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U.S. Army Europe's 18th Military Police Brigade cases colors as its third deployment in Iraq comes to an end

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

18th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers gathered on Camp Liberty here Dec. 1 to witness the transfer of the Baghdad Police Transition Team mission from U.S. Army Europe's 18th Military Police Brigade to the 8th Military Police Brigade.



SGT DANIEL BLOTTENBERGER

Col. Mark Spindler, commander of U.S. Army Europe's 18th Military Police Brigade (right), and brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson case the 18th's colors as the unit transfers its Police Transition Team mission to the 8th Military Police Brigade at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Dec. 1. The 18th will return to its home station in Mannheim, Germany in the coming weeks as it concludes its 15-month deployment.

The 18th's Headquarters and Headquarters Company came to the Iraqi capital 15 months ago for its third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, with the task of heading up the PTT mission of training and mentoring Baghdad's Iraqi Police forces.

The brigade will return to its home base in Mannheim, Germany in the coming weeks.

The "Ever Vigilant" 18th is handing over the PTT mission to the "Watchdogs" of Headquarters and

Headquarters Company, 8th Military Police Brigade, whose Soldiers are deploying for the first time in support of OIF. The 8th is based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

“We find ourselves leaving today, and though we have accomplished a lot here, there is still a whole lot to do,” said Col. Mark Spindler, commander of the 18th.

The 18th and its four battalions spread across Iraq focused on IP expansion, development and legitimacy. The brigade expanded the IP force by training more than 20,000 IP officers throughout the country, including 13,000 trained to protect the streets of Baghdad.

The brigade also oversaw the development of two national IP training centers in Diyala and Baghdad.

“A year ago the IP did not have a voice,” said Spindler. “Now they have a voice ... along with the National Police and the Iraqi army, as it rounds out the Iraqi security forces charged to protect Iraq and its citizens.”

Spindler said the IP will continue to succeed as long as they continue to hold their position and enforce rule of law in their respective communities.

The colonel credited the success of the IP to the dedication of his brigade’s PTT teams, which he called unwavering in the support to their IP counterparts.

“You have made a difference to the generations to come,” said Spindler. “They will remember a time when American Soldiers stood on this soil.”

Spindler said he is confident handing the mission to the 8th.

“The good news is we are handing off all these initiatives and programs to the 8th MP Brigade,” he said.

“The ‘Watchdogs’ are ready to step in and continue the pursuit of a safer Iraq with the same momentum and tenacity you have seen with the ‘Ever Vigilant’ brigade,” said Col. Byron Freeman, the 8th's commander, to the crowd of about 100 watching the ceremony.

In his remarks Spindler also paid tribute to the 18th MP Brigade Soldiers whose lives were lost during the deployment.

“This has been a difficult mission and a difficult task,” said Spindler. “We lost 15 of our warriors along the way, who fell for their buddies to their right and left. We will remember them and we will honor them as we continue to be inspired by their sacrifices.”

