

## Keeping Troops Legal in DP-03

Press Release

Keeping Troops Legal in DP-03

Posted Aug 21, 2003 at 4:20:PM MDT

Unlike the television show *JAG*, the mission of the legal staff involved in Determined Promise-03 is to advise the military on the law, not to solve crimes. When Joint Task Force Civil Support deploys to Clark County, Nevada, to provide humanitarian aid for a simulated bioterrorism incident, the people involved in the exercise will need education on the various legal issues that will arise. The Staff Judge Advocate's job is to help troops accomplish their mission without breaking any federal or state laws.

Lt. Col. Chris Jones, Domestic Operations Attorney for JTF-CS reviews legal documents during Determined Promise-03. Photo credit: Pfc. Jennifer Marquis, 65th PAOC

"One of the main legal issues during a mission here in the United States is the Posse Comitatus Act. Under the Posse Comitatus act, generally the federal military is restricted from doing any direct law enforcement," said Lt. Col. Chris Jones, Domestic Operations Attorney, JTF-CS. "There are a few exceptions, but troops need to be educated about the restrictions on law enforcement activities so they don't run afoul of the law."

In the exercise, the governor of Nevada imposes a quarantine throughout Clark County. Because quarantine is a state police function, the federal troops supporting JTF-CS are prohibited from enforcing the quarantine, although they are allowed to provide logistical support. Lt. Col. Jones explains, "If people are quarantined and they need medicine, we could help bring that to them. We could bring them food, or we could provide them shelter."

The Staff Judge Advocate's team at JTF-CS is versed in both federal and state laws, because both sets of laws apply during operations in the United States. The Staff Judge Advocate's team briefs each person involved in Determined Promise-03 about the legal issues they may encounter during the exercise. Since laws vary from state to state, troops may encounter situations where they need specific legal guidance. Lt. Col. Jones feels the legal team is well prepared to handle those questions. "That's why our lawyers are here," said Lt. Col. Jones "To help the troops understand the law and educate them about it. We're here to guide our commanders and troops on the legal restraints so we can accomplish our missions legally."