

# Military Police:

## The First Choice for First Response

*Article and photographs by Sergeant Heather A. Denby*

Soldiers from the 92d Military Police Battalion, 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, rose to the challenge of combating the effects of a 31 December 2010 tornado that left 4 people on the installation with minor injuries and more than 150 military homes uninhabitable.

Sergeant Joshua Parker, a military policeman with the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, was the desk sergeant on duty at the Directorate of Emergency Services building the morning the storm hit. "I received a call that a tornado had touched down south of [Training Area 211, and] I immediately notified my patrols to take cover," Sergeant Parker said.

As soon as the storm cleared the post, the phone calls began to pour in. "I instructed the patrols to follow the storm's path across post to conduct damage assessments and check for any injured personnel," said Parker.

Military police Soldiers are trained in the area of first response during Advanced Individual Training, and they receive follow-up training at the unit level.

Sergeant Andrew Dean, a military policeman assigned to the 463d Military Police Company, 92d Military Police Battalion, was the patrol supervisor during the storm. He was the first to arrive at Goethals Drive—the hardest-hit housing area on the post. "I called in to the [Directorate of Emergency Services] desk to let them know that military housing was pretty much destroyed," Sergeant Dean said. "Then, I got out of my vehicle and started searching for any people who might be trapped. At the very first home on the street, I heard yelling and I finally saw a hand reaching out of a small hole," he said. "I just kept talking to him, and somehow he was able to push his child out of the rubble." Dean credits his quick reaction to muscle memory developed through unit training.

As Sergeant Dean was doing his job, hundreds of other military police Soldiers across the installation were doing theirs. More than 350 military police were called in on New Year's Eve to respond to the natural disaster.



**Above and below: Military police Soldiers assess damage and search for injured victims of the tornado.**



These Soldiers conducted search-and-rescue operations and wellness checks, provided initial casualty assistance, established traffic control points, and performed damage assessments.

In less than an hour, the Directorate of Emergency Services and the 92d Military Police Battalion established an on-site mobile command post that was capable of fielding telephone calls and e-mail messages and dispatching emergency responders throughout the state. Via radio, dispatchers coordinated interagency recovery efforts with the Installation Operations Center, Directorate of Public Works, Directorate of Logistics, and state and local emergency response agencies such as the St. Robert Fire Department. After civilian emergency response components arrived at the scene, military police provided augmentation and assistance in cordoning off areas that were considered to be unsafe for public transportation.

Within the first week of the disaster, more than 7,000 hours were dedicated to tornado law enforcement and emergency responder augmentation. Weeks later, military police continue to provide security for the homes and personal property affected by the tornado.

“I just can’t imagine coming home from the holidays to . . . nothing,” said Sergeant Dean, as he patrolled Goethals Drive. “It’s really rewarding to be able to allow families to come back to their homes and to see the looks on their faces when they find something they cherish.”

According to a Directorate of Emergency Services spokesperson, patrols will continue to provide additional security on and around damaged areas until the installation commander directs otherwise.

“Military police have been called upon during several natural disasters, from Haiti to our own Gulf Coast hurricanes,” said Major Timothy Slep, rear detachment commander, 92d Military Police Battalion. “It is important to realize that we play a vital role in emergency response—not just overseas, but at home too.”

**Editor’s Note:** *More photographs of the Fort Leonard Wood tornado are shown on the back cover.*

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*Sergeant Denby is a photojournalist assigned to the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.*

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