



The garrison commander and the 97th Military Police Battalion commander (foreground) case the colors of the 924th Military Police Battalion.

Guardians, Take Charge!

97th Military Police Battalion Activates at Fort Riley, Kansas

By Major Louis J. Poore

“Guardians, take charge!” Those words by Lieutenant Colonel Michael Apodaca, commander of the 97th Military Police Battalion, concluded the battalion’s activation ceremony and ushered in one of the Military Police Regiment’s newest battalions. They also closed the latest chapter in the history of the 924th Military Police Battalion (Provisional) as it inactivated.

The ceremony took place at Fort Riley, Kansas, on the morning of 18 October 2005. Units participating in the ceremony were the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 97th Military Police Battalion; the 116th Military Police Company; the 300th Military Police Company; the 977th Military Police Company; and A Company (Provisional).

It provided an opportunity for Colonel Thomas T. Smith, the Fort Riley garrison commander, and Colonel Michael Galloucis, commander of the 89th Military

Police Brigade, to participate in the time-honored tradition of activating units for service in the US Army.

Before the activation ceremony, Colonel Galloucis and Command Sergeant Major Mike Sampson, brigade command sergeant major, officially welcomed the battalion into the 89th Military Police Brigade at a soldier sleeve insignia (SSI) changeover, from the III Corps insignia to the brigade insignia. The new SSI gave the Soldiers of the battalion a visual reminder of the change in the unit’s status, from a nondeployable headquarters to a deployable “Force of Choice” battalion. Also, it demonstrated the evolutionary changes within the Army as the number of military police units continues to increase.

The formal ceremony to activate and inactivate units is rich in tradition. This occasion served the dual function of rendering honors to the inactivation of



A veteran of the Vietnam War (right) presents a battle streamer to festoon the colors.

the 924th Military Police Battalion (Provisional) and the opening of a new chapter in the 97th Military Police Battalion's history. The garrison commander and the 97th Military Police Battalion commander cased the colors of the 924th Military Police Battalion as the inactivation orders were read aloud. Simultaneously, the 523d Military Police Detachment was inactivated and its guidon was furled by Captain Craig Hager, the detachment commander.

The 97th Military Police Battalion, as well as its Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, officially activated as the orders were read aloud. The activation of the battalion was especially memorable for one veteran, retired First Sergeant William Reese, who served in the battalion during the Vietnam War. First Sergeant Reese and several Soldiers wearing uniforms from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War provided the battalion's 21 campaign streamers for Colonel Smith and Lieutenant Colonel Apodaca to festoon the battalion's colors.

The inactivated 924th Military Police Battalion traces its lineage through the Alpha Company (Law Enforcement) to the 207th Military Police Company, which was first activated at Fort McClellan,

Alabama, in February 1941. The 207th saw action in the Pacific Theater during World War II and deployed to Korea in 1946 for occupation duty, where it was awarded a Meritorious Unit Commendation. Upon withdrawal of US forces from Korea, the unit was inactivated. The 207th was activated at Fort Riley in December 1952, where it served continuously until 1982. Alpha Company was activated in 1982, when personnel and equipment were transferred from the 207th Military Police Company to establish a law enforcement activity at Fort Riley. Alpha Company served under the 716th Military Police Battalion from its activation in 1982 until the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment deployed to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in June 1996. The remaining military police units at Fort Riley were then reorganized into a law enforcement command, which was redesignated as the 924th Military Police Battalion in 2001.

The history of the 97th Military Police Battalion can be traced back to World War II, when it served briefly in Western Europe in 1945 before being inactivated. The battalion was activated and called upon to serve in the Korean War, where it operated

Prisoner of War (POW) Enclosure No. 9 in support of the United Nations-led POW internment operation. The battalion directed a facility that secured more than 21,000 POWs. The battalion served in the Korean War until its inactivation in 1953. The battalion was twice awarded the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation for its actions.

In 1966, at the height of the Vietnam War, the battalion was activated once again to support the Army and its mission in Southeast Asia. The 97th Military Police Battalion operated out of Cam Rahn Bay, South Vietnam. The battalion coordinated the battlefield circulation control operation for several key mobility corridors while simultaneously performing law and order operations. The battalion and its subordinate units were credited with securing a 450-mile convoy of engineers and supplies destined for a special forces base camp in the vicinity of the Cambodian and South Vietnamese borders. This was the longest convoy completed during the conflict. After six years of service in Vietnam, the battalion redeployed to the United States and was inactivated at Oakland Army Base, California, in April 1972. The battalion was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm for its distinguished service.

By the end of the Cold War, the battalion was once again activated in Mannheim, Germany, in September 1989. Its main missions were military customs and the command and control of the US confinement facility in Mannheim. The battalion was again inactivated in September 1994.

The 97th Military Police Battalion begins a new chapter in its history by providing command and control of the Headquarters and Headquarters



The 89th Military Police Brigade commander (right), garrison commander (center), and the 97th Military Police Battalion commander (left) review the assembly while a soldier dressed in a World War II uniform stands at attention.

Detachment, the 116th Military Police Company; the 300th Military Police Company; and the 977th Military Police Company. Additionally, the battalion provides support to the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) through the assistance of the provost marshal's office, the Akal civilian security contractor force, the Department of the Army police, and government service employees. Lieutenant Colonel Apodaca summarized the feeling of those who attended the activation ceremony when he said, "The Soldiers before you will continue the legacy of this great unit, the 97th [Military Police] Battalion, and will show character, courage, and commitment in all they do."