
Is It Time for a Paradigm Shift?

By Colonel Mike Galloucis

For many years within the Military Police Corps, it has been common practice for military police officers to wear “multiple hats.” For example, it is not uncommon for some military police officers to serve concurrently as commander, installation provost marshal, and division or corps provost marshal. In the last few years, some officers within the Regiment have even added a fourth title—Director of Public Safety (DPS). In the not-too-distant future, the practice of military police officers adding DPS, or a similar title, will likely be even more widespread than it is today.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the Army’s long-standing practice of having many military police officers serve concurrently in more than one position while in a command billet. Specifically, I ask leaders of all ranks within the Military Police Corps a simple question—In the world after 11 September 2001, with its high demands on Active Army and Reserve Component military police units and leaders, does this model still make sense? Based on today’s contemporary operating environment (COE), which is not likely to change significantly any time soon, I believe the time may be right for the Military Police Corps to work with the Department of the Army (DA) to make changes so that military police commanders can focus solely on “commander’s business,” and not have to contend simultaneously with the often conflicting and always time-consuming staff responsibilities.

Having worn multiple hats as a captain (company commander and post provost marshal), major (battalion executive officer and deputy area provost marshal), and lieutenant colonel (battalion commander, post provost marshal, and division provost marshal), I can attest to how challenging it is for one person to juggle the many duties of a commander and provost marshal.

Soldiers of all ranks—certainly the superb soldiers we have in the Military Police Corps—can handle a tremendous workload while consistently exhibiting a high level of performance. However, there is only so much one person can do, no matter how dedicated, diligent, conscientious, and experienced that person is. When one person serves in multiple full-time

positions for extended periods, something or someone invariably suffers. As military police, we understand the old adage, “Do more with less.” But if doing more with less becomes the steady state instead of a temporary condition, it is then a question of when—not if—suboptimal results will emerge. Can we live with those suboptimal results in today’s COE? My opinion is that soldiers in units with commanders who are serving concurrently in other positions should not be the ones who suffer. That is especially true today when so many military police units are deployed; have recently returned from a deployment; or are getting ready to deploy to Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere. Those deployable units, more than other units, deserve to have their commanders’ undivided attention.

A few real-world examples drive this point home. In the spring of 2003, the Germany-based 18th Military Police Brigade deployed to participate in the invasion of Iraq. As the unit prepared to deploy, the commander was dual-slotted as the V Corps provost marshal, which he had been since taking command. He was the corps provost marshal throughout the period that V Corps was the Army’s primary command and control (C2) headquarters in Iraq. When V Corps transitioned and became Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7), a Reserve Component military police officer handled the provost marshal duties on an interim basis for about six months. Eventually, a provost marshal slot was built into the CJTF-7 Joint Manning Document (JMD), and it was filled at 180-day intervals by Active Army military police colonels through the Worldwide Individual Augmentation System.

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The decision to appoint a second officer to handle the CJTF-7 provost marshal duties made a lot of sense. When that decision was made, the brigade commander had more than 7,000 soldiers under the C2 of the 18th Military Police Brigade. The brigade was responsible for running all police stations, jails, and prisons in Baghdad; conducting hundreds of joint patrols with the Iraqi police; and running an academy tasked with transforming more than 10,000 Iraqis into police officers. When the CJTF-7 leadership asked the brigade commander to consider remaining as CJTF-7 provost marshal, it came with the stipulation that his daily place of duty would be at CJTF-7 headquarters. Given the challenges of commanding his brigade in hostile territory, along with accomplishing such a diverse and unprecedented mission set, the commander informed the deputy commanding general of CJTF-7 that he could not devote adequate time to the provost marshal job while simultaneously commanding a 7,000-soldier brigade. Anyone familiar with the situation—including the officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and soldiers in the 18th Military Police Brigade—recognized that the commander’s inspirational and highly visible leadership had a lot to do with the brigade’s success during its initial tour in Iraq.

A new four-star command headquarters known as Multinational Force-Iraq, which has a military police colonel on its JMD, has since replaced CJTF-7. This arrangement allowed the commanders of the 16th Military Police Brigade and 89th Military Police Brigade to focus on commanding their brigades during their recently concluded tours in Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 3d Military Police Battalion at Fort Stewart, Georgia, offers another example of the dilemma often facing commanders who wear multiple hats. The senior military police soldier at that post is serving concurrently as commander of the 3d Military Police Battalion, as Fort Stewart’s provost marshal, as the DPS, and as the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) provost marshal. His battalion may be one of several military police battalions transitioning from a law enforcement command structure to a more traditional combat support military police battalion headquarters and headquarters detachment structure under recent force structure decisions approved at DA. If so, that transition could begin during the battalion commander’s extended absence to serve a tour in Iraq as a staff officer with his division headquarters. If another officer were slotted as the 3d Infantry Division

(Mechanized) provost marshal, it would enable the battalion commander to oversee the transition of his battalion headquarters and help it prepare for what presumably will be an upcoming deployment.

Another example is the senior military police commander at Fort Lewis, Washington. Before his recent deployment, he was concurrently slotted as commander of the 42d Military Police Brigade, as Fort Lewis’ provost marshal, and as I Corps provost marshal. As his brigade headquarters remains fully engaged in a deployment in the coming months, it is easy to wonder whether the brigade commander could have focused more on the deployment of his headquarters if he were able to focus exclusively on deployment-related activities without also having to be concerned with garrison force protection, installation access control, traffic accidents, on-post larcenies, drunk driving, and military police blotters.

Although always challenging for the affected officer, the long-standing practice of one officer wearing multiple hats was defensible before 11 September 2001. However, the events of that tragic morning prove that things will never be quite the same for our beloved nation and should probably never be quite the same for the Military Police Corps. It is relatively easy to make the case that commanders at all levels within the Military Police Corps should focus their effort and energy on the most important charter for all commanders—ensuring that their soldiers and units are prepared to perform their wartime missions. Military police commanders at all levels, along with their senior NCOs and soldiers, are putting their hearts and souls into preparing their units for overseas deployments. However, many of those same commanders are also contending with other duties that have little to do with their command responsibilities, and that is the crux of the issue. In the world after 11 September 2001, shouldn’t anything that detracts from that fundamental charter be considered unacceptable?

One only has to look at the operational tempo of today’s military police combat support brigades and battalions—the positions where it is commonplace to have dual-slotted commanders—to appreciate why senior military police commanders should be focused solely on commanding. In the last three-plus years, approximately 86 percent of the Military Police Corps’ combat support military police brigades; 84 percent of its combat support military police battalions; and 92 percent of its combat support military police

companies for which it exercises C2 have been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, or another location away from their home station.

The plain truth is that very few other branches within the Army ask as much of their battalion and brigade commanders as does the Military Police Corps. In my view, soldiers assigned to military police battalions and brigades deserve to have their commanders focused exclusively on training, warfighting, preparing for deployment, maintenance, and stability operations and support operations and not merely on balancing these responsibilities with garrison law enforcement duties as an installation, division, or corps provost marshal. This condition is exacerbated even further today because in many cases battalion and brigade commanders are staying in command longer than the customary 24 months. I am not trying to downplay the significance of the Military Police Corps' law enforcement mission or to suggest that it should be civilianized. But peacetime law enforcement on our installations should not have more importance than preparing our units for deployment to hostile areas or performing our many missions while deployed to those areas. I believe that in today's COE, with its operational requirements and heavy law enforcement and force protection requirements at the installation level, it might be best not to put all of that responsibility on one officer. I believe the Military Police Corps should take a stand on this and not leave it to chance, to the individual decision of commanders in the field, to their senior commanders, or to DA.

Anyone who has served concurrently as a battalion commander and provost marshal can attest to what draws the interest of their command group. Typically, it involves those areas that are the purview of the installation provost marshal. As a young officer, I observed a military police brigade commander briefing his training programs to the new three-star corps commander. The brigade had a good training program that the brigade commander was justifiably proud of and wanted to highlight for his senior mission commander, who had the reputation of being an excellent trainer. Less than 10 minutes into the briefing, the corps commander raised his left hand, waved off the brigade commander and said, "That's all great,

but what I really want to know is what you're doing about speeding on post and the backup of traffic that occurs every morning at six o'clock."

While serving concurrently as a battalion commander and provost marshal, I participated in several quarterly training briefings (QTBs) with our division commander. It was evident at each QTB, even with two different commanding generals, that they cared far more about law enforcement issues than about training programs, even though our battalion had an aggressive training program and routinely deployed soldiers for extended periods.

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This represents an interesting paradox for the Military Police Corps. On one hand, most senior leaders outside the Military Police Corps (especially those outside of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other war zones) typically view our responsibilities as staff officers as paramount. Conversely, most military police officers serving in a Human Resources Command board-selected command billet choose to focus on their command responsibilities. Why? Because the natural gravitational pull for Army commanders is their training and troop-leading responsibilities—or at least it should be. That ethos is part of the Army culture and is inculcated into us as junior officers.

This is not a self-correcting dilemma. Leaders outside the Military Police Corps do not fully appreciate the complexity of the discussion and have more than enough on their plates right now. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that those senior leaders will intervene to modify the status quo without prodding.

I believe the Military Police Corps should take a close look at this issue. One approach would be to assemble several active and recently retired military police colonels and lieutenant colonels who have worn multiple hats concurrently and seek their recommendations. Military police officers within the US Army Military Police School or the Office of the Provost Marshal General (PMG) can then formulate these recommendations into a presentation for the PMG and the Commandant. The ensuing discussion may result in no change to the status quo, or it may result in the senior leadership of the Military Police Corps looking for ways to change its long-standing

practices and taking steps to get senior military police commanders back solely to the business of commanding their units. If the latter option is pursued, it will be an uphill climb because it is a formidable challenge to acquire spaces in today's Army with all of the ongoing transformation efforts underway. Regardless of the outcome, it is certain that the Military Police Corps will remain the Army's "Force of Choice" for the foreseeable future. I believe the Military Police Corps will be a better regiment for looking closely at a model that directly impacts many of its senior officers and indirectly affects thousands of military police soldiers throughout the Army.

Author's note: My point in writing this article was to stimulate discussion on an important issue for the Military Police Corps. If it does nothing more than that, I will have accomplished my self-imposed mission. I acknowledge that there are other perspectives on this same issue. I believe it is healthy for the Military Police Corps to periodically examine its "sacred cows" to see if they still serve the Corps well in today's COE. If they still make sense, the Corps should sustain them. If they no longer make sense, it should look for ways to change them. None of the commands mentioned in this article prompted me in any way to write the article or to use their organizations as an example for the key points made. The main points and thoughts contained in this article are my own.