

Running head: MOBILIZING AN ARMY RESERVE MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

Mobilizing an Army Reserve Military Police Company

MSG Kevan H. Visnick

Mobilization in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I, 02/07/2003

31B5M, First Sergeant, 812th Military Police Company

29 August 2006

Class # 57

Abstract

The 812th Military Police Company was mobilized on the 7th of February 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I. The goal is to follow this mobilization process from an Active Army noncommissioned officer perspective. This will include the unit posture and readiness prior to mobilization notification, the home station mobilization phase, impacts of a short notice mobilization on the Soldiers of the unit, the mobilization station phase, and conclusion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I	Unit posture and readiness prior to mobilization notification
Section II	Impacts of a short notice mobilization on the soldiers
Section III	Home station mobilization phase
Section IV	Mobilization Station Phase
Section V	Conclusion

Section I

UNIT POSTURE AND READINESS PRIOR TO HOME STATION MOBILIZATION

Prior to the Home Station Mobilization Phase, I was assigned to the 812th Military Police Company, Orangeburg, New York as an Active Army Military Police Operations Sergeant under the Army's Full Time Manning (FTM) program. During the month of November 2002 the 812th Military Police Company was filled at 62% of its MTOE strength or 112 of the authorized 180 Soldier strength. During mid November the 310th Military Police Battalion our parent headquarters received notice of mobilization. Subsequent to this mobilization order forty four senior noncommissioned officers, officers, and Soldiers were transferred to the 310th Military Police Battalion. This personnel transfer included the unit Commander, First Sergeant, all of the Platoon Leaders, Platoon Sergeants, the Troop Program Unit Operations Sergeant, and approximately two-thirds of the units Staff Sergeants. The unit strength upon completion of the personnel transfer stood at seventy personnel.

On the 28th of January 2003, CPT Vance Kuhner assumed command of the 812th Military Police Company. CPT Kuhner and I were told by the 77th Regional Readiness Command that due to the unit's personnel shortages we would not be mobilized. We did not agree with this assessment. Since we could do nothing about the personnel shortages we concentrated on our efforts on improving the unit's administrative readiness.

On the 4th of February 2003, a United States Army Reserve Command (USARC), Command Assessment Program (CAP) inspection team arrived at the unit. During the inspection out-brief the unit received Go's in all areas meeting or exceeding the USARC pre-mobilization requirements. Upon the completion of the out-brief the inspection team OIC provided CPT Kuhner and I with a copy of the Mobilization order for the 812th Military Police Company

which directed an effective Home Station Mobilization date of 7 February 2003, with a mandatory arrival date of 10 February 2003, at Fort Drum, NY the units Mobilization station.

Section II

IMPACTS OF A SHORT NOTICE MOBILIZATION ON THE SOLDIERS

Due to the short notice mobilization we immediately initiated the unit alert procedures to allow the Soldiers as much time as possible to get their lives in order. The short time between mobilization notification and home station mobilization placed a hardship on most of the Soldiers in the unit. Approximately two-thirds of the unit's population was employed as police officers in the local community or students enrolled in college. The turn-in of police weapons, withdrawal from college, placing belongings in storage and all of the other personal actions associated with a deployment had to be accomplished by these Soldiers in twenty-four hours. Several of the Soldiers were on business in other states and Canada and had to drop everything to return home. A short delay of mobilization was requested by the unit commander and subsequently denied by the chain of command.

The effects of this short notice mobilization were felt throughout the home station phase of mobilization. Many of the Soldiers failed to report to the mandatory first formation on the 7th of February 2003, many due to their having to decide between the Army obligation and their obligation to their family and civilian employers.

Section III

HOME STATION MOBILIZATION PHASE

The purpose of the Home Station Mobilization phase is to allow the alerted unit time to complete the initial personnel actions required when activating Reserve Soldiers and to provide time for the unit equipment load out prior to moving to the mobilization station. This phase

normally lasts from fourteen to twenty-one days. The 812th Military Police Company mobilization order allowed for three days at home station.

At the first mobilization accountability formation, 0700, 05 February 2003, thirty-two of the assigned seventy-two personnel reported for duty. This poor showing was primarily due to the above mentioned Soldier hardships, Soldiers choose to get their lives in order over reporting on time.

Upon receipt of the unit mobilization order I had established contact with the mobilization station at Fort Drum, New York and with our higher headquarters. Due to the mobilization of the 310th Military Police Battalion that meant the 800th Military Police Brigade and the 77th Regional Readiness Command. Fort Drum provided a list of tasks to be completed prior to arrival at the mobilization station. Based on this list I had requested personnel support to conduct the unit SRP, JLIST sizing, Security Clearance Processing, and procurement of transportation for the MTOE equipment (to include pallets and connex inserts) as well as other items. In response to this request the BDE NBC NCO and the 306th Military Police Battalion S-3 Sergeant Major reported to the company area to assist in the JLIST sizing and security clearance issues respectively. However, I was told by the 800th Military Police Brigade XO that no pallets or connex inserts were available and that we should wait until the local Home Depot or Lowe's had closed and then using our 2 ½ Ton truck we should go and take what pallets we needed. Obviously this was not an acceptable course of action. In addition the two impact cards that the unit possessed were turned off by the 77th Regional Readiness Command. When contacted they stated that upon receipt of the mobilization order we belonged to the Active Army and not the Reserves and that the Mobilization Station was responsible for all costs incurred with the unit movement. When the Mobilization Station was contacted they stated that we were not

Their problem until we arrived at Fort Drum. Instead of the course of action suggested by the BDE we contacted local businesses and facilities to request donations of any packaging materials they could offer. By close of business on Friday the 7th of February we had procured eighty pallets and connex inserts and had begun equipment load out.

The load out and personnel processing continued throughout the weekend in preparation for the tentative convoy roll out time of 1100 hrs, Monday the 10th of February. Personnel continued to report throughout the weekend with a final count of seventy-two Soldiers at the Monday morning accountability formation. The 812th Military Police Company had fifty-four pieces of rolling stock that required movement to Fort Drum, however, we only had enough drivers and assistant drivers for thirty-five vehicles. Cadet Anest an ROTC cadet assigned to the unit was placed on active duty orders for two weeks to coordinate the shipment of the remaining vehicles and all of the palletized equipment to Fort Drum. At 1000 hrs, 10 February 2003, COL Spies the force projection officer for the 77th Regional Readiness Command arrived at the 812th Military Police Company area with Temporary Change of Station orders that laterally promoted me to First Sergeant and deployed me with the unit. At 1100 hrs, 10 February 2003, the unit convoy and all personnel departed Orangeburg, New York for Fort Drum.

The weather at the time of departure was thirty-two degrees with light snow flurries, within forty-five minutes of convoy departure the temperature had dropped to fifteen degrees with blizzard/white out conditions. I contacted the 77th Regional Readiness Command and requested permission to return to the Reserve Center to wait for the storm to end. I was informed that they no longer commanded our unit and that we needed to make the request through the EOC at Fort Drum. I then contacted the EOC at Fort Drum and was ordered to continue to Fort Drum regardless of current or future weather conditions, but to reduce speed to a safe level and

to keep the EOC informed of our progress. By 1700 hrs the temperature was minus five degrees and the blizzard conditions continued. Many of the vehicle heaters were inoperable and most of the ones that did work could not keep the vehicle interiors warm. This made it necessary to make several unplanned rest stops for the Soldiers to warm themselves. After ten hours we had covered only one hundred and seventy miles of the three hundred to Fort Drum. CPT Kuhner contacted the EOC at Fort Drum and again requested to stop the convoy, this time at an Army Reserve Center near Syracuse, New York. CPT Kuhner was told that under no circumstance would the convoy stop and that we were to check in hourly with the EOC from then on.

The convoy finally arrived at Fort Drum at approximately 0400 hrs on the 11th of February 2003. It had taken roughly seventeen hours to travel the three hundred miles from Orangeburg to Fort Drum. Upon arrival at Fort Drum the temperature stood at minus thirty five degrees. The temperatures over the next forty-five to fifty days remained between ten degrees and minus forty-five degrees.

Section IV

Mobilization Station Phase

Upon link up with MSG Hansen, the NCOIC of our advance party, we were taken to the barracks where we would be housed during our stay at Fort Drum. The World War II era barracks were in a run down state to say the least. When the wind blew, which it always seemed to do, the snow would blow into the rooms through the gaps around the windows and cracks along the outer walls.

The unit equipment was scheduled for arrival on the 12th of February 2003. We did not have a storage facility and were unable to secure one before the first shipment arrived. The post transportation office directed that the equipment be off loaded into the snow bank next to our

barracks to avoid the additional cost of the equipment sitting on a tractor trailer. Both the Fort Drum Garrison Activity and the Mobilizations Operations Center (MOC) refused to provide a suitable location for equipment storage. Finally a Reserve Garrison Activity Major allowed us to temporarily store our equipment in a building that was to be used as office space for another mobilizing unit. The final solution was to sign for the connexes that we would use for movement to Iraq and move the equipment into them. However, it took the garrison commanders approval to spot five connexes.

Shortly after our arrival at Fort Drum we received a printed and electronic copy of a proposed Military Police Guard Company Mission Table of Organizational Equipment (MTOE) from Forces Command (FORSCOM). This MTOE reduced our overall personnel strength from one hundred and eighty to one hundred and twenty-four Soldiers. Additionally it drastically reduced the vehicle and equipment allocations to the headquarters platoon. Fortunately the MTOE came with directions for the unit to make any recommended changes to the electronic copy and return it to FORSCOM. Approximately two weeks later we received the approved MTOE complete with all of the unit's recommended changes.

The MOC did not have a Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE) developed for a unit with this MTOE or mission. Also due to a shortage of personnel the MOC did not have the experienced Military Policemen to build the necessary MRE scenarios. This resulted in the company commander and me getting involved in the development of the MRE.

At the same time we received approximately fifty soldiers from Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee, Florida, and California and began the reception process. As an Army Reserve unit we maintained our own TA-50 to issue to Soldiers. Prior to our mobilization we had transferred most of the on hand equipment to the 310th Military Police Battalion to fill their shortages. As a

result we did not have enough TA-50 (canteens, pistol belts, holsters, LBE, ect...) to support the influx of new personnel. The Army Reserve supply system could not support us because we now belonged to the Active Army. Additionally due to the large number of Army Reserve Soldiers mobilizing though Fort Drum they also could not fill our shortages. After numerous phone calls we were able to locate a Defense Reutilization Marketing Office (DRMO) at Aberdeen Proving Ground that was willing to let us sign for the TA-50 to fill our shortages. The Company Commander and I paid for a rental van and sent the company supply officer and supply sergeant with a list of shortages to Aberdeen to retrieve the shortage items.

As I had stated earlier the temperatures during this time were well below zero. As the unit progressed through the early stages of mobilization the Soldiers were required to spend more time outside. The Gore-Tex jacket and polypropylene underwear were not enough to keep them from becoming a cold weather injury. When this issue was raised at the first unit validation meeting the civilian in charge of the Central Issue Facility (CIF) told us that the standard issue field jacket would work well enough for our Soldiers. After a rather heated debate between this gentleman, my commander and I the Garrison Commander ordered the CIF to provide the needed equipment.

We continued to run into the same general attitude through out the mobilization either the Army Reserve would not assist because we now belonged to the Active Army or the Active Army Refused to assist because the Army Reserve should have provided the assistance prior to reporting to the mobilization station. Another example of the "it can't be done" mentality is the Guardian weapons mount. While a Platoon Sergeant and First Sergeant at Fort Campbell we used the Eagle mounts on our HMMWVs. This mounting system gave us the capability to mount the M249 SAW and the MK-19 simultaneously on the HMMWV. The Guardian mount

was the Fort Drum version of the same mount. When we approached the DOL supervisor with a copy of the plans from Fort Campbell we were told that he could make a similar mount (the Guardian mount) but three post commanders ago he was told not to make anymore. After continuous encouragement from our unit he finally gave in and made the mounts in time for them to go into our connex. These mounts were a combat multiplier and enhanced the overall weapons platform capabilities. When we departed Iraq the 519th Military Police Battalion Commander ordered us to leave the Guardian mounts in theater to be distributed throughout the Battalion yet we almost did not receive them to the “I can’t mentality”.

Section V

CONCLUSION

As an Active Army NCO assigned to a Reserve Unit I was able to see the unique situations faced by the Reserve Soldier. From the initial moment of call up the unit was treated as an independent organization. The peacetime Reserve unit chain of command cut all ties, providing zero assistance or guidance. The active Army treated the unit as a lesser member or citizen in their community.

The hardships endured by the Soldiers being removed from their family with three days notice, dropping everything because their country called goes far beyond duty and responsibility. Without exception this unit met or exceeded every standard set for them and surpassed all expectations. At the time of their return from theater they were the most decorated unit since World War II and were later selected as “The Best Company Sized Unit in the Army Reserve” for FY2003. Additionally the 812th Military Police Company was awarded the Valorous Unit Award and the 519th Military Police Battalion Commander repeatedly and openly stated that the 812th Military Police Company was the best unit in his command.

This level of performance was achieved by a highly motivated and dedicated core group of senior NCOs and officers that set and maintained the standard. Collectively we adopted the attitude that it was the 812th Military Police Company against the world and no matter the roadblock or barrier we would find a way to succeed. This attitude began by building a strong team mentality and then maintaining the importance of that team to the Soldier.

While at Fort Drum we obtained a copy of the lessons learned during the mobilization of Military Police units during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Nothing had changed in ten years. The active Army and Reserve pay system were still unable to communicate, the Reserve individual replacement system was nonexistent, and every issue that existed then existed at the time my unit was mobilized. As it has been said, “If we do not learn from our mistakes we will be condemned to repeat them”.