

Running Head: DEPLOYING AN MP COMPANY

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Abstract

This paper will relate my experiences in deploying Military Police Companies. It relates my experiences as a unit First Sergeant deploying the 212th MP Company. It also narrates my role as the S3 Sergeant Major in the 3D Military Police Battalion when during the deployment of the 549th MP Company to Iraq.

Deploying an MP Company

As a newly appointed First Sergeant, my commander informed me of my unit's pending deployment to Kosovo in five months. Being familiar with the unit, I knew the company had soldiers spread across Germany in the following four communities: Ansbach, Kitzingen, Bamberg, and Grahewoehr. These communities were 50 to 200 miles from the company headquarters. Each platoon supported the community in which they lived by providing Military Police Soldiers for force protection and law enforcement. The communities in turn provided administrative, logistic and UCMJ support for these Soldiers. This required the company headquarters to learn the personalities of four different Base Support Battalion command teams and the administrative procedures for four different communities. Each community had its specific deployment, law enforcement, and administrative requirements, which complicated routine actions as well as deployment procedures. For example, an administrative action for a Soldier in Ansbach required different supporting documents than a Soldier in Kitzingen with the same action. While all of the areas fell under U.S. Army Europe guidance, each community interpreted the guidance differently and added to the requirements as they saw fit. The result was one unit headquarters using four different sets of procedures to support Soldiers. To add to this challenge, the unit had to devise a way to train the Soldiers in these outlying communities and still provide day-to-day law enforcement coverage.

Method

With the unit mission identified, we developed a strategy to train and deploy the unit. To tackle this problem, we first identified the unit strengths and weakness. We determined that the unit was strong in the performance of platoon level mission and team tasks. We noted the unit was weak in marksmanship skills and battle tracking. We also identified the law enforcement

training and certification requirements for each community. We needed this information so that we could work with the S3 on a training plan for replacement Soldiers. Once we established this list, we went to our S3 and asked for support from other units to provide Military Police Soldiers for each community. These backfill Soldiers would assume the duties of the deploying platoons. With one company deployed and the other reconstituting after a twelve-month deployment, filling our request would fully tax the battalion. The 793rd Military Police Battalion S3 responded with a plan that would place the requisite number of Soldiers in each community starting 102 days prior to the deployment. This plan allowed the backfill Soldiers two weeks to meet the training requirements and assume force protection and law enforcement responsibilities. The plan would effectively leave the 212th MP Company 90 days to prepare for its deployment.

With the backfill problem solved, we turned our attention to the 90-day training plan and identified what each platoon could do prior to the start of the 90-day training window. We developed a list of individual Soldier pre-deployment tasks and directed each platoon to focus on those tasks. The platoons were responsible for coordinating for such things as wills, powers of attorney, immunizations, identification cards and tags, privately owned vehicle storage, driver's training, and a litany of other tasks. The training office tracked the platoons' progress and provided a snapshot at the weekly training meeting. We also set up leaders training on basic and advanced marksmanship techniques. All seemed to be going well until we realized that we had not identified the rear detachment leadership. Fortunately, the former First Sergeant had already identified the legitimately non-deployable Soldiers and the Soldiers who wanted to shirk the deployment. We selected a pregnant First Lieutenant as the rear detachment Commander. We also selected a Sergeant First Class, pending reassignment, as the rear detachment Sergeant. We later learned that these were two of our biggest mistakes of the deployment. With the rear detachment senior leaders identified, we identified the remaining rear detachment Soldiers from

our list of non-deployable Soldiers. These Soldiers filled such critical sections as the supply room, arms room, mailroom, and personnel. We identified the rear detachment MP Soldiers capable of working law enforcement duties and planned to have them augment the backfill Soldiers. We did not identify the leadership for the outlying platoons, nor did we establish a date of when the rear detachment would assume responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the unit. These two omissions would also come back to haunt us.

Participants

The 212th Military Police Company had an authorized strength of 170 Soldiers. At the time, the unit received deployment orders the unit had an assigned strength of 142 Soldiers. There were approximately 128 deployable Soldiers. In addition, 12 of the 128 deployable Soldiers were on assignment instructions, which prevented them from participating in the deployment. This left the unit with 116 deployable Soldiers. The mission called for the unit to deploy at 80% of its authorized strength. This met that the unit would have to have 136 Soldiers for the deployment. Positional staffing was also a concern. We had several junior Soldiers filling key roles due to a shortage of non-commissioned officers. For example, the unit was authorized two Master Sergeants in the operations section. At the time we received orders, a senior Sergeant First Class and a Staff Sergeant staffed the operations section. The leadership within the platoons was in a similar situation. We had several Specialist staffing team leader positions instead of the authorized Sergeants. We were also short two platoon sergeants and filled these positions with junior Staff Sergeants. The 212th Military Police Company staffing was typical of the shortages that were facing the entire Army during this time. In fact, according the 2002 Army Posture Statement, there was a 20% shortage of personnel Army wide. (WHITE)

The Battalion Commander Sergeant Major worked with our Brigade Headquarters and

Personnel Command to fill the shortages. She advised us to continue to cover critical positions with junior Soldiers as needed and to keep her informed on the unit's training progress.

As promised, the unit was relieved from law enforcement responsibilities 90 days prior to the deployment. We had 30 days to qualify and train our platoons prior to the unit's mission rehearsal exercise in Hohenfels. Having no master gunners assigned, we used train-the-trainer techniques that we taught during NCOPD to ensure all NCOs were teaching the tasks to the same standards. We started company wide training with five days of gunnery for all weapons systems. We followed this with three days of advanced marksmanship techniques. We used the company level ranges as an opportunity for our company headquarters to set up the company command post and practice battle tracking by having them track the platoon movements and weapons qualification statistics. This worked well and the unit qualification rates improved dramatically. Relying heavily on our TACSOP and the specified training guidance, we conducted platoon lane training for eight days following our second set of ranges. The lanes concentrated on the Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) task we would face in Kosovo. This also provided another opportunity for the Company Headquarters to set up and practice their support and battle tracking skills. The training went well although most leaders complained about the shortage of time and personnel, which the Commander and I expected.

Sixty days prior to our deployment, we were still short on personnel. The 116 Soldiers identified for deployment was now at 119 and we deployed to the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTTC) in Hohenfels, Germany. This 200-mile separation was enough to alert us that there was a serious disconnect between the unit headquarters and the rear detachment.

Although we briefed the rear detachment Commander and NCO on the working issues, we did not leave reliable leaders to assist them in addressing problems. The tenuousness of the situation became apparent with the flood of phone calls the rear detachment received from

disgruntled family members and community leaders. As the calls came in, the rear detachment leaders immediately called forward to the unit headquarters and passed the issues forward. As a result, the company headquarters juggled the exercise and tried to address issues in the rear. We worked through most of the issue by phone calls and sent runners back to their home communities as needed.

Equipment accountability was also hectic. When we deployed, we took all weapon systems assigned to Soldiers and the records from the arms rooms with us. This left no documentation or accountability for the unassigned weapons we left in the rear. We faxed copies of the rosters back to the rear and stopped training to verify accountability.

Fortunately, the training we conducted prior to the MRE adequately prepared us for the training challenges we faced during the exercise. While there was some learning, for the most part, we were on target for the deployment, as far as critical tactical tasks. We redeployed from the CMTC 40 days prior to deployment and shipped our equipment within ten days of our return from CMTC. We identified NCOs in each community who would address issues and assist family members as needed. The commander and I also clarified the duties of the rear detachment leaders. Unfortunately, the US Army Europe course was not teaching Rear Detachment Commanders Course at this time.

While we are at the CMTC 11 new, Soldiers arrived at the unit. We also received a new platoon sergeant to fill one of the short platoons upon our return. This put the unit at 77% strength, with several NCO shortages. The newly arrived Soldiers went through individual readiness training (IRT) while the remainder of the unit continued to prepare for the deployment and took block leave. We deployed on time at 78% strength with three additional Soldiers scheduled to deploy 30 days after the bulk of the unit, due to medical issues with their family members.

The challenges of the rear detachment continued to plague the unit through most of the deployment. This was mainly due to personnel turn over and a lack of continuity.

Apparatus

A year and a half later I PCSed to Fort Stewart where I served as the S3 Sergeant Major of the 3D Military Police Battalion. When the battalion received deployment orders sending the 549th Military Police Company to Iraq I recalled the lessons I learned from Germany. As a member of the battalion staff, I met with the unit leadership and drew up the deployment plan for the unit. Our plan relieved the unit from all law enforcement and external commitments 120 days prior the deployment. We also identified the rear detachment for the unit. These highly competent leaders would serve in as the rear detachment throughout the deployment. This approach alleviated several of the issues confronting the deploying unit and aided in the train up and deployment of the unit. The Battalion S3 and I presented the unit training requirements to the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security (DPTMS). They pooled installation resources according to our timeline and provided synchronized and fully supported ranges, simulations, requisite briefings, and screenings. This support far exceeded our expectations.

Procedure

Both deployments started with the actual deployment order, which required personnel adjustments, development of a training plan, and a period of training prior to the units deploying. Both units successfully deployed on time and were at the required strength prior to assuming their mission in theater.

Results

These deployments punctuated the need for strong support from the higher headquarters supporting a unit deployment. They also highlighted the need for units to make smart decisions on selecting key leaders in the deploying force and in the rear detachment.

Discussion

Experiencing the pitfalls of a poorly selected rear detachment has indelibly highlighted the whole unit concept in my mind. This experience taught me that although ensuring the proper staffing and training of the deploying force is critical, the rear detachment can make or break a unit deployment just as quickly as any other threat facing a unit

References

WHITE, THOMAS E. SECRETARY OF THE ARMY. (2002, February). *2002 U.S. Army Posture Statement*. Retrieved from <http://www.Army.mil/aps/02/html/addendum.html>