

Company History

THE 436TH MILITARY POLICE ESCORT GUARD COMPANY

I. Introduction and early days

The 436th Military Police Escort Guard Company, organized by the Provost Marshall General of the United States Army within the Corps of Military Police, Army Service Forces, was officially activated on February 25, 1943, at Fort Custer, Michigan. The primary mission of the company, like all Escort Guard Companies, was to be the escorting and guarding of prisoners of war, either en route or at base internment camps. However, the company was also to be versed in a basic knowledge of the other major military police duties and was to acquire a thorough knowledge of basic combat principles in order that it might serve in any military police capacity, combat or otherwise, should the necessity arise.

The original officers were Second Lieutenants Cecil H. Hughes, as company commander, Thomas R. Frye, and William H. Culp. Of these, only Lt. Frye was to remain with the company for any length of time. On March 13, First Lieutenant Joseph A. Dionne became the permanent Company Commander of the 436th and has continued as such to the present time. Lt. Dionne was promoted to the rank of Captain on Sept. 24, 1943. He is a regular army soldier of some fifteen years of continuous service.

The original cadre of the 436th was composed entirely of enlisted men drawn from the 368th M.P.E.G. Co. which was located at that time at an internment camp in Huntsville, Texas. These men, fifteen in all arrived in Fort Custer on February 14, 1943. They⁽¹⁾ spent over six weeks pursuing various activities in camp before the arrival of the recruits. All engaged in kitchen police and barracks and area maintenance, as well as different training activities.

The cadre moved to a different company area four times before the recruits finally arrived.

The original recruits were drawn entirely from two reception centers in Ohio--Fort Hayes, and Camp Perry, the great majority of the men coming from Fort Hayes in Columbus. Most of the men (over 90%) were residents from Ohio, although there were a few from West Virginia and Indiana. The men were of well-established civilian stock as illustrated by their personnel records. Thus, the average age of the recruits was approximately twenty-eight. About sixty-five percent of the men were married, most of them having been married for two years or more. A number of the men had been well-established in their civilian professions or occupations. The group included an investment banker, a graduate engineer, a school teacher, a lawyer, two accountants, a large corporation credit manager, a finance company branch manager, a restaurant owner, an owner of a dry cleaning establishment, two professional entertainers, an owner of a bicycle repair shop, several shop foremen, and numerous other office workers, salesmen, skilled laborers and farmers. All of the men were inducted into the Army through the processes of Selective Service, most of them in late March. When they detrained at Fort Custer on Saturday, April 3, they plunged into a vigorous program of basic training almost immediately.

II. Basic Training Period

The basic training of the recruits of the 436th M.P.E.G. Co. was conducted entirely at Fort Custer, Michigan, and with one interruption ran from April 3 to July 3, a period of about three months. The company was housed in three two-story barracks. The company area also included a mess, hall, an orderly room and supply room combined, and a day room. The barracks opened at one end on

Basic Training

one of the regular streets of the Fort, the other end opening into a parade ground in the center of the block which formed the battalion area. Although this parade ground was used occasionally, most of the field training and classes were conducted in an open training area on the outer edge of the reservation. This area was quite extensive and included both hilly and flat and wooded and open terrain.

The officers who participated in the administration of the training program, in addition to Lieutenants Dionne, and Frye, included the following second lieutenants; Thomas P. Lee, and Joseph D. Foley, Infantry Officers, Robert M. Hinds, Milton G. Stapleman, Joseph L. Korcevitz, and Isaac P. Street, all members of the Corps of Military Police. Lt. Street was destined to remain as company officer when the 436th entrained from Custer, while the others were later assigned to other duties.

At the beginning of the basic training period, several other non-commissioned officers joined the company to complete the cadre. Seven of these came from a regular military police unit at Camp Grant, Illinois, ⁽²⁾ and two were transferred from other units at Fort Custer. ⁽³⁾

In compliance with the Table of Organization, the company was divided into four sections, with a sergeant in charge of each. The first section was commanded by Sgt. Billie B. Sizemore, the second by Sgt. Edgar Peters, the third, Sgt. Alex Brzozowski, and the fourth by Sgt. John Waghorn. These four sergeants continued to occupy those positions throughout the period. The position of Acting First Sergeant was filled by Cpl. August P. Collis, Jr. for part of the period. He was replaced by the permanent First Sergeant William R. Lampton, a regular army soldier of six years' service. S/Sgt. Nolan Tucker was Mess Sergeant and S/Sgt. Donald Crosslin,

Supply Sergeant. The Company Clerks were Cpl. Raymond Stull and T/5 Leland Naley. S/Sgt. Tucker and Cpl. Stull were transferred later, the others remaining.

The basic training schedule was administered by the Provost Marshal General's Unit Training School at Fort Custer. The 436th was under the command of a provisional regiment and a provisional battalion. The program was rigorous, intensive, and complete, and covered a wide range of general field and combat training as well as specialized military police training. In general, the schedule included the following main subjects; (1) Infantry Drill, including close order drill, marches and bivouacs, extended order, bayonet drill, scouting and patrolling, manual of arms, obstacle training, defense against chemical warfare, and defense against aerial attacks; (2) Rifle Marksmanship, which included daily practice in positions, sighting and aiming, and shooting on the range for record. (By the time the company left Fort Custer, all of its members had qualified at least as rifle marksmen. There was one expert and over 25 sharpshooters); (3) Hikes and Bivouacs--the company averaged one day and one night hike each week, the hikes ranging from seven to twenty-six miles in distance, and were often of the character of forced marches with emphasis on hardship, concealment, and silence; (4) Military Police Training--this included familiarization with and firing of the Thompson Sub-machinegun, the automatic pistol, the carbine and the 12-gauge riot-type shotgun, instruction in the guarding of prisoners, Judo training, practice in interior guard, and instruction in the rules of land warfare governing treatment of prisoners of war, conduct on town patrol, conduct on riot duty, methods of handling traffic and straggler lines both at the front and in the zone of interior, and other related military police subjects.

In addition to training, the company participated in a number of regimental retreat parades, held on the main parade ground at

at Custer in front of the post headquarters. On these occasions, the 436th was especially honored, since it was chosen to lead the regimental parade on three different occasions -- more than any other company in the regiment. While at Custer, the company also participated in interior guardfunctions which included patrol of the battalion area, patrol of the regimental area, patrol of the garrison prison area, and patrol around several of the post's vital installations.

At the end of the seventh week of basic training, the company was suddenly alerted for movement one evening. The following noon, May 25, 1943, found the 436th entrained and on its way to Fort Devens, Massachusetts on an emergency mission. The purpose of the mission was to escort a large group of newly arrived German prisoners of war to an internment camp in the United States. After almost a week's lay-over at Fort Devens, the company proceeded to Boston Harbor where the prisoners were received and escorted into a prisoner of war train. The train left Boston on May 31 and arrived three days later in Camp McAlester, Oklahoma, where the prisoners were deposited. The company arrived back at Fort Custer on June 5 and resumed its training schedule with the knowledge that it had completed a highly difficult and important mission with complete success. The men were commended en masse by the company commander for their work.

On June 18, the company was suddenly alerted again. The cause this time was the outbreak of serious race riots in nearby Detroit. However, although the men slept in their clothes for four nights, the alert was terminated and the company moved into the Fort's bivouac area instead of to Detroit. The men pitched their shelter tents in the large "tent city" and lived there for a full week preceding the movement to their permanent station. Life in the tents was made difficult by the total absence of showers or washing facilities and the men gained experience in living out of their helmets.

Training

--6--

The company left for Aliceville, Alabama on July 1, 1943. It left Fort Custer with an excellent record. The record included the repeated honor of leading the regimental parades mentioned above, and several informal commendations from superior officers for the neatness of the mess hall and barracks and the general well-disciplined conduct of the organization. The regimental commander in an off-the-record statement said that in his opinion, it was the best Escort Guard Company ever to leave Fort Custer.

III. ACTIVE SERVICE AND ADVANCED TRAINING PERIOD

The 436th arrived in Aliceville, Alabama on July 3, 1943, and proceeded directly to the "Aliceville Internmane Camp" (the name was later changed to the "Prisoner of War Camp"), located about 1½ miles from Aliceville. Aliceville itself proved to be a typical small Southern town. The population was in the neighborhood of 1300. The town boasted of one bank, two moving picture theatres, two drug stores, two railroad stations, two cotton gins, several general stores, and numerous mules and wagons. Together with the movies, there was one bowling alley and one pool room to provide the men with amusement, along with the well-attended Aliceville High School football games.

The camp itself was still in the building stage when the 436th arrived, although the main installations had all been completed and the camp had already received half of its prisoner quota. The improvements continued until by December of 1943, the camp contained the following major features; a post theatre, a main post exchange with two sub-units an Officer's Club, a Non-commissioned officers' club, a large Enlisted Men's Recreation Hall, a Station Hospital with a separate dispensary, as well as adequate barracks, and quarters for the officers and enlisted men, and numerous warehouses and other maintenance buildings. The main streets of the camp were all paved and many feet of concrete sidewalk had been laid. The company itself financed the laying of sidewalks throughout the company area from its company fund. The company area was also greatly improved by the laying of sod. Prisoner of war labor was used extensively in these projects.

When the 436th arrived, the camp was under the command of Colonel F. A. Prince, Inf. Col. Prince continued in command until he retired from active duty in September of 1943. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. Wm. Waite who has been in command to the present. When the company first came, it found three older Escort Guard Companies already on duty. These were the

the 324th, and the 389th. Later, the personnel of the camp was further increased by the arrival of the 443rd Prisoner of War Processing Company, and the 425th, 572nd, and the 598th Escort Guard Companies. However, in December of 1943 the 305th, the 425th, and the 443rd left the camp for other stations.

The prisoner of war capacity of the large compound was approximately 6000. Only 3000 prisoners had actually arrived by July 1943. However, by Fall, the full 6000 was in compound, although later the number was decreased by several transfer of prisoners to other camps. All of the prisoners were Germans, captured in the North African campaign.

The 436th fell to work immediately and the third day found a number of its men already engaged in "chasing prisoners" on work details. After familiarizing itself with the facilities and methods of the camp, the company soon was engaged in the regular duties of the camp. Although a number of changes were made in the guard duty methods and schedules, the basic pattern remained the same. The compound, in addition to its standard double barbed wire fence, was flanked by ten large guard towers, equipped with powerful searchlights, sirens, and machineguns. These towers had to be manned at all times. In addition, the M.P. companies provided guards for all gates opening out of the compound, for the individual enclosure gates within the compound, for the main gate of the camp, for the wards in the Station Hospital, and for the nightly patrol of Aliceville. The M.P. companies, of course, also were required to man the camp guardhouse and operate the camp interior guard.

A separate function of the guard companies was the guarding of prisoners on work details outside the limits of the compound. The guards were in most cases not connected with the supervision of the conduct of work by the prisoners, but were charged with complete responsibility for the security of the prisoners. The men traveled many miles from camp each day during the summer on cotton picking jobs, and during the winter

in pulp-wood cutting details. They participated as well in the guarding of numerous details in work in and about the camp area itself.

During short periods each week when the 436th was not engaged in guard duty or "chasing prisoners" it was constantly continuing its advanced training functions. The training program consisted of a general review of most of the basic training subjects, hikes, and bivouacs, physical training, and the introduction of several new subjects into the curriculum such as bomb reconnaissance and current events. A climax was reached in the training of the company, when on Feb. 20th, 1944, the entire company moved to nearby Camp McCain, Mississippi to fire the 1903 .30 calibre Rifle for record and the carbine for familiarization. The company also went through the combat infiltration course under live fire.

The command of the 436th has remained to the present in Captain Joseph A. Dionne. Cap. Dionne was promoted to his present rank from that of First Lieutenant on Sept. 24, 1943. Lt. Thomas R. Frye, second in command was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant on Aug. 14, 1943. However, he was transferred from the company soon afterwards to attend the Aerial Gunnery School at Ft. Myers, Florida. Lt. Isaac P. Street became second in command of the company, and was promoted to First Lieutenant on Oct. 29, 1943. On Oct. 23, 1943, Second Lieutenant Milton B. Newman joined the company from Camp Lee, Virginia, to serve as Company Officer.

On Dec. 10, 1943, Captain Dionne became Commander of the Provisional Military Police Battalion of the post which was set up to coordinate and command the activities of all the Military Police companies. He has remained in that capacity to the present; in his absence Lt. Street has served as company commander.

In addition to its regular duties, the company performed numerous special missions. The most important of these occurred when the 436th

Duty
provided 90 men and one officer (Lt. Street) for the guarding of prisoners at a temporary prisoner of war camp near Belzoni, Mississippi. The men left on November 17, 1943, and returned on Dec. 17th. Together with men from the 432nd M.P.E.G. Co. from Camp McCain, the men of the 436th escorted the prisoners back to their permanent camp at Ft. McClellan Alabama, and completed the difficult job of breaking the camp and closing it completely.

On Nov. 4, a large number of prisoners were escorted by the 436th to Camp Blanding, Florida. On Jan. 17, 1944, the 436th provided 17 men to supplement the men of the 572nd in a large movement of prisoners to Fort Dix, New Jersey. And on Jan. 28, most of the company participated in the movement of a large group of German prisoners, including a number of officers, to a camp near Phoenix, Arizona. In addition to these large scale missions, men of the 436th have escorted numbers of prisoners individually or in small groups to far-flung points, including Denver, Colorado, Long Island, N.Y., Memphis, Tenn., Alva, Oklahoma, Sparta, Wisconsin, and others. In all of these numerous and varied missions, the 436th has performed with complete success in the execution of its primary mission. No prisoners were lost, nor was any attempt at escape made. No incident of any sort occurred to cast any discredit upon the 436th, and it may be said that the company has discharged its duties with honor to date.

The company has chosen as its motto, "We Police for Peace." At present, the company is almost at full strength. A number of transfers and discharges have occurred during the period of the company's existence, but numerous replacements have been received to fill the vacancies.

As the company nears the first anniversary of its existence, its men may look with pride upon its record and they may remember with interest the many experiences which the company has already accumulated.

Footnote (1):

They were: Leroy R. Sweatman, 1st Sgt., S/Sgt. Samuel V. Stanley, Mess Sgt., S/Sgt. Donnell L. Crosslin, Supply Sgt., Sgts. Alex J. Brzozowski, Edgar E. Peters, Billie B. Sizemore, Line Sergeants, Tech. 5th Joseph J. Drapchatey, Albert R. Darby, cooks, Tech 5th Carl C. Heinlein, Artificer and Cpls. Billy R. Rymer, and John M. Long, Joe Duncan, Horace W. Butler, Raymond Stull, and Mike C. Lionti, line corporals. Sweatman, Drapchatey, Stanley, and Darby were with the company for only a short time.

Footnote (2):

They were: Sgt. John M. Waghorn, and Cpls. Robert J. Barnes, Zohitan Bohkor, Charles Crowley, James Miller, Albert Slomkowski and Eugene A. Robbins.

Footnote (3):

Cpl. August P. Collis, and T/5 Leland M. Naley.