

MASS. GUARD PROGRAM BUILDS BRIDGES WITH CIVILIAN POLICE

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ARLINGTON, Va. – The Massachusetts National Guard has implemented a new training program that gives Massachusetts Guard military police officers and security forces members a similar operating picture as their civilian law enforcement partners.

With the Police Mission Partnership Initiative, or PMPI, military police officers and security forces members undergo the same training as members of Massachusetts' police departments, said Army Lt. Col. Rick P. Cipro, commander of the Massachusetts Army National Guard's 211th Military Police Battalion, who assisted in implementing the initiative.

"We look at it as an innovative collaboration between all [civilian law enforcement] entities, helping with the [Guard's] immediate, no-fail homeland mission of protecting communities," he said.

As part of the initiative, military police officers and security forces members attend training classes at Joint Base Cape Cod and then move on to train with instructors at a Worcester (Mass.) Police Department training facility. Course topics range from constitutional law and investigative techniques to defensive tactics and suicide intervention.

Cipro said the initiative is tied to Army and Air Force requirements that call for periodic recertification on certain law enforcement skill sets.

"This meets the law enforcement recertification requirements and helps us with the warfighting function of preserving the force," he said.

Though Guard members supported civilian police departments before the initiative, operational gaps existed, said Army Col. Brett Conaway, commander of the Massachusetts Army Guard's 26th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, who oversees a number of military police units.

"Despite our high-quality, military police success in airport security missions after 9/11 and other

domestic emergencies, there was still ongoing ambiguity in Massachusetts about what the arming and authority status should be for the National Guard when supporting domestic police operations," he said.

The initiative developed around 2011, said Conaway, when multiple internal assessments concluded that military police officers and security forces members needed to be similarly postured with civilian police forces during emergencies.

"The takeaway was that National Guard members who are doing police tasks need to be armed and equipped for effective re-missioning as a threat environment changes in a domestic mission," he said.

In order for the initiative to proceed, Cipro said Massachusetts Guard leaders worked with the Municipal Police Training Committee, the Massachusetts government agency that oversees police training standards throughout the state.

By working with the committee, he said the Massachusetts Guard was able to establish "the number of hours that is required to get us civilian police credentialing – giving us credit for prior military law enforcement training."

As a result of the initiative and state legislation, Cipro said that Massachusetts Guard members are more integrated with civilian police authorities when responding to large-scale events or emergencies.

"Now, when we are on state active duty, we have the same power and authority as a state police officer because of the training that we are conducting," he said.

The Massachusetts Guard has conducted two initiative-based classes so far, with two more classes scheduled this year.

The initiative gives those who have completed the course a leg up when applying for civilian jobs, as

they already carry the required civilian credentials for law enforcement officials in Massachusetts, said Cipro.

Roughly 96 percent of those in the Guard who applied for civilian police jobs after completing the course have landed those positions, he said, adding that more than 50 percent of Massachusetts Guard military police officers and security forces members have civilian jobs with law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

That translates to increased unit readiness and retention, added Conaway.

"Nothing is more important for the retention of high-quality personnel in our formations than a [civilian] job that enables them to have a sustainable family life and a concurrently progressing [military] career," he said.

In the end, said Conaway, the initiative allows for greater integration of Guard members throughout the civilian police community.

"This initiative links Soldiers to a strategic partnership that builds readiness," he said. "It's executed, and valued, at the Soldier level."



A security forces Defender with the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 102nd Intelligence Wing, works alongside an officer with the Massachusetts State Police during an exercise last year. The Massachusetts National Guard has implemented a new training program that allows Massachusetts Guard military police officers and security forces to undergo the same training as Massachusetts police department members, allowing for shared operations when working together at large-scale events or emergencies. (Air National Guard Photo by Mr. Timothy Sandland)