducted throughout the year contributed to the company's success at Fort Drum, Fort Indiantown Gap, Camp Atterbury, Muscatatuck Urban Training Center, and the U.S. Military

Academy. In the event of an actual national disaster, there is no doubt that the 563d Military Police Company would alert, marshal, and deploy within 96 hours by ground, rail, ship, or air to the joint operating area and execute all DCRF tasks in an exceptional manner.

STRENGTH AND HONOR!

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