



Major Harry Hill Bandholtz,
Division Provost Marshal, 1898

Provost Marshal Duties During the Spanish-American War Era

By Master Sergeant Patrick V. Garland (Retired)

Military Police Hall of Fame honoree, Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz, had a long and interesting career interspersed with periods of law enforcement duties (even though he remained an infantry officer). Although it was his dream to incorporate military police duties into the Army, the Military Police Corps did not come into being until long after the death of Major General Bandholtz.

The year 1897 found First Lieutenant Harry Hill Bandholtz on detached service from the U.S. Army and assigned as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Michigan Agricultural College, Lansing, Michigan. However, in early 1898, war clouds were developing over Cuba. War with Spain was imminent. As a result, First Lieutenant Bandholtz was ordered to return to his unit, the 7th Infantry Regiment, where he served in the Santiago Campaign. For his gallantry in the battle at El Caney, Cuba, on 1 July 1898, First Lieutenant Bandholtz was awarded the Silver Star Medal. However, this award was not presented until 12 April 1927, long after the conflict in Cuba ended and nearly two years after the death of its recipient.

Upon his return from Cuba, First Lieutenant Bandholtz was promoted to major and assigned to the 35th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. The 35th was later designated as part of the 1st Division, 2d Army Corps, and was transferred to Camp McKenzie,

Georgia. On 15 November 1898, three months after the armistice went into effect but still a month before the end of the war, the 15th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was also transferred to Camp McKenzie. This location was organized as a winter camp for Headquarters, 2d Army Corps, and two brigades from the 1st Division. Unfortunately, the 15th Minnesota was known as the sickest regiment in the Army because of the illness that began shortly after the unit was formed near Minneapolis. Typhoid fever ran through the troops like wildfire.

Four companies in the 15th—F, K, M, and H—were hit hard. Personnel from the companies were relocated to an area 100 yards from the rest of the regiment, and lime was spread over the vacated areas. Company H—consisting of four commissioned officers and 105 enlisted men—suffered the most. With the exception of eight Soldiers, all company personnel reported to sick call; three later died.

On 4 February 1899, 24-year-old Private Dennis O'Connell, Company F, accompanied by his brother and two other companions, was drinking in a saloon in the Augusta area. The men got noisy and, according to some reports, used profane and vulgar language in the presence of the wife of saloonkeeper, C. Brown Hadley. Mr. Hadley warned the men about their language, and a shouting match ensued. It was then that Mr. Hadley produced a handgun and shot Private O'Connell to death. After the shooting, Mr. Hadley ran outside, mounted his horse, and departed. He surrendered to authorities sometime later, away from the scene of the shooting.

Private O'Connell was well respected in his unit, and his friends were upset when the news of his death reached Camp McKenzie. As Soldiers discussed what should be done, about 300 men gathered in front of the tent of their commander, Colonel Harry A. Leonhaeuser, demanding that he speak with them about the incident. He declined to do so, but received a few representatives and assured them that he would do everything within his power to bring the murderer to justice.

Later that evening, about 150 Soldiers broke out of camp and headed for Augusta. A lieutenant from the company managed to overtake the Soldiers, calm them down, and persuade them to return to camp. On the morning of 5 February, word reached camp that Mr. Hadley was being prepared for transport to Atlanta. Less than an hour later, Soldiers, led by Private Peter Foley, overpowered the few officers and noncommissioned officers guarding the ammunition storehouse. Breaking open the ammunition crates with pickaxes, the Soldiers armed themselves and headed to Augusta. Colonel Leonhaeuser tried to stop the mutineers, but a group of 70 continued with the march.

Major Bandholtz, the 1st Division Provost Marshal, was on notice due to the unrest from the previous day and had placed six troops of cavalry Soldiers and a large contingent of his provost guard on alert. The Soldiers were dispatched and were able to turn around most of the troops and return them to camp. The ringleaders were identified and put into shackles.

Elements of the Provost Guard, Troop A (Cavalry) and personnel from the 35th Michigan were dispatched to Augusta to round up the Soldiers and remove them from the city. Guards were left to protect the home of C. Brown Hadley, a target of the mutineers. In the meantime, Hadley was transported to Atlanta and placed in the Fulton County Jail pending trial.

Camp McKenzie was placed on lockdown; and the camp commander, Major General Samuel

"Headquarters, 1st Division, 2d Army Corps, Camp McKenzie, GA, 12-2-1898, Special Orders 183, the appointment of Major Harry H. Bandholtz, 35th Mich. V.I. as Provost Marshal of the Division is hereby continued until further orders. By command of BG Cobin."

Text of the first document found assigning provost marshal duties to Harry Hill Bandholtz.

Note: At the time, there were no military police personnel in the U.S Army. Provost guard duties were assigned as added duties to personnel serving in line units.

"Lt. H.H. Bandholtz, 7th U.S. Infantry

Dear Sir:

It affords me much pleasure to certify to the energetic and efficient manner in which you performed the duty of Provost Marshal at Augusta, Ga., last winter. That you were selected for that responsible position, and kept on such detail during the entire time you remained in Augusta, is good evidence of the manner in which you performed the duty. The quiet and good order that prevailed generally in camp and in the city, was due in a great measure to your energy and good judgment. I wish particularly to certify the able manner in which you appreciated the unfortunate outbreak of the 15th Minn. Regiment. Your instant call on the Cavalry and disposition of the Provost Guard, prevented what might have grown into a serious outbreak. As the Commanding Officer of the Division, I am very glad to send you this acknowledgement of your service under me."

Text from the letter of commendation sent by Major General Samuel S. Sumner, Commander, 7th Infantry Division, dated 10 October 1899.

Sumner, initiated an embargo that forbade troops to visit Augusta. A week later, after a delegation from Augusta visited the camp, the embargo was lifted.

Major Bandholtz is credited with calming the near-riot behavior of the troops from the 15th Minnesota. As a result of this unfortunate incident, the general courts-martial section at division headquarters placed nine of the instigators on trial. Eight of these were found guilty and sentenced to dishonorable discharges, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for periods ranging from six months to six years. The Soldiers were then transferred to St. Francis Barracks in St. Augustine, Florida, where they were confined.

In March 1899, eight months after the troops began their pointless and ill-fated tour of duty, the 15th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was mustered out of service. In July 1899, the 35th Michigan was released from Active Army duty and Major Bandholtz returned to the 7th Infantry. However, most likely because of his ability to speak the Spanish language, he was assigned to Cuba to command the Sagua La Grande District and supervise the free elections. He remained in Cuba for five months and was later assigned to the Philippine Islands.

References:

- Augusta Chronicle*, February 1899.
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Ray Crippen, "The Odyssey of the 15th Minnesota, Co. H," <<http://www.spanamwar.com/15thMinnCoH.htm>>, accessed 15 November 2007.

Franklin F. Holbrook, "Minnesota in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection," Minnesota War Records Commission, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1923.

Master Sergeant Garland retired from the U.S. Army in 1974. During his military career, he served in military police units and criminal investigation detachments and laboratories. At the time of his retirement, Master Sergeant Garland was serving as a ballistics evidence specialist at the European Laboratory. He remained in this career field until retiring from civilian law enforcement in 1995.