

91st Military Police Battalion Multistate, Full Spectrum Operations Exercise

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In October 2010, the 91st Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, Fort Drum, New York, successfully deployed, trained, and redeployed two military police companies and one headquarters detachment from Fort Drum to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, while partnering with state police from four eastern states for liaison and convoy escort operations in support of a 610-mile 10th Sustainment Brigade movement exercise to Fort Pickett, Virginia. While such multifaceted operations are typical of military police missions abroad, they are rarely conducted across several home states. However—along with offensive, defensive, and other stability operations—civil support operations are an important part of full spectrum operations.

In conjunction with authorities from Fort Drum, Fort Indiantown Gap, and Fort Pickett and state police from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, the 91st Military Police (or “Guardian”) Battalion carefully planned and coordinated mission command, maneuver and mobility support operations, law and order operations, police intelligence operations, area security operations, and the sustainment of the battalion. The 91st successfully deployed a battalion (with 60 vehicles) and facilitated the movement of a brigade headquarters and support battalion (with 129 vehicles) from the 10th Sustainment Brigade, while simultaneously conducting law enforcement operations and carrying out chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives consequence management response force responsibilities.

According to the commander of the 543d Military Police Company (which was experiencing a reset phase following a July 2010 redeployment from Operation Iraqi Freedom), the most challenging area of the exercise involved planning and preparation with limited resources. He indicated, “After overcoming mission equipment shortfalls, execution was essentially straightforward due to extensive and detailed rehearsals at battalion, company, platoon, and squad levels.”

One of the main training objectives of the commander of the 91st Military Police Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Carl J. Packer, was to leverage the movement of so many personnel and vehicles through multiple jurisdictions at the federal, state, county, city, and township levels. The goal was to focus on high-payoff tasks that would cut across multiple mission-essential task lists—such as the conduct of police and maneuver and mobility support operations. To accomplish these tasks, the 91st made use of liaisons, who were located at state police stations throughout the route from Fort Drum to Fort Pickett, to ensure the synchronization of all military movements within the various sectors. Thanks to several key state partnerships, the operation was very successful.

The 543d Military Police Company provided military police liaison support at five of eight state police stations in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, with the 23d Military Police Company providing support at the remaining stations in New York and Pennsylvania. The military police Soldiers who served as liaisons found their state police hosts to be very accommodating. The Soldiers were also pleased to have the opportunity to compare and contrast civilian law enforcement operations with those of military police. For example, a specialist with the 543d Military Police Company observed a Virginia State Police special

weapons and tactics team preparing for a forced entry to an illegal oxycodone distribution site and learned that inspections and checks are just as critical to civil support operations as they are to expeditionary environments. Overall, the Soldier felt that the U.S. Army and state police are organized and that they operate in a very similar manner, which facilitated cooperation.

Communication was the key to mission success. The primary means of communication between the battalion rear at Fort Drum, the battalion main at Fort Indiantown Gap, serials moving along the interstate highway system, and military police elements embedded at state police stations was the Blue Force Tracker—a system that uses global positioning information to provide military commanders and forces with the locations of friendly and hostile military forces. The ability to immediately send detailed messages and reports over this system allowed the battalion commander to obtain a clear, common operating picture across a large area. The use of cellular telephones was kept to an absolute minimum to ensure the maximum use of Blue Force Tracker and frequency modulation communications for internal command and control.

The battalion tactical operations center carefully monitored the speed of convoys; traffic congestion levels; and frequency and duration of rest stops, unplanned halts, and refueling operations via Blue Force Tracker to ensure the safe and efficient movement of serials to their release points. In addition, each serial used Blue Force Tracker to contact the military police liaisons at the state police stations after phase lines had been cleared. It became evident that, for any future contingency operations in which civilian communications systems are disrupted, military communications systems are capable of quickly becoming the primary means for passing critical information.

Sustainment operations were also very critical to the mission. Detailed planning and logistics estimates revealed that equipment would be moved well beyond previous movement distances. As a result, spare fuel was carried on all vehicles and refueling points were established at National Guard facilities located between Fort Drum and Fort Indiantown Gap and between Fort Indiantown Gap and Fort Pickett. Wreckers and mechanics were also an integral part of the mission, and spare parts were transported to Fort Indiantown Gap to ensure continued equipment maintenance capabilities. Fortunately, a strong emphasis on preventive maintenance checks and services before and during the operation minimized the need for vehicle support throughout the movements.

The eight days between deployment to, and redeployment from, Fort Indiantown Gap allowed ample opportunity for Soldiers to take advantage of the great training assets available at the Pennsylvania National Guard's primary training installation. The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 543d Military Police Company, and the 563d Military Police Company conducted full

spectrum operations training on individual and collective tasks such as communications, day and night land navigation, urban operations, and critical-site security. The training also included warrior tasks; battle drills; leadership reaction course drills; and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives instruction. The 563d Military Police Company also enhanced their chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives consequence management response force readiness by conducting an antiterrorism/force protection exercise (which included maneuver and mobility support operations, area and critical-asset security, and the collection and analysis of police information) with Fort Indiantown Gap police at the Pennsylvania National Guard, Joint Force Headquarters. The exercise tested the company's ability to alert, marshal, and deploy within a 400-mile radius of the home station and then operate and sustain the unit during a contingency operation. Because leadership professional development was another commander's training objective, the 91st Military Police Battalion visited the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Northeast Counterdrug Training Center, and Gettysburg National Military Park. They also attended an officer professional development brief presented by Brigadier General John L. Gronski, assistant adjutant general of the Pennsylvania National Guard. This well-rounded professional development program maintained the ongoing focus on the full spectrum operations aspect of military police support.

New Army doctrine challenges the force to adopt a new mind-set and train for full spectrum operations. When presented with the rare chance for a Regular Army military police organization to leave their home station to operate in several states within the continental United States, the 91st Military Police Battalion leveraged all available resources to maximize training opportunities. According to Major Will McKannay, former operations and training officer (S-3), 91st Military Police Battalion, "I, for one, say the Guardian Soldiers have met the challenge—demonstrating they can deploy, anytime and anywhere, across the full spectrum of operations."

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