



Sgt. Tim Barnes, a special agent at the Fort Belvoir, Va., CID Office, a part of the Washington CID Battalion, makes notes regarding a mock crime scene at an abandoned hospital in Washington, D.C., in October. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)

Doing what has to be done

When crime happens, CID special agents have one mission: Find out the facts

By Michael L. Lewis

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The special agents of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, commonly referred to as CID, are more than similar characters you may have seen on TV. Though they usually wear civilian attire, they are Soldiers, the Army's truth-seekers, who descend on felony crime scenes to collect evidence, interview witnesses and suspects, and piece together to the best of their ability how, why and if a crime occurred.

"Our job is to show that either it did or didn't happen," said Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Seaman, com-

mand sergeant major of U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command. "We have a duty to show one way or the other. If somebody was victimized, then this is our opportunity to put together the right information for someone to decide whether there is sufficient evidence to take it to trial or for a commander to take action.

"When we come to a unit, we are often not bringing very good news. But it's important for people to know that these individuals are professionals at what they do, and ultimately they are simply on a mission to collect the facts," he said.



Spc. Timothy Wheeler, a special agent from the Fort Meade, Md., CID Office, takes photos of a mock victim during the crime scene training. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)

“You’re the one who has to tie it together with the information you’re given. It really threads through like a story,” Marlow said. “No crime scene is the same. You may have seen 100, but the 101st is going to be different. It never fails.”

Pointing to a shell casing at a mock crime scene, he said, “This is evidence. You have to identify it, photograph it, process it, collect it, look at it forensically. And it’s NCOs who are driving that — what do we see; what do we not see?”

In fact, nearly half of all CID special agents are NCOs; the other half are warrant officers who rose from the enlisted ranks, Seaman said.

“You’re expected to be an individual operator with the ability to work a case from beginning to end — every aspect from processing the scene to interviewing subjects, interviewing victims and deciphering a case. You have to figure out what key witnesses you need to interview, who you maybe need to reinterview, what evidence you think needs to go forward to our crime lab for examination. You then have to take the results and analyze them. It’s amazing when people realize that those are often young NCOs who get those key confessions, or who identify those critical items of evidence that help turn a case.”

The Army’s mix of NCO and warrant officer felony investigators is unique in the military — the Naval Criminal Investigative Service

Methodically working through investigations of crimes as varied as homicides, unexplained deaths, sexual assaults, thefts, drug offenses and child abuse cases, CID special agents search for clues big and small, not knowing which bit of information may crack open a case, said 1st Sgt. Marvin “Chad” Marlow, the first sergeant of the Washington CID Battalion, headquartered at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va.

comprises only civilians and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations has a mix of officers and NCOs. The Marine Corps does have a separate CID division, but major crimes are still investigated by NCIS. And though Army CID NCOs are junior in rank to their warrant officer counterparts, their jobs are the same, Seaman said.

“It’s not as if that warrant officer does all the major stuff in that case and the NCO just gets the small stuff,” he said. “It’s purely designed so that those two can go out as a team and completely function and execute. It’s designed so that while the NCO is processing the crime scene, the warrant officer can be doing canvassing interviews — or vice versa. We’re not locked down where someone is strictly a crime scene processor, and someone else has to do these other things. NCOs are completely capable of operating across the full spectrum of doing an investigation from A to Z.”

Nearly all agents start as sergeants, Seaman explained. About half recruited are military police, the rest are from nearly every other MOS, he said.

“The great thing about having individuals with such diverse backgrounds is that they understand a lot of different things about the Army,” he said. “If you have [an agent] who was a prior supply NCO, who better, when you’re in there trying to figure out if somebody’s working the books or is filtering supplies out, than somebody who’s worked in the supply system before? People can’t blow smoke, because they’re up against someone who knows their job better than they do.”

NCOs have been integral to CID’s history from its earliest days. Created within the Military Police Corps by Gen. John J. Pershing during World War I, the Soldiers of the Criminal Investigation Division — whose initials persist as the command’s abbreviation to this day — were



First Sgt. Marvin “Chad” Marlow (background), the first sergeant of the Washington CID Battalion, guides a special agent as he inspects a masked mannequin that represented a suspected hostage-taker during training in October. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)



As part of the training scenario that served as a precursor to the mock crime scene, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jennifer Harris, a special agent of the Washington CID Battalion and a former NCO, talks with a suspected hostage-taker. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)

tasked with preventing and detecting crime among the U.S. Soldiers fighting in Europe. Re-established during World War II to consolidate investigations that were then considered the purview of local MPs, the division was again decentralized after the war. It wasn't until 1964 that the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Agency was formed, becoming the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command in 1971, fully separating the Army's criminal investigations. This ensures agents can do their jobs independently and without interference, Seaman said.

"Basically, it's driven by the ability to show that there is no unlawful command influence on our investigations," he said. "It allows us to completely operate as an independent organization for the Army, to go onto any installation and every operation that we're in worldwide and conduct an investigation knowing that it's not controlled by someone who sits on that installation. And that's in everyone's best interests. Someone can't say you were influenced how you went at it because that commander didn't want a black eye on their installation or their organization."

Because CID NCOs are full-fledged federal agents and often train and work alongside agents from the FBI, DEA and other federal agencies, their uniform is usually civilian business or casual attire, Seaman explained.

"Because everybody's in civilian clothes, they don't know whether that's a warrant officer or a junior NCO," he said. "We'll tell them that we just had an agent get a confession or found a key piece of evidence, and by the way, that's an E-5 who did this. That often amazes them."

Seaman said that when working, special agents often do not display their rank to avoid the impression of intimidation — either by an investigator or by

a suspect. Even while deployed, most will wear "US" insignia where the rank would normally appear on the Army Combat Uniform.

"What we don't want is someone saying, 'I'm a private and that was a sergeant first class sitting across from me. I've been told that a senior NCO is always right. So if he told me that I did it, I admitted that I did it because he was a sergeant first class.' Or a subject saying, 'I'm a captain, what are you? I bet I outrank you.'"

Well at this point, it doesn't matter. If I've just advised you of your rights, it probably means the tables have turned.

"By taking off that [rank], and having someone in civilian clothes or without a rank on his or her chest, it becomes purely an interview at that point. It's ultimately designed to avoid any perception that you may have influenced



Special Agent Russell Rhodes, a digital forensic examiner serving with the 10th Military Police Battalion (CID) (Airborne) in Bagram, Afghanistan, in August 2011, picks the lock of a store believed to be selling stolen U.S. government property. (Photo by Colby T. Hauser)



Barnes records and sketches the precise measurements of the location of a mock victim. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)

them because of your rank versus your abilities as a true investigator. ‘Special agent’ is my rank,” he said.

Nonetheless, ranks do exist within CID. In fact, every NCO special agent will one day have to answer a big question, Marlow said.

“At some point, you come to the pivot that every agent has to come to: Do I want to stay on the NCO track or do I want to become a warrant officer?” he said.

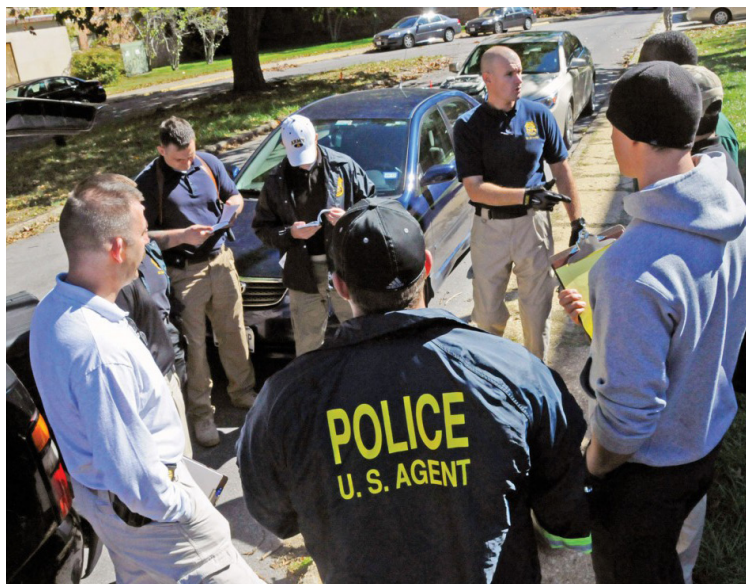
Those who stay on as NCOs, Marlow said, typically do so because they enjoy the traditional NCO roles of training and leading Soldiers.

“Obviously, as the senior NCO in the battalion, I like to train Soldiers,” Marlow said during a break from training at an abandoned hospital in Washington. “So I’m out here in the thick of it. I enjoy seeing the light bulb come on in Soldiers. Yes, I pulled you off your mission, but every once in a while, you have to sharpen your sword.”

But keeping agents’ crime-fighting skills at their best is no different than what any other NCO does, Seaman said.

“We talk about going through things over and over again,” he said. “I think any NCO does part of that. If you’re an infantryman, it’s the repeated going through things so that you can almost do it with your eyes closed, because you one day may have to. If you don’t have it down to a science as an infantryman, you potentially risk the lives of your Soldiers. And for us, if you’re not doing things meticulously, you may miss that critical item of evidence, or may make that one mistake that costs you the case.

“That’s why we say, ‘This is how you do it,’ and don’t get complacent. Complacency is a challenge for every Soldier to fight and not allow it to creep in,” Seaman said. ■



Marlow (center, pointing) discusses the training scenarios with members of the Washington CID Battalion in October. (Photo by Michael L. Lewis)



CID's units

U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID) Headquarters at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., is collocated with the headquarters of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

- **3rd Military Police Group (CID)**, headquartered at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., is responsible for all felony criminal investigation matters with a U.S. Army interest in the eastern United States, Caribbean, Central America, South America and U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility in the Middle East and Asia.
- **202nd Military Police Group (CID)**, headquartered at Kaiserslautern, Germany, is responsible for investigations in countries in the European and African Command areas of responsibility.
- **6th Military Police Group (CID)**, headquartered at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., is responsible for investigations in the western United States and countries in the Pacific Command area of responsibility.
- **701st Military Police Group (CID)**, headquartered at Marine Corps Base Quantico, conducts sensitive and classified investigations, major fraud investigations associated with the Army's acquisition programs, and computer intrusion investigations. It also provides protective services for key Department of Defense, Army and visiting foreign officials.
- **U.S. Army Crime Records Center**, at CID's headquarters, receives, safeguards, maintains and disseminates information from Army law enforcement records.
- **U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory**, at Gillem Enclave, Ga., is the only full-service forensic lab in the Department of Defense.



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