



# ***The 504th Military Police Battalion Surges Into Full Spectrum Operations in Kandahar City***

*By Captain John R. Kennedy and First Lieutenant Roger Foley*

*The agile, adaptive 504th Military Police Battalion, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, continued to add chapters to its legacy by being ready to accomplish any mission during combat operations associated with Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11. The efforts of the battalion from June 2010 to June 2011 significantly contributed to the downward spiral of Taliban influence in Kandahar City, Afghanistan, thereby paving the way for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to take the lead in providing security for the local populace. The 504th Military Police Battalion was task-organized with the 170th Military Police Company, Joint Base Lewis-McChord; the 202d Military Police Company, Fort Bliss, Texas; the 372d Military Police Company, Cresap-town, Maryland; the 511th Military Police Company, Fort Drum, New York; and the 552d Military Police Company, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, to form Task Force Dragon Fighter.*

## **Surging Into Kandahar**

**I**n June 2010, the Soldiers of the 504th Military Police Battalion had their “boots on the ground” in Afghanistan and were ready to support surge operations in the volatile southern region of Kandahar. The battalion was initially assigned to the Canadian-led Task Force Kandahar, and they conducted successful relief-in-place and transfer-of-authority operations with the 97th Military Police Battalion. Soon after the transfer of authority, the 504th was assigned to the 4th Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, positioning Task Force Dragon Fighter to conduct police mentorship training operations to

enhance the capabilities of the Afghan National Police (ANP), provide security to the population of Kandahar City, and support government leaders in understanding and meeting the needs of the local populace.

The 504th Military Police Battalion entered the theater with a familiar face—the 170th Military Police Company, who had completed a relief-in-place operation with the 293d Military Police Company (at that time, the only military police company in Kandahar City). Just days after the 504th began operations, the 372d Military Police Company joined Task Force Dragon Fighter. In each subsequent month, the 552d Military

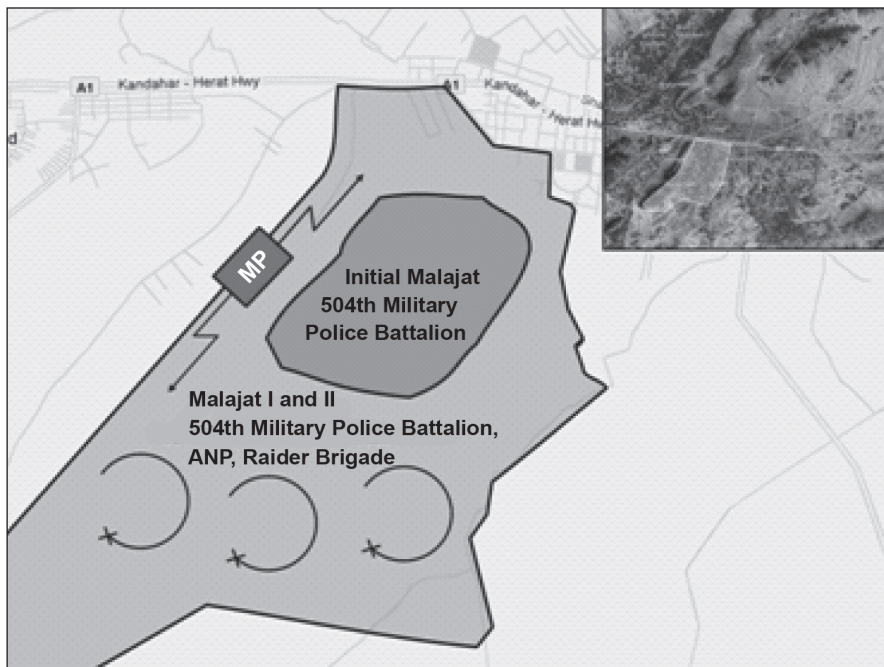
Police Company, the 202d Military Police Company, and the 511th Military Police Company transitioned into Task Force Dragon Fighter. During this time, the 504th was under the command of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division—or the “Raider Brigade.”

### Securing Malajat

The 504th Military Police Battalion and ANP expediently executed decisive operations in Kandahar City. The most notable of these operations occurred in August, when efforts were focused on Malajat—which had previously been considered a sanctuary of Taliban support that had allowed for enemy freedom of movement into the city.

Following a largely ineffective ANP clearing operation in July, the 504th worked with the ANP to plan and execute Operation Malajat I, incorporating critical lessons learned from the initial operation. In early August, elements of the battalion headquarters, the 170th Military Police Company, the 372d Military Police Company, and the ANP swept through the Taliban-controlled area to disrupt the insurgent activity. This operation led to multiple small arms engagements and improvised explosive device (IED) detonations. By the end of the day, 21 suspected insurgents were detained and two large cache sites were discovered.

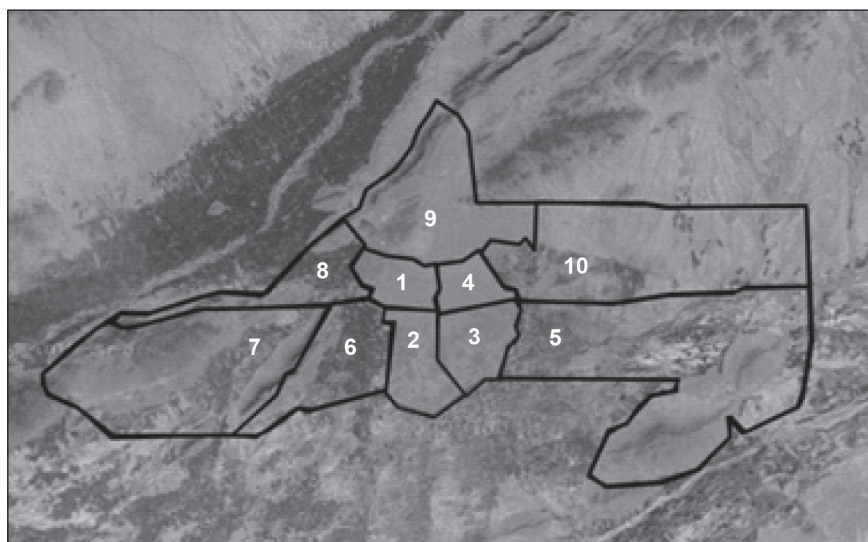
With the area confirmed as a Taliban stronghold, planning immediately began for a Raider Brigade level operation to support a deliberate, large-scale ANSF “clear and hold” of Malajat. On 25 August, Operation Malajat II began as the



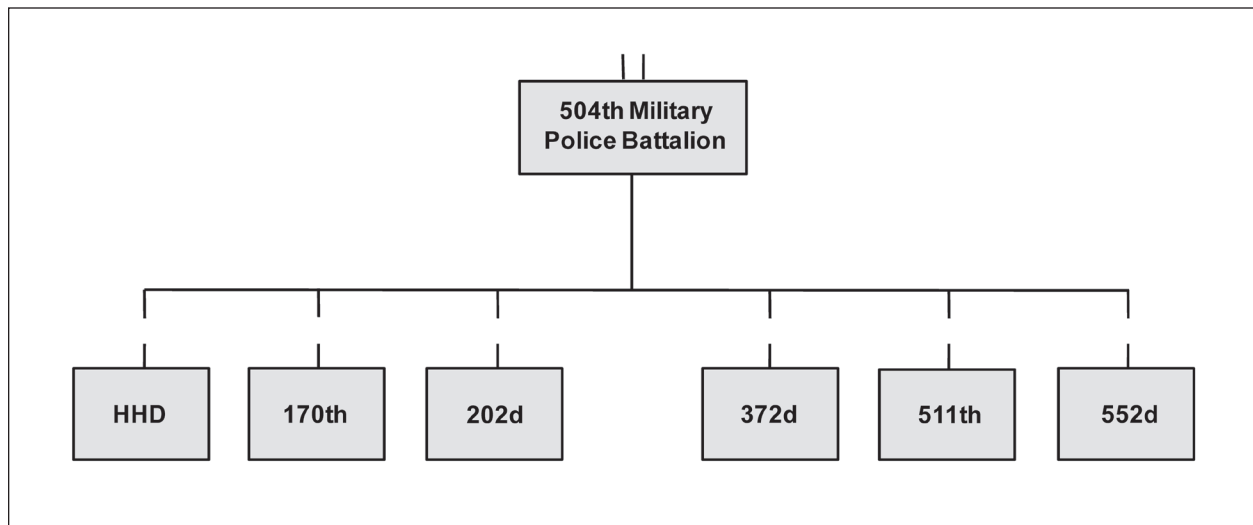
**Soldiers from the 504th Military Police Battalion and the ANP established a cordon in northern Malajat during Operation Malajat II. Three days later, they moved to seal the southern flank behind the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry Regiment, which cleared from the south to the north.**

504th Military Police Battalion and the ANP established blocking positions to the north, west, and east of Malajat. Task Force Dragon Fighter communications and operations sections established a battalion forward tactical command post at Police Substation (PSS) 6, located inside the Malajat area. With blocking positions set, communications established, and logistical support flowing, the clearing operation began with an Afghan Border Police task force followed by the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry Regiment (partnered with Afghan National Civil Order Police). The Afghan Border Police moved from the Dand District, in the southern part of Malajat, to the northern portion of Malajat, just south of Highway 1 in Kandahar City. For the next 2 weeks, the partnered mission swept through Malajat, successfully eliminating a Taliban foothold in Kandahar City.

The dismounted 504th moved from their blocking positions and into the southern part of Malajat to provide relief-in-place to the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry Regiment, and to hold the southern flank. Relying on airdrop resupply from Chinook helicopters, the battalion held the southern portion of Malajat from hastily established strongpoints for more than 2 weeks, successfully preventing the return of the Taliban. A total of 72 detainees were processed at the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in



**Kandahar City subdistricts**



**504th Military Police Battalion task organization**

Kandahar City and enrolled in a biometric system. Some of the high-value detainees were transferred to Kabul for further investigation.

The 504th supported the clearing operations in Malajat by reallocating combat power from across the city. The Taliban tried to take advantage of what they perceived to be reduced security outside of Malajat by conducting a complex attack on PSS 8 in the western part of Kandahar City. The Soldiers of the 552d Military Police Company quickly proved that the Taliban was no match for their ability to defend PSSs—nor was the Taliban any match for the 504th’s ability to reinforce areas of the city.

Malajat was no longer a safe haven for the Taliban. The once-prominent, white Taliban flags were removed; and Afghans hoisted official flags of Afghanistan in their place. As part of the hold phase, the 504th Military Police Battalion began the initial construction of PSS 15 in the heart of Malajat.

### Supporting Successful Elections

Parliamentary elections were held in Kandahar City on 18 September. The elections were planned and executed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). The people of Kandahar had the opportunity to cast their votes at one of 36 polling centers across the city. While the GIROA and ANSF controlled the election, the 504th Military Police Battalion assisted by conducting interdiction operations and disrupting insurgent activity for the 4 days leading up to the election.

The Task Force Dragon Fighter military police companies helped the ANP develop effective security plans by conducting a reconnaissance of all polling stations. Using military police working dogs, Task Force Dragon Fighter assisted the ANP with interdicting IEDs and cache sites that could be used by the enemy on election day. In addition, the 504th supported

ANP traffic control points and conducted joint mounted and dismounted patrols throughout the city on election day.

As a result of these efforts, enemy freedom of movement was limited and the enemy’s ability to conduct a significant attack was refuted during the parliamentary elections. In a vast improvement over the August 2009 presidential elections (when 126 significant activities occurred), only 25 significant activities—and no local national injuries—were reported for the parliamentary elections. The only reported casualties consisted of two insurgents who died trying to emplace an IED.

Fortunately, the voters did not heed earlier Taliban threats and attempts at intimidation; instead, their voice was heard.

### Securing the Heart of Kandahar City

During most of the 504th’s deployment time, the battalion was responsible for the battlespace in Subdistricts 1–4 of Kandahar City, which included six ANP PSSs and two area control stations. The subdistricts and the Task Force Dragon Fighter companies providing oversight for them were as follows:

- Subdistrict 1: 202d Military Police Company.
- Subdistrict 2: 170th Military Police Company.
- Subdistrict 3: 511th Military Police Company.
- Subdistrict 4: 552d Military Police Company.

*(Note: The 372d Military Police Company, under the operational control of the 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, was responsible for Subdistrict 5.)*

These four subdistricts, located in the heart of the city, are home to many key structures, including the governor’s palace, the mayoral compound, the judicial center, the NDS, and the ANP provincial headquarters (PHQ). Given that the area of operations of Task Force Dragon Fighter was the home of many

Taliban targets of interest, the 504th Military Police Battalion was a prominent aspect of Raider efforts to secure the city. The battalion efforts in the center of Kandahar were a key element in improving the security of the city.

### Connecting the People to the GIRoA

**E**nhancing the reach of the government by supplying essential services and humanitarian assistance is an important element of counterinsurgency. One of the missions of the 504th Military Police Battalion was to ensure that the GIRoA represented the best viable option to the people of Kandahar. To accomplish this, the battalion used Commander's Emergency Response Program funds to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to meet the populace needs. Throughout the course of the deployment, nearly \$2 million in Commander's Emergency Response Program funds were spent in an attempt to connect the people to the government.

A total of 20 schools and a juvenile detention center located in the battalion area of operations were refurbished with items such as furniture, plumbing, wood-burning stoves, windows, educational equipment, tents for additional classrooms, and sports and recreational equipment. Due to the weather, parents historically stopped sending their kids to school during the winter; however, these upgrades allowed tens of thousands of children to continue their education throughout the winter months.

The Teacher's Training Institute, which educates about 100 teachers per year, was the 504th's focus. When the battalion first visited the school, the students lived and studied in buildings without windows or heating. The 504th quickly rallied to provide the students with shoes, coats, and blankets. The school also received windows and wood-burning stoves to keep the living areas and classrooms warm throughout the winter. The assistance provided to these teachers helped shape a positive perception of Americans.

In addition to refurbishing existing schools, the battalion worked with the Afghan Minister of Education to build a new school in a subdistrict where the need was pressing. This school now provides instruction to more than 1,000 children who previously had no access to education.

A 6-kilometer road was also paved using Commander's Emergency Response Program funds. This helped increase economic activity and provided access to health care and other government services for Mir Bazaar residents.

Long-term development of the area was enhanced by efforts to encourage entrepreneurialism across Kandahar Province. The 504th Military Police Battalion worked with the local government to provide families with hens so that they could sell eggs at the market. Working closely with Afghan subdistrict managers, canals were cleared and irrigation ditches were built so that crops could be properly



**A military police Soldier and his ANP partner meet with village leaders to discuss the security situation.**



**Antenna systems are installed to expand radio communications between the Arghandab District and Kandahar City.**

hydrated, increasing yields. As a result of this partnered effort, the Kandahar City canal network supplied water from the Arghandab River to more citizens than it had in the past few decades.

Other humanitarian assistance packages were provided to local individuals to help them meet their immediate needs. For example, blankets were presented to widows and female heads of households, agricultural equipment was presented to farmers, shoes and jackets were presented to students, and medical supplies were presented to clinics and families.

Thanks to the 504th's efforts to enhance government services, thousands of kids are now going to school, patients now have access to medical care, and the people of Kandahar are now better connected to their government. Although official numbers are not available, it has been estimated that the population of Kandahar City has increased by as much as 25 percent since 2010, demonstrating a public perception of improved security and faith in the GIRoA.

### **Embedding with the ANP**

**A**s the battalion's cornerstone for improving the ANP, Task Force Dragon Fighter platoons were spread across the 16 Kandahar City PSSs, where they lived and worked each day; Dragon Fighters were embedded at most of these locations 24/7. Working at the PSS level paid tremendous dividends in building a better Kandahar City police force from the bottom up. Along with the many operational improvements, the battalion also contracted a total of \$1.5 million in refurbishments on 10 of the PSSs. They also secured land within their battlespace and initiated contracts to build new PSSs at four critical locations within the city at a total cost of \$6 million.

October marked a big milestone for the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 504th Military Police Battalion, as a large staff section embedded at the ANP PHQ in the center of Kandahar City. This move allowed improved functionality between the battalion and headquarters staff, and the establishment of a joint operations center resulted in better battle tracking and incident response in Kandahar City. The PHQ efforts quickly leveraged partnered operational and intelligence capabilities, contributing to an intelligence-driven operations cycle and weekly ANSF-led security working group meetings, where ANSF and International Security Assistance Forces discussed the current operational picture.

By mid-February, Dragon Fighter units embedded at the PHQ received a huge boost in resourcing, which increased mentorship capability to meet needs in the areas of recruiting, personnel, training, communications, and logistics. The broadened focus was supported by the relocation of most of the battalion staff to the PHQ. With more personnel available to help assist ANP senior leaders, the 504th exponentially increased the capability and capacity of the ANP force in Kandahar City.

### **Supporting the Information Operations Campaign**

**E**arly successes of the 504th Military Police Battalion and their Afghan partners helped launch a rigorous Task Force Dragon Fighter Information Operations (IO) Campaign. The IO Campaign was put into place to marginalize the efforts of the insurgency, highlight the security efforts of the ANSF, and further promote the legitimacy of the ANP and GIRoA in Kandahar City. According to the IO Campaign philosophy, because the ANP were to serve as

the lead for all operations and U.S. forces were to serve as mentors and enablers, the ANP and GIRoA should become increasingly trustworthy and capable of handling the issues of Kandahar citizens.

The 504th recognized the need to preempt Taliban propaganda by reporting information first, by highlighting the progress made by the ANP, and by placing the faces of ANP leadership in front of the Afghan people. As a result, the battalion led the effort to establish a weekly press conference at the governor's palace, where the chief of security delivered a message and answered questions from reporters. At the press conferences, the chief of security highlighted the results of recent ANP operations and displayed wanted posters (which were provided by the 504th) to spotlight individuals who had been tied to crimes against the GIRoA and to encourage the public to ostracize them. In addition to the weekly press conferences, the 504th distributed IO messages of ANP support via leaflets, posters, billboards, and radio and television stations.

The IO campaign helped portray the ANP as Afghanistan's "true protectors."

### **Promoting the Rule of Law**

**W**hile in Kandahar, the 504th placed significant emphasis on promoting the rule of law process through the ANP and into the judicial system. This effort focused on stopping the "revolving door" of insurgent criminals in Kandahar—eliminating their quick, untried release from detention. To accomplish this mission, the battalion established the Special Investigations Unit—Kandahar City (SIU-KC), which is comprised of U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (commonly referred to as "CID") agents, sister Service staff judge advocates, and military police investigators from within the battalion.

The early emphasis of the SIU-KC was on working closely with the ANP Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, and Criminal Techniques Offices and with national security prosecutors. The SIU-KC stressed the use of biometrics and forensic exploitation as enablers for Afghan-led investigations. More than 100 cases were initiated at the Joint Expeditionary Forensics Facility, which helped to prosecute individuals in Afghan court. The success of the SIU-KC case building against insurgents—backed by forensic evidence—encouraged the 504th to establish an additional team at the NDS to further the rule of law.

In February, the NDS Engagement Team began working with NDS investigators and national security prosecutors to take the next step in prosecution support. The team worked with the Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell to develop prosecution support packets that detailed forensic reports and linked the insurgents to national security crimes. Together, the prosecution support packets and NDS investigation assistance

packets served as a force multiplier in the counter-IED fight. Multiple national security criminals were quickly identified; five of these were associated with previously unsolved Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell cases.

The combined efforts of the SIU-KC and NDS, coupled with more than 4,000 biometric enrollments from Task Force Dragon Fighter, allowed the 504th to identify criminals linked to forensic evidence and to gain increased visibility of ANSF detainees to ensure their appropriate movement through the judicial system.

### **Conducting Operations in the Arghandab River Valley**

**I**n September, the 504th established the Security Force Assistance Team to support the 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, by conducting operations in the Arghandab River Valley—one of the most insurgent-saturated areas of Afghanistan. The Security Force Assistance Team quickly established standing operating procedures to assist with the proper inprocessing and tracking of detainees. The ANP have fully embraced these procedures. The Security Force Assistance Team also worked with the district chief of police to help establish mission-essential training programs for the ANP within the district.

In just 9 months, the team assisted with many village clearance operations, built several ANP checkpoints and upgraded several others, and established a fueling station for the ANP.

### **Creating the Intelligence Coordination Center—Kandahar**

**D**uring the course of the deployment, it became evident that one critical capability which was lacking among the ANSF partners was the sharing and analysis of intelligence information. This problem often resulted in ANSF agencies withholding intelligence due to the fear of a compromise or the secession of bureaucratic territory if the intelligence were revealed to another ANSF agency. To combat this problem, the 504th created the Intelligence Coordination Center—Kandahar (ICC-K). Backed by a GIRoA mandate for intelligence sharing and by the governor of Kandahar Province (who lent credibility), the ICC-K worked to build cooperation and information sharing across Kandahar City.

Supported by coalition intelligence analysts, Afghan partners embraced the ICC-K motto of "Share until it hurts." As coalition information sharing increased, the sharing of Afghan-led intelligence (which had previously been reserved only for top leaders of ANSF agencies) also increased.

Through the ICC-K, ANSF and coalition agencies actively analyzed the credibility of intelligence together; and together, they gained a much better understanding of potential threats. The ICC-K became a focal point in the joint effort to defeat the Taliban.

## Equipping and Educating the ANP Force

In February, major efforts were undertaken to improve ANP logistics systems and equip the ANP force ahead of the approaching spring season, when Kandahar historically experiences a spike in insurgent activity. The 504th helped field more than 2,300 weapons and 50 vehicles throughout 10 subdistricts and the 16 PSSs to further improve the ANP fighting capability.

Along with fielding equipment, the battalion Security Force Assistance Team helped plan and execute a month-long, province-wide Ministry of the Interior weapons inventory to account for more than 12,000 weapons, 450 vehicles, and several hundred thousand rounds of ammunition. Five Ministry of the Interior-led teams conducted on-site inventories of district headquarters, PSSs, police battalions, and checkpoints throughout Kandahar Province. The teams stressed the importance of property accountability with the ANP and helped ensure the future resourcing of weapons and equipment across the province.

In addition to expanding ANP resources and equipment, the 504th also worked to improve the level of education across the ANP force. Working with PSS commanders and Afghan training officers, literacy programs were established at each PSS. Each week, local teachers visited the PSSs, where they conducted basic reading and writing classes. As the program continues to develop, Kandahar City will benefit from a better-educated, more capable police force.

## Expanding Communications

February proved to be a strong month for the battalion, as great strides were also made in improving communication systems used by the ANP. To dedicate the maximum effort to the project, the battalion communications team embedded at the PHQ and began planning the layout for a city-wide secure radio communications system that would diminish ANP reliance on unsecure cellular telephones.

The plan was executed in March. The team installed a base station at each of the 16 PSSs. One-kilowatt solar power systems, antennas, a triple-battery backup, and six-bay battery chargers were also installed to supplement the base stations. In addition, the team replaced the PHQ repeater and antenna to improve the range of communications from the main ANP hub. Going a step further, they added an additional base station, installed two repeaters, and distributed 50 handheld radios, enabling very high frequency cross-communication throughout the area of operations for the first time in history.

The communications team also established a 4-day communications class designed to help train the ANP on the proper use and maintenance of the radio systems. The intent was to provide each district headquarters and PSS with a well-trained radio telephone operator.

## Providing Mentorship for the Camp Nathan Smith Police Training Academy

On 29 March 2011, the Camp Nathan Smith Police Training Academy hosted a transfer-of-authority ceremony in which Canada relinquished control of the facility to Afghanistan. The facility now operates under Afghan leadership, with Afghan instructors backed by U.S. Task Force Dragon Fighter mentorship. This allows the ANP to handle administrative processes and ensures that the proper Kandahar-area ANP receive quality training that is supported by U.S. military police and law enforcement professionals.

April marked the first month that classes were taught by mentors from the 504th Military Police Battalion. Courses were approved by the Ministry of the Interior and included the following classes:

- ANP Officer's Training Course.
- Emergency Response Training.
- Crime Scene Officer's Workshop.
- Basic Criminal Investigations.
- Female Security Awareness.
- ANP Leadership and Management.
- Intelligence-Based Policing.
- Female Ethics and Values Workshop.

The instruction took place at a private compound on Camp Nathan Smith. The facility, which can accommodate up to 150 students, contains seven bedrooms, seven classrooms, ablutions, a dining facility, a laundry facility, and a gym.

The 19 May 2011 graduates of the ANP Officer's Training Course were the first to graduate from an officer academy located outside of Kabul. The graduates were commissioned as new lieutenants in the ANP.

The 504th fully embraced the training academy mission, maintaining military police mentorship as the 385th Military Police Battalion transitioned into Kandahar. The continuation of quality training designed to meet the needs of Kandahar City ANP will result in a better-qualified force for years to come.

## Responding to the Sarpoza Prison Situation

In April 2011, Task Force Dragon Fighter was tasked to respond to a massive escape of Taliban prisoners from the Sarpoza Prison in Kandahar City. A total of 488 prisoners had slipped away from the Afghan-run facility via a 1,000-foot tunnel that insurgents had spent 5 months digging from a residence outside the prison walls. In the days and weeks that followed, the Raiders relied heavily on the 1,200 detailed biometric enrollments that the 504th Military Police Battalion had gathered on 100 percent of the Sarpoza Prison



**A military police Soldier instructs a member of the ANP at the Camp Nathan Smith Police Training Academy.**

population during Operations Caged Tiger I and II just a few weeks earlier. Through the combined efforts of the Raider Brigade and the 504th Military Police Battalion (who assumed the prominent role of identifying and reprocessing escapees), a portion of the insurgents was recaptured and a positive IO message was provided to lessen the impact of Taliban success.

As missing prisoners were being tracked down, Task Force Dragon Fighter was spearheading efforts to investigate the incident, seal the escape tunnel, and address systemic deficiencies within the prison by emplacing a permanently embedded element at the facility. The battalion push to directly mentor Sarpoza Prison administrators resulted in a major impact in a short period of time and set the conditions for continued strides toward a more effective facility.

### **Responding to the Opening of Fighting Season**


**I**n May 2011, the Taliban launched a series of complex attacks across Kandahar City, signaling the return of the traditional fighting season. In a coordinated effort involving small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades, and vehicle-borne IEDs, insurgents attacked several GIRoA buildings, including the governor's palace, PSS 1, the Afghan National Civil Order Police Headquarters, and the NDS. At the governor's palace, two insurgents attacked from a building to the southeast, while PSS 1 sustained fire from an adjacent school. At the NDS, insurgents fired small arms and rocket-propelled grenades from the nearby Kandahar Hotel and prestaged multiple vehicle-borne IEDs to target responding forces. Throughout the following 24 hours, Task Force Dragon Fighter again demonstrated the ability to respond to any threat across the city. The

552d Military Police Company protected the governor's palace by suppressing the attackers, helping prevent a breach of the compound, and supporting a large clearing operation. The 202d Military Police Company and their ANP partners successfully defeated a complex attack at PSS 1. The 170th Military Police Company responded to the NDS attack with direct-fire weapons and multiple air weapons teams over a number of hours, which allowed the ANSF to clear the Kandahar Hotel. The 511th Military Police Company helped limit the insurgents' freedom of movement by locking down the checkpoints in their sub-district. The 504th mentors at the Rule of Law Center and the Sarpoza Prison increased their security posture and initiated a 24-hour inmate lockdown. Throughout the attacks, battalion staff members at the PHQ helped coordinate the ANP response by providing advice on ANP asset positions and helping

organize Class I and Class V combat resupply missions. The result of these efforts was a huge victory for the ANP: A total of 13 insurgents were killed during the assault, and 15 more were detained when they were unable to breach any targets.

### **Leaving a Legacy**

**T**he contributions of the 504th Military Police Battalion during Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11 were significant and will leave a lasting impression on the people of Kandahar. Task Force Dragon Fighter Soldiers put forward their best effort to improve the security of Kandahar City by serving *shannah bah shannah*, or "shoulder to shoulder," with their Afghan counterparts. In the process, the battalion positively contributed to the proud history and growing legacy of the great Task Force Dragon Fighter organization!

**Dedication:** This article is dedicated to the memory of Sergeant Jason Weaver, Corporal Andrew Wilfarht, and Specialist David Fahey—military police Soldiers who lost their lives while serving our Nation in Kandahar City. 

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