

New Program Emphasizes Leading From the Front

By Captain Meghan Starr



An MPDO checks with other patrols by radio.

From the very beginning, Army leaders are instructed to lead from the front and to share in the hardships experienced by their Soldiers. For military police, this instruction applies not only in the field, but also while conducting law enforcement operations in a garrison environment. While their Soldiers work the road, Military Police Corps leaders work as military police duty officers (MPDOs). Successful MPDO programs offer leaders the opportunity to lead from the front and to hone law enforcement skills that are vital during deployment and in garrison. The 97th Military Police Battalion, Fort Riley, Kansas, is fully invested in a new MPDO program that does just that.

The new MPDO program at Fort Riley is different from the programs of the past. In the 1990s, MPDOs worked 12-hour shifts and played an integral role on patrol and at the Fort Riley confinement facility. They provided guidance to patrols, accounted for inmates, and met with the Geary County and Riley County Police Departments, which operate immediately off post. At the turn of the century, though, the confinement facility closed and things changed. The interaction between MPDOs and the off-post police departments increased. MPDOs routinely linked up with local law enforcement agencies, and they maintained a consistent presence in the most popular nearby night spots. This also marked the first time that MPDOs interacted with Department of the Army (DA) police officers. The MPDOs and DA police built a solid relationship, which allowed the two organizations to work together to mitigate many potential issues during the Fort Riley reorganization.

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As the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment prepared to deploy in 2009, the MPDO program was phased out. Battalion leaders were busy focusing their attention on deployments and combat operations, and they had little opportunity to increase their exposure to law enforcement. But following the return of the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment to Fort Riley, the battalion began to refocus its efforts on law enforcement and the creation of a new MPDO program.

The implementation of the new program began in early 2011. MPDOs no longer leave post; rather, they patrol within the Fort Riley community. They also maintain a stronger supervisory role with regard to the patrols. Thus, they work more directly with the Soldiers, leading from the front while working the road. Leaders gain a better understanding of the environment in which their Soldiers operate and the daily issues they face.

As the Military Police Regiment refocuses its efforts on building and maintaining law enforcement skills, it is fitting that the battalion do the same. Officers and senior noncommissioned officers with law enforcement experience are greater assets in garrison and in combat. As military police deploy to train host nation police, leaders now have a better background and working knowledge of police operations in the United States. This allows company level leaders to provide better training and make more effective improvements in host nation police operations.

While most deployed units are in Iraq and Afghanistan, the training of host nation police is not unique to these areas. Acting as a liaison and training host nation police are requirements almost everywhere that military police are deployed.

The new 97th Military Police Battalion MPDO program allows company grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers to lead from the front while gaining essential law enforcement skills that will help at home and abroad. These leaders will be valuable assets not only to the Military Police Regiment, but to the Army and to the host nation police forces they train around the world.

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