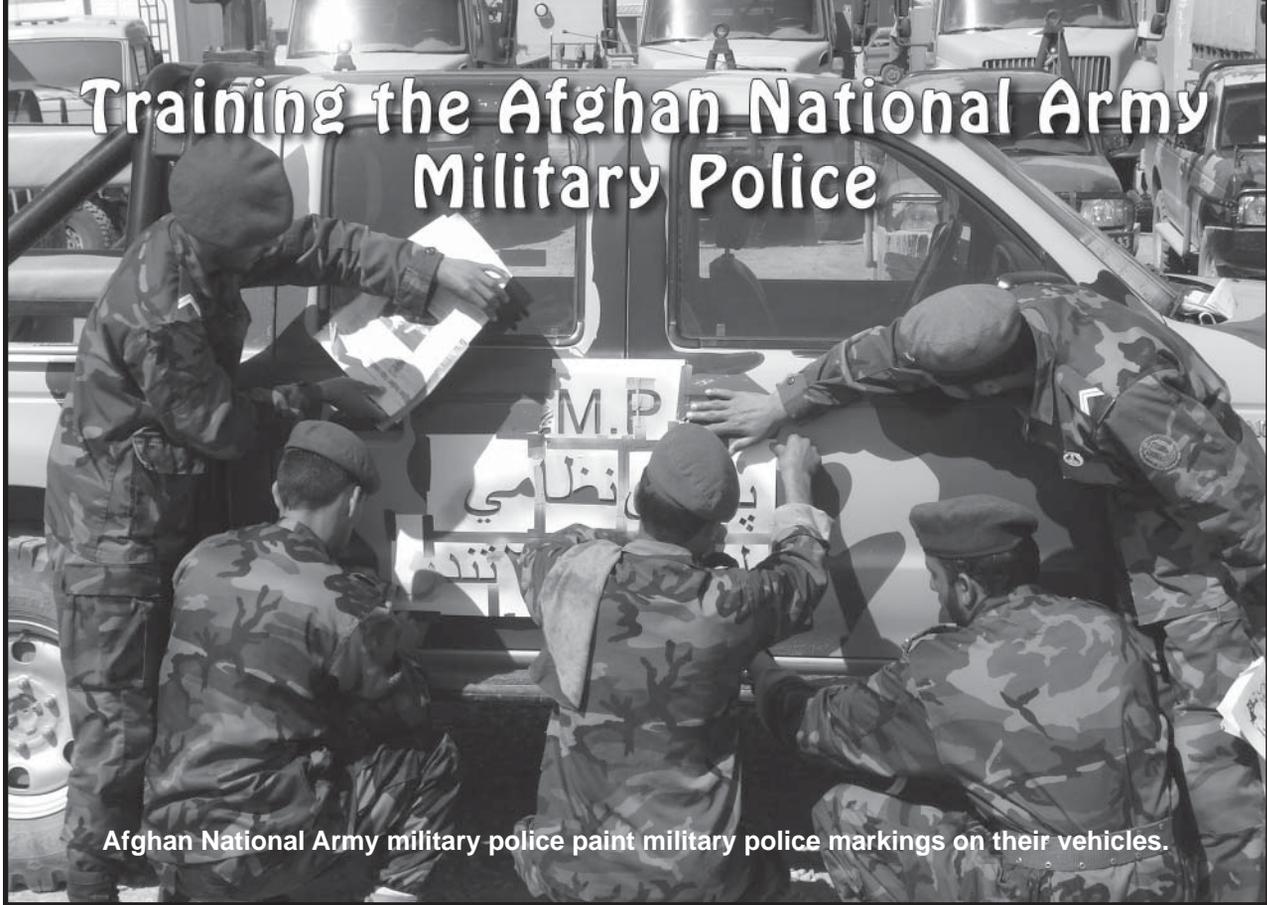


# Training the Afghan National Army Military Police



Afghan National Army military police paint military police markings on their vehicles.

*By Captain Mike Miranda and Sergeant First Class Stephen Palazzo*

“Congratulations, you’re a military policeman!”

“Great . . . but what’s a military policeman?”

As part of our mission in Afghanistan, the 503d Military Police Battalion (Airborne) has been tasked with training the first military police company of the 203d Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps. Training a host nation military police force always presents challenges, but establishing and training a military police force from scratch presents a new and even greater set of challenges.

The commander of the 203d ANA Corps created the military police company a scant six months ago by converting (in name only) about sixty ANA soldiers to military police. The commander had no clear understanding of how to employ military police forces, and the military police company had no stated purpose or task. Furthermore, the new military police had no previous military police training. It became clear that we would first need to determine the role of the military police company and then tailor a force that would best complement the commander’s current force structure.

While we had a clear idea of the “right” direction for the ANA military police, we knew from previous experience that forcing Middle Eastern agencies to conform to Western concepts and ideals only increases their frustration. And we also understood that the overriding factor used to determine our eventual success or failure would be the level of support the new military police company received from the ANA leadership who, as of that time, was

unfamiliar with the best means of employing these forces. The key to establishing a system that would continue to prosper long after we ended our partnership efforts was to mold the company not after our own ideals but, rather, after Afghan concepts. Full cooperation and input from our Afghan counterparts was crucial to the development of an appropriate training plan.

The commander of the 203d envisioned the new military police company conducting base law enforcement and security operations. As his military police mentors, we agreed. After all, these are the same operations that serve as the foundation of our own Military Police Corps and they are operations that we believe all military police should be capable of conducting. After mastering these operations, the ANA military police company should have the experience necessary to expand into other traditional military police roles.

We identified three succinct phases that were necessary for the company to become a self-sufficient military police unit. Clear objectives must be met for each phase before advancement to the next phase.

- Phase I covers the facilities, equipment, personnel, and training necessary to conduct basic law enforcement and security operations. Upon demonstrating the ability to perform these functions, students enter the second phase.
- Phase II focuses on increasing the strength of company personnel and equipment, establishing

formal advanced individual training (AIT) for all new recruits, and expanding the military police role to include maneuver and mobility support operations missions.

- Phase III incorporates area security and police intelligence operations into the military police mission set and addresses increases in the strength of personnel and equipment in the three line platoons and the headquarters element. The AIT program is also expanded to include separate officer basic and basic noncommissioned officer courses that focus on collective and leader tasks and fundamental leadership principles during Phase III.

Because these three phases were designed to be event-driven, rather than timeline-based, it is difficult to predict how long it will actually take the military police company to complete each phase. Therefore, this article focuses only on Phase I developments.

In conjunction with the ANA military police company commander and first sergeant, we made plans to conduct personnel asset and full equipment inventories to establish baseline conditions. In addition, we verified the literacy rate within the company to determine the level of detail and complexity of training that could be conducted. A simple, written vignette followed by several questions requiring the soldier to recall and expound upon specific details easily provided a quick assessment of the soldier's reading comprehension and written communication skills. However, such an individual skills test in a country with typically low literacy rates has the potential to bring public shame on those who perform poorly, particularly if those who perform poorly happen to include the leadership. To avoid this potentially serious offense, we explained the purpose and concept of the test to the company commander and first sergeant in a private meeting. After obtaining their approval, we had them administer the test, excluding those soldiers who admitted they were illiterate. We monitored the testing process and discreetly noted those who cheated. By having the Afghan leadership administer the test, we avoided falling into the stereotypical role of the arrogant American.

After conducting the literacy test and identifying those who were capable of reading and writing reports, we established a training course designed to "validate" the military police. Although a longer, more formal AIT course will eventually be incorporated into the initial military police training process, a condensed program covering basic skills training was implemented with the current unit.

Although the ideal military police candidate is literate, is physically fit, and has a clean service record, the fact is that most ANA military police are illiterate. Until all soldiers can meet an acceptable literacy level, the training

program and operational procedures must be adjusted accordingly. For example, the condensed military police course includes classes on reports, interviews, and evidence collection for literate individuals; but to maximize training efforts and include all current ANA military police, it also focuses on basic law enforcement techniques and skills such as searching, securing, and transporting a detainee; unarmed self-defense; principles of patrolling; principles of physical security; marksmanship; and interpersonal communication skills.

We believe that ANA soldiers should be presented with a visible and recognizable symbol of their achievement upon graduation from the military police training course. In a culture where uniform accoutrements are greatly valued, the most logical way to do this is to gain approval to add a military police brassard and distinctly colored beret to the military police uniform. And, literate military police who complete the more extensive "investigator" training are the only ANA military police authorized to carry pistols while on duty. This highly recognizable status symbol serves as an outward sign of authority and as an incentive for literacy improvement (which can be achieved through available night classes).

As the ANA military police demonstrate their ability to perform basic law enforcement operations, we plan to expand our training efforts to improve provost marshal office functions. Participation in activities such as guard mounting, report filing and organizing, and blotter report writing will provide the commander of the ANA Corps with a highly visible means of measuring the success of the military police. With demonstrated professionalism and increased publicity, the military police training program can move into Phase II, further transforming those soldiers into a capable fighting force.

There is a lot of work to do, and there are many obstacles to overcome. Major projects always require patience and dedication to see them through. However, we are optimistic and eager to implement these training initiatives. The goal of the 503d Military Police Battalion is to plant the seeds of success and establish a baseline upon which future units can build, ultimately creating a professional Afghan military police corps that we will be proud to welcome into our great fraternity.

---

*Captain Miranda is a 503d Military Police Battalion battle captain and primary ANA military police mentor supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. He holds a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, New Jersey.*

*Sergeant First Class Palazzo is a platoon sergeant with the 503d Military Police Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At the time this article was written, he was a 503d battle noncommissioned officer and primary ANA military police mentor supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. He graduated from the Marion Military Institute, Marion, Alabama, and attended the University of Colorado.*