



*Of the troops
and for the troops*

THE MILITARY POLICE CODE OF ETHICS

I AM A SOLDIER IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

I AM OF THE TROOPS AND FOR THE TROOPS.

I HOLD ALLEGIANCE TO MY COUNTRY AND DEVOTION
TO DUTY ABOVE ALL ELSE.

I PROUDLY RECOGNIZE MY OBLIGATION TO PERFORM
MY DUTY WITH INTEGRITY, LOYALTY, AND HONESTY.

I WILL ASSIST AND PROTECT MY FELLOW SOLDIERS IN
A MANNER THAT IS FAIR, COURTEOUS, AND IMPARTIAL.

I WILL PROMOTE, BY PERSONAL EXAMPLE, THE
HIGHEST STANDARDS OF SOLDIERING, STRESSING
PERFORMANCE AND PROFESSIONALISM.

I WILL STRIVE TO MERIT THE RESPECT OF OTHERS;
SEEKING NO FAVOR BECAUSE OF POSITION
BUT INSTEAD, THE SATISFACTION OF A MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED AND A JOB WELL DONE.

The Military Police Code of Ethics, or Military Police Creed, overlain on Jes Schlaikjer's "Of the troops and for the troops" painting. This background was favored for use over the crossed pistols and badge images.

Clean as a Hound's Tooth: *The Origin of the Military Police Creed*

By Mr. Andy Watson

The well-known Military Police Code of Ethics, commonly referred to as the Military Police Creed, was officially approved on 17 May 1974 by Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey, who was the Provost Marshal General at that time.¹ The creed was intended to serve as a constant reminder of personal responsibilities as Soldiers and members of the Military Police Corps.² But how did it originate? And why?

When I began to research the answers to those questions a few years ago, the earliest source of information I was able to locate was Field Manual (FM) 19-5.³ However, the Military Police History Office, U.S. Army Military Police School (USAMPS), has since acquired more detailed information concerning the origins of the creed. Fortunately, Major General Peter T. Berry (Retired), a former action officer with the Office of the Provost Marshal General, had preserved and safeguarded some of the original paperwork from the project. He recently sent the documents to Brigadier General David Phillips, the current chief of the Military Police Corps Regiment and commandant of USAMPS. The historic papers, which consist of original handwritten notes and carbon copies, tell the story of the creation, debate, and adoption of the Military Police Code of Ethics. The papers are now located in the military police archives.

The U.S. Army and the Military Police Corps faced considerable challenges in the early 1970s. The specter of Vietnam, decline in morale, and reorganization of military police and criminal investigation structures and operations took their toll. There were also some unsavory Soldiers who should not have been in uniform. Major General Berry remembers this as “an interesting time.”

In October 1972, three military police Soldiers from Camp A.P. Hill, Virginia, illegally entered the commissary ration breakdown building and stole food. They were caught, relieved of duty, and convicted. Although the crime was thwarted and the guilty were sentenced, the offense damaged the reputation of military police. It was later determined that two of the three Soldiers had not

received formal military police training; and while this was no justification for their improper actions, it did result in further inquiry. Army leadership began to consider how to “enhance the moral values and integrity of the military police.”⁴

Distressed by the incident, General Ralph E. Haines Jr., commander of the Continental Army Command (CONARC),⁵ asserted, “[Military police] must be as clean as a hound's tooth.”⁶ He added, “This is the part of the burden they carry, but I would hope they carry it proudly.”⁷ General Haines' office sought a formal code for military police.

But what would the creed contain? How would it be approved? (The U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry and the Office of Military History [later renamed the Center of Military History] indicated that there was no system in place for official “creed recognition.”) And, how would it be distributed?

Personnel from the Office of the Provost Marshal General soon began discussions and work on the project. They reviewed mottos and similar items for other Army branches and received input from military police Soldiers. Opinions regarding the creed ranged from approval to rejection. Colonel Zane Kortum, USAMPS commandant, agreed with the establishment of a creed, writing, “We need a code which highlights what being an MP [military police Soldier] is all about.”⁸ However, other military police officers considered the code to be an indictment against the branch; thus, they felt insulted. In addition, some leaders believed the code should be Army-wide, rather than branch-specific. Despite differences of opinion, the work continued.

The prevailing thoughts and concepts with regard to the creed involved verbally capturing the mission of the military police Soldier and reinforcing the integrity of the branch. Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Wood, chief of the Military Police Crime Prevention Division, had focused on a code of ethics for his Military Police Officer's Advanced Course student monograph years

earlier (in 1959). Lieutenant Colonel Wood provided those materials for further review.

The Military Police Code of Ethics underwent various paper shuffles and semantic reviews. Once a working document was created and approved, the creed was distributed in FM 19-5 and in the form of graphic training aids and wallet-size cards. Copies of the code were sometimes circulated at military police graduation ceremonies.

Although widely disseminated, the use of the code varied by unit and command. Some viewed the code more positively than others. However, by design, the use of the code was “limited only by the imagination of the individual.”⁹

More than three decades after its adoption, the Military Police Code of Ethics is still in use. Some continue to argue that it is an unnecessary reminder. Others believe that integrity and professionalism should always be stressed. Interestingly, the seven current Army core values (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage) directly mirror the principles of the Military Police Creed.

Acknowledgement: A special thanks to Major General Peter T. Berry (Retired) for preserving and providing the original documentation and story of the creation of the Military Police Creed.

Endnotes:

¹FM 19-5, *The Military Police Handbook*, 28 November 1975 (rescinded 15 September 1979).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴“Creed of a Military Policeman,” DAPM-PLO (memorandum from Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey to the CONARC commander), undated.

⁵The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and U.S. Army Forces Command were created from CONARC on 1 July 1973.

⁶“Serious Incident Report—Camp A.P. Hill” (memorandum from Headquarters, CONARC, to General Ralph E. Haines), 3 November 1972.

⁷Ibid.

⁸ATSMP-C (memorandum from Colonel Zane V. Kortum to Colonel Glen A. Hill), 17 May 1973.

⁹“Military Police Code of Ethics,” DAPM-PLO (memorandum from Major General Peter T. Berry to ATTS-AT, TRADOC), 29 March 1974.

If you know of historical documents related to Military Police Corps history that you would like to see preserved in the military police archives, please contact the U.S. Army Military Police historian, Mr. Andy Watson, at <andy.watson@us.army.mil> or (573) 563-5440.

Mr. Watson is the U.S. Army Military Police historian.
