
The Forensic Exploitation Battalion



By Lieutenant Colonel Martin Rowe

Beginning in 2004, the Multinational Corps–Iraq (MNC-I) established several unrelated, stand-alone, forensic facilities with limited mission sets. The Combined Explosive Exploitation Cell (CEXC) was the first lab established to conduct technical and limited biometric analyses on all materials related to improvised explosive devices and to develop effective countermeasures based on these analyses. Due to a large number of sniper attacks, a countersniper lab was established in December 2006 to positively identify insurgents through fingerprint and ballistic comparisons. U.S. Marines in the Multinational Forces–West area also stood up their own forensic lab, which had fingerprint capability only. Based on the success of these programs, the commander of the MNC-I directed the establishment of a system of joint expeditionary forensic facilities (JEFFs) to conduct forensic analysis on all materials not related to improvised explosive devices. One forensic lab was established to directly support each multinational division (MND), and all labs were placed under the administrative control of a U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC) (commonly referred to as the “CID”) battalion. The countersniper lab was redesignated as JEFF 3, and the Marine lab was redesignated as JEFF 2. In March 2008, the 733d Military Police Battalion (CID), also known as the Forensic Exploitation Battalion, was deployed to Iraq to assume command and control of the existing labs and to begin standing up three additional labs in support of the commander’s intent.

The 733d Military Police Battalion is a CID asset that normally supervises three to six CID detachments conducting general criminal investigations. The mission of overseeing theater forensic assets is new to the Army and to the CID. Based on the needs of the MNC-I commander, the 733d was released from CID command and assigned directly to the MNC-I headquarters under the Corps Provost Marshal’s Office. This marked the first time that a CID asset had been released to another command.

The 733d Military Police Battalion—

- Establishes, commands, and controls all JEFF assets in the theater.
- Implements and operates a police intelligence fusion cell that provides real-time intelligence to combatant commanders.
- Establishes a partnership with and serves as a mentor to Iraqi forensic services and the Iraqi Major Crimes Unit.
- Conducts site exploitation, train-the-trainer courses for coalition forces.
- Serves as the executive agent for MNC-I forensic operations staff.

The primary function of the battalion is to establish, command, and control all theater JEFF assets. The 733d currently has administrative control of five geographically dispersed JEFFs in Iraq. The battalion is responsible for ensuring that theater forensic requirements are transmitted to the U.S. Central Command for validation. Once the validation is complete, the 733d executes the administrative and logistical functions necessary to implement the requirements. This includes oversight of all equipment purchases, transportation, and sustainment. In addition, the battalion tracks the contracting of civilian lab examiner personnel, ensuring that personnel hired possess the appropriate skill sets.

The involvement of the 733d in this mission also marks the first time a military police organization has conducted police intelligence operations in a theater of operations. The 733d police intelligence fusion cell is designed to complement and enhance existing systems—not to serve as a stand-alone system. The 733d ensures that all intelligence derived from forensic analysis at the labs is fused with existing intelligence regarding the insurgent or event. The result is then fully integrated into existing military intelligence systems and processes and transmitted directly to the battlespace owner in a timely manner so that the commander can maximize the use of

the information. This intelligence information may also be used to prosecute insurgents through the Iraqi judicial system.

Since arriving in the theater, the 733d Military Police Battalion has produced packets on more than 1,200 insurgents who were involved in attacks on coalition forces and for whom positive identifications were made through forensic analysis. These packets include forensic information fused with other available, relevant intelligence regarding the subject or incident. If the subject is at-large, a targeting packet is prepared and information (including information about the significant activity) is entered into the Combined Information Data Network Exchange and sent to the targeting cell and law enforcement professional (LEP) in the area of responsibility. LEPs recently effected the capture of three insurgents identified in targeting packets. If the subject is in U.S. detention, a prosecution packet is prepared and provided to U.S. attorneys who prosecute cases in the Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

The 733d Military Police Battalion established the Investigative Task Force (ITF) to enhance police intelligence operations. The ITF (which consists of one staff judge advocate from the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, two U.S. Navy master-at-arms investigators, and two 733d CID special agents) is assigned in direct support of an MND. The ITF reviews all insurgent detentions and develops the cases into legally sustainable detentions and prosecutions within the Iraqi judicial system. With the recent implementation of the Security Forces Agreement, all detentions in Iraq must now be legally based and result from a violation of Iraqi law. An arrest warrant from an Iraqi court is also necessary before any detention by U.S. forces. This shift from intelligence- and security-based detentions to legal-based criminal cases requires that the MNC-I further develop the ITF capability. Due to the early success of the ITF, the 733d Military Police Battalion is seeking additional assets to expand the concept to all MNDs in Iraq.

Through a directive from the commanding general of the Multinational Force–Iraq, the 733d was tasked to establish a partnership and mentoring program with the Iraqi Major Crimes Unit. This partnership focuses on sharing information about attacks on coalition forces and other crimes related to insurgent activity. Although this partnership is still in its infancy, it has already yielded positive results. The 733d has further established a partnership with the Iraqi Criminal Evidence Division for assistance in establishing viable forensic facilities. Together, the 733d and the JEFFs have the forensic expertise necessary to provide consultation and oversight support for the Iraqi effort.

As the MNC-I executive agent for forensics, the 733d coordinates and synchronizes the efforts of all players in the forensic arena of Iraq. The JEFF system comprises one of the key players; two others are the CEXC lab and the document and media exploitation cells. The CEXC lab and

the document and media exploitation cells routinely submit cases beyond their own capabilities to the JEFFs for analysis. These submissions include deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and firearm/tool mark analysis requests. And the 733d assists the CEXC lab by developing prosecution packets for cases in which there is a positive biometric match and the subject is detained. The 733d also hosts quarterly interlab working group meetings, which are designed to ensure that the forensic assets complement one another.

While in theater, the 733d identified a significant gap in forensic training for coalition forces. Although most forces received some training in evidence collection, tactical concerns were the first priority and much of that valuable training was forgotten. To address this problem, the 733d (in conjunction with the Multinational Forces–West Joint Prosecution and Exploitation Cell) now conducts a five-day, site exploitation, train-the-trainer course for coalition forces. The course focuses on the proper way to collect, preserve, and ship forensic materials to the appropriate labs; and it covers the capabilities of the JEFF and CEXC labs. So far, the 733d has trained more than 1,500 Soldiers from over 20 different units. This training has become extremely valuable—especially given the shift from intelligence- and security-based detentions to legal-based detentions.

Since arriving in Iraq, the 733d has seen a 300 percent increase in the number of cases submitted to the JEFF labs for analysis—in spite of the fact that the number of attacks on coalition forces drastically diminished during that same time frame. This increase in the number of cases submitted is due to maneuver commanders being better informed about the capabilities of the labs and to improvements in evidence collection training. LEPs deserve much of the credit, as they have played a huge role in briefing commanders and getting material to the labs for analysis.

With the establishment of a JEFF in each MND area of operation, JEFF caseloads will continue to expand. As the challenges grow, the road ahead will be a busy one for the 733d. As the Iraqi theater of operations evolves toward the rule of law, evidentiary detainments and prosecutions will play an increasingly crucial role in developing a stable future for Iraq. The 733d is in a unique position to positively effect this transition, reduce attacks on coalition forces, and increase Iraqi primacy.

Editor's note: For more information about the JEFF 3 counter-sniper lab, see the article entitled "Expeditionary Forensics: The Warrior's Science Revealing the Hidden Enemy" on page 5.

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