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U.S. ARMY EUROPE MILITARY POLICE 'RIP' INTO IRAQ MISSION

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

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BAGHDAD, Iraq -- "This is a change of environment for us, but we are expecting the unexpected and we are trained for anything that might come our way. I want to be here and I love what I'm doing here," said Sgt. Ryan Blas of the 18th Military Police Brigade Commander's Personal Security Detachment.

The PSD team and the rest of U.S. Army Europe's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th MP Brigade are now in the final stage of training known as "Relief In Place," part of the process that passes a mission here from an outgoing unit to an incoming one. The 18th, deployed from Mannheim, Germany for a 15-month tour, is assuming the mission that had been the responsibility of the outgoing 89th MP Brigade from Fort Hood, Texas.

During the RIP process the incoming unit works alongside the outgoing unit to get a feel for the methods of operation work best for accomplishing the mission the new unit is assuming. During the RIP process, members of the outgoing unit explain these procedures during what are called "left-seat rides." The follow-on phase of the RIP is called the "right-seat ride," when the incoming unit takes the reins of the mission while the outgoing unit observes.

This left seat/right seat ride technique allows units to remain operational during the RIP



MAJ MICHAEL INDOVINA

Pfc. Cory McNicol of U.S. Army Europe's 18th Military Police Brigade prepares his security team position as he and his team members get ready to depart for a mission in the Baghdad area as part of the 'left seat/right seat ride' program the brigade is conducting with the 89th MP Brigade as it assumes the mission for which the departing 89th was responsible.

so the mission does not suffer as units rotate in and out, said Sgt. Maj. Michael Arbec, the operations sergeant major for HHC 18th.

Every time an Army unit rotates in or out of an area of operations, they execute the RIP process. The information that they exchange with fellow Soldiers during this process is crucial to their collective success.

Because the Iraqi population and the enemy are not rotating, unit changeovers must be as seamless as possible to gain and maintain the support of the people, 18th officials say. The RIP or TOA is the optimum technique or plan that prevents units from losing the initiative to the enemy or leaving gaps the enemy could exploit.

“The ‘Relief in Place’ process is going very well. There is good communication, and great people here to receive us. I don’t see any interference that will keep us from completing the mission,” said 1st Sgt. Myron Lewis of HHC 18th.

The RIP process pervades every part of Lewis's company, from staff sections to the PSD team.

The PSD's RIP actually began with several months of training prior to coming to Iraq.

“We were already ready before we got here,” said Staff Sgt. Dwight Vauters, the team's platoon sergeant. “The team went through intense training in Germany leading up to deployment. Now we are just perfecting our skills.”

Part of that process consisted of the team getting “eyes on the ground” experience from their counterparts in the 89th. To do that the 18th's PSD members had to learn a variety of procedures, including convoy formations and operations; standard operating procedures for combat scenarios; enemy methods of operation, and new technology used by combat teams in Iraq.

“Small changes had to be made in our methods of operation once we got here and found the new kind of personnel safety equipment we were using. Now that we learned about the new equipment, I am confident that we are prepared to take over,” said Vauters.



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