

HISTORY OF THE 716TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

OUR MOTTO: LEX ET ORDO – LAW AND ORDER

The 716th Military Police Battalion was activated in accordance with General Orders No. 2, Headquarters, Second Corps Area; Fort Wadsworth, New York dated 15 January 1942, and actually came into being on 22 January 1942, when the first troops arrived. The 716th Military Police Battalion was one of the first military police battalions activated in the Army of the United States.

In February, the battalion moved to the Jersey City Armory with the mission of guarding the railroad yards and installations containing tremendous stockpiles of war materials. Some of the duties performed by the battalion during this period and for the next four years were: Security at Newark Airport, guarding troop transports and Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York. The battalion provided honor guards for visiting dignitaries, escorted General Officer Prisoners of War to places of confinement and supervised prisoner of war movements to all parts of the United States.

In the summer of 1946, the battalion moved from Fort Wadsworth to Fort Dix on a permanent change of station. Elements of the battalion were dispatched to various Army posts in Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. Their mission continued to be general military police duties including duty at post stockades and burial detail duties. While serving at Fort Dix, our platoon was detailed as Honor Guard for President Truman and Governor Dewey at the dedication of the United Nations building in New York City.

During the years 1951 to 1955, the battalion was assigned the additional mission of training personnel in basic and MP subjects prior to assignments to other units in the First Army Area. However, it remained responsible for certain special missions such as burial details, honor guards and ceremonial troops.

On November 15th, 1956, the battalion was moved to Camp Kilmer, J.J. to take over post military police operations, and to control "Operation Mercy". During Operation Mercy, 22,000 Hungarian refugees were shuttled through Camp Kilmer. When the mission was completed the battalion was moved back to Fort Dix, J.J. and continued the mission for all military police patrol activities and support operations at the post stockade.

On 29 September 1962, the battalion received the movement order dispatching them to Oxford, Mississippi to provide military police support during the civil rights upheaval prompted by the enrollment of James Meredith, a Negro, in the University of Mississippi. The battalion was to be part of the federal effort to ensure equal rights for all men. The battalion remained on station in Oxford, Mississippi until the closing of Camp USAFOX in 1963.

When the battalion returned to Fort Dix in 1963, its mission was to support annual active duty training of reserve components. Elements of the battalion were sent to Korat, Thailand to participate in Exercise Tidal Wave. They remained in Thailand until 30 June 1963.

In 1964, the battalion was the first military organization to be awarded the 2nd star to the Minute Man Flag for maintaining a minimum of 90% participation in the Savings Bond program for 3 consecutive years.

On 15 February 1965, the battalion was alerted to its overseas move to the Republic of Vietnam. The move was completed on 24 March 1965. At this time the battalion also received the commitment to provide support to the four corps areas in Vietnam. The battalion operated the length and breadth of the Republic of Vietnam until September 1965. With the arrival in country of the 504th MP Battalion, the area of responsibility for the 716th MP Bn was reduced to Saigon and the III and IV Corps areas. On the scene during all the major terrorist activities of this period, the battalion added to its reputation of competence and reliability. Its performance during the terrorist bombings of the US Embassy, the Metropole BEQ, and the Brinks BOQ won it additional accolades. In September of 1965, the 90th MP Detachment was attached to the battalion. This unit provided the Provost Marshal function for the City of Saigon/Colon.

On 1 April 1966, during the early morning hours, three MPs of the battalion performed in the finest tradition of the service and the Military Police Corps. They gave their lives to protect their fellow man. The occasion was the terrorist bombing of the Victoria BOQ. The three MPs were awarded the Silver Star for their gallant effort. At the home of the Military Police Corps, Fort Gordon, Georgia, two members of the 716th Military Police Battalion are enshrined for posterity. The barracks area housing the Military Police AIT Companies of the 4th Training Brigade (MP) bear the name of PFC Patrick J. Brems, Military Police Corps, who died at his post defending the Victoria BOQ from terrorist attack. In the Military Police School area stands Lee Hall, a classroom wherein young officers of the corps receive branch training. The hall is dedicated to CPT Chester Lee, Military Police Corps, who, like PFC Brems, paid the supreme sacrifice performing his duty in defense of the Victoria BOQ.

On 14 May 1966, in St. Louis, Missouri, CPT Chester Lee, SP4 Michael Mulvaney and PFC Patrick Brems were elected to the National Police Hall of Fame for giving their lives to keep the peace.

With the arrival in country of the 89th MP Group and additional military police units, the battalion's area of responsibility was again reduced. It was confined to the metropolitan area of Saigon/Cholon/Tan Son Nhut.

In December 1966 came the arrival in country and attachment to the battalion of C Company, 52nd Infantry. Company C/52nd Infantry was constituted on 14 May 1917 in the Regular Army. In World War I it participated and served honorably in two campaigns, Alsace 1918 and Meuse – Argonne 1918. In World War II, C Company 52nd

Infantry served in three campaigns, Rhineland, Ardennes – Alsace and Central Europe. In these actions, the 52nd Infantry was awarded two Presidential Unit Citations (ARMY) and a Belgium Croix de Guerre with Palm. It was inactivated on 13 October 1945 at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia and remained so until it was re-activated 1 June 1966 at Fort Lewis, Washington. The motto of Company C, 52nd Infantry is “Ready Rifles”. The new company was a physical security company, and as such received an appropriated amount of static posts to man and provided the gunners to the battalion’s machinegun jeeps.

Throughout the year 1967, the mission of rendering law enforcement services along with static and mobile security continued to be the battalion’s responsibility in the metropolitan Saigon, Cholon, and Tan Son Nhut area. The patrols of the battalion investigated thousands of traffic mishaps, incidents and felonious complaints. These units also provided numerous security escorts for visiting dignitaries and elements of major combat forces moving through Saigon. On several occasions, the expeditious actions of security guards saved many lives during terrorist bombings and attacks.

On 31 January 1968 (TET OFFENSIVE) the 716th MP Bn was operating in a city whose streets were VOID of any other organized allied or Vietnamese forces. The battalion engaged in ten separate major confrontations with the enemy in an area that roughly formed a semicircle around the city. Besides the ten major confrontations, there were numerous small fire fights going on throughout the city between our personnel on static post and patrols, and the enemy.

At 0400 hours, 31 January 1968, a military police reaction force was sent to reinforce our other units at the US Embassy. The military Police force surrounded the Embassy compound but could not enter the compound because of heavy VC fire coming from inside the compound and the roof of a building across the street. At daylight, the intense fire was directed at the enemy positions and the fire was silenced. At this time an MP jeep attempted to ram the front gate, but was unsuccessful. The lock was then shot off. Once the gate was open, the MPs poured into the Embassy grounds. By a series of closely coordinated actions employing fire and maneuver, the battalion alert forces destroyed the enemy. Nineteen enemy were killed and one captured. Almost exactly nine months after the Viet Cong blasted through the Embassy’s wall and into the chancery itself, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker paid tribute to the men who defended the building during the desperate TET attacks. Ambassador Bunker thanked men of the 716th Military Police Battalion for saving what he called, “a symbol of America’s support of the Republic’s effort to defend itself from outside aggression”. On 4 November 1968, Ambassador Bunker stood on the plush Embassy lawn and presented a scroll of appreciation to LTC Tyler H. Fletcher, Commanding Officer of the 716th Military Police Battalion, in recognition of the heroism displayed by his men. He also presented scrolls to five marines and two soldiers still serving in Vietnam. Four military policemen and one marine were killed defending the Embassy. A bronze plaque is mounted in the chancery commemorating their sacrifice.

During the entire period of the TET Offensive, units of the 716th Military Police Battalion stopped the enemy's advance by utilizing numerous reaction forces to successfully engage and neutralize the enemy. The battalion displayed such a high degree of gallantry and determination that not one of the 130 facilities that the battalion was responsible for securing fell to the enemy.

In May 1968, during the second Communist offensive, the battalion's forces were engaged in fire fights throughout the city. Patrols were being dispatched to reinforce BOQ's and BEQ's. On these occasions the patrols were rendering aid and evacuating the wounded as well as returning fire and holding their positions. The 716th Military Police Battalion was operating tactically in coordination with the National Police in the allied effort to drive the enemy from the Capital by providing quick reaction machine gun patrols and 90mm Recoilless Rifle Teams.

The battalion assisted ARVN and National Police Field Forces during sweep operations in Saigon/Cholon/Tan Son Nhut areas. In addition, the battalion maintained an aggressive patrol system, detecting and engaging any enemy that could be located in the city. Patrols were paired up and located at selected positions to act as immediate reaction forces. The internal defense of the Capital once again rested with this battalion. As a result of the action during the second offensive, the 716th MP Battalion in conjunction with Free World Forces, accounted for approximately 283 enemy killed and 153 POW's. Not a single US Billet or compound guarded by the battalion had been taken by the enemy.

During the remaining part of the year 1968, the mission of the battalion continued to be security and law enforcement in the Saigon/Cholon/Tan Son Nhut metropolitan area. Specific security missions included the US Embassy, Ambassador's Quarters, MACV Complex, VIP and General Quarters, BOQ's, BEQ's and critical US facilities and installations throughout the city. During this period, the city came under frequent rocket attacks. The patrols from the 716MP Battalion gave aid to survivors and evacuated the wounded, often in spite of the fact that rockets were still falling on the city.

In the wake of major terrorist activities the patrols of the 716th MP Bn continued to search for and engage the enemy. On several occasions the actions of Security Guards and Military Police saved many lives during terrorist bombings and attacks. As the result of one instance in December of 1968, 1st LT Hulon C. Allen received the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism.

Throughout the year 1969, the battalion continued to provide Military Police in Support of the Saigon, Cholon/Tan Son Nhut area, rendering law enforcement services along with static and mobile security. The involvement of the battalion and the successful accomplishment of its mission during the past year can be shown by the services rendered. Three thousand, eight hundred and six incidents and felonious complaints were investigated by members of the battalion. In addition, nine hundred and seventy-four AWOL's sixty-six deserters and twelve escaped prisoners were apprehended. During this period, the battalion maintained a combat ready posture at all times. Reaction forces

were designated on an immediate 24 hour-a-day standby basis, to be dispatched to any trouble areas in the Saigon/Cholon/Tan Son Nhut area.

Since the battalion has been in the Republic of Vietnam, the battalion personnel have contributed time and assistance to many Civic Actions projects. The battalion sponsors a Vietnamese medical student at the Saigon University School of Medicine by providing tuition and expenses. For the Trung Thu Elementary and High School of 2200 students, the battalion provides notebooks, pencils, playground and sports equipment. In addition, the battalion provides two language instructors to the Saigon Municipal Police Department Training School.

In July 1972, Company C, 52nd Infantry, was alerted for inactivation. On 7 August, 1972 Company C, 52nd Infantry's colors were cased until when once again they are activated to fulfill another mission for their mother country. The 716th MP Bn will forever remember the gallant efforts set forth by Company C, 52nd Infantry, during their tenure in Vietnam. The heroic actions displayed by those killed and wounded during the TET Offensive of 1968 will always be remembered.

On 29 March, 1973, the 716th MP Bn was relocated from Vietnam to Fort Riley Kansas. In an impressive redesignation ceremony held on 2 April 1973, the colors of the 508th Military Police Bn were retired and the unit redesignated as the 716th MP Bn. At that time the alphabetized sub-units were subsequently redesignated as the 977th Military Police Company and the 890th Military Police Company. On 30 May 1973, the 1st Military Police Company and the 207th Police Company were attached to the 716th MP Bn for administrative and operational control.

SUMMARY

The 716th Military Police Battalion was among the first of the Military Police Battalions to be organized in the zone of the Interior, Continental United States, during World War II. It has remained on active duty since it was activated, performing a wide variety of Military Police services in many locations throughout the world. It has always had high marks on inspections and is the holder of two certificates of Commendation; first, for being selected as the Outstanding Unit of the Second Service Command during World War II; and second, for continued superior performance of duty, outstanding soldierly conduct and discipline and superior condition of equipment.

The 716th Military Police Battalion has received the following awards: The Presidential Unit Citation; the Meritorious Unit Commendation with Oak Leaf Cluster; the Navy Unit Commendation; the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm; recommended for the Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Meritorious Unit Commendation; and has been commended in GO #4418, dated 19 September 1968, HQUSARV.

The 716th Military Police Battalion has served the First US Army and the US Army Vietnam Wall during its lifetime and it will continue to maintain its place as the Outstanding Military Police Battalion in the United States Army in the future as well.