

Berlin MPs Drill for Riots

Service designation dropped by battalion

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BERLIN MILITARY POST's 759th MP Sv Bn has dropped the "service" from its name. This veteran Berlin outfit has been transformed from an MP service battalion into a regular MP battalion.

Col Harold A. Davenport, 759th CO, explained that the subsequent reorganization of the battalion's TO added strength to the general buildup of tactical forces now under way at this isolated post.

The change placed the battalion on a full combat footing. It provided the "police soldiers" with M1 rifles, tank-killing bazookas and grenade-launchers. It gave the battalion three full-strength "line companies," rather than the four lighter-equipped and lighter-staffed companies of the former "service" setup.

An MP service battalion, Davenport explained, is made up of a number of small cells. "We consider this system not so good for a combat area," he said.

BMP officials said the revamped MP battalion structure provides the Berlin garrison with extra tactical power in addition to the 6th Inf Regt, scheduled to be on duty here at full strength by mid-January.

The reorganization has necessitated a full schedule of combined operational duties and training for Berlin's arm-band brigade. The 759th is now undergoing a rigorous program of weapons training in addition to carrying out its regular MP duties and increasing its patrol work, as a result of the arrival here of new troops to fill out the 6th Inf.

The stationing of an entire new battalion of infantry at Tempelhof Air Base, at the opposite end of the U.S. Sector from MP Hq, has forced Davenport to establish a new MP substation in the crowded metropolitan Tempelhof area.

A function of the new substation will be to prevent incidents between the newly arrived American troops and Russian soldiers and German "people's police" in the nearby Soviet Sector.

Among the special responsibilities undertaken by the 759th as a result of Berlin's unique geographical position are the operation of two autobahn checkpoints, the Russian Zone autobahn patrol and the lake patrol on the waters of West

Berlin's huge lake system. The 8-to-11-man lake patrol team is composed mainly of former sailors or marines.

According to 1st Lt J. P. Fox, battalion S3, an effective system of alternating training and operation duties has been implemented. Each company alternates two straight weeks of training with four straight weeks of operational duty.

High on the training priority list are anti-riot tactics. MP officers here have developed a fast-striking mobile force using jeeps and three-quarter-tons for wheels, and nearly every weapon in the arsenal, if necessary, for firepower.

However, despite the many threats of ugly mob action which have arisen during the five-year East-West tug-of-war for control of this city, the MPs have never had to use their well-drilled anti-riot tactics. U.S. officials say there are two reasons why the MPs have yet to put their bayonet wedge to the test: The demonstrated ability of West Berlin police to handle Communist rioters, and the show of force presented by West Allied troops here.

The anti-riot training of the 759th has been the object of many attacks in the Russian-sponsored East Berlin press. All sections of the West Berlin population, however, enthusiastically support every show of Allied strength.

The 759th was activated on Sept. 5, 1942, at Ft. Ontario, N. Y., and saw wartime service in Africa, Italy and Southern France. It was transferred to Berlin in October 1945 and has been here ever since.

Davenport took command last January, after having served in the EUCOM provost marshal division since July 1949. He had held posts with the provost marshal general's office in Washington, D. C. and as theater provost marshal in China.

The colonel cites this example of the results of the 759th's new tactical training program. "Before, we fired the M1 for familiarization only. Now the battalion is 100 per cent qualified with that weapon."

Regarding regular MP duties, Davenport is most proud of the fact that there has not been a single instance of a member of the U.S. Berlin garrison assaulting a military policeman on duty.