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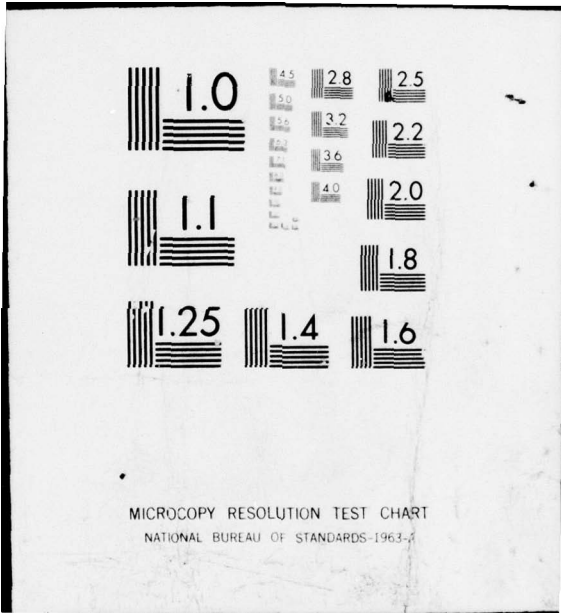
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STUDENT STUDY PROJECT

THE MILITARY POLICE AND
THE COVERING FORCE

Prepared For

Major J.A. Kochenour

by

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↳ The author states that the MP's do have a role and mission in the covering force; e.g., security of supplies, traffic control, PW collecting and evacuating, and refugee and straggler control.		

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will be a brief look at the possibility of employing military police resources in the covering force area. It will be based on the present concept of the covering force and the missions now assigned to the Division M.P. Company. This information will be analyzed to see if those missions need to be included in the covering force area (CFA).

This paper is written by a military police officer with 14½ years experience in the field and an assignment as a company commander of a division military police company in Vietnam.

This paper will not discuss any specific unit or unit size to be considered for employment in the CFA. It will also not include any discussion of combat in a nuclear environment.

Section II will be a general review of the covering force concept. It will include missions, composition of forces, and tactics.

Section III will be a review of the traditional missions assigned to a division military police company. It will include a brief synopsis of the nature of these missions.

Section IV will be an analysis of the M.P. missions that can be extended into the covering force area.

Section V will be the conclusion. It will include any recommendations that should be considered.

II

THE COVERING FORCE CONCEPT

The battlefield, when prepared for defensive operations, is divided into three distinct areas: the covering force area, the main battle area, and the rear area. Forces and fires must be apportioned so as to support each area as a part of the overall defensive plan.

The primary mission of a covering force is to gain time. Time is gained by:

- "(a) Aggressive offensive action and skillful retrograde operations.
- (b) Imaginative use of natural and manmade obstacles.
- (c) Deceiving the enemy as to the true location of the FEBA.
- (d) Forcing the enemy to deploy his force prematurely.
- (e) Inflicting maximum casualties as the enemy advances.
- (f) Providing early warning of enemy movement. " 1

The time that is gained will be used to shift forces in the main battle area to meet the advancing penetration. This can be accomplished if the enemy is forced to deploy for close combat in the covering force area and commit its second echelon forces into a main thrust. Since enemy doctrine is to channelize his attack into a main penetration, the defending forces must mass their firepower at that critical point to stop the attack. The covering force will accomplish its primary mission if it can force the enemy to reveal his main thrusts and provide time for the main battle area forces to meet the attack.

CGSC reference book (RB) 100-5-1 dated July 1976, lists four basic tasks for the covering force:

- "(a) Force the enemy into revealing the strength, location, and general direction of his main attack. To do this, it will be necessary to strip away enemy reconnaissance and advance guard elements. Contact with the enemy main body is sought; a fight is started with enough intensity to force the enemy to deploy maneuver and fire support units and begin his main attack.
- (b) Deceive the enemy, or prevent the enemy from determining the strength, dispositions, and locations of friendly forces, especially those in the main battle area.
- (c) Divest the enemy of his air defense umbrella, or require him to displace his air defenses before attacking the main battle area.
- (d) Gain time for the main body, enabling it to deploy, move, or prepare defenses within the main battle area." ²

Covering force units should make contact with the enemy as soon as they enter the covering force area. By beginning the battle as far forward as possible it will give the main battle area commanders the best opportunity to analyze the situation and shift their forces to counter the main attack.

The covering force area is that area from the FEBA forward to the line of contact. Any mobile force can be used as covering forces but normally armored cavalry and air cavalry reinforced with sufficient tank, antitank, mechanized infantry, field artillery, air defense artillery, engineer, and attack helicopters could expect to make-up the task force. Artillery and tactical air should be used extensively in order to attrit the enemy and deceive him into believing he has made contact

with the main defensive line.

When the covering force has done as much damage as it can it will pass through the main battle area defensive positions and begin other assigned missions. These missions can vary from reserve or refitting, to strengthening the main battle area.

The concept of the covering force is to have a strong, mobile tactical fighting force to attack the enemy as he enters the area and to inflict as many casualties as possible. Once contact is made, elements must move to alternate positions and resume the fight. When the enemy is identified, maximum combat power will be exerted at that location. Units in the covering force may have to move laterally to counter any enemy penetration.

Maneuver and firepower are the keys to mission accomplishment in the covering force area. It would follow that ammunition and POL would be expended or used up at greater rates than previously experienced.

MILITARY POLICE MISSIONS

There are fifteen missions normally assigned to a division military police company. Six of these missions deal with normal police activities or relate to rear area protection and area damage control. These six will not be discussed further as they do not lend themselves to any possible use in the covering force area. The remaining nine will be discussed in depth in the following paragraphs.

Traffic Control - "Military police traffic control operations are vital in combat operations".³ The traffic circulation plan, prepared by the division transportation officer, details the use of the road network. Control of this plan is a mission of the military police. In combat, emphasis is on uninterrupted movement. Supplies heading to the troops-in-contact are given priority on routes forward while evacuation of wounded is given priority to the rear. Other traffic is directed to secondary roads so as not to interfere with this higher priority traffic. Enforcing this plan requires traffic control posts, patrolling roadblocks, searches, travel permits, cargo manifest checks, seizure of contraband, and detainment of suspect individuals.

Physical Security - Security of sensitive items in a combat zone is done at static locations and along routes of march. Military police are prepared to secure installations, downed aircraft, distinguished visitors, or most any other sensitive item. This requirement is usually temporary because of the rapid changing situation in combat. Attended and unattended sensors, dogs, and night vision aids may be used to augment physical security guards.

Command Post Security - Military policemen man the internal security posts designated by the headquarters commandant as a part of the overall defense and security plan for the division

main command post. The TOC, the division war room, the communications center, facilities for special intelligence, and the division commander's quarters are all covered in the security plan. In some circumstances, M.P.'s may be used as personal security for the C.G. and travel with him at all times. Similiar security requirements are found in each of the brigades.

Prisoners of War - Military police units establish forward and central P.W. collecting points to relieve combat troops of the additional task of their security. Forward P.W. points are located in each committed brigade. Classification, segregation, processing and evacuation are also a division military police responsibility.

Circulation Control of Individuals - As a part of their other duties, military policemen exercise control over stragglers and refugees. Stragglers are identified, reported, and returned to their unit as quickly as possible. Refugees that can clog up main supply routes are diverted to secondary roads or directed to designated evacuation centers. The latter function is done in conjunction with the G5 and local authorities.

Enforcement - The enforcement of military laws, orders, and regulations as well as host country laws is a function of all military police. Their presence will often deter crimes from occurring. Many times they are the only police force able to respond to calls for assistance.

Aid to Civil Authorities - There is a constant requirement to aid and support local civil authority. Control of refugees, searching buildings, operating checkpoints, and providing emergency communications are all types of assistance that can be provided by the division military police.

Police Information- The development of police information by M.P.'s and local police compliments the overall intelligence program. Interrogation, identification, and searching techniques can provide valuable information for the all-source intelligence center. Close liason with local police will insure rapid

transmittal of this information to the appropriate intelligence center.

Populace and Resource Control - Military Police involvement in populace and resource control is normally limited to assisting the host government in traffic control, military police investigations, security activities, and refugee control.

MISSION ANALYSIS

The control of traffic in the covering force appears to be just as important as it is in the main battle area and the rear area. Forces are expected to use more POL and ammunition because of the greater need for massed firepower and mobility. If operations are prolonged for several days, then resupply will be an ongoing requirement. The straggler problem will not be as great as in offensive operations but refugees can be expected to be a serious obstacle. It is important to keep the main supply routes open during the resupply efforts.

Critical items of equipment, such as XM-1 tanks and aircraft; are expected to be disabled. Often this equipment has valuable and sensitive items on-board. Military police can be employed to secure this equipment until maintenance personnel can evacuate the desired items. The use of M.P.'s will free combat troops for their combat mission.

Security of the commander of the covering force and his tactical operations center (TOC) is a mission that may be done by combat troops or military policemen. It would probably depend on resources available. Since M.P.'s are presently not assigned to covering force operations, it would be done by combat troops. If M.P.'s were assigned, they would be suited for C.G. security and close-in security of the TOC. Security of a perimeter, if established, would still have to be done by combat troops because of the lack of tactical weapons available to the M.P.'s.

The security and safety of enemy prisoners of war is the capturing units responsibility until they can turn them over to forward P.W. collecting points. It would greatly assist these units if P.W. collecting points were established as far forward as possible, even in the covering force area, so they are not burdened any longer than necessary.

I do not envision any need for detailed enforcement of laws etc. during actual combat. Normal police work is suspended during this time. Any criminal activity during combat would be

investigated after hostilities have ended. If police were patrolling the roads and manning circulation control points (CCP's) for other missions, they may act as a deterrent for some crimes and be able to gather limited data on reported crimes. This would be a residual effect from other missions previously discussed.

As discussed with the traffic control mission, the movement of refugees over supply routes would reduce the effectiveness of the resupply movement. The M.P.'s could aid civil authorities to direct and escort them on other routes. Communications equipment available to the M.P.'s could also assist local authorities establish control over the population. Other needed assistance could be rendered if M.P.'s were available.

Military police patrols and CCP's would be continuously gathering information about bridges, obstacles, road data and even enemy activity. This information would be another source of data to help the commander fight the battle. This is also a residual effect of other missions.

The area of populace and resources control has been discussed previously in other paragraphs. If M.P.'s were available in the covering force area they could aid the local population in many capacities. This assistance would depend on the combat situation and the ability of the host government to implement it's programs.

CONCLUSION

The military police do have a place in the covering force area. They should be used to establish traffic control so supplies can reach troops in contact as soon as possible. By doing this they will also reduce the refugee problem and assist stragglers in finding their units.

They should be used to temporarily secure sensitive equipment until evacuation can be accomplished. They are ideally suited to secure the covering force commander and the TOC. This would reduce the number of combat troops diverted from their primary mission.

They should set up Prisoner of War collecting points and evacuate P.W.'s to the rear as soon as possible.

These functions can be specifically assigned to an M.P. unit. The size of the unit would naturally depend on the size of the covering force and the area to be covered. When designing the force, consideration of special equipment should be included. Armored cars, anti-tank weapons, or secure communications equipment are examples of equipment that may be added depending on the missions.

Once an M.P. unit is assigned to a covering force with the previously mentioned missions, the residual functions of enforcement of laws, circulation control of individuals, police intelligence, aid to civil authorities, and populace and resources control would also be realized.

The overall effect would be better use of combat forces in the CFA and the use of a trained resources not now used.

I recommend that future doctrine include military police in the covering force. I further recommend that defensive operations (3161) taught at CGSC include M.P. play. After several rounds of 3161, a more detailed study of the type of unit, special equipment, and mission analysis could be presented as official Army doctrine.

FOOTNOTES

1. FM 100-15 (Test) March 1974, Larger Unit Operations, pg. 4-17.
2. RB 100-5-1, July 1976, Operations, CGSC, pg. 5-10.
3. FM 19-1, August 1975, Military Police Combat Support, pg. 5-1.

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7. Student Issue, M3161 period 3, CGSC, 1976
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1. FM 19-1, DA, August 1975
2. FM 19-4, DA, June 1969
3. FM 19-7, DA, September 1976
4. FM 19-10, DA, September 1976

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