

Platoon Sustainment Operations

By First Lieutenant Jonathan Sherrill

As combat tours become increasingly longer and troops move into isolated outposts in the Iraqi community, the need for sustainment operations becomes increasingly important. Maintaining the area of operations can be a strenuous task, but the 57th Military Police Company has excelled in providing constant presence. Maintaining combat support operations involves all aspects of the company—from the headquarters to the support elements. At the platoon level, sustaining the fight goes beyond the principles of shoot, move, and communicate. The key fundamentals of morale, maintenance, and training are the critical aspects to platoon sustainment operations. This unique approach to sustainment operations practiced by the 3d Platoon has established the unit to be the most flexible platoon in the 57th Military Police Company—an example for others to follow!

The strenuous task of overcoming harsh conditions is essential. For Soldiers to remain at peak performance, they must keep their minds and bodies in top condition. The 92d Military Police Battalion Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Center provides Soldiers with an excellent opportunity to enjoy some downtime. Soldiers can use the Internet, watch movies, lift weights, enjoy a book, or do nothing at all. Sergeant First Class Lee Troope, the headquarters platoon sergeant and MWR noncommissioned officer in charge, ensure that there are a wide variety of activities that interest Soldiers of every rank.

With the notification of an extension just weeks before a scheduled relief-in-place/transfer-of-authority operation, the company quickly prepared an organizational day—a rare opportunity that allowed Soldiers to relax and compete against each other to build unit and team pride and participate in stress relief activities. The organizational day activities included a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, a volleyball tournament, and swimming at an adjoining camp pool.



A Soldier conducts unscheduled maintenance on a vehicle.

Maintenance is one of most essential operations conducted at the platoon level. For every hour spent on a mission, there is another hour devoted to maintenance. Soldiers are well aware that the time spent sweating in the motor pool performing maintenance can save the lives of fellow Soldiers deployed on a mission. With the help of the motor pool staff, all deficiencies above operator level are quickly fixed. Leader involvement is what makes a good maintenance program. During maintenance days, leaders at all levels are required to supervise and participate in the process. Keeping retransmission sites operational is a top priority. Every soldier assigned to the 3d Platoon, 57th Military Police Company, is trained to set up and troubleshoot a retransmission site. Ultimately, the hours spent sweating in the motor pool and climbing the stairs to the retransmission site solidifies the importance of successful missions. The knowledge gained from these maintenance missions has allowed leaders to also train and assist the Iraqi police in vehicle, weapon, and communications equipment maintenance.

The tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) used by the enemy constantly change. To adapt and stay ahead of the enemy, we must constantly reevaluate TTP. After each significant event, the platoon conducts an after-action review. Lessons learned are then dispersed to the rest of the company and incorporated into battle drills. Reacting to enemy contact, improvised explosive devices, and sniper fire are a few of the battle drills rehearsed daily when preparing for a mission. During maintenance days, training on other critical tasks (such as medical training and equipment employment) is also a point of focus. Since arriving in-country, 3d Platoon has conducted four small arms range exercises. These ranges go beyond qualification requirements. Soldiers are trained to fire all the weapons assigned to the team.

Each platoon trains and maintains itself; however, the headquarters element is an integral part of platoon sustainment capabilities. When new and updated communications equipment hits the theater and is distributed to companies, the communications section provides the expertise and training needed to bring Soldiers up to speed. Personnel in the arms room ensure that Soldiers are never without properly gauged weapons that are mission-capable. When enhancements and safety equipment are directed for additions to vehicles, motor pool personnel coordinate the installation. Personnel in the supply section do an outstanding job of acquiring many types of safety equipment so that the Soldiers of the 57th Military Police Company are as protected as possible. And when a Soldier's combat lifesaver certification and weapons qualification are close to expiration, operations personnel ensure that the Soldier is prepared and scheduled for training. Ultimately, the 57th Military Police Company's morale, equipment maintenance, and training are all essential and equally important aspects of sustainment operations at the company and platoon levels.
