

# Military Police Unit Provides Specialized Support

## National Defence's major-crimes unit sends clear message

When crossing the Canada-U.S. border recently, an officer with the Canadian Border Services Agency asked me several questions. Upon learning of my employment with the Canadian Forces (CF) Provost Marshal, she asked: "Do you guys carry guns?" Explaining that military police are, like their civilian counterparts, armed for frontline-policing duties, I once again realized that the role, resources and jurisdiction of the CF Military Police are a mystery to many in the law enforcement community and the public at large.

While many are aware that military police patrol bases and Department of National Defence (DND) property across the country, most are not familiar with the extensive support services behind these frontline-policing activities. Like their civilian police counterparts working the street in communities across Canada, military policemen and women have investigative and technical support available to assist with serious and sensitive cases.

Military police detachments have their own investigative sections to deal with routine offences, but more serious offences including sexual assaults, death, computer crimes, large thefts and frauds,

and drug trafficking and cultivation are normally handled by the CF National Investigation Service (NIS). The NIS was established in 1997 to provide an independent investigative unit to handle the more serious or sensitive cases, similar to the major-crimes units of most larger civilian police agencies. The unit provides surveillance, criminal intelligence, computer crime, drug enforcement and polygraph expertise to support DND, the CF and military police detachments around the world.

"The NIS provides vital support to our military community, including local military police detachments," says Colonel Donald Dixon, head of the NIS. "Given the department's national and international commitments, the NIS is prepared to provide investigative expertise in support of CF operations at home and abroad."

Under direct command of the CF Provost Marshal – the military's chief of police, the NIS functions as an independent police unit. A deputy provost marshal manages day-to-day operations including four regional detachments: Western, Central, Eastern and Atlantic, a support detachment and a national headquarters based in Ottawa. With approxi-

mately 125 experienced and well-trained investigators, essentially "detectives" for the CF Military Police, the NIS can lay charges under the criminal code or other federal statutes, such as the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, and for service offences under the Code of Service Discipline of the *National Defence Act*.

The NIS has a rather unique jurisdiction – one that includes all CF bases, missions and DND property (Defense Establishments) and extends to offences committed by CF members anywhere in the world. This means that NIS investigators work closely with their Canadian counterparts at the federal, provincial and local level, and with law enforcement agencies in many other countries.

This jurisdiction calls for a specialized investigative unit – one able to probe allegations of criminal or other illegal activity in urban settings, isolated areas across Canada, and sometimes even remote regions of the world. In 2002, the NIS conducted an investigation requiring the exhumation of a body in a mountainous area of Afghanistan. Investigators had less than one hour to conduct an entire scene exam while CF troops secured the area against enemy attack.

Although most investigations are related to Defense Establishments in Canada, the unit maintains a detachment in Afghanistan and will normally assign investigators to support any significant CF troop deployment. Conducting investigations outside of Canada presents unique challenges as it often involves working with foreign police, different languages, laws and cultures. Even with established missions such as the one in Afghanistan, investigations often require liaison with International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and local police investigators.

*Military police and NIS investigators, working with civilian law enforcement, seized approximately 1,000 marijuana plants in Quebec in 2003.*



As CF personnel also work and train in many other parts of the world, investigators can find themselves on short-term assignments to other countries. During the past year, NIS investigators have travelled to Bosnia, Germany, China, Thailand, Algeria, Poland, the U.K. and the United States to conduct CF-related investigations.

These short-term assignments, which during the past year included the investigation of incidents involving HMCS *Chicoutimi* (submarine) and HMCS *Montreal's* (navy frigate) missing sailor, usually require liaison and diplomatic skills when dealing with foreign law enforcement and military officials from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Like most communities, DND and the CF have to deal with a small minority who engage in criminal or other illegal activity here at home. These investigations, often involving allegations related to drugs, sexual assault, theft and fraud, are common to most police and law enforcement agencies.

Working closely with local military police detachments and civilian police agencies, the NIS national drug enforcement team has made arrests for drug possession and trafficking at several bases across the country. These investigations enforce Canadian law and assist commanders in maintaining morale and a drug-free work environment for all personnel.

The NIS is a leader in technological-crimes investigation, including those often related to Internet use, such as accessing or possessing child pornography. Although these cases are rare, DND and the CF are not immune to these crimes. Working with other agencies and the RCMP Child Exploitation Centre, the NIS has increased its investigative efforts aimed at curbing child pornography and child exploitation in Canada. The NIS computer-crimes

team has considerable resources at its disposal to detect and thoroughly investigate these cases. Investigators work closely with DND computer analysts to uncover evidence related to illegal or inappropriate use of departmental computers and have laid several child pornography-related charges in recent months.

Although the majority of the work done by the NIS relates to DND or CF personnel, its jurisdiction, like that of all military police members, extends to all offences committed on, or in relation to, Defence Establishments. This jurisdiction was illustrated in late 2004 with the arrest of a civilian (not employed with DND) for robbery at Garrison Edmonton's Wild Rose Credit Union, and again in early 2005 when an HIV-positive woman was arrested and charged for aggravated sexual assault after allegedly engaging in unprotected sexual relations at CFB Borden, Ontario.

The NIS is committed to working closely with Canadian and international law enforcement agencies. This cooperation often involves integrated police operations and officer exchanges with civilian police organizations. The RCMP continues to assign an inspector to the NIS as officer in charge of the Sensitive Investigation Section, who provides independent input into sensitive investigations involving senior DND or CF personnel. The NIS also currently assigns investigators to the RCMP Major Crimes Section in Edmonton, the Integrated Technical Crime Unit in the National Capital Region (RCMP and Ottawa Police Service), the Sureté du Quebec, the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, and the Criminal Intelligence Service of Nova Scotia.

"The NIS is developing a well-deserved reputation for professional competence and investigative expertise," says Captain (Navy) Steve Moore, Canadian Forces Provost Marshal. "With its commitment to teamwork and an integrated approach, the NIS will con-

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