

Joint Security Operations

Success Begins With the Basics

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In 1996, a task force of 533 soldiers from the 3d Battalion, 126th Infantry, and the 146th Forward Support Battalion, Michigan Army National Guard, deployed on a two-week tour in support of the Summer Olympics. The battalion's mission was to help secure the Olympic Village on the campus of Georgia Technological University by observing and physically securing the perimeter of the village and searching all vehicles seeking entry.

Although this was a fairly simple mission, it offers some important insights into the conduct of operations other than war and domestic support operations—the types of missions the Army can expect to perform repeatedly in the future.

When the soldiers of the task force took their places on the perimeter, they became part of a massive joint security operation involving federal, state, and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations. The responsibility for physical security at the Olympic Village was shared by two provisional agencies, each formed especially for the Olympic mission: The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), and Georgia's State Olympic Law Enforcement Command (SOLEC).

The security measures at the Village consisted of two major components: checkpoint operations at entry and exit points, and surveillance operations on the Village perimeter, both designed to prevent physical penetration of the compound by unauthorized personnel:

The first line of defense was the checkpoint system. Access to the village by foot traffic was restricted to

specific entrances manned by ACOG security personnel, consisting of volunteers from police agencies throughout the world. Only authorized persons with specially provided passes were permitted to enter, and then only after passing through metal detectors. All bags and packages were inspected using x-ray scanners like those found at airports. The same procedures also applied to pedestrians moving between the various sectors within the Village.

Vehicular traffic into the Village was subject to even more rigorous procedures. Every vehicle attempting to enter was subject to a thorough internal and external search. Soldiers checked

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beneath, inside, on top of, and under the hood of every vehicle seeking entry, and opened every package found inside.

The other major component of the security effort was on the Olympic Village perimeter. The perimeter was secured by a seven-foot tall chain-link fence, equipped with electronic sensors to detect any tampering and supplemented by video surveillance. This was a formidable barrier to any would-be intruders, but the real obstacle was directly behind it: The perimeter was physically manned by scores of National Guard soldiers from Michigan and Georgia, as well as law enforce-

ment volunteers from numerous federal, state, and local agencies. Backing up these fence-line pickets were roving teams of soldiers who patrolled the streets throughout the Village.

Our task force made three major contributions to this security effort, providing the vehicle search teams, the roving patrols in the Olympic Village, and about half of the fence-line sentries. The task force organized itself into three eight-hour shifts. On each shift, 87 soldiers were assigned to the battalion's primary task of providing visual security on the fence-line perimeter; 40 were assigned to roving patrols within the Olympic Village; and 21 conducted vehicle search operations at the three entry points.

The soldiers on fence-line security duty performed a critical supporting role in the Olympic security mission. Unlike the soldiers of the Georgia Army National Guard and the state and federal law enforcement officers on the fence-line, our soldiers were neither armed nor specifically authorized to use force against intruders. The Georgia Guardsmen had received one week of specialized law enforcement training before assuming their posts on the perimeter. This training included instruction in basic police procedures such as apprehending suspects, use of force, and rules of engagement. Further, many of the Georgia troops were military policemen, already well versed in these subjects, as were the law enforcement agents on the fence. Upon completion of this training, these soldiers were sworn in as provisional law officers of the State of Georgia, thus receiving the authority to bear arms and enforce state

law. The soldiers of our battalion did not have access to similar training before deployment. Further, our status in Georgia was active duty for training, which made it neither legal nor advisable to arm our soldiers and empower them to use deadly force in executing their mission. Without the thorough training that the Georgia troops had, the risk of a tragic accident would have been too great, and any action taken by our soldiers would have been under the shadow of doubtful legal authority.

Without our Michigan soldiers on fence-line security, the sentries would have been 300-400 meters apart, a huge distance for a single soldier to monitor effectively. Thus, even unarmed, the soldiers greatly strengthened the perimeter by doubling the number of observers on the fence-line. Our soldiers and the armed Georgia troops alternated along the perimeter, so that if an incident occurred, armed back-up would never be more than a short distance away.

The psychological effect of the task force's presence on the perimeter was another critical contribution. Dressed in class-B uniforms and positioned prominently along the perimeter, our soldiers constituted a highly visible, thoroughly professional presence along the length of the perimeter. This made the fence-line boundary of the Olympic Village a much more intimidating and effective obstacle to anyone seeking unauthorized entry.

Despite the effectiveness of the fence-line security perimeter, command and control on the fence was difficult. The fence-line soldiers were under the operational control of SOLEC, which exercised control from a central command post inside the Olympic Village and communicated with the fence-line only by FM radios issued to the Georgia soldiers on the perimeter. This posed a problem, as it left our soldiers out of communication and wholly dependent upon the adjacent Georgia Guardsmen to keep them informed and to summon help in an emergency. To make matters worse, SOLEC provided no direct supervision of the fence-line sentries to enforce discipline along the perimeter. SOLEC envisioned indirect control of

the fence-line sentries by radio, with no supervisory role for the unit's organic chain of command.

We solved these problems through improvisation. In addition to the SOLEC fence-line security detail, our task force detailed 40 soldiers on each shift to roving patrols throughout the Olympic Village. These soldiers operated under the command of ACOG, not SOLEC. Although neither agency envisioned any operational relationship between these elements, we linked the two to form an improvised chain of command to supervise the fence-line sentries. Dividing the Olympic Village into several sectors, we assigned two junior leaders as the roving patrol in

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each sector and charged them with enforcing discipline and standards among our fence-line sentries within their sector. Their primary task was to patrol the perimeter continuously and spend as much time as possible interacting with soldiers. This expedient was not a complete solution, because the roving patrol radios operated on a range of frequencies different from those of the fence-line radios. Nonetheless, it did allow us to maintain effective control over our soldiers on the fence line; unit commanders had radio communication with the roving patrols, who in turn had face-to-face contact with the sentries on the fence-line.

This control proved extremely important. Most of the task force's soldiers were light infantrymen accustomed to aggressive training on wartime METL tasks far more dynamic and exciting than the static security mission at the Olympic Village. They tackled the fence-line mission enthusiastically and with great professionalism and pride, but standing in the hot Georgia sun for hours at a time tended to take its toll. Without supervision, discipline would have suffered. Positive and frequent interaction between the soldiers on sen-

try duty and their leaders on roving patrol was absolutely critical to maintaining the morale and discipline of the troops, keeping them alert, and maintaining the professional demeanor so critical to their success. It was also critically important in maintaining the soldiers' welfare. Without the close supervision of the soldiers along the fence, we would have faced a serious risk of heat injuries. Having deployed from armories in Michigan and gone directly onto the Olympic Village perimeter in Atlanta, our soldiers had no opportunity to acclimatize. Only through constant attention by junior leaders on patrol were we able to ensure that the soldiers were supplied with water and hence kept properly hydrated.

The third component of our task force mission was vehicle search operations. Although carried out by the smallest of the three security elements of the task force, the vehicle search may have been the most critical of all, as it represented the only barrier between an unauthorized vehicle and the Olympic Village. Each of the three points set up for vehicle access into the Village was guarded by ACOG security personnel, and no vehicle could enter unless cleared by a search team. Selected members of these details received several hours of instruction on vehicle search and clearance techniques before assuming their duties. These junior leaders, in turn, trained their subordinates. The search teams conducted a thorough examination of every vehicle, checking undercarriages with angled mirrors, clambering up ladders to check vehicle roofs, searching trunks, truck cabs, and cabins, checking under hoods, opening all packages found inside, and confiscating any suspicious or inappropriate items.

The absolute prerequisite for success in missions of this kind is a solid foundation of pride, discipline, and cohesion within the unit. The one sure way to build these traits is challenging, aggressive training on the unit's wartime METL tasks. The plethora of peacekeeping, humanitarian, and other non-combat missions assigned to our Army since the end of the cold war has prompted some observers to argue in

favor of modifying METLs to include tasks supporting operations other than war. The Army certainly must develop doctrine to support peacekeeping and other missions facing it in the post-cold war era, as well as the skills and techniques with which to execute such missions. Likewise, when a specific mission, with identifiable parameters, is assigned to a unit or is reasonably foreseeable, then the unit must ascertain what tasks will be essential to mission accomplishment and proceed to train on them aggressively. When no such mission is on the horizon, however, units should avoid diluting their wartime METLs with non-combat tasks that will not contribute to accomplishing the wartime mission. No unit can hope to select and effectively train on all the tasks essential to every likely scenario, particularly in light of the shrinking pool of resources available for unit training. There simply are not enough resources available to train units to proficiency on their wartime METL and a contingency or peacekeeping METL at the same time. To reach proficiency, units must focus on one or the other. Normally that focus must be on the wartime METL, but the wartime METL will ordinarily be an excellent foundation to build on when assigned to a peacekeeping, stability, or support mission. While wartime tasks are often easily adapted to peacekeeping or other stability and support missions, it would be exceedingly difficult for a unit that has long neglected its wartime METL to turn about and adapt to a wartime environment. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of aggressive training on wartime METL tasks as the best preparation for future stability and support operations lies in the very nature of armies. All military forces derive their credibility and psychological power, not from the ability to negotiate or debate, but from their ability to inflict damage and casualties on an enemy. Any military unit's effectiveness at separating combatants, enforcing peace, or stabilizing a dangerous situation is ultimately founded on that unit's ability to inflict unacceptable casualties on a belligerent if peaceable efforts fail. While we must develop the specialized tech-

niques necessary to execute future stability and support missions peacefully, these techniques will be useless if they are not backed by the credible threat of lethal force posed by a well-trained combat unit. An obvious way to minimize the tension between the wartime METL and the desire to prepare for future stability and support missions is to carefully select the units tasked with them. By assigning these missions to units whose wartime mission is at least analogous to the operation at hand, we capitalize on years of training on the wartime METL, reduce the training time needed before the unit can begin operations, and reduce the uncertainty created when soldiers are thrust into circumstances for which they are unprepared.

Our experience at the Olympics confirmed these observations. Most of the fence-line sentries were military policemen and infantrymen. The military police were obviously well-prepared for this mission; guarding the Olympic Village was very similar to such primary military police wartime missions as rear area security and even enemy prisoner of war (EPW) control, and they adapted easily. The mission for the infantrymen on the fence-line was not as familiar, but it still found them well prepared for the task. While not closely analogous to our unit METL, the mission did capitalize on our training to develop situational awareness in such tasks as moving tactically and maintaining local security, not to mention such basic soldier knowledge as the General Orders. By far, the most critical factor in the success of the mission was the unit's solid foundation of basic discipline. It enabled our soldiers to execute the mission in a highly effective and professional manner, even though some were not enthusiastic about the operation. The unit's long-standing commitment to performing all tasks to standard made this possible.

A number of factors stand out as important lessons for future operations of this type. The first is maintaining both the perception and the reality of authority. Even soldiers performing passive surveillance duties will be regarded as authority figures by the surrounding

community. This was dramatically demonstrated in the Olympic Village when a woman who was assaulted on a shuttle inside the Village ran directly to two of our soldiers for help. The soldiers promptly apprehended the suspect and turned him over to civilian authorities. It is critical that every soldier be able to handle any emergencies. They must have the authority to use reasonable force to defend themselves and others, the ability to render or summon medical aid promptly, and access to reinforcement by personnel with the ability and authority to handle whatever situation may arise. If the soldiers fail to respond effectively to such crises, their credibility will be eroded, and with it much of the deterrent value of their presence.

Another issue is maintaining discipline and effectiveness uniformly throughout the unit. One problem the task force faced was that the level of diligence and professionalism with which soldiers approached their duties varied from shift to shift, and from location to location within shifts. This phenomenon created the potential for a serious breach of security. Hostile parties may take note of these variations and attempt to exploit them by acting during the periods of lax discipline. For example, at the Olympic Village, truck drivers quickly learned which search details were the most thorough and tried to avoid inconvenience by entering the Village at points manned by less diligent personnel. While this example may seem innocuous enough, we must remember that truck drivers aren't the only parties who will take note of such differences and attempt to exploit them.

Finally, commanders must work hard to maintain the morale and discipline of their soldiers. Inevitably, a large percentage of soldiers may be less than enthusiastic about the various stability and support operations they will be charged to execute, and the Olympic Village mission was no exception. Many soldiers resented the mission, perceiving it as a distraction from the important business of tactical training on the wartime METL. Positive leadership was critical in overcoming this resistance and keeping the soldiers mo-

tivated and alert. Maintaining unit effectiveness required unit commanders and other leaders to continually stress the significance of the threat and our importance to the safety of the athletes.

The security mission at the Olympic Village was a great success. (The one tragic incident that did occur—the lethal effects of an explosive device—was not at the Village, but at the almost unguarded Centennial Park.) During the

entire Summer Games, not a single breach of security or violent incident occurred within the Olympic Village. This, in itself, is a testament to the extraordinary security apparatus erected to protect the athletes at the Olympic Village. The soldiers of the task force played an important role in this success by bringing to bear the discipline, flexibility, and patience inherent in well-trained soldiers.

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