
42d Military Police Brigade

By Colonel Richard Swengros

In late June 2004, the 1st Military Police Brigade (Provisional) received a Department of the Army order to activate as the 42d Military Police Brigade in October 2004. Looming on the horizon was a probable deployment and the Army wasted little time in publishing another order to deploy the brigade's headquarters and headquarters company to Iraq in November 2004, less than 30 days after the activation date.

Unusual and difficult? Yes. Impossible? The fantastic Soldiers of the brigade headquarters would answer with a resounding "No." They not only deployed to Iraq, but turned the concept of headquarters support into a unique, highly effective partnership with the Iraqi police. Their year of hard work in Iraq resulted in 2006 being declared the "Year of the Police" by General George W. Casey Jr., commander of the Multinational Force-Iraq.

What follows are lessons learned concerning how the 42d Military Police Brigade men and women came together to achieve change and progress in ways not accomplished before. The intent of this article is to highlight some of the unique challenges the U.S. Army is presenting to leaders of all ranks. These are challenges the U.S. Army should address in leader instruction and seminars in all schools and units. The 42d Military Police Brigade embarked on a partnership program that put U.S. military police units at the forefront of efforts to establish local security and stability while maintaining the distinctly important combat support role to maneuver units.

Getting Started—A Challenge for Leaders

In early 2004, the 1st Military Police Brigade (Provisional) was performing law enforcement and force protection responsibilities at Fort Lewis, Washington, and was engaged in professional development and unit readiness responsibilities for subordinate units. After receiving the order to activate as the 42d Military Police Brigade and deploy, the brigade began forming the headquarters and headquarters company from the ground floor, going from an organization with no equipment and just 13 personnel to a combat ready force. Quickly, the

prospect of deployment, the influx of new equipment and personnel, and the daily needs of the Fort Lewis mission became nearly overbearing. It is a credit to the original unit members and those assigned early on that they were able to accomplish all missions to the level of excellence they achieved.

As the brigade began to receive equipment, timelines were set for training with equipment and then loading it. Just-in-time logistics is a phrase the U.S. Army has heard for years. While the concept works well in an established logistics system, it did not work well for the brigade. Just-in-time personnel fills is a newer phenomenon that also presents difficult challenges to all leaders. The brigade headquarters had three months for training after receiving its deployment order. In July, the operations and training (S3) officer and the intelligence (S2) officer had just arrived. The S3 sergeant major was reassigned from a subordinate battalion that had recently returned from Iraq. In the next 90 days, the entire brigade commissioned and noncommissioned officer (NCO) staffs would come together while trying to execute command post exercises and other necessary training. It was not until the mission rehearsal exercise during the unit's block leave in October that key officers and NCOs were first able to exercise the entire staff process. The brigade was now less than 30 days from deployment. All key players were in place, with the exception of the civil affairs and communications (S6) officers, who would arrive after deployment.

Just-in-time personnel fills shortchanged training and laid a significant burden on the personnel in the unit. Leaders had to balance taking care of new Soldiers with meeting training goals in order to reach established ramp strength and training certification requirements. Clearly, the unit live-fire exercise conducted in April did not reflect the unit that would deploy. The way the brigade trained was extremely different from the way it would fight in a combat environment. The brigade's Soldiers were exhausted at the deployment date. The fact that this unit was able to form, train, and deploy in such a short time is a testament to their professionalism and expertise.

The rear detachment plays a critical role in the forming process, especially in preparing follow-on Soldiers for immediate deployment and in building the family support confidence that is so essential in the rear. The rear detachment commander and other key leaders must be self-starters who are personable, responsible, and professionally competent, especially when the rear detachment is a brigade headquarters that is still responsible for significant installation support missions and for deploying and redeploying other subordinate units.

Deploying Forces—Setting the Stage

Upon arrival in Iraq, the brigade headquarters began the relief in place of the combat-tested 89th Military Police Brigade. The initial mission set found military police companies under the operational control of the 1st Cavalry Division for support to maneuver brigades and for security and escorts for embassy and Iraqi transitional government personnel. Three other companies were task-organized from the brigade to Task Force (TF) Olympia and the Multinational Division North Central. The companies were not being managed by the 89th Military Police Brigade. The remaining brigade elements were conducting detention operations at Camp Cropper and Camp Ashraf.

The brigade headquarters quickly established its own battle rhythm. It continued to form as a combat team and complete the nearly six months of company-sized deployment and redeployment operations while simultaneously conducting combat support operations. The six months of establishing the combat team took its toll on the brigade and battalion staffs as they managed this lengthy process while trying to perform combat operations. Evaluation reports, awards, leave planning, and other administrative and support operations were negatively affected by this extended process. In the future, condensing the deployment window to 60 to 90 days would enhance effectiveness.

Engaging Our Expertise

When asked what help was needed at the Iraqi police stations, one squad leader from the 127th Military Police Company did not hesitate to say that someone had to fix the Iraqi police headquarters. A week later, a platoon leader in the 272d Military Police Company gave the same answer. From my experiences as a battalion executive officer in Bosnia in December 1995 and as a battalion commander in Kosovo in June 1999, I knew these Soldiers were correct. It became obvious to the brigade's planners and leaders that to be successful, the following actions were necessary:

- Address the needs of and build the entire Iraqi police force, not just a portion of it.
- Establish population control systems such as vehicle licensing and registration.
- Improve local security by improving Iraqi police effectiveness with training, operations, and professionalism.

The brigade's planners and leaders also observed that in a combat environment, United Nations or other civilian police trainers or liaison officers would not be sufficient to bring about the necessary changes.

Presenting this information to the staff and battalion commanders, the brigade's planners and leaders became convinced that the brigade and battalion headquarters had the skill sets necessary to improve all levels of Iraqi police headquarters, the Iraqi police stations, and the individual Iraqi policemen simultaneously. No longer could the brigade accept simply trying to improve a station commander and his police forces. The brigade had to fix all levels and the overall policing system.

An equally significant observation during the assessment of the area of responsibility (AOR) was that the maneuver unit boundaries crossed police station, district, and even provincial boundaries. Although synchronization was often talked about, the reality was that there was very little synchronization of police support efforts. The criminals and insurgents had the opportunity to operate in many seams and used the lack of police operations synchronization to their advantage. The U.S. Army saw this happen in Bosnia and Kosovo also. On the ground, police commanders had to typically answer to two or more combat arms commanders who were trying to stabilize their own AORs. To say the situation resulted in confusion for Iraqi police leaders would be an understatement. They were frustrated and the Multinational Security and Transition Corps-Iraq (MNSTC-I) and the Civilian Police Assistance and Training Team (CPATT) were somewhat ineffective in getting the Iraqi police to grasp concepts such as responsibility, professionalism, the rule of law, and fair and humane treatment of prisoners and to bring about genuine change.

In Tikrit and Mosul, the brigade command team saw platoon leaders and company commanders working hard to accomplish the mission but little was coordinated outside each AOR. In effect, our Military Police Corps was providing platoon-level expertise to senior maneuver commanders when they really needed battalion and brigade command- and military police headquarters-level expertise to resolve difficult issues.

Within 60 days of taking over its military police mission, the brigade faced the Iraqi elections of January 2005. As the elections approached, the III Corps, 1st Cavalry Division, Task Force Olympia (Mosul) leadership, and the brigade leaders and planners recognized that there was a lack of resources to provide oversight and partnership with the Iraqi police headquarters, especially in Mosul and the key city of Baghdad. The brigade staff developed a plan to mitigate this lack and support the maneuver units and the Mosul and Baghdad Iraqi police headquarters for the elections. During the election preparation and execution periods, the brigade worked closely with the 1st Cavalry Division to ensure that the brigade's efforts in Baghdad were linked with the commander's intent. The brigade used the division's effects cell and provost marshal office as the anchor points to ensure that it remained well grounded in the division's overall plan to support the elections and establish security.

As the brigade worked through the elections, the Iraqi police found a new friend and comrade and the 1st Cavalry Division discovered that the 42d Military Police Brigade's battalion commanders and staffs brought tremendous police expertise to the table. It was expertise that the Iraqi police leaders were anxious to capitalize on. The brigade found an opportunity to develop a partnership program that would use the expertise of military police commanders and staffs to partner with provincial, directorate, and district chiefs of the Iraqi police.

Building the Partnership Program

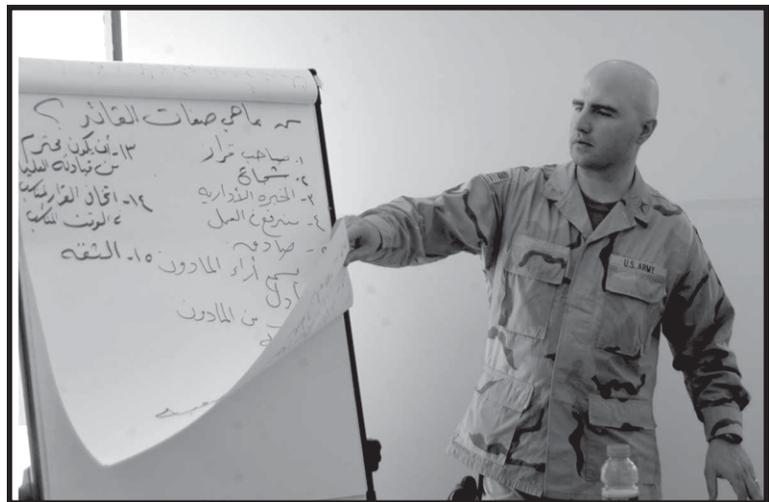
The combined efforts of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 42d Military Police Brigade with the Baghdad police and the Ministry of Interior during the elections proved significant in jump-starting the partnership program the brigade leaders and planners envisioned. The table was set. The brigade headquarters was partnering well with the Baghdad police. The headquarters of the 720th Military Police Battalion in the east and the 231st (and later the 504th) Military Police Battalion in the west partnered with their respective directorate headquarters. The brigade then ensured that the military police companies partnered with the district commanders within their respective AORs.

The brigade leaders and planners should have seen earlier the need to better establish the leaders and systems that support the patrolmen. This need was similar to some of the shortfalls experienced with building the police of

Bosnia and Kosovo. In both of those operations, U.S. Army leaders and planners saw inexperienced host nation (HN) police trying to perform police duties. Those who had been police in the past were largely mistrusted by the community. The police were under terrible pressure from fellow tribesmen and neighbors, from people offering bribes, and from the numerous threats they received. There were also corrupt police and those who put their own needs first. This further diminished the overall performance of the police, as well as the respect the people had for the police. In all three deployments, it could be argued that the senior police leaders were totally ineffective, mostly because they had no experience to lead at that level and little or no government support. It was obvious that to make the partnership program work the brigade would have to involve police leaders at all levels.

Reviewing these facts, the brigade's leaders and planners soon published an order that set out to address these shortfalls by partnering each of the brigade staff elements with an Iraqi police partner. The S1 officer and noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) soon became experts in Iraqi police pay and assignment regulations, awards, and retirement programs. The public affairs representative, working with the brigade S1 section, helped the Iraqi police develop their own public relations capabilities. The S2 officer and NCOIC did tremendous work in establishing a police intelligence system. The S3 section provided several officers and NCOs to work with Iraqi police operations personnel. They set up systems for tracking requirements, developing synchronized police plans, and instituting useful reporting systems.

The brigade supply section made significant improvements to the Iraqi police capabilities through



A U.S. military police officer reviews leadership traits with Iraqi police leaders during the Baghdad Police Chiefs Leadership Seminar.

partnership with Iraqi police headquarters logistics and maintenance facilities and through the development of the maintenance facility for the Baghdad province. When the brigade's leaders and planners first walked into the maintenance facility, there were several hundred damaged or broken vehicles and just a handful of employees with few tools. Using the brigade's systems as a baseline, the Iraqi police services cell developed the maintenance facility into a first-class operation, repairing almost 300 vehicles per month. They operated tool rooms, parts bins, and maintenance schedules effectively. The logistics personnel made the same strides in the warehouses and weapons and ammunition storage facilities, as well.

The S6 section became heavily involved in setting up local area networks and working with CPATT to bring in improved radio communications systems. The S6 personnel also taught the Iraqis how to use computers and computer programs to effectively manage their subordinate elements. Finally, they led the effort in the "train the trainer" program. The brigade not only developed classes in English but in Arabic as well and then ensured that the Iraqis developed their own trainer expertise in order to continue the programs once the brigade departed the theater.

The brigade legal and chaplain sections also contributed to the partnership efforts with their Iraqi

police counterparts. The legal section trained personnel who worked in Iraqi jails and in the legal offices of the police directorates in human rights, detention, and record-keeping procedures. The chaplain section was instrumental in fostering human rights at a time when tribal feuds were undermining efforts to bring respect for and professionalism in the police force.

Establishing the Police Force

Partnership with HN police is important, especially in the early phases of an operation. Without a stable and legitimate police force, the government will not succeed. The people must respect the police but respect is impossible with police corruption or illegitimate police tactics. As in Bosnia and Kosovo, Iraq found its police academy at the heart of allegations of institutional biases, fraud and abuse, and relative ineffectiveness. The first police academy set up in Baghdad produced police in eight weeks. While understanding the rationale for limiting the instruction to eight weeks, it must also be acknowledged that there is not a legitimate police force in the world that trains its police in just eight weeks. Coupled with the insurgent activity and the weakness of the infrastructure, the Iraqi police were being set up for difficulties—not for success.

The staffs of MNSTC-I and CPATT worked hard to fix this. Together with the military police and with



U.S. military and civilian police leaders engage Iraqi senior leaders in developing strategies for the Iraqi police departments. Small-group seminars helped the Iraqis develop strategies they could then teach to their subordinates.

some Iraqi police liaison officers embedded at key police academies in Mosul and Baghdad, the staffs began to fix the problems of the academies. They also linked academy training to street training and linked the training to street needs. Where possible, the expertise of law and order detachments was used to bolster the technical and management capabilities of the academies. Before long, the academies were running well and the situation was stabilized so that the brigade was able to add two more weeks of police training and refine the station training to reap the greatest benefits.

As training was further developed and programs implemented, such as the police-essential task list (an offshoot of U.S. Army job books), coordination among policing entities began to grow. As elements of the 42d Military Police Brigade moved about the AOR, the Iraqi police reached out to establish partnerships in their areas. Even the Ministry of Interior deputy for police affairs, who initially opposed such an idea, saw the benefits of the partnership and the synchronization and professionalism of the police forces. Soon the brigade headquarters was making progress in the same partnership and leader/manager development with this government element.

Achieving Success

As the brigade began departing Iraq, a much better police force was left behind. The brigade's success led directly to the proclamation of 2006 as the "Year of the Police." The partnership program gave birth to the police transition teams that now, coupled with military police assets in theater, are taking the Iraqi police to the next level. Several things highlight the path to success. First and foremost, the Soldiers in the brigade were some of the most professional, dedicated, and technically proficient Soldiers ever assembled. From the brigade staff, through the battalion and company commanders and their staffs, to the individual squad leaders, the technical and tactical abilities drove home success, day after day. Another key factor in the success of the mission was assigning the brigade to build the Iraqi

police structure and capabilities and to conduct police partnership activities. Upon receiving the specific mission to train and partner with the Iraqi police, the 42d Military Police Brigade got back its command and control of military police units to execute that mission. However, the brigade still would not have been as successful if the military police units, now under the command and control of the military police brigade and military police battalions, did not continue to work closely with the maneuver units to ensure that the desired maneuver commander effects were synchronized with the police partnership efforts.

Finally, the technical expertise of the entire 42d Military Police Brigade was fully realized. From the brigade headquarters to the squad level, police expertise was fully integrated and synchronized. Years of police experience in military police commanders, staffs, squads, and platoons were put to dedicated use on policing, and the results were phenomenal. Law and order detachments were fully engaged in police partnership operations. Skills developed from years of experience in traffic, military police investigation, police desk and dispatch, police intelligence, police station, and police patrol operations were used at every level to effect change. From pride in wearing their uniforms to showing up for work, from professionalism in their conduct of investigations to accountability for logistics, the Iraqi police were taught how to conduct police business at every level. In no other unit outside a military police brigade could all the technical skills be brought to bear in a synchronized and integrated fashion to effect change in a HN police force.

While there are still problems with the police in Iraq, the groundwork has been set for success. The Iraqi police are improving and are relatively stable. The citizens, for the first time in more than 35 years, are beginning to respect the police and their efforts to keep people secure in their homes, places of work, and places of worship. The great protectors of the 42d Military Police Brigade spearheaded this latest success and took a major step in righting the police of Iraq and bringing some stability to the country.

Colonel Swengros entered the Army in August 1976. After serving six years as a military policeman in various team and squad leader positions in Germany, he attended the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he was commissioned in June 1982. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from St. Martin's College and a master's degree in organizational systems from Pacific Lutheran University. Colonel Swengros assumed his current position as assistant commandant of the U.S. Army Military Police School on 8 February 2006.