

Soldiers of the Gauntlet

720th Military Police Battalion Newsletter – October 2003

Photo of the Month



SGT Price and SPC Howard, 401st MP Company, exit a room they had just cleared during a raid near Tikrit. SGM Wilson, HHD 720th MP Battalion, (right), looks on.

Soldier Profile

SGT Adrian Camacho is a communications team chief with HHD, 720th MP Battalion. Camacho, who has an A.A. Degree in Administration from Columbia College in Puerto Rico, joined the Army in 1998. As a communications team chief for the battalion, Camacho works with a variety of systems and equipment such as telephones, radios and internet connections. His most important job is to keep communication in the battalion flowing smoothly, he said. This means maintaining and repairing equipment, as well as offering guidance and training on the use of the equipment. The most difficult part of the deployment for him has been being separated from his wife and three children, and he said he is looking forward to going home to them “Sano y salvo” – alive and well.



SGT Camacho
Puerto Rico

Defeating The Enemy

720th Military Police Battalion soldiers have continued to pursue, disrupt and defeat enemy forces in Tikrit and surrounding areas during the month of October.

Soldiers of the 411th, 64th and 401st MP Companies conducted numerous raids resulting in the confiscation and destruction of large weapons caches, and the arrest of some important enemy leaders. In addition, they continued to work closely with the Iraqi police, training and guiding them so that they can continue to improve as a security force for the Iraqi people.

Tikrit and the rest of the 4th Infantry Division area of operations have become a central base for many civilian media organizations. On several occasions in October, as many as ten correspondents accompanied MPs as they conducted raids, patrols and checkpoints. This resulted in many stories and photographs about “Soldiers of the Gauntlet” being printed in publications around the world. One of these stories, by Patrick Quinn of the Associated Press, is included in this newsletter on page 9.

Whether they are guarding detainees or enemy prisoners of war, conducting raids, escorting supply convoys or training local police officers, the Military Police of the 720th MP Battalion continue to prove that they are some of the most versatile and skilled soldiers in the United States Army. Their capabilities as MPs have perhaps never been more needed in any conflict than here in Iraq.

*editors note

Due to my extended absence from Iraq, there will be no chaplain’s article, photo supplements or Soldier’s Voices in this month’s newsletter. I look forward to providing the full range of articles and supplements for the November issue. – SPC Phillips

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Soldiers of the Gauntlet

From the Commander's Foxhole

Why are we here? Our nation has called upon our professional soldiers to resolve matters vital to our national security. Ours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if we lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of our public service must be duty, honor, country.

Duty, Honor, Country. These three words mean everything to soldiers and to millions of Americans who rely on us to employ the nation's instrument of military power. These three hallowed words reverently dictate what we soldiers ought to be, what we can be, what we will be. They are our rallying call to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.

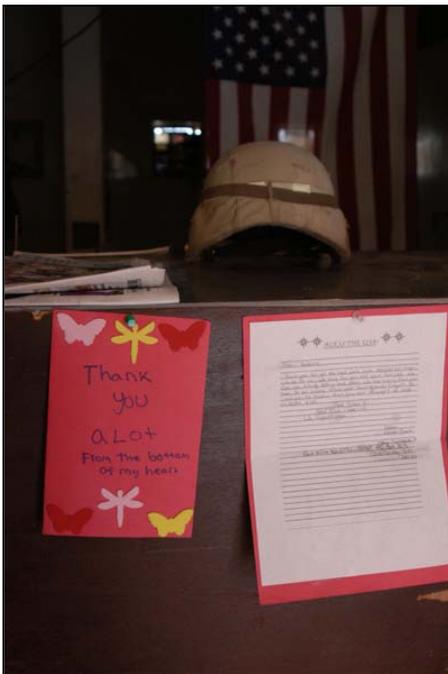
These words were emphasized by General Douglas MacArthur as he addressed West Point Cadets in 1962. In discussing duty, honor country, GEN MacArthur said, "And through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. Everything else in our professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication. All other public purposes, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishment; but you are the ones who are trained to fight."

Soldiers of the 720th Military Police Battalion, "Soldiers of the Gauntlet," are among the most honorable of Americans, dedicated to their country and are now doing their duty. And they are doing it well. We all understand the hazards of what we're doing. We all understand what our families are going through with us here. We all understand that our families are cheering for us to absolutely destroy the enemy here, set the conditions for a peaceful future in Iraq, and get home. We will do our duty and come home.

Duty is tough here. The work that we perform everyday keeps American streets free from terrorists so that our families can enjoy America. Now that this country's evil dictator has been removed from power, we must make sure that Iraq does not become a breeding ground for terrorism. We do this by ridding Iraq of terrorists while simultaneously helping the new Iraqi government set the conditions for future peace and success.

The spirit of the American Soldier is contagious. We find, that within the new Iraqi Police and the Iraq Civil Defense Corps, duty, honor, country is growing here. As contagious as it is, it is not felt by all. Our dedication to encouraging Iraqi people to do the right thing will benefit our own country for years to come.

I thank you, family members, and other supporters that keep us motivated to make the world a safer place. Your sacrifices are appreciated. Your prayers keep us safe. May God bless you and your families.



Above right: LTC Poirier helps carry a crate full of RPG rounds after it was discovered in a well.

Above: Letters from schoolchildren to U.S. soldiers displayed in the 411th MP Company barracks.

LTC Dave Poirier, Commander, "Gauntlet 6"
720th Military Police Battalion

Soldiers of the Gauntlet

From the Battalion Command Sergeant Major's foxhole



Soldiers, Family and Friends, I can tell you that no level of leadership compares to being a part of direct leadership. The rewards and sense of accomplishment watching young and old warriors grow are immeasurable. I would like to share with you the professionalism and beliefs being fostered in our Gauntlet soldiers, known as the Warrior Ethos, as they accomplish their mission.

As soldiers see or hear of comrades being killed or wounded, we suddenly have a greater burden: we become aware of our own mortality. The difficulties soldiers face may not always be ones of just physical danger, but of great physical, emotional, and mental strain as well. Our method of coping begins with the Warrior Ethos. What is the *Warrior Ethos* and how does it apply to our soldiers and what we are doing on a daily basis? The Warrior Ethos concerns character; it shapes who you are and what you do. It is directly linked to the Army core values - *personal courage, loyalty to comrades, dedication to duty, selfless service, integrity, respect and honor*.

But character development is a complex, lifelong process. It happens to people at different times throughout life. There are a few things you can count on. Character in this organization is built by ensuring values are not just words in a book. It is expected of our soldiers as a way of life, acting properly, teaching and coaching. The resulting Warrior Ethos spreads throughout the Gauntlet family —like the waves from a pebble dropped into a pond.

The Warrior Ethos helps us understand that our profession is much more than just another job. The proud heritage of the Army and those who have fought and died before us to secure our freedom fuels our soldiers to drive on.

However, the Warrior Ethos is perishable — so leaders in our organization continually affirm, develop, and sustain it. Our Gauntlet leaders aim to achieve a climate that promotes Army values and fosters the Warrior Ethos by encouraging learning, promoting creativity and by providing clear intent. The result is well-trained and confident soldiers; disciplined, cohesive teams; and trusted, competent leadership.

American soldiers will not quit or accept failure. This same core value is felt by each of our Gauntlet soldiers; they are totally committed to doing their part to free the Iraqi people. The Army has forged the Warrior Ethos in soldiers for over 200 years during training and previous wars. The soldiers in this organization are honing it today by fostering the quiet, calculating, and deadly Warrior Ethos that wins battles and campaigns. This attitude provides the will to win when the situation looks hopeless and doesn't show any indications of getting better, when being away from home and family is a profound hardship. But pursuing victory over time also requires a deep moral courage that concentrates on the mission.

Gauntlet soldiers are Warriors inculcated with a winning spirit and display the will to win—the desire to do their job well—to persevere, no matter what the circumstances, for this is imperative to accomplishing our mission, no matter when, no matter where, no matter what.

William A. Generali, CSM, US Army, "Gauntlet 7"
"Only the dead have seen the end of war." - Plato



SSG Davis, 411th MP Company, receives a Certificate of Appreciation (COA) from LTC Poirier for recently leading his squad to find a large weapons cache near Tikrit while on patrol. SPC Fifield, HHD 720th MP Battalion, and SPC Grounds, 401st MP Company were also awarded COAs for their recent accomplishments during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Soldiers of the Gauntlet

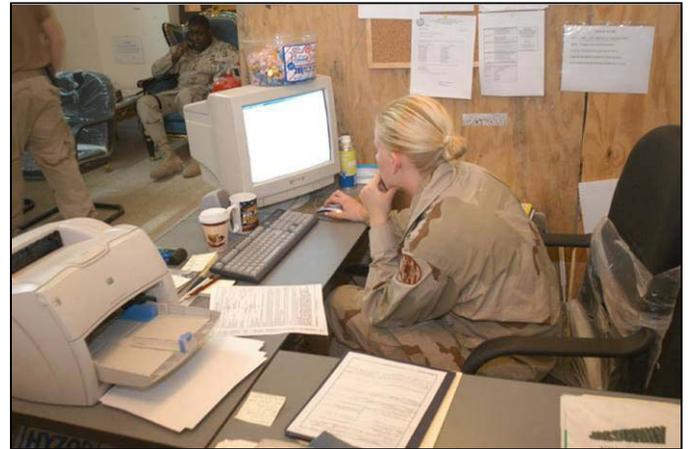
HHD 720th MP Battalion

by 1LT Christopher Church, Commander

Greetings from Tikrit. Seven months down and we are still plugging away. Even though the mission is ever present we still manage to keep spirits high with R&R trips to Qatar and other activities. Many soldiers find an escape from day to day activities by playing cards, video games, or watching sports on American Forces Network. Soon we will get high-speed satellite internet work stations so communication by e-mail should improve. Many soldiers will get the opportunity to travel home on mid-tour leave to visit family and friends. I can't guarantee that everyone will get to go home, but I understand the importance of family, and I look forward to sending as many soldiers home as possible.

This month we have added and lost soldiers to the detachment. Specialist Crone and Staff Sergeant Uecker are both returning home and saying goodbye to the Army. Specialist Crone is returning to his home state of Texas and looks forward to starting college. Staff Sergeant Uecker is retiring after 20 years of service to his country. Last month we got some new arrivals from the states, Specialist Fuller joined the S-6 shop, PV2 Smith went to S-1 and PFC Linear will be working in the Transportation Section.

Now that we have reached the down slope of the deployment, the spirit and morale of everyone in the Detachment has raised considerably. Now it is even more important that soldiers here keep getting the continued support from their loved ones back home, because it is your support that is going to get them through the home stretch and back to you.



HHD soldiers at work clockwise from top right;

PFC Linear, motor transport operator, on a mission near Balad.

PV2 Smith, administration specialist, in the HHD TOC.

CW2 Hughes, battalion PBO, at her desk in Tikrit.

720th MP Battalion soldiers in the BN maintenance tent.



Soldiers of the Gauntlet

411th Military Police Company

by CPT Omar Lomas, Commander

Greetings to all the family, friends, and relatives of the 411th MP Company,

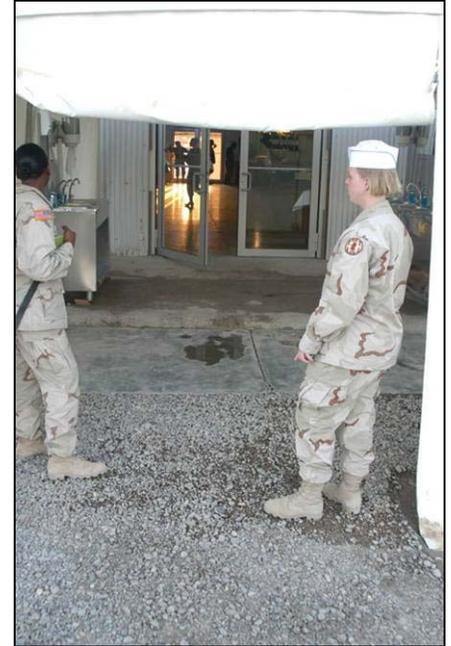
As we near our eighth month of deployment, our unit is still going strong! We are currently involved in a diverse array of missions from running a detainee Central Collection Point to continuing to do convoy escorts. All four line platoons have been occupied in supporting the battalion's efforts. First platoon is currently backfilling the other three platoons as our soldiers go on mid-tour leave and rest and relaxation (R&R). Second platoon is currently our quick reaction force platoon that is prepared to respond to any crisis. Third platoon continues to secure FOB Iron Horse here in Tikrit, Iraq. Finally, our fourth platoon is extremely busy operating a detention facility for all the detainees captured in our area of operations. All of our platoons' success has not gone without the support of our mechanics, food service personnel, medics, clerks, supply clerks, and communications personnel. They have remained battle focused and ensured our line platoons were properly equipped to accomplish their missions. Our soldiers have certainly been hard at work in order to continue to carry on the tradition of the 411th MP Company. They have made us all very proud.

As you might already know, some of our "Speed and Power" soldiers have been home for mid-tour leave. This program truly is a welcome motivator for our soldiers deployed here in Iraq. It allows our soldiers to go home on 15 days of leave to visit with their family and take care of any personal situations that they might have pending. To date, we have had 16 of our soldiers return back to the United States and take advantage of this program! We have been fortunate that our battalion has received several slots for our soldiers. We've had a lot of positive feedback from our returning soldiers and the First Sergeant and I will continue to send more of our soldiers home as slots become available.

As you all know, the holidays are just around the corner. We in the 411th MP Company are preparing for the holidays as well. Our food service personnel will cook up our Thanksgiving dinner here in Iraq. They will be allowed to use all of the local contractors' equipment and ingredients to cook up a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Although most of us wish that we could be back home with you, we will eat our Thanksgiving dinner here in Iraq as a company. We are also preparing for the upcoming Christmas holidays. I plan on having a unit Christmas tree erected in our company area. However, I need your help. I have asked our soldiers to write, email, or phone home and ask you (relatives and friends) to send them a single Christmas ornament or decoration that they can contribute to our company tree. Every soldier will get to contribute a little something of themselves and their family to our tree. In this manner, if we can't be home with our loved ones, then our loved ones can send us a piece of home to put on our tree.

"Speed and Power" is now starting their preparations for re-deployment! We have dusted off our deployment books and are turning them into re-deployment books. The First Sergeant and I have started to move and stage equipment so that we can send some of it home early. Although our re-deployment date is still sometime in March 2004, it never hurts to prepare early. I will keep you informed on the latest re-deployment information as it becomes available. I once again ask you to please continue to send our soldiers packages from home, especially now since the holiday season is just around the corner. Don't forget to mail early since there are many soldiers here in Iraq. Keep the mail coming and please continue to pray for our safe return home. God Bless You.

SPEED AND POWER! - CPT Luis O. Lomas



SPC DeCurtis, cook, monitors the line outside the dining facility in Tikrit. 411th food service personnel play a large role in support of dining facility operations in Tikrit for the 4th Infantry Division.

Soldiers of the Gauntlet

401st Military Police Company

by CPT Mark Blair, Commander

The 401st Military Police Company is undergoing a season of change during the months of October and November. The month of October saw the departure of a great mentor and leader, 1SG Phillips. 1SG Phillips has returned to Fort Hood to prepare for his retirement. The soldiers of the 401st and I would like to thank him for his sacrifices and service he gave to the company as well as the U.S. Army. The 401st would also like to welcome 1SG DeFilippo to the company. 1SG DeFilippo has currently been with the company for a month and is already having a positive influence over the soldiers.

The month of November will bring about a profound leadership change to the 401st MP Company. MSG Crook, the company's Operation Sergeant, whose vast tactical knowledge was beneficial to the success of the 401st during Operation Iraqi Freedom, will be leaving the company to attend the Sergeant's Major course at Ft. Bliss, TX.

SFC Pierri, the Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon, has been reassigned to the battalion S-3 shop. SFC Pierri's profound knowledge of Military Police Operations as well as his steadfast leadership led him to be selected out of his peers to perform a critical role in the Battalion's Operations section.

1LT Bishop, who successfully led 1st Platoon throughout many missions in Iraq, will depart the company in late November. As a Platoon Leader and as the Company's Executive Officer, 1LT Bishop played a decisive role in the company's overall missions. 1LT Bishop has decided to pursue a career outside of the Army; we all wish him the best of luck.

Finally, it is with great reluctance that I inform you that I will be leaving the 401st Military Police Company as well. I will never forget the courage and the selfless service that these soldiers displayed everyday throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom. I feel an overwhelming sense of pride and gratitude to command the outstanding soldiers of the 401st Military Police Company. On 15 November 2003, I will pass the 401st's guidon to CPT Jennifer J. Knight. I have extreme confidence in CPT Knight's ability to successfully carry on the missions and bring the soldiers of the 401st Military Police Company back home to their families.

There have also been a few additions to the company during the month of October. 2LT Cook, 1st Platoon Leader, SFC (P) Robledo, the company's new Operations Sergeant, and SFC Shuman, the company's Rear Battle NCO. All of the company's new leaders hail from the 64th Military Police Company. The 401st can expect great things from these highly competent leaders.

As always, the soldiers of the 401st are still continuing to make huge strides in the advancement of the Tikrit Police. The Iraqi police officers are now taking on a greater role due in part to the training and assistance from the 401st. The 401st is also credited for capturing top resistance leaders in and around the Tikrit area. In closing I will like to remind you that your soldiers and loved ones miss you very much and are thinking of you always. Continue to keep them in your prayers...



1SG Phillips gives his farewell speech to the 401st MP Company in Tikrit.

“Always First”

Gunfighter 6

Soldiers of the Gauntlet

64th Military Police Company

by CPT Juan Nava, Commander

As we come to the close of our seventh month on this deployment, the Guardians find ourselves spread throughout central and northern Iraq in support of the 4th Infantry Division. Since last month's entry, the "Renegades" (3rd Platoon) have relocated to Kirkuk, Iraq. The Renegades now have the mission and responsibility for the 173rd Infantry Brigade (Airborne) Central Collection Point (BCCP). Their duties require them to oversee and control the Enemy Prisoners of War (EPW) and Civilian Detainees (CD) confined there. They are currently under the operational control of the 1/63 Armor Battalion in Kirkuk. Their current assignment provides for a much-improved standard and quality of living. With Air Force dining facilities, 24-hour gyms, hot showers, and a large PX within 200 meters, they are finally living really well.

The Wolfpack of 2nd Platoon continues their hard work and efforts to influence control over the unruly city of Samarra, Iraq, with the 1/66 Armor Battalion. Their work continues to force improvements in one of the most dangerous areas of north-central Iraq. The outlook is positive as changes to the law enforcement structure in Samarra pave the way to an increase in local Iraqi responsiveness and willingness to cooperate with the coalition authority.

The Warriors of 4th Platoon continue their dynamic efforts in the city of Ishaqi (sub-area of Balad), Iraq, with the 1/8 Infantry Battalion. Their fast-paced operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and joint operations with the infantry unit have them in perpetual motion. They continue to explore and discover adjusted tactics and techniques that have proven helpful and share them with the company as exemplified by their collective design and implementation of a locally-produced dual weapon mount system that has been adopted for use throughout the battalion.

The Wardawgs of 1st Platoon and the company headquarters remain on Samarra East Airfield, Iraq. The Wardawgs have the responsibility for the BCCP for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT). Additionally, the Wardawgs provide security for logistical convoys four days a week and security for the company command group and headquarters as needed. The headquarters soldiers continue to provide excellent support everyday for all of our soldiers. They too are kept quite busy.

We have managed to send a handful of soldiers for a couple of weeks of well-deserved rest with their families. We will continue to execute this program and look to provide this opportunity to as many soldiers as possible while we continue to conduct operations here in Iraq. I ask for families to remain patient as this process continues. I assure you that each soldier and their time with their families are of great importance.

In closing, I would like to express our best wishes to SSG Hernandez and his family. SSG Hernandez suffered an injury consisting of a two broken bones (Tibula and Fibula) in his lower leg as he disembarked a vehicle in reaction to enemy gunfire. SSG Hernandez was exiting the vehicle to assume a hasty defensive position to protect the convoy element. He has been evacuated to Landstuhl, Germany enroute to Fort Hood. SSG Hernandez, we wish you good luck and hope that you feel better. We'll see you in less than five months!

GUARDIANS!



PFC Adkins waits to leave on a patrol from Samarra East Airfield.

1SG Notes: I would like to thank the family members and SSG Miles along with all the rear detachment personnel. Your efforts truly make this deployment much easier. It appears that the mail system has finally caught up; even the 1SG is getting mail now. The Guardians are working hard to come home to their families. Some are already there for a short stint (mid-tour leave) and others will get the opportunity. The numbers are dependent on available slots, we will send as many as they allow us. With this I ask that you take care of these soldiers while they are there. I need all of them to return so that we can get more Guardians home. It will be hard to send them back, but we are truly on the downward slope with only about five months to go 'till we all return to take care of you. 1SG Gut-3

U.S. troops arrest suspected Iraqi resistance leader

By PATRICK QUINN, Associated Press
(Published October 9, 2003)

TIKRIT, Iraq (AP) - U.S. troops on Thursday arrested an Iraqi resistance leader believed to be responsible for scores of deadly attacks against American forces around Saddam Hussein's hometown, officials said.

The 720th Military Police Battalion, in a series of overnight and midday raids of small farming hamlets along the Tigris River, also uncovered a factory where deadly roadside bombs were being built.

Led by an Iraqi informant, MPs raided a desert oasis in Tikrit's Abu Ajeed area and arrested a member of the Fedayeen Saddam, the ousted leader's former paramilitary force.

Another man was arrested with him, while an earlier raid netted three other members of the Iraqi resistance thought to be bomb makers.

"They are definitely, without a doubt, the individuals responsible for attacks against the coalition forces and probably orchestrating the attacks with improvised bombs in the Tikrit area," said Lt. Col. David Poirier, commanding officer of the 720th, based in Fort Hood, Texas.

The attacks in the past three weeks in the Tikrit area killed four soldiers and injured numerous others.

The military did not identify any of the captured Iraqis.

Poirier called the Iraqi informant "a significant find."

"He is a member of a family that is very very close to Saddam. It is a very significant person that we were able to detain," Poirier said. "He helped us arrest people close to Saddam."

The raids began late Monday, when the informant led the MPs to a set of homes in Uja, a small farming town just outside Tikrit that was Saddam's birthplace.

They discovered five rocket propelled grenade launchers, 60 mm mortar shells similar to those used to attack the main American base on Wednesday, 15 rockets, 25 blocks of explosives each weighing 400 grams, 40 hand grenades, an electronic detonating devices and a bucket full of cut iron pieces.

Each block of explosives is thought to be enough for a bomb. The entire bomb factory, found in a mud hut, was destroyed.

In the second raid, which targeted three houses southeast of Tikrit, MPs in Humvees discovered an apparent detonating device in a mud housing complex, then dug up three mortars from a parched wheat field.

As he was arrested, the captured Fedayeen Saddam member looked at the U.S. soldiers with hatred as he was bound. "He is a card-carrying Fedayeen," Poirier said, holding up the man's membership card in the organization.

As Poirier spoke, soldiers discovered a rocket propelled launcher and nine rockets buried in a nearby well.

The man also is suspected of orchestrating a Sept. 18 ambush that killed three U.S. soldiers, an attack that marked a new cycle of orchestrated violence against the American military in Tikrit.

"He is responsible we believe for the attacks in the Abu Ajeed area, the ambushes on troops and attacks" against the main U.S. base, said Capt. Desmond Bailey, from Wetumpka, Ala., who commands the 10th Cavalry's Golf troop, whose soldiers were killed Sept. 18.



Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 720th Military Police Battalion load a suspected Saddam Fedayeen member into the back of a Humvee on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2003 during a raid just outside Tikrit, Iraq.