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# THE NAVY SHORE PATROL\*

Ordway Hilton†

The past year has seen the development of a permanent Navy Shore Patrol organization throughout the country. To the civilian who is not familiar with naval terminology, shore patrol may bring to mind many ideas as to the duties of such units which are far from their true functions. Shore patrol, as set up by Navy Regulations,<sup>1</sup> is a policing unit which is principally concerned with the preservation of peace and order among naval personnel. In peace time it is generally formed in a temporary status when large units of the fleet arrive in smaller ports. In such instances a group of petty officers in charge of a commissioned officer are put ashore from the ships to supplement local police forces in handling sailors on liberty. Fundamentally, these same functions are handled by the present permanent shore patrol except that the patrolling is not confined to seaports where units of the fleet are at anchor but extends into many of the inland cities as well.

The chief reason for establishing these permanent patrols arose out of the increased number of naval personnel stationed in schools and training stations throughout the entire country. Everywhere the general public, and in many instances even the local police, would refrain from interfering with a serviceman's recreation even though in some instances it consisted of near rowdiness and property damage. It was their opinion that a man in the military service who is ready to give his life for his country should be able to "let off steam" while on liberty. As such was not the idea of the Navy, steps were taken to alleviate the situation. As it became more and more noticeable that it would be necessary for the Navy to police its own personnel while on leave and liberty, local temporary patrols from various stations were organized. These left much to be desired as the temporary nature of the personnel and their lack of experience reduced the efficiency of these patrols.

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\*The opinions or assertions in this article are the personal ones of the writer and are not to be construed as official or necessarily reflecting the views of the Navy Department or the naval service at large.

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<sup>1</sup>Navy Regulations (Article 698 (1) ) defines the functions of shore patrol as a peace preserving unit with powers set forth as follows:

"When liberty is granted to a considerable number of men, in any except a city large enough to properly care for them without danger of disturbance or disorder, the commander in chief shall cause to be landed with the liberty party a sufficient patrol of petty officers of the Navy or noncommissioned officers of the Marine Corps, in charge of an officer, to maintain order and suppress any unseemly conduct on the part of any member of the liberty party. A sufficient number of officers shall be detailed to act as assistants to the senior patrol officer. The senior patrol officer shall communicate with the chief of police or other local officials and make such arrangements with him to aid the patrol in properly carrying out its duties as may be practicable."

The solution was ultimately found as it had been in many other fields of specialization within the Navy. During the summer of 1942 the Navy Department set about to recruit specialists for shore patrol duty from the ranks of the nation's police departments. Under this program definite requirements were set up for the men to qualify for each of the three grades of petty officers and for the grade of chief petty officer.<sup>2</sup> These requirements defined the number of years of police experience, the requisite age, and in the case of chief petty officers and first class petty officers the necessary previous military service. In addition each man was required to furnish letters of recommendation from previous employers and to have at least one dependent. With personnel so selected indoctrination courses began in the fall of the year and almost at once the permanent patrol began to function.

Even in this present form the shore patrol is still a policing unit with limited jurisdiction. Reference to Navy regulations<sup>3</sup> reveals that the shore patrol was originally intended to handle only personnel from a particular ship, or group of ships, and in any case was limited to naval and Marine Corps personnel. The most important change since the beginning of the war has been the expansion of jurisdiction to cover all service personnel, including Navy, Army, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. This expansion of power was put into effect through a joint agreement between the Navy and War Departments on December 15, 1942, and gives like powers to both the shore patrol and the military police. Within the continental limits of the United States, however, the shore patrol has no jurisdiction over civilian personnel and must depend upon the assistance of the local police in any program which involves handling both servicemen and civilians. These facts of course have led to close cooperation between shore patrol, military police, and local police forces.

One further function, which though not specifically provided for in Navy Regulations, has become a very important part of the shore patrol activities. This is the apprehension of stragglers and

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<sup>2</sup>Qualifications for Specialist (S) (Shore Patrol) ratings, Class V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve, are given below:

Chief Specialist (S) (AA)—Fifteen years police experience and previous military experience.

Specialist (S) 1st Class—Ten years police experience and previous military experience.

Specialist (S) 2nd Class—Six years police experience.

Specialist (S) 3rd Class—Two years police experience.

All applicants for Specialist (S) (Shore Patrol) ratings must be of unquestionable reputation and have maintained excellent records during the time specified above. Applications must be accompanied by letters of recommendation from their present employers and respective Chiefs of Police. Men enlisted in this rating must be married or must have at least one bonafide dependent.

The same physical qualifications as for other enlistments in Class V-6 U.S.N.R. will prevail except that defective color perception may be waived.

<sup>3</sup>See footnote 1 for citation of regulations covering this activity.

deserters and the return of them to their ships and stations. With patrolmen located wherever there are large numbers of servicemen, it is quite apparent that the shore patrol is in an excellent position to discover those men who are away from their ships in an unauthorized status. This has led to routine checking of identification cards, liberty passes, and leave papers of a large number of men by members of the patrol. As the result of such routine many men have been returned to duty who might have otherwise remained away from their stations for days, weeks, or even months.

Wartime conditions have also modified the areas covered by this activity. It has been pointed out that the peacetime patrol was limited to the seaport cities where certain sections would be patrolled either on foot or by means of roving details in automobiles. Today units are located in inland cities as well as seaports, and the phrase "except a city large enough to properly care for them [men on liberty]" has been completely disregarded with the establishment of patrols in New York City and Chicago. In addition to city patrols train riding details police many of the through trains.<sup>4</sup> Generally, these details consist of one shore patrolman and one military policeman charged with the duty of preserving order among service personnel who are today traveling in such large numbers.

City patrols are generally distributed according to the local conditions and the number of men available for duty. The practice has been to cover those areas in which are found the greatest number of personnel or which have been the scenes of actual disturbances. Thus it is not unusual to see patrol members in railroad and bus stations, along the main streets, in public parks, and around amusement and servicemen centers. The men so assigned are free to enter public places, such as hotel lobbies, bars, restaurants, etc., but have not authority to enter a private dwelling without the specific request and consent of the owner and then only to quell disorder or to apprehend a straggler. Patrols are generally instructed to enter public places from time to time as it has been found that a visit of this sort by a shore patrolman does a great deal toward preserving order. To further supplement these foot patrols throughout the city automobiles are employed so as to touch those areas which are less frequently visited by naval personnel and consequently do not warrant constant patrolling, and to answer special calls resulting from disturbances and to investigate stragglers.

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<sup>4</sup> On September 19, 1943 the Chief of Naval Personnel issued a letter to Commandants of various naval districts stating that the Bureau had decided to comply with the request of the railroads and assign shore patrolmen to certain trains to preserve order. This letter reiterated the statements of previous letters issued by the Bureau of Personnel that "there is considerable drunkenness, misconduct, and general misbehavior prevalent on passenger trains on the part of the military personnel."

Since the establishment of the permanent patrol more and more police duties have been assigned to the shore patrol by district commandants and local commanders. These duties may vary from place to place but generally include such things as the responsibility for enforcing uniform regulations, seeing that proper military courtesies are rendered by members of the service, assuring that minors in the Navy are not served liquor, and so on. Thus it is apparent that with the passage of time the duties and problems of the shore patrol will grow until its functions will probably not differ a great deal from the problems of the uniformed force of a municipal police department.

Not all the functions of the shore patrol are of a policing nature. Today one sees these units rendering more and more assistance in problems which can be classified as public service. The man in uniform has found that the shore patrolman is not principally interested in finding some excuse for arresting or reprimanding a man on leave but is more anxious to help his fellow serviceman whenever he can. Here is a man who "speaks the same language" and who is familiar with the serviceman's problems and local conditions as well. Consequently, it is only natural that the visiting serviceman will turn to the shore patrol for assistance and information. With this in mind the senior patrol officers insist that the men of their patrols become familiar with local conditions, such as points of interest, special facilities available for servicemen, location of principal hotel and restaurants, etc.

Contrary to general belief the shore patrol seldom finds it necessary to arrest a man for disorderly conduct or other offenses. By and large the man on leave is orderly and sober, and most of the minor offenses that are committed can be best handled by a word of caution or warning. Even with the men who have become intoxicated it is generally the policy that if the man is orderly and does not disturb the peace he is not taken into custody. In fact most arrests of men who have been drinking are made with the idea of protecting the man in those cases in which he can no longer handle himself or of preventing him from becoming involved in fights or street brawls. Following along with this same program those men assigned to train riding have found that it is most effective to confiscate bottled liquor found in the possession of service men and to watch those who are drinking in the club cars to be sure that they are not served in excess. This has led to virtually eliminating disorder on trains in the case of service personnel.

This policy of eliminating trouble before it occurs is manifest in the "out of bounds" practice. Whenever a portion of the city or a business establishment is declared "out of bounds" by the senior naval officer present or the district commandant all naval establishments in the vicinity are notified of the action, and shore patrol

is posted so as to prevent personnel from entering. Such action, however, is generally taken only as a last resort and is employed when such places are a constant source of trouble to service men or where it appears to be for the best interest of the personnel concerned that these areas are so restricted.

In the case of the straggler it is a different story. He is taken into custody at once and carefully questioned regarding his status. Those men who have been gone only a few days are often allowed to return without guard after being warned that failure to return when given this chance will subject them to more severe discipline in the end. Of course some must be returned by armed guard, but these are generally the men who are classed as deserters or have been stagglers for several weeks.

The close cooperation between the shore patrol and the military police has already been mentioned. Due to their joint jurisdiction over all service personnel this cooperation has in many instances taken the form of joint patrols with military policemen and shore patrolmen actually working together. Whenever personnel of all services congregate together this type of patrol is set up so that such posts as railroad stations, downtown streets, servicemen centers, and trains are generally policed by a mixed patrol. This of course means that the two units tend to work toward the same ends with the same general mode of procedure, and close liaison is constantly maintained between them.

In the cities which have shore patrol units the patrol is rapidly taking its place in the police organization of the community. Cooperation with the local police department is generally excellent, and it is not unusual for members of the local shore patrol detachment to have been formerly associated with the local police department. In many instances the Navy has been given the use of brig facilities, police radio, police telephone communication systems, etc. In return the shore patrol has relieved the city police of many problems which have arisen from the influx of service personnel. All in all it is to the advantage of both units to work in close cooperation, and this fact is certainly appreciated by those in charge.

Such in brief is the picture of the Navy Shore Patrol. Designated as purely a peace preserving organization for handling of naval personnel, its functions are at present gradually growing until it has taken on many of the aspects and functions of a municipal police department with more and more problems and responsibilities. But regardless of its scope, its effectiveness is well appreciated by all who have come in contact with it, as the disorder and unmilitary conditions which brought about the shore patrol's organization have for the most part been thoroughly eliminated.