
Agents Work Behind the Scenes



By Sergeant First Class Mary A. Mott

They are the “Shadow Soldiers,” mostly working behind the scenes, combining the work of police detectives, Secret Service agents, and forensic investigators. Their skills include photography, writing, reporting, and a keen sense of how to handle difficult and complex interpersonal relationships. Beyond all of that, of course, they are Soldiers first.

Their roles vary from investigating felonies committed against Soldiers and civilians employed on military bases to guarding visiting members of the Department of Defense. Criminal Investigation Division (CID) agents serve both in uniform and in civilian attire, depending on the mission. They are sworn to uphold the law as it affects the military and enforce it fairly and without prejudice, and they take that assignment seriously.

The Soldiers of the 481st Military Police Detachment (CID), 10th Military Police Battalion, have varied roles while stationed in Iraq. At Camp Liberty, on Forward Operating Bases Falcon, Kalsu, Loyalty, and Prosperity and in the International Zone, the small unit acts as both an investigative and protective service. CID services at Camp Victory fall under the 76th Military Police Detachment, a sister element under the 10th Military Police Battalion.

This is a small career field, with approximately 900 CID military agents out of a total of about 2,000 agents worldwide, counting civilians working at forensic laboratories and in related jobs. The CID is the Army’s version of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and its agents do not investigate a crime unless it is a felony. Misdemeanors are investigated by military police investigators. One noncommissioned officer with the 481st said he knows that to a Soldier who steps outside the law, the CID can be seen as a “villain.” The charges cannot be dropped simply because the accused individual is a fellow Soldier, though.

“The cost of not conducting the investigations is much higher. We create a layer of transparency so the

public can’t say to the Army, ‘Oh, you’re just covering stuff up.’ That is why we exist,” he said.

A warrant officer, one of two women investigators with the unit, joined the Army 10 years ago as a military police Soldier but said that being part of the CID was always her goal. She recalled being profoundly affected by a college professor—a former CID agent—who inspired her to make law enforcement a career. She has been an agent for five years and is a team leader for other agents. She also teaches the CID’s role in investigating rapes and other sexual assault cases to students in the Army’s new Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program. She also serves as a liaison and subject matter expert with the newly formed Iraqi police version of the CID and meets weekly with Iraqi officials to confer on cases.

The ability to separate fact from fiction and then put the facts down on paper in an unbiased, cohesive report is a big part of an agent’s job. The report has to be fair, accurate, and thorough and must give the commander and trial counsel a clear idea of the evidence against the accused Soldier. Agents do not work for either the prosecution or the defense, but are simply fact-finders, she said.

Agents have many educational opportunities, including training in child abuse prevention and intervention, crisis negotiation, detective service training, and numerous sexual assault service courses. Agents may become polygraph examiners and can apply for a master’s degree program in forensic medicine offered by George Washington University in Washington, DC. There is also the opportunity to attend the FBI’s prestigious academy at Quantico,

Virginia. Soldiers who would like to become agents but do not have the requisite six months of law enforcement experience can perform on-the-job training with a CID unit for six months to acquire this experience and ensure “that this career field is the right thing for them,” explained the warrant officer.

The CID course, conducted at the U.S. Army Military Police School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, lasts six weeks. A new agent serves a one-year apprenticeship but is credentialed as an agent during that time. Agents investigate a variety of crimes, such as the following:

- Economic crimes, including contract fraud.
- Computer crimes.
- Sabotage.
- Sex crimes.

- Illegal drug activities.
- Child abuse.
- Murder.
- Suicide.
- Arson.
- Any other felonies.

On occasion, agents may have to guard high-ranking Department of Defense leaders, said the warrant officer, but most of the time the job is routine police investigative work. Agents also are called upon to give testimony at courts-martial and in federal and civilian courts. For more information on becoming an agent, visit the CID Web site at www.cid.army.mil.

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