MILITARY POLICE PLATOONS OF 2040

By Captain Cody A. Khork

As military police Soldiers, we must be proficient in individual and collective tasks that make up the four military police competencies and versatile in dealing with complexity in wartime and peacetime operations. As technological advancements continue to shape the world around us, our tasks will only grow in complexity. It is only natural that we consider how that might impact the role and operations of military police platoons in the year 2040. While the specifics of military police platoon operations will depend on various factors including location, mission, and available resources, several trends will likely influence the way military police units operate in the future.

In 2040, military police will need to be able to adapt to the use of technology on the battlefield. As our toolkit expands with this new technology, more will be expected from individual Soldiers. More time will be required to train to train on, and become proficient with, the new equipment and to properly employ it on the battlefield. Leaders will need to focus on their day-to-day tasks as well as build additional training and maintenance time to adapt to the new technology.

As technology improves, some of the day-to-day military police platoon workload will be lightened. As surveillance technology becomes more and more automated, surveillance will become a more hands-off task. Soldiers won't be physically performing surveillance; instead, they will find themselves behind a screen, deciphering captured information. This will affect how policing operations are conducted. Surveillance traffic enforcement, such as the issuance of speeding citations, may be automated with future advancements in technology. Patrols will be less engaged in enforcing traffic laws and will be better able to protect the force by acting as a physical deterrent in more populated areas and providing faster responses to more violent crimes.

Detention operations always present unique challenges that differ from one conflict to the next. During the past 20 years, there has been a significant increase in cross-border migration. In 2020, more than 270 million people were living in a country to which they had migrated; this is 100 million more than in 2000, representing an increase of more than half a percent of the global population.[1]

Therefore, when conducting detention operations in 2040, military police can expect to encounter people of many different demographics—not just populations originally from the country in which we are operating. We predict that there will be people from many differing religions and political groups within detention camps and facilities. As military police, we must be mindful of these differences and ensure that all detainees receive humane treatment. We must allow them to exercise freedom of religion consistent with detention requirements. We must ensure that they are not mistreated or attacked by other detainees. Platoon leaders must ensure that the guard force (detention staff) is educated about the different religions and cultures, that it knows when one group is hostile to another, and that it ensures segregation when necessary to avoid detainee-on-detainee violence.

Safeguards must also be in place to protect detainee health and hygiene. Progress on the treatment of tuberculosis and malaria has stalled in recent years. (The number of cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis increased from 2015 to 2019.[2]) These longstanding infectious diseases will continue to endanger individuals and communities, as will new and emerging ones. And in addition to infectious diseases, military police will face older populations with rising instances of noncommunicable diseases, which also cause many deaths worldwide. These circumstances will strain the resources available to detention facilities. Military police must become creative problem solvers in order to tackle these issues. Guard forces will need additional resources and training in order to identify the effects of these diseases, ensure that ailing detainees receive the proper treatment, and protect other detainees and the guard force working in the facility.

To properly handle the global trends of the future, our military police platoons need a more robust form of training. Not only will we need to train on how to support maneuver units and maintain ground lines of communication with advanced technology, but we will also need to possess and defend against the technology used on us. In addition, military police will need an expanded knowledge of religious and cultural practices as world demographics change. Finally, military police will need increased training in dealing with the rise of different diseases and protecting ourselves against them.

Endnotes:

[1]"Global Trends 2040," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, <https://www.dni.gov/files/images/globalTrends/GT2040/GT2040-Structural-Demographics.pdf>, accessed on 8 June 2023.

[2]Ibid.

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