

MP investigators keep close eye out for evidence

WILSON A. RIVERA
Monitor Staff

The Military Police Investigations section is run by a constantly engaged staff during all hours of the day who investigate crimes by persons on the installation here.

MP investigators spend their day processing minor crime cases such as misdemeanors, shoplifting, damage to property, aggravated assaults which don't include sexual assault, battery and situations regarding small amounts of drugs under 30 grams. Other cases may be the responsibility of the Criminal Investigation Division.

Only Soldiers work in the MPI section. When on duty following up on leads, they wear civilian attire to make it easier for individuals to speak with investigators about a crime, according to Sgt. Clay A. Laughman, 76th MP Battalion, investigator.

Soldiers work throughout a 24-hour shift, seven days a week, responding to situations needing further processing in order to gather more details about what happened, who was involved and other pertinent questions

to the investigation. At times, the interviewing of a witness may involve them with the crime or to a completely different crime. The investigators immediately inform the new suspect of their rights and turn their interview into an interrogation.

"I might ask the same question four or five times in a different way to see if a person is lying ... We don't do anything that would violate anyone's rights," said Staff Sgt. Mark L. Hull, 76th MP Bn., investigations section noncommissioned officer in charge.

The MP desk receives calls about possible cases and initially sends a traffic patrol to respond to the situation and secure the area before questioning witnesses. Investigators follow up with leads about a case as well as process the crime scene, identify, preserve, and collect evidence.

"[They] process the scene the same but it's not as high-tech as shows like CSI," said Hull. The evidence is then sent out to a lab where it is processed.

Investigators complete an eight-week military police investigators course held at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., and are taught how to conduct an

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Sgt. Clay A. Laughman
76th MP Battalion
Investigator



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Spc. Thomas A. Agredano, 76th MP Bn. investigator, dusts prints off a window of a vehicle to collect and send out for processing in order to get identification of a suspect.

interview, interrogation and trained on the proper procedures and use of a drug determination test kit.

"I love it, I love MPI because it's been the best thing I've ever done in the Army. I'm doing the same job just as I was as a civilian cop," said Spc. Thomas A. Agredano, 76th MP Bn., investigator.

The shifts for the investigators run past their 24-hour shift when they are still processing a case.

Their day starts with physical training in order to stay above the Army Physical Fitness Test standards and begin their shifts at 8:30 a.m. until the following day at the exact same time. The rest of the day is used for recovery. Even as investigators, they must still complete everyday tasks and training just as any other military

police officer.

"We are Soldiers first; we do the other duties like the rest of the MPs and other individuals," said Laughman.

Laughman, who was stationed in Germany prior being assign as an investigator, finds his mission to be completely different since he doesn't have any Soldiers to take care of and is working a different side of law enforcement he hasn't worked before.

Those who witness a suspicious act should call the military police in order to have a patrol check it out. To reach the Military Police desk, call 568-2115.

Editor's Note: This is the second feature series story of several to publish about Fort Bliss' Military Police force and their duties.

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