



*On 16 March 2003, the V Corps commander summoned his division and brigade commanders to a meeting at Camp New York, Kuwait. Over the past months, these commanders had spent seemingly endless hours together, discussing missions and strategies for a possible invasion of Iraq. As the 18th Military Police Brigade commander headed to the meeting, he had no reason to suspect that this session would be any different. However, he soon realized that this was not going to be another meeting about hypothetical dates and possible missions. Instead of the usual greetings and chitchat, the officers sat rigidly in their seats with serious expressions, aware of the magnitude of the task ahead.*

The V Corps commander informed them of President Bush's intent to give Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to get out of Iraq, after which V Corps had to be prepared to take military action. He directed his commanders to use the next two days to make final preparations and allow soldiers one last shower and hot meal. He looked around the room at his commanders—who thought of their soldiers, knowing that some of them would not make it home—and told them “the next time I see all of you will be in Baghdad.” The following night, President Bush addressed the nation and the world and directed Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq.

While the division commanders prepared their units, the commander of the 18th was trying to determine how to accomplish the brigade missions and tasks with only two military police companies with equipment, four military police companies without equipment, a mechanized infantry battalion, a battalion headquarters, and a brigade headquarters. Changes to the force flow over the previous two months resulted in military police units being pushed back to make room for more combat arms units in theater.

Faced with a mission that required 50 military police companies, this task organization of 20 companies (with only 6 actually in theater), was forced to assume multiple military police roles.

As the U.S. military began air strikes against Iraq, personnel and equipment from the 18th Military Police Battalion were in various states of readiness. As the 3d Infantry Division (3ID) crossed the berm into Iraq, personnel from the 720th Military Police Battalion headquarters (Fort Hood, Texas) arrived in Kuwait and prepared to download unit equipment and conduct reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration (RSOI) operations. The headquarters detachment of the 519th Military Police Battalion (Fort Polk, Louisiana) arrived in theater on 20 March; however, its equipment, which had just been loaded at Fort Polk, would not arrive for another month. At the same time, the 18th's headquarters detachment and the 709th Military Police Battalion (Hanau, Germany)—the only organic battalion of the 18th that deployed to Iraq—were downloading shipping containers (CONEXes) in Kuwait and loading equipment into vehicles in preparation for the push into Iraq.

The 503d Military Police Battalion (Fort Bragg, North Carolina) and the 115th Military Police Battalion (Maryland Army National Guard) had just loaded their equipment stateside. The 211th Military Police Battalion (Massachusetts Army National Guard) was still activated from its deployment to Afghanistan and was preparing to fly to Kuwait. Within the theater of operations, the 400th Military Police Battalion (Maryland Army Reserve) was task-organized under the 18th to assist with increasing detention operations. The 168th Military Police Battalion (Tennessee Army National Guard) had just been mobilized and was the final military police battalion to arrive in theater to serve under the 18th.

With so few military police available initially, the 18th did not have the capability to perform doctrinal rear-area security functions. Due to the criticality of this function—especially in the eyes of the V Corps deputy commander—1st Battalion, 41st (1-41) Infantry Regiment (Mechanized) (Fort Riley, Kansas) was called upon to perform the mission. For the purpose of unity of command, the 1-41 was task-organized as a subordinate unit under the 18th. The 1-41, comprised of more than 700 soldiers and their accompanying equipment (tanks, Abrams and Bradley fighting vehicles, and mortars), proved to be a valuable asset that would be tested in its unique role as the V Corps tactical combat force. At the onset of the war, the unit had the mission of clearing Alternate Supply Route (ASR) Tornado, to enable the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to establish a forward arming and refueling point to support forces to the north. The 18th also employed the 1-41, in conjunction with the 709th Military Police Battalion, to secure Tallil Air Base (which would later become a key theater life support area [LSA]).

The 3ID was advancing quickly, and its division company—the 3d Military Police Company—had to keep up as it pushed north. On 22 March, the 709th, with the 527th Military Police Company (Giessen, Germany) and the 551st Military Police Company (Fort Campbell, Kentucky) crossed the Kuwaiti border and entered Iraq. As soldiers from the headquarters detachment of the 709th and the 1-41 were moving forward, the soldiers in the headquarters detachment of the 18th were conducting final precombat checks, preparing to jump the brigade tactical operations center, and getting a few hours of sleep before crossing into Iraq the following morning.

To facilitate the forward movement of the 3d Military Police Company, two platoons from the 511th Military Police Company (Fort Drum, New York), a unit whose equipment was still en route

to Kuwait, conducted an airmobile operation to Tallil Air Base with just its rucksacks. The platoons assumed control of the division enemy prisoner of war (EPW) collection point and established EPW Corps Holding Area (CHA) Warrior.

Aware of the critical need for fuel and the lack of military police to provide convoy support from Kuwait to Iraq, the commander of the 18th turned to his headquarters detachment. On 22 March, the convoy rolled into Iraq escorting 55 fuel tankers carrying a quarter million gallons of fuel. The detachment established a command post just outside of Tallil Air Base, colocating with the 709th Military Police Battalion, the 551st and 527th Military Police Companies, and the division collection point. The collection point was strategically placed at the air base due to the potential of an Iraqi attack. Before the end of the first day, it was evident that in its effort to get to Baghdad as quickly as possible, 3ID had not had time to conduct a full sweep of the area. Pockets of resistance remained, and the road between the air base and CHA Warrior was attacked repeatedly. With two platoons operating the CHA and two companies providing security, the military police units were unable to assume additional missions.

The commander of the 18th, concerned for the safety of his soldiers and the EPWs, met with the commander of Tallil Air Base and requested permission to move his soldiers and the CHA onto the air base. The request was initially denied because of the risk of placing EPWs on a U.S. base, but the commander of the 18th appealed once again, requesting permission from the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC). The CFLCC agreed that, for force protection reasons, the 18th could better perform its mission on the air base and directed the 18th and 709th headquarters and the 551st and 527th Military Police Companies to move. The 709th continued to operate the CHA on the air base until the mission was



**Enemy prisoner of war holding area**

assumed by the 800th Military Police Brigade on 5 April. During that time, the 709th processed 1,546 EPWs at CHA Warrior: 1,266 were transferred into theater, 127 were released, and 153 remained when the mission was handed off. As more companies arrived in theater, the 709th established checkpoints, conducted maneuver and mobility support operations, and provided assistance to the citizens of southern Iraq (through a joint effort with civil affairs units).

The 855th Military Police Company (Arizona National Guard), under the 720th Military Police Battalion, established CHA Gauntlet at LSA Bushmaster on 4 April. On 14 April, the 720th moved forward to LSA Dogwood, approximately 60 kilometers south of Baghdad, and established CHA Gauntlet II. In less than a month, the 720th had processed 836 detainees between the two CHAs.

As 3ID marched toward Baghdad, a key decision was made. Due in part to the capture of soldiers from the 507th Maintenance Company in the city of An Nasariyah and the large number of enemy attacks on coalition forces convoys, the 82d Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) were assigned the mission to secure the lines of communication along key routes running north toward Baghdad. The 101st was arrayed in the north and the 82d in the south, both behind 3ID, creating a nonlinear battlefield. The unique, nondoctrinal aspect was that both units performed these missions in the V Corps rear area, not along the front lines or in the enemy's rear area, because these units normally conduct combat operations on the typical linear battlefield.

Due to the unique array of forces in the corps rear area, there was a need for detailed coordination between the units to prevent fratricide and facilitate operations in a "shared battlespace" combat environment. The commander of the 18th visited both divisions and established clear control measures and coordinated with division provost marshals to establish limits of advance (LOAs), particularly in the vicinity of key cities As Samawah and An Najaf. The 82d and 101st were conducting combat operations in these two cities, and it was absolutely critical that corps military police

and division forces not "collide" during battle or create a situation that could be exploited by the enemy. The 709th Military Police Battalion was sharing battlespace with the 82d, and the 720th Military Police Battalion was sharing with the 101st. The LOA concept (not new to the Army, but unique in this instance) worked flawlessly. As the number of military police in theater increased, the 18th assumed additional missions and an increased area of operations. By the middle of April, the corps rear area extended from the Kuwait-Iraq border in the south to just outside of Baghdad, with the 720th patrolling more than 1,400 kilometers and the 709th patrolling more than 1,100 kilometers.

As the 519th Military Police Battalion completed RSOI operations, it was informed that it would be attached to 3ID as part of Task Force Baghdad. The battalion headquarters and the 233d Military Police Company (Illinois Army National Guard) crossed into Iraq on 20 April to conduct mobile patrols and establish security in Baghdad. Within a week, the 204th Military Police Company (Fort Polk) and the 549th Military Police Company (Fort Stewart, Georgia) arrived in Baghdad and were task-organized under the 519th.

The 115th Military Police Battalion entered Baghdad on 22 April and established Camp Cropper to operate a CHA and a theater high-value detainee (HVD) holding area on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport. The HVD site was constructed to hold blacklist personnel and the now famous "top 55" featured on the deck of cards—Saddam Hussein's most trusted government officials and personal staff.

On 23 April 2003, the 709th Military Police Battalion moved from Tallil Air Base to downtown Baghdad. The following day, the brigade headquarters moved to Victory Camp, east of the airport, and the 519th Military Police Battalion returned under the operational control of the 18th. The city of Baghdad was divided into sectors, with the 709th conducting law and order operations on the west side of the Tigris River and the 519th operating on the east side. The 18th now faces the daunting task of standing up a new Iraqi police force and establishing law and order in Baghdad, a city of 5.6 million people.