

Critical-Site Security— *An After-Action Review*

By Captain Robert Harris

One of the primary missions of the 529th Military Police Company (Honor Guard) is critical-site security at Campbell Barracks in Heidelberg, Germany. Like installations throughout Europe, the level of security and force protection at Campbell Barracks increased dramatically after 11 September 2001. The most obvious changes were greatly increased manning requirements at all pedestrian and vehicle access control points (ACPs) and more stringent access control requirements. This article provides after-action review (AAR) comments and tactics, techniques, and procedures for conducting critical-site security that could provide a template for current or projected critical security missions. All schematics, specific documents, and weapons systems employed at Campbell Barracks have been modified or generalized to avoid compromising operational security.

Issue No. 1: More Is Not Always Better

Discussion. Immediately after the attacks of 11 September 2001, all ACPs received increased manning, sometimes by a factor of five, with little thought given to what was really required. While it certainly gave a visual impression of “target hardening,” a closer examination revealed that there were too many soldiers at each ACP. Many soldiers did not have a specific task, and when they did, it was often the same as the task of others on the same ACP. This led to confusion among the soldiers about who was to perform which tasks during routine actions and engendered little confidence in their reactions to an emergency or a security breach. Also, soldiers felt their efforts were wasted since another soldier at the same ACP was assigned the same task. The company was using manpower at an unsustainable rate and had too many of its assets tied up in one location, causing the commander to lose flexibility. If there had been another attack or security breach that required a quick-reaction force or a similar force, the unit would not have had the assets to respond.

Recommendation. While an immediate and visible response was required to harden all installations (since no one was sure if more attacks were imminent), a troop-to-task evaluation should have been conducted within 72 hours of the initial reaction. A proper evaluation would have identified the problem, allowed for a manpower reduction, tied up fewer assets, given the commander more operational flexibility, and offered a better possibility for sustainment.

Issue No. 2: Position Hardening

Discussion. Once a proper troop-to-task evaluation was conducted and the optimum number of soldiers were assigned to each ACP, another vulnerability was identified. Several of the positions at the ACP were semipermanent but did not get increased physical protection. This violated a basic principle of the defensive maxim to “continue to improve your position.”

Recommendation. Once positions like the overwatch and vehicle search positions were identified as being mostly static, immediate improvements should have been made. Simple things such as guard towers and sandbags are inexpensive and reasonably durable. If aesthetics are a concern, parked vehicles offer a military appearance that is easy to maintain and still provide the soldier with protection. Another benefit to the use of vehicles is that the position can be moved to another location quickly and easily. Shifting the vehicle location also breaks up the pattern for both the potential attacker and for the soldier performing overwatch duties. We found that the right vehicle also looks intimidating, which adds a psychological element to the overall physical protection of the site.

Issue No. 3: Specific Missions

Discussion. Once it is known how many soldiers are needed for a specific mission—an ACP, for example—make the mission easy to understand. We found that many soldiers had only a general idea of what was expected of them. They understood the

overall mission—to ensure that the installation was secured and that unauthorized people did not enter—but did not know how each individual position contributed to that goal.

Recommendation. Draw up a schematic of the site that is large enough for the entire guard force to have a clear view of it. We found that soldiers responded well to a visual presentation and were more likely to remember key tasks for each position after they saw the task illustrated. Give each position a number, a primary and secondary mission, and a clear action to take in case of an emergency or a security breach. Write a synopsis of the mission and the emergency actions for each site, and have the entire guard force review it before each shift. New soldiers should get a pocket-sized version that they can have with them on site.

Example. *Position 1—Your primary mission is access verification. Ensure that all documentation is valid and in good condition. If the individual has a photo identification (ID) card, ensure that the photo matches the individual. When checking multiple forms of ID, ensure that all personal information is the same on all documents. If there are any questions about allowing entry, contact the sergeant of the guard. Your secondary mission is to search the bags of all pedestrians entering the installation. Your emergency action procedure is to close the primary vehicle and pedestrian gates and take up an overwatch position at observation post No. 2.*

Issue No. 4: Battle Drills

Discussion. About 80 percent of people are visual learners who can master a task best through hands-on, performance-oriented training. Anyone who has taken any Army course knows that the Army believes in hands-on training. Once we had identified the emergency action procedures that soldiers at each post were to take, the community conducted a force protection exercise on the installation to test the procedures. The test was satisfactory, but the soldiers were clearly hesitant. They could verbalize what to do, but had never actually done it “for real.”

Recommendation. Conduct hands-on training using scenarios in which people actually attempt to

breach the security of the site or conduct an attack on an ACP. Use the crawl-walk-run method to build the soldiers’ confidence that they know what to do. Blanks and other pyrotechnics will drive the point home in the run stage. Threats from multiple vehicles of differing types, assaults from vehicles and pedestrians together, and multiple assaults that occur in phases greatly increase proficiency. We developed Go/No-Go force protection battle tasks for each ACP team, such as Task 191-376-4105, *Operate a Traffic Control Post (TCP)*¹; Task 191-376-4106, *Operate a Roadblock and Checkpoint*²; and Task 191-376-5122, *Search a Vehicle*.³

Issue No. 5: Teamwork With Host Nation

Discussion. Military police conduct critical-site security all over the globe. Few of these sites are completely isolated, so an attack on them would affect host nation (HN) and local residents or property.

Recommendation. The final and possibly most important point is the importance of teamwork with HN emergency response forces. The immediate actions to defend against an attack or a security breach must be second nature. Any such incident will probably occur as a complete surprise and is likely to generate attention. Because the HN population will contact its emergency response organizations, it is critical that those organizations understand what you are going to do and what you expect them to do. Failing to prepare for the response of these HN forces will increase confusion in an already tense and confusing situation. Also, improper integration of the HN emergency response forces into the notification and defense and mitigation plan can leave the large military community uncovered. Miscommunication can pose a threat to soldiers. If you cannot contact the local chief of emergency response forces, contact the public affairs office or civil affairs team to bridge the gap for you.

Endnotes

¹Soldier Training Publication (STP) 19-95B1-SM, *Soldier’s Manual for MOS 95B, Military Police, Skill Level 1*, and Standardization Agreement 2019, *Military Symbols*.

²STP 19-95B1-SM and Field Manual (FM) 19-25, *Military Police Traffic Operations*.

³STP 19-95B1-SM and FM 19-10, *Military Police Law and Order Operations*.