

Running Head: Preparation and Deployment

Preparation and Deployment of a Military Police Battalion

SGM David DeBates

Operation Iraqi Freedom, 01/24/04-01/19/05

31B50, Operations Sergeant Major, HHD 759<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion

15 September 2006

Class 57, USASMA

### Abstract

The focus of this paper will be on my participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom II (OIF II) from January 2004-January 2005. I deployed as the Assistant S3 Sergeant Major while assigned to the Headquarters, and Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 759<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, Fort Carson Colorado. My intent is to focus on our unit's preparations for overseas assignment, our initial staging and then our onward integration into our Area of Responsibilities, our transfer of authority from the 519<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion and then close with how we integrated and controlled the transfer of authority of our subordinate units. Additionally, I will address lessons learned and the challenges we faced with the transition from a peacetime HHD with three organic MP companies to a battlefield C2 element with control of 8 MP companies and responsibility for all Iraqi police operations on the east side of Baghdad, Iraq.

## Preparation and Deployment of a Military Police Battalion

***Warning Order and Preparation for Deployment.*** Our mission began in September of 2003 when we, the HHD 759<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, Fort Carson, Colorado, received an initial warning order from United States Army, Forces Command. Our unit was identified as the replacement Command and Control Headquarters, and Headquarters Detachment (HHD) unit for the 519<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion that was currently occupying their battle space in the eastern half of Baghdad, Iraq.

Our initial notification came via an email notification since FORSCOM had yet to finalize their deployment order and the task organization of the replacement forces. The official deployment order would not come for another two months. This delay in receiving our official order complicated our preparation and deployment immensely because of our inability to receive the limited resources. Our training priority was reduced behind all the other units that had valid deployment orders and placed us on a space available basis for training sites, areas, and ranges.

This left us with a number of questions and concerns that could not be answered and affected our planning and preparation and caused us to make constant adjustments to our planning prior to our deployment. The only information that was provided with the original warning order was that we knew where we were going, who we would replace and when we would arrive. Our earliest arrival date (EAD) as listed was 15 December 2003, and our latest arrival date (LAD) was 15 February.

Our planning and preparation began with our personnel and equipment. We began with an analysis of our mission and our current available manpower and skill sets. We also had to identify personnel that were non deployable due to medical profile or on assignment orders that could not be cancelled. Our personnel and equipment shortages were identified and we requested

replacement personnel and equipment to make up for the critical shortages. This shortage of personnel and the delay in gaining timely replacements caused problems in the integration of personnel and unit and section train up due to personnel arriving later and not being with the unit during our entire preparation for deployment.

As we were analyzing our personnel and equipment shortages we started to focus on training and began to develop critical tasks and a training plan that would be conducted during our limited time frame. We had to identify critical war fighting tasks that were listed in the deployment order and our units individual and collective tasks from our units Mission Essential Task List (METL) that would be needed to support our battlefield mission.

We again, looked at our outlined mission and what tasks our Soldiers would be required to perform and developed our training plan and tasks to ensure that we were trained on these tasks. We focused on critical individual tasks and collective battle drills that centered on the Soldiers ability to use his personnel equipment and weapon systems effectively and efficiently. This proved to be more difficult than was initially planned.

A HHD is task organized to provide the C2 and support for a battalion sized element and normally does not participate in ground combat or conduct offensive tactics and team movements designed to close with and destroy and enemy. An analysis of the tactics, techniques, and procedures for units in Iraq during OIF I indicted that this was no longer a linear, symmetrical battlefield and that all units must be trained and prepared to conduct offensive and defensive operations. This required us to devote a large portion of our available time to ensure that the Soldiers had a mastery of their individual tasks and could function as members of a fire team.

Along with our training, we also had to ship our equipment and necessary supplies that would be need for us to sustain operations until we could fully integrate with our support elements

in Baghdad. This included over 75 wheeled vehicles and trailers, generators, and milvans. Our requirement to arrive in theatre, mission capable, required that we move that equipment ahead of us in order for the equipment to be available to us when we arrived. This affected our ability to conduct training and complicated our ability to move Soldiers to training events. We modified all of our equipment packages and supply lists based on what we were able to determine about availability of all classes of supplies. At the time Class IX parts and petroleum, oil, and lubricants products were in short supply in theatre. This required us to allocate a high percentage of our available space to ensure that we would have adequate supplies and equipment.

Our most important lesson learned is that units need to be ready to deploy on a short notice. By the time we finally received our official orders to deploy, we were already very short on time. If our unit had not been trained on the basic Soldier skills to include common tasks, individual tasks, and basic battle drills we would have been hard pressed to focus our limited training time on more complex tasks. This would have seriously degraded our effectiveness to accomplish our mission and our ability to integrate into the battlefield.

***Deployment:*** Our deployment into the AOR was standard airlift via commercial airlines from Fort Carson, Colorado into the AOR. By December, we had a hard date for our air movement of Soldiers and individual equipment and our earliest arrival date (EAD)/latest arrival date (LAD) were firmly established. We determined that we would need more time in theatre preparing so we moved our window closer to our EAD to allow for air flow into the theatre and to ensure we had the adequate preparation time needed. .

We broke the movement of Soldiers into two elements: an advance party, consisting of representatives from all of our S-shops as well as our HHD operations and C2 personnel and the

remainder of our personnel who would follow us into theatre with the main body. Our total number of advance personnel was limited at 15 personnel due to limited billeting in Kuwait. The time difference between the advance party and the main body was only four days difference so it required us to ensure that only critical personnel went early. This ensured that we would be able to secure adequate resources in the theatre and be prepared to receive our main body of personnel and focus on preparations for moving forward from our staging area into our final area of operation.

The advance party deployed out of Fort Carson on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006 and the main body followed on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006. Upon arrival at our Aerial Point of Entry (APOE), Ali Al Salem, Airbase, Kuwait, the advance party had the responsibility of securing support for themselves and the main body, to include transportation from the Aerial Port of Entry (APOE) to our staging area where we would be billeted. This hard site was where we would begin our training and preparations for our onward integration into the theatre of operations and our convoy movement into Iraq and eventually, Baghdad which was initially schedule for 2 February, 2006.

Our major lesson learned during this phase was the need to remain flexible and to continue training and improving when provided an opportunity. Our time lines remained in a state of flux and this generated a great deal of anxiety in the Soldiers. Leaders need to focus on squashing rumors and step up their communications with their Soldiers. Talk to them constantly to keep them focused on the things that they can control and influence, like training, maintenance of personal gear and improving their force protection posture.

***Reception and Staging:*** Our primary mission in the staging area was preparing our equipment and personal equipment for our upcoming mission. We spent a great deal of time fixing

and repairing equipment that malfunctioned, or was damaged during the movement overseas, drawing additional equipment and resources and preparing personal equipment.

The majority of the vehicles we had were non armored vehicles, from 5-ton trucks down to M1025 High Mobility Multi Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs). We were not yet equipped with the newer M1114 Up Armored HMMWVs due to an Army wide shortage and would not get those until we arrived in Baghdad. The original deployment order called for all units to leave their M1114s as stay behind equipment (SBE) and we would have the responsibility of collecting them and redistributing them once we assumed responsibility for our area.

This shortage of hardened vehicles required that we harden the vehicles we had with a variety of methods to include, sandbags, fabricated protective panels, and synthetic ballistic panels and blankets. This method was not the most preferred or safest method to travel but we were able to apply some innovative techniques and procedures to offer the best protection we could with the limited resources that were available to us.

The remainder of our preparation time was spent conducting weapons maintenance which proved to be difficult in the desert environment. The weapons malfunctioned at a higher rate due to the environment and the harsh desert conditions and the weapons had to be cleaned and maintained multiple times during the day to ensure that they would function properly. This was adopted early on as a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for all Soldiers.

When we were not cleaning or working on equipment, we were going through individual and team live fire battle drills to ensure that the Soldiers maintained their proficiency and their ability to function as a member of a fire team, and to be able to defend their element. Their skills and abilities, as well as their confidence, grew rapidly during this time as the Soldiers gained a high level of trust in their equipment, their ability to use it, and their faith in their fellow Soldiers.

Motivation was never an issue because everyone knew fully that within a few days they would be crossing the border and leaving the relative safety of Kuwait and entering into a known, high threat area and, everyone was focused on mission accomplishment. This training in the staging area, combined with the preparations we made in CONUS allowed our unit to deploy with a high level of confidence in our capabilities and our potential to deal with a determined and resourceful enemy.

Our biggest lesson learned is that training pays off. We focused our training on individual and team and squad level training along with immediate action drills. This provided us with an excellent foundation and provided the Soldiers with a heightened level of confidence in their own abilities and faith in the unit's ability to accomplish its mission.

***Onward Integration:*** Our movement into Iraq began on the Morning of 2 February, when we left our staging area with our entire element and headed north to NAVSTAR, Kuwait, a US staging area on the Kuwait/Iraq border. Upon arrival at NAVSTAR, we were assigned our movement times by the Movement Control Team. The theatre movement plan called for called for our unit to remain over night and depart early on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> into Iraq and towards Baghdad. Our initial plan called for us to make the move to Baghdad in two days with a maintenance and rest stop scheduled. Our efforts in preparation and maintenance allowed us to continue on and make the 350 mile trip in a single day without a single breakdown. The trip was long and tiring but again, our training, preparation, leadership and maintenance allowed us to complete this move with few problems or difficulties.

Upon arrival in Baghdad, we covered down on our future home at Forward Operating Base Muleskinner and begin the process of occupying our site and the process of integrating our element

into the battle. At that time, Baghdad was the battlespace of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division who were in the process of turning it over the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division.

Our battalion was a direct replacement for the 519<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion and we were task organized under the 89<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade, Fort Hood Texas under the Command of Colonel David Phillips. The 89<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade was responsible for all Iraqi Police (IPs) operations in the city of Baghdad and was responsible for the reconstruction, equipping, and training of the IPs to include the establishment of a police academy and the oversight of the numerous detention facilities through the city.

Our support to this mission involved us assuming operational control of the 519<sup>th</sup> MP Battalions AOR. On February 12, 2004 we assumed responsibility for our AOR to include, all districts east of the Tigris River, over 38 Iraqi police stations, 5 Iraqi Police Division Headquarters, The Iraqi Police Academy, and two detention facilities.

As soon as we transferred authority we began the process of rotating out the remainder of the OIF I units and replaced them with military police units and in-lieu of units (ILO). Our ILO units were artillery units that were task organized to replace a standard military police company. Our normal mission was to provided command and control to two corps MP companies and an MP detachment. In Baghdad we assumed control of four ILO companies, four corps MP companies and an MP detachment.

This basically tripled our normal unit strength and provided numerous challenges. Our final task organization include A 1/258 Field Artillery Battery, C 3/112<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battery, C 1/107 Field Artillery Battery, A1/109 Field Artillery Battery, 984<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, 571<sup>st</sup> Military Police Company, 630<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, 272<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company, and 415<sup>th</sup> Military Police Detachment.

After we completed our transfer of authority with the 519<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion, and completed the rotation of our units, we began to focus on our battlefield mission and the many challenges that we would face in the upcoming year. Our unit experienced many changes in our mission during the year that we served and our personnel continued to grow and develop as a unit during this difficult time. But these changes were never as dramatic or as rapid as when we rapidly transitioned from a CONUS based, garrison law enforcement battalion with command and control of just three units to operating in a highly fluid battlespace. This was demonstrated by our ability to adapt while maintaining operational control of nine units and conducting operations in one of the toughest and most demanding areas in Iraq and the responsibility of establishing, equipping, developing, and training a professional police force from the ground up.

Our biggest lesson learned was that Soldiers can adapt well to a changing environment when they have good leadership and proper training. Even though our conditions changed, our environment changed, our mission changed several times, we were able to adjust on the fly and shift our focus and develop reliable courses of action that enabled us to continue to fulfill our responsibilities on the battlefield.