

A Return to the Division:

Tailoring the Military Police Corps for a New Age of Conflict

By Captain Christopher J. Parker

We have arrived at a critical juncture. As Operation New Dawn comes to a close and we begin to see the end of Operation Enduring Freedom on the horizon, we need to take a look back and a look forward—a look back to capture the hard-learned lessons of the previous 10 years and a look forward so that we can better prepare to meet the unforeseen challenges of the 21st century. At the same time, we are faced with the reality of defense cuts and a shrinking budget. Our problem quickly becomes apparent: How do we, as the Military Police Corps, organize our forces to improve efficiency while also remaining an effective force that is capable of supporting unified land operations?

After much thought and consultation with Regimental and other Army leaders, several potential solutions have been proposed. One of these, in particular, stands out as the most practical and efficient means of restructuring the force to better meet future demands—realigning as division military police battalions with organic, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (commonly referred to as “CID”) assets (Figure 1, page 20). Aligning our military police battalions with divisions would provide maneuver commanders with a flexible combat multiplier that is tailored to suit the modular Army and capable of defeating a hybrid enemy by producing legitimate effects on the battlefield and among the populace. Additionally, aligning in this manner would greatly improve efficiency by eliminating

more than 1,500 unnecessary billets in the form of CID battalions and brigade special troops battalion (BSTB) military police platoons, while simultaneously providing a unity of operations and improving our expeditionary police intelligence; forensic; criminal investigation; and host nation, police-building capabilities. To appreciate the motive behind this concept, we must recognize that the threat often drives changes to the force and we must review the evolution of the military police force structure as well as past, present, and future threat models.

The traditional Military Police Corps was structured to support the fight against a conventional threat defined by the Cold War. Combat during this era was to be characterized by force-on-force battles between nation-states. Military police were task-organized as division military police companies (capable of conducting limited military police operations for their supported division) or as corps military police battalions and brigades (prepared to execute all military police functions in support of a larger rear area). However, after the fall of the Soviet Union, a new threat in the form of nonstate terrorist organizations and insurgent cells soon emerged. These organizations seek to influence public opinion and U.S. policy by targeting the civilian populace.

By the time terrorists attacked the United States on 11 September 2001, the Military Police Corps had restructured and

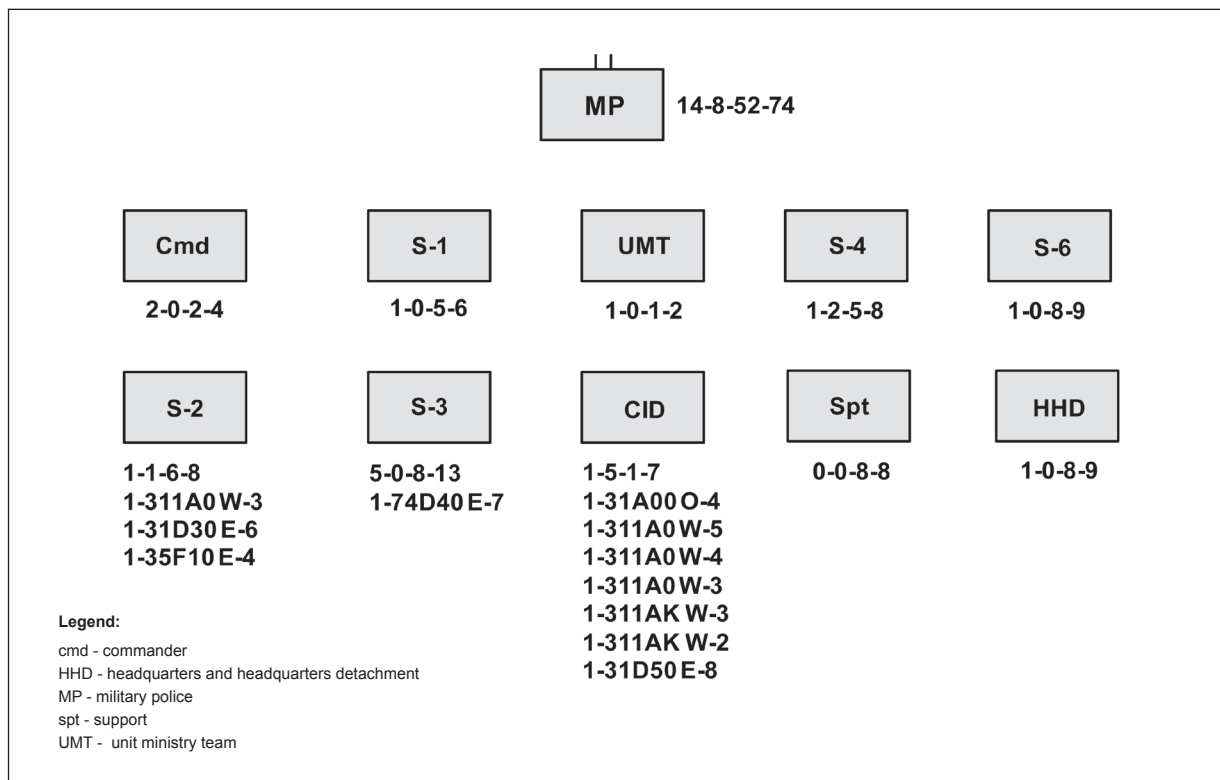


Figure 1. Proposed division battalion (expeditionary) (CID billets depicted accordingly)

replaced the division military police company with a military police platoon in each BSTB and expanded the traditional military police battalions. Though well-intentioned, this model has drawn considerable criticism, as BSTB military police platoons continue to be misused. And although larger than the division military police company forces, they are still too small to produce significant effects in the contemporary operating environment. It is this inability to produce effects that has often caused these units to be relegated to missions that fail to make use of the skill sets of assigned Soldiers and leaders. Tasking these troops with missions such as glorified battlefield taxi services, personal security details, and forward operating base/combat outpost force protection is a shameful underutilization of valuable Army assets. Experience has demonstrated that this is an ineffective model, and changes must be made. To rectify this situation, we must ensure that the new force structure is better suited to defeat emerging threats.

According to Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*,¹ the most likely future security threats are best described as “hybrid threats,” or “the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects.”¹ While we will likely continue to face threats similar to those that we have fought for the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, the acknowledgement of the threat to populations and U.S. operations posed by criminal elements means that military police will become a much more critical asset

than they have been in the past. As military police, it is within our purview to neutralize these threats and improve upon the ability of our host nation partners to prevent and negate their influence. Despite a rough start, we have learned a great deal throughout the decade since 9/11 and we have significantly improved our ability to carry out this mission; however, considerable shortcomings remain. We continue to lack the investigative experience and forensic knowledge necessary to conduct proper police intelligence operations, and our training of host nation partners is limited to rudimentary police tasks. Rather than relying on our own CID agents and investigators to assist with this mission, we turned to contractors such as international police advisors and law enforcement professionals to fill the void. Realigning our CID assets within military police battalions would correct this shortcoming by unifying our operations and providing division commanders with a one-stop shop for all policing functions. Under this new task organization, benefits would not be limited to improved policing. Division commanders would have far greater flexibility through a much more substantive force that could easily be tailored to the contemporary operating environment and would be capable of effecting real changes on the battlefield.

The advantages of the proposed division military police battalion can only be appreciated with an understanding of the task organization and how it would unify and enhance military police operations. The battalion would fall under the division maneuver enhancement brigade or, because these are not yet available in all divisions, the sustainment brigade. The

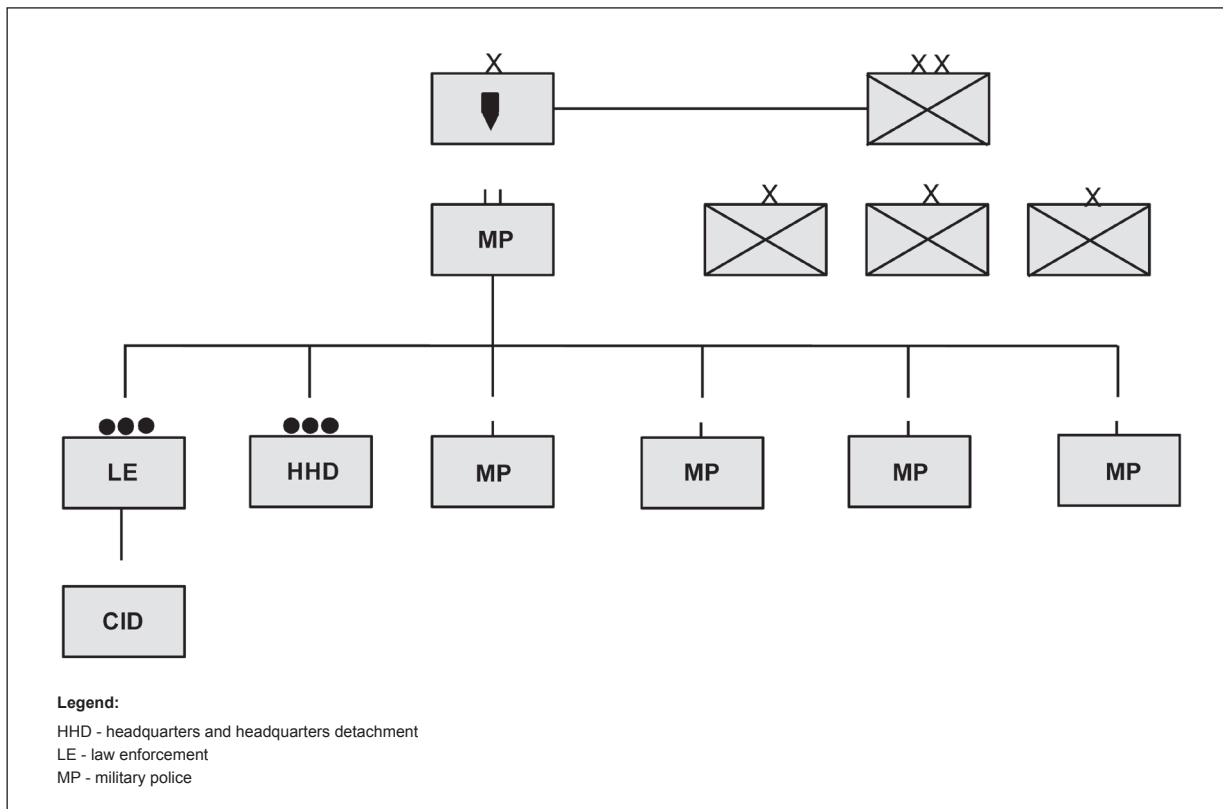


Figure 2. Division military police battalion organization chart

battalion would consist of four military police companies, a headquarters and headquarters detachment, and a law enforcement detachment (Figure 2). Under this organization, CID special agents and investigators (who now comprise the CID battalion operations and training [S-3] section) would realign within the battalion law enforcement detachment. In garrison, this would properly place CID elements under the provost marshal (the military police battalion commander), thereby streamlining the unity of command. However, the true benefits would become evident in an expeditionary environment. When deployed, the military police battalion commander could tailor his staff to augment the intelligence (S-2) section with non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from the CID section of the law enforcement detachment, creating a robust intelligence cell that is capable of performing the police intelligence operations required to defeat complex criminal and terrorist networks. Additional CID NCOs and warrant officers would form a staff criminal investigation and forensic section, dramatically enhancing the unit's police intelligence; forensic; criminal investigation; and host nation, police-building capabilities. This would provide combatant commanders with experienced professionals who could train host nation police on the intricate aspects of modern investigative techniques while simultaneously delivering an improved forensic capacity for missions requiring site exploitation.

Other significant advantages of the division military police battalion would lie in size and flexibility. Division

commanders would have a substantive force that could be easily tailored to any number of missions or theaters. Under the current task organization, brigade combat teams (BCTs) are limited to a mere 42-member military police platoon and, as previously noted, the shortcomings are numerous. However, with the presence of a military police battalion, the division commander could “plug and play” as needed—maneuvering forces where they were best able to produce effects. For example, in today's dynamic contemporary operating environment, one BCT may be engaged in sustained conflict with regular forces (calling for only a platoon of military police). In another, more stable area of operations, a significantly larger military police force may be required to defeat an emerging criminal or terrorist threat and to begin the transition to civil control. Or, in concert with the modular concept, one of the division's deploying BCTs may require a company, rather than a platoon, of military police. With an allotment of four times the current number of military police, the division commander could complement the BCT with the appropriate number of forces per mission, phase of operation, or theater. The enhanced police capacity and flexibility would make the division military police battalion a very valuable asset.

In addition to drastically improving performance, the division military police model would significantly reduce cost and promote efficiency by eliminating the need for BSTB military police platoons and CID battalions. Realigning the battalions under divisions would eliminate the need for BSTB military

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police platoons, thereby reducing each BCT across the Army by about 42 billets. As the Army restructures and reduces the size of divisions, this equates to the elimination of about 1,260 military police billets across the force. Moreover, additional savings would be realized through the elimination of the 10 CID battalions currently incorporated in the task organization.

Although functional and well-intentioned, the CID battalion is grossly inefficient and must evolve to remain relevant. To be clear, I do not advocate the dissolution of the CID. The premise of stovepipe reporting to prevent unlawful command influence and to provide a direct line of communication for sensitive criminal cases is understandable. However, can the same objective be accomplished in a more efficient manner? In these organizations, 11 Soldiers accomplish the lion’s share of the mission, while the remaining 29 staff members perform support roles. This translates to an investigator-to-staff ratio of 1:2.6, which is extremely redundant. In an era of fiscal restraint and improved moral leadership, this is a significant misappropriation of resources. These 11 agents and investigators could easily be realigned as a criminal investigation section within the law enforcement detachment, where they would be supported by battalion staff. They would maintain their current reporting channels and their current core mission of investigating serious criminal activity against and among our troops. CID groups would retain oversight and reporting on sensitive investigations within their realm; but just as military police brigades provide training and readiness oversight to military police battalions, CID groups would do the same for criminal investigation sections. This force realignment would further reduce cost and redundancy by eliminating an additional 290 billets across the Regiment.

As the Nation—specifically the military—comes to terms with the prospect of significant budget cuts, we must closely examine our current structure, previous shortcomings, and

emerging threats to ensure that our response is the appropriate one. The current Military Police Corps task organization has been successful in some regards; however, there are obvious shortcomings. The misuse of BSTB military police platoons can be attributed to their inadequate size and their inability to produce effects in the contemporary operating environment. Although functional, CID battalions—with their disproportionate investigator-to-support staff ratio—are demonstrably inefficient. In the face of an emerging hybrid threat, we must realign our forces to better provide maneuver commanders with capable and efficient military police units. We must posture ourselves to properly defeat the threat of complex criminal and terrorist networks operating in and among critical human terrain. The proposed division military police battalion, with its organic CID assets, would unify our operations and provide maneuver commanders with a flexible force that could easily be tailored to address evolving operations and that would be capable of defeating hybrid threats through enhanced police intelligence; forensic; criminal investigation; and host nation, police-building capabilities. It would also significantly cut costs by eliminating more than 1,500 unnecessary billets across the Regiment. These matters must be taken into account as we structure our force to improve efficiency and better defeat emerging threats in the 21st century.

Endnote:

¹ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 10 October 2011.



At the time this article was written, Captain Parker was a student in the Military Police Captain’s Career Course, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He was previously assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas, where he served as the assistant S-3, 97th Military Police Battalion, and as an executive officer and platoon leader, 300th Military Police Company. He holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Kansas State University.

“One of the best ways to keep peace is to be prepared for war.”

—General George Washington