
What is MPEP?

By Major Donald R. Meeks, Jr., and Major Chad Froehlich

The Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP) enables U.S. military personnel to be “exchanged” with personnel from other national armies to promote partnerships, interoperability, and standardization among the armies. The Army program, which is sponsored by the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Army Chief of Staff, is governed by Army Regulation (AR) 614-10. The objectives of the program are to—

- Establish relationships in which experience, professional knowledge, and doctrine are shared.
- Foster mutual appreciation and understanding of the policies and doctrine of different armies by sharing professional knowledge and experience.
- Encourage the mutual confidence, respect, and understanding necessary to enable harmonious relationships between the U.S. Army and other national armies.
- Provide U.S. Army officers and career enlisted personnel with opportunities for interesting and challenging duties with other armies.

There are 124 exchange positions in 13 different countries. These assignments are almost exclusively isolated and usually some distance from U.S. support facilities. There are twelve Army officer and noncommissioned officer positions in Germany and forty in the United Kingdom. The Military Police Corps provides two officers for the MPEP; these positions are available through the U.S. Army Military Police School (USAMPS), with duty in Cologne, Germany, and Bulford Camp, United Kingdom. Because exchanges work in both directions, officers from Germany and the United Kingdom are also assigned duties in the United States.

The expectations of host nations and exchange personnel are specified in memorandums of agreement between countries participating in the MPEP. The memorandums of agreement also list administrative requirements, tour lengths, uniform requirements,

reporting requirements, evaluation requirements, and necessary administrative and logistical support. Exchange personnel are selected and assigned to positions commensurate with their grades and qualifications. The Army attaché—or another appropriate U.S. Army officer—is responsible for the “in-country” supervision of exchange personnel.

The MPEP is a valuable means of military-to-military cooperation because it supports security cooperation goals and greatly contributes to interoperability and the coalition warfighting capability. Because exchange officers are U.S. Soldiers who have been completely integrated into other national armies, they have several U.S. and host nation responsibilities. However, exchange officers are not liaison officers and cannot be used as a mechanism for the exchange of technical data or other controlled information between governments. The doctrine regarding methods of staffing and supporting armies is different for other countries, and other countries have different means of accomplishing tasks. U.S. exchange officers may not always like these differences; that is where tact and diplomacy come into play. Knowledge and experience should be shared, but the United States does not own the right to dictate tactics and doctrine to other countries. The ability to effectively perform day-to-day duties fosters mutual confidence and appreciation between armies.

The Military Police Group Future Developments exchange officer (*Feldjäger Abteilung Weiterentwicklung Austausch Offizier*) position in Germany has developed over time. The position was originally intended to bridge the gap between American military police stationed in Europe and the German *Feldjäger* (military police); however, it evolved to be included in the MPEP. This was a significant milestone because it meant that the billet would then be filled according to DOD policy. The Military Police Group Future Developments exchange officer works in the Federal Armed Forces of Germany, Office of the Provost Marshal General, Doctrine and Future Developments

Branch. But the military police mission in Germany is multifaceted—the MPEP exchange officer also serves as one of three secretaries to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Police Panel, which oversees allied joint military police matters.

Since 1972, the Military Police Corps has sanctioned a regimental officer exchange with the British Army. This exchange position has evolved over the years, but is currently designated as the operations officer of the 3d Regiment Royal Military Police. The position is the equivalent of a battalion operations and training officer (S3). The operations officer plans and executes operations and training within the regiment, provides daily updates on operational and exercise deployments to the commanding officer, and coordinates individual and collective training throughout the regiment. The operations officer and operations sergeant major conduct quarterly staff assistance visits to the four subordinate companies located throughout England and Northern Ireland, providing insight and ensuring that subordinate units follow the commanding officer's training directive. The operations officer also serves as the regimental subject matter expert on the Combat Estimate (7 Questions)—the British version of the military decision-making process.

Once military police exchange officers arrive in country, they are housed, rationed, and cared for as if they are in the host nation military. They strive to instill regimental pride and the Warrior Ethos throughout the units. However, they still professionally and socially represent the U.S. Army and the Military Police Corps to all members of the German and British forces. Therefore, it is important that exchange officers develop and foster personal and professional relationships. They must always lead by example—physically, mentally, and ethically.

How does a military police officer get selected for one of these exchange assignments? First, he or she must be highly motivated and have demonstrated, through previous assignments and schooling, the capability to represent the U.S. Army with tact and diplomacy. In addition, an exchange officer must be proficient in the language of the host nation. Finally, after reviewing personnel data and career history, the host nation must approve the selection.

Before our assignments as exchange officers, we hadn't heard of the MPEP, but we thought it sounded like a foreign area officer billet. We certainly had a lot to learn! Although exchange assignments are far off the normal career path of a U.S. Army officer—especially for military police—they are great assignment opportunities for branch-qualified captains. Some claim that because the duties are so far outside the mainstream, serving as an exchange officer may be a career-ending move. However, history indicates that exchange officers go on to command and continue to be selected for advanced schooling and demanding assignments. The ability and initiative of the exchange officer are the only limitations. And to be selected as an exchange officer is quite a compliment to a Soldier's professionalism; exchange officers have earned the trust of the commander. An exchange officer is considered to be the right person, in the right uniform, at the right time to represent the U.S. Army.

Overall, our personal experiences as exchange officers have been very positive. It has been challenging and professionally rewarding to be totally immersed in a foreign army. So, if you are approached by your career manager about an exchange position, our recommendation is to take the assignment.

References:

AR 380-10, *Foreign Disclosure and Contacts With Foreign Representatives*, 22 June 2005.

AR 614-10, *United States Army Personnel Exchange Program With Armies of Other Nations; Short Title: Personnel Exchange Program*, 19 May 1977.

The British Army Web site, <<http://www.army.mod.uk/home.aspx>>, accessed on 7 July 2008.

Major Meeks currently serves as the U.S. Army Military Police exchange officer with the Federal Armed Forces of Germany, Office of the Provost Marshal General, and as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Police Panel secretary. He holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Oregon State University.

Major Froehlich is the operations officer (MPEP), 3d Regiment Royal Military Police, United Kingdom. He holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Bowling Green State University and a master's degree in business and organizational security management from Webster University.