

Lessons Learned at JRTC:

A Look Into 194th Military Police Company Preparation and Execution

By Captain Jacob T. Maule

The 194th Military Police Company, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, recently completed a rotation at Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), Fort Johnson, Louisiana, in support of the 2d Mobile Brigade Combat Team (MBCT), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell. This rotation was unique in that the 2d MBCT is one of only three brigades going through transformation in contact. In addition to normal preparations, it was necessary for the 194th Military Police Company to adjust many operating concepts to more closely align with the highly mobile and technologically advanced MBCT. The deliberate preparation, task organization, enhanced capabilities, increased mobility, aligned communication, and practiced survivability contributed to the ability of the 194th to effectively execute operations and support the Army transformation in contact MBCT.

Task Organization and Alignment

The speed and advanced technology of the 2d MBCT drove the analysis for proper 194th Military Police Company alignment with the MBCT. The company, dispersed throughout the training area, was aligned based on prioritized mission sets, with a changing command relationship during the rotation. Several squads were aligned under operational control of battalions to execute critical site security for assets on the defended asset list. This level of control presents a few issues with regard to accomplishing the overall intent of the brigade across different phases of the operation. It was clear that, in order to mitigate the risk of changing command relationships for squad formations, these military police missions needed to be executed off a brigade-synchronized matrix. Company leaders and operations personnel worked closely with the brigade and subordinate unit staffs to best align capabilities against each of the mission sets. The commander of the 194th Military Police Company developed a close working relationship with brigade operations and provost marshal personnel to coordinate military police operations with the overall timing of brigade operations.

To keep pace with the much faster and more mobile infantry squad vehicles of the 2d MBCT, the 194th Military Police Company reduced the amount of modified table of organization and equipment with which it deployed. The company deployed its high-mobility, multipurpose, wheeled vehicle fleet but not its mine-resistant, all-terrain vehicles. Although this resulted in fewer platforms and fewer common remotely operated weapon station systems, the company

gained significant maneuverability. The wrecker, contact truck, a light medium tactical vehicle, and one water buffalo were also deployed to minimize sustainment requirements from the MBCT.

Designating primary missions to each of the platoons proved to be successful. One platoon with the lightest of equipment sets was designated the light mobile platoon and was aligned with the MBCT. That platoon configured its formation to execute military police tasks in a light, agile manner conducive to supporting a long-range, large-scale air assault. Another platoon that was focused on detainee operations created the most mobile detainee collection point possible, which allowed the platoon to expediently process detainees and to move locations at regular intervals. A third platoon, which provided a squad-sized reserve to the company, supported mobility and security tasks. Its mission set focused mostly on convoy security and forward arming and refueling point critical-site security. This task organization allowed the company to be more agile and responsive, enabling it to provide tangible and sustaining assets to the brigade's multiple lines of effort.

Support to the Strategic Support Area

The JRTC rotation focused on the 2d MBCT long-range, large-scale air assault ability, with some equipment moving off installation by barge. The 194th Military Police Company leveraged the opportunity to test its ability to support force projection from Fort Campbell. The company assisted in movement control operations and discussed at length what would need to happen if the movement was contested. For future combat training center rotations, division protection efforts and garrison support agencies should be integrated into the planning process for "red team" deployment activities to develop possible options for the commander to ensure that units can rapidly deploy from fort to port, as required.

Training

The 194th Military Police Company integrated with the 2d MBCT early on, attending the initial planning conference and briefing the brigade commander on military police company capabilities. Although much coordination was conducted through the brigade provost marshal, the 194th also worked directly with brigade operations, logistics, and communications personnel to ensure full integration. This communication resulted in a more connected company, which enhanced its ability to integrate into

pre-rotation training, such as Operation Lethal Eagle—the qualifying training event for the 101st Airborne Division prior to the JRTC rotation. Operation Lethal Eagle allowed the company to work closely with brigade and division assets to ensure the early establishment of logistics and lines of communication.

With increased unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) threats and the dispersed nature of the 2d MBCT, the 194th Military Police Company needed to find new means of providing protection to the MBCT. As a result, the company ensured that it had personnel trained in man-portable air defense systems and surface-to-air missiles within the formation, which became a combat multiplier for dislocated squads providing security for assets. On numerous occasions, Soldiers assigned to the man-portable, shoulder-fired guided missile system prevented the company or defended assets from a catastrophic attack by the enemy. Due to the baseline relationship established with the 2d MBCT, the 194th was provided counter-small UAS equipment and it trained teams on this equipment, providing an additional layer of protection.

Additionally, early alignment with the 2d MBCT and the 101st Airborne Division enabled the 194th Military Police Company to develop relationships with other attached enabler units such as human intelligence, explosive ordnance disposal, civil affairs, and psychological operations teams. These relationships proved invaluable when developing a common operating picture of the environment. As many enabler units are not on the same transformation and fielding schedule as MBCTs, the prior communication ensured that a synchronized pace plan was in place, allowing future coordination once in the training area at JRTC.

Communication

As part of the MBCT transformation process, the 194th Military Police Company had already fielded integrated tactical network communications equipment. This created a disconnect that the 194th was mostly able to overcome during training events prior to the rotation. Working directly with brigade communications personnel and supporting units, the 194th acquired additional capabilities and other solutions that allowed the company to talk across the division network. To mitigate communications friction, integration must start early; and although the 194th had Android Team Awareness Kits (ATAKs), the Joint Battle Command Platform, and multichannel manpacks, integration was not seamless. ATAK platforms operating on the Contingency Response Situational Awareness/Situational Understanding Tactical Applications Leader Kits were not compatible with MBCT Nett Warrior-enabled ATAKs, recently fielded multichannel manpacks did not contain data profiles, and Joint Battle Command Platforms did not operate on the latest mounted mission command software to allow full compatibility with the MBCT. Through pre-rotation coordination efforts, the 194th built a system that allowed communication with the brigade; it is still working to better align these systems for the future.

Survivability

The 194th Military Police Company focus on survivability started at the Soldier level and was developed from there. The ability of the Soldiers to quickly and efficiently camouflage themselves and their equipment was imperative; it was the most effective way to ensure their survivability on the battlefield. The need for effective camouflage led to the fielding of the new ultra-lightweight camouflage net system, which performed physical and heat signature dispersal very well. Additionally, the 194th trained extensively on quickly and efficiently displacing its tactical operations center on a routine basis, allowing for the company to relocate the command post with ease throughout the fight. By the end of the JRTC rotation, the 194th could effectively displace at regular intervals, remaining undetected by the enemy and committing assets against its position. The dispersion efforts and the ability to quickly displace were the primary reasons that the company was not targeted by precision fires or directly targeted by enemy forces.

Once paired with the counter-UAS assets, the ability of the 194th Military Police Company to rapidly displace provided an even greater level of survivability. Employment of the counter-small UAS equipment actively detected, warned, and defeated enemy UAS and enemy aircraft on a nightly basis. The same level of protection that was provided to squads that the 194th was employed to protect was also provided for brigade critical assets. With the consistent threat of drones used for surveillance or enemy data collection or as deadly weapons, the counter-UAS devices provided the ability to detect, deter, and defeat enemy forces. The early warning allowed the 194th to move itself or any protected assets to an undetected position; remove the threat from airspace; and, sometimes, hide in plain sight. On numerous occasions, the devices allowed the company to prepare for oncoming attacks from enemy forces, keeping the unit ahead of the enemy and appropriately postured.

Conclusion

The success of the 194th Military Police Company at JRTC can be attributed to extensive preparation, task organization and alignment changes, additional capabilities, increased mobility, sustained communications, and enhanced survivability. It is important that military police adapt to execute a mission and more effectively support units. The ability of the 194th Military Police Company to provide value and support to the 2d MBCT while maintaining high mobility, communication, and survivability sets an example for other units striving to improve their integration efforts. The dedication of a unit to the fundamentals and a strong understanding of its capabilities and limitations will greatly assist in the effective planning and execution of the mission.

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