



# Working Overtime!

## Professional Development On and Off the Clock

By Captain Cory J. French

*After a relatively quiet Friday night, the military police emergency telephone line rings at 0126 on Saturday morning. The desk sergeant answers and quickly takes notes as the caller shouts into the phone. An unidentified individual has just been stabbed at a club that is frequented by Soldiers and local nationals. As I stand at the main gate conducting a presence patrol, my radio suddenly screams, "Patrols 3-A, 3-0, 3-2: Respond to multiple assaults in progress. One confirmed stabbing victim and multiple fights breaking out. Polizei<sup>1</sup> and club security request MP [military police] assistance immediately. Code is authorized."*

**F**or years, I've been waiting to finally get started on the *MP* portion of my *MP* career. Countless hours of training and preparation would have been extremely beneficial in responding to that radio call. Yet I had no criminal justice degree, I had no real on-the-job experience, and I was working alongside military police Soldiers who—for the most part—were new to the Army and had just recently arrived in Germany. Fortunately, the time I spent shadowing the Lincoln Police Department and the Lancaster County Sheriff's Department (both in Nebraska) prepared me for the exact scenario that was playing out over the radio. After arriving on the scene, I worked side by side with the *Polizei*, directing my Soldiers to control the suspects and aid the victims. Without the knowledge that I had gained by working with civilian police, the situation could have been very different.

I quickly realized that I would never excel in the military police world if I didn't take time out of my own off-duty schedule to draw road gear and ride alongside the enlisted Soldiers and noncommissioned officers of my company. One particular Soldier took me out and showed me what it was like to patrol a community and how to use the famed *verbal judo*.<sup>2</sup> The term *verbal judo* is frequently mentioned in civilian law enforcement circles; however, until I saw the technique in action, I had no real understanding of how a situation could be de-escalated

so that a Soldier could end up returning to the barracks rather than being placed in hand irons.

My mentor had worked in the law enforcement field in Texas for several years before joining the military, and he shared his experiences and the lessons he had learned during our shifts together. At first, I thought that my peers would disapprove of me constantly working the road and learning from—of all people—a private first class. However, after several months, I was taking my peers out to teach them the "rules of the road" and how to properly deal with Soldiers, spouses, and local nationals. Over time, I logged more than 650 hours on patrol at an installation where there was no assigned duty officer and no duty roster requiring officers to work patrol. I was often criticized for working so much and for failing to experience all that Europe had to offer! I countered by listing the countries that I had visited and the professional development that I had received while working closely with the *Polizei* and *Feldjägers*.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2011, I had the opportunity to attend the 118th Annual International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference in Chicago, Illinois. There, I was able to interact with some of the finest law enforcement officers from the United States and across the entire world, including small-town department chiefs, U.S. marshals, and members of elite Federal Bureau of Investigation special weapons and tactics teams.

I quickly realized that I could gain worthwhile knowledge by partnering and sharing my own experiences with members of these organizations. Surprisingly, most conversations turned to discussions about how I could possibly train Afghan police units and about the difficulty of interacting with people from a country that is new to the concept of the rule of law and basic military and police tactics. Although my learning curve seemed steep, I saw that other agencies respected military police organizations and that they benefited from information about what military police do on a daily basis in garrison and in a deployed environment.

I still feel that my experience as a police officer is inadequate. But I've learned that the only way to expand my knowledge and skills is to push my pride aside and learn from those who have lived and breathed these duties for years. My experiences in Germany, and later Afghanistan, cemented my love for law enforcement and have created a yearning to continually expand my law enforcement knowledge and technical and tactical skills. I have the rare privilege of waking up and being truly excited about going to work every day—to assist, protect, and defend the ones with whom I work and the community that I have sworn to serve.

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#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>*Polizei* is the German word for “police.”

<sup>2</sup>Verbal judo refers to the tone and use of words (in conjunction with body language) to prevent, de-escalate, or end an attempted assault. This type of conflict management is used to defuse a potentially volatile situation before it becomes physically violent.

<sup>3</sup>*Feldjägers* are German military police units.



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