

Modernization of the Protection WFF

By Colonel Mandi L. Bohrer

Shortfalls in the ability to successfully perform the protection warfighting function (WFF) currently represent the most significant vulnerability of the U.S. Army.

Aspiring global powers, such as China and Russia, continue to invest in improved strategic fires and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, empowering those threat forces with potential overmatch in multiple domains. Adversarial cyber- and electronic-warfare capabilities, in concert with robust information operations, are capable of destroying assets and disrupting friendly activities with minimal exposure of the threat forces. If successful, these actions will generate a range of hazards and risks by reducing the effectiveness of friendly fires, sustainment, and aviation support. These hazards and risks will then prevent Army formations from enabling access to the close area, synchronizing fires, and synchronizing movement and maneuver.

Contemporary pacing threats¹ create adverse conditions that, in turn, result in complex challenges and vulnerabilities that U.S. military forces have not faced in the modern era. For the U.S. Army to fight and win in large-scale combat operations, the protection WFF must be modernized. Innovative modernization will involve integrated and synchronized changes across doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P). This article describes several vital adjustments that need to be implemented now in order for us to meet and defeat our adversaries.

Doctrine

The two primary doctrinal publications intended to advance doctrinal solutions for protection on the future battlefield are Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*,² and Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-37, *Protection*.³ As the capstone doctrine for Army operations, the forthcoming FM 3-0 revision will provide updated descriptions of the protection WFF in the context of the Army's vision of warfare, the range of military operations, the Army's focus on the operational concept of multi-domain operations, and the conduct of large-scale combat operations. In addition, the Army will update

ADP 3-37 to describe the role of protection in complementing and reinforcing combined arms protected windows of opportunity to generate overmatch and deny the enemy freedom of action. The revised ADP 3-37 will expand the doctrinal description of protection to include the prevention and mitigation of enemy effects and the preservation of combat power, as well as the prolonging of effective operations. It will also describe how the Army simultaneously vertically and horizontally integrates multiple all-domain protection capabilities across the operational area. An emphasis on changing the mindset of protection as a WFF will be central to the updates of FM 3-0 and ADP 3-37.

Other than evolving to nest within multi-domain operations, perhaps the most essential role of the doctrine updates will be to help drive a difference in how commanders and staffs view the protection WFF. Some practitioners incorrectly (although understandably) equate the protection WFF to force protection or to actions performed by a specific branch, such as the Military Police or Engineer Branch. This misinterpretation of existing doctrine creates real-time problems within the fielded force and shortchanges the potential value of the protection WFF. Updates to FM 3-0 and ADP 3-37 will be profoundly important in changing the mindset from one that considers protection to be a passive afterthought in the rear area to one that views protection as an active, critical function that is at the forefront of planning and is fully integrated into all operations.

Organization

In an attempt to keep pace with the growing multidomain threat posed by ambitious adversarial powers, Army leaders are considering many organizational design changes; however, two are of particular relevance. First, the Army must better integrate protection planning into operations at echelon, as the small cells dedicated to providing information about protection WFF solutions in accordance with division and corps commander priorities are woefully inadequate in

capacity and capability. Divisions and corps need an improved organizational design that can better synchronize the larger planning, operational, targeting, and intelligence processes across echelons. This will require two broad changes: The cell staff should encompass enhanced expertise across the 16 protection tasks, and the cell must have physical linkages within the main command post—the hub of planning and operations. Training, educating, and providing a staff capable of planning, applying, and integrating protection effects across the full depth of the battlefield will have a monumental impact on the effectiveness of fighting. A second organizational design change—establishing protection brigades in the Active and Reserve Components—could further reinforce the ability of a division to integrate and apply protection. Creating a combined arms formation with survivability, ground security, air defense, information advantage, and threat detection capability would provide important benefits. It would maximize unity of command for disparate priority protection capabilities, thus preventing the division commander from investing finite attention toward the command and control of its numerous functional enablers. It would also increase readiness by providing a common assigned structure for the division, which would be ready for Day-0 operations. If the ability to provide protection is both a vulnerability and a priority, then the Army should move beyond approaching the assignment and employment of protection capabilities as a “pick-up game.”

Materiel

Many significant materiel modernization efforts are necessary in order to enhance the protection WFF. Developing and procuring air defense artillery systems capable of protecting critical capabilities, assets, and activities from surface- and air-launched threats (including unmanned aircraft systems) are priorities for Army forces. Developing solutions to quickly “integrate sensors to shooters” is another. To protect against aspiring peer threats, programs such as the Terrestrial Layer System offer materiel solutions in intelligence, cyber, fires, and protection systems that are integrated to defeat accurate threat fires, thus preserving critical capabilities. With the speed and complexity of threat operations projected to increase exponentially, it will become progressively more challenging—if not impossible—to employ proactive protection WFF effects on the battlefield. However, efforts and endeavors are actively taking place across the Army. For example, the Maneuver Support–Capability Development Integration Directorate, U.S. Army Futures Command, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, continues to develop and refine the Protection Decision Support Tool, which is an artificial-intelligence-enabled solution to provide commanders and protection professionals with a means of quickly identifying and interdicting potential threats before they impact friendly operations. Several other material solutions, such as the Protection Mobile Response System, the Coded Visibility program, are also under development and worthy of attention and investment.

Training and Leadership and Education

Updating doctrine, changing organizational design, and investing in exquisite materiel solutions are pointless without appropriate training, leadership and education domain solutions in place. Two years ago, the U.S. Army Military Police School, Fort Leonard Wood, developed a pilot Protection Integration Course to train and educate protection professionals. By emphasizing “integration,” the course aims to educate professionals on the means and methods of artfully integrating protection WFF tasks and systems based on commander priorities. The Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood, continues to refine the pilot course while pursuing authorization to expand and formalize the course in the Army Training Requirements and Resource System. To fully realize the potential value of the class to the Army, the attendee list should be expanded to include echelons-above-brigade personnel in G-3 and G-5 positions. Professional courses across the continuum of learning and throughout both components also require updates to further improve the Army’s knowledge of protection effects and its ability to fully integrate them into operations.

Personnel, Facilities, and Policy

Personnel, facilities, and policy changes accompany the other DOTMLPF-P domain modernization options.

Army formations need skilled protection professionals in echelon protection cells and protection brigade formations. Additionally, updating key positions such as the protection coordinator, executive officer, S-3, and S-3 sergeant major with additional skill identifiers will lead to improving unit readiness and enhancing talent management. Personnel requirements could be examined to ensure the availability of a full career continuum for officer, warrant officer, and non-commissioned officer protection professionals.

Several of the previously discussed DOTMLPF-P solutions will drive a corresponding facilities solution. The Army will need to identify installations, facilities, and/or training areas where units will be able to safely train with advanced protection technologies without unintentionally impacting surrounding areas.

Defending the homeland and deterring strategic attacks against the United States are the top two priorities addressed in the *2022 National Defense Strategy*.⁴ The Army should, therefore, also examine potential policy implications for more closely integrating the Army Protection Program and the protection WFF in the homeland.

Integration of Solutions

The Army must improve its ability to fully integrate the protection WFF in the operations process. However, organizational design changes are only part of the complex solution that is needed to address the complex challenges. Updated doctrinal publications on operations, planning, and functional capability will capture methods and means of integration, which will be further enabled in practice by materiel solutions such as the Protection Decision Support Tool. Training and education will provide protection professionals

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in cells and across formations with knowledge and skills—a critical consideration in ensuring applied and integrated all-domain effects. Personnel changes will allow for the development of professionals throughout their careers; the new additional skill identifier coding for personnel will assist with managing talent and providing the force with the best-qualified professionals. The combination of educational opportunities, branch expertise, and operational experience will build leaders who are well-prepared and best-qualified to lead protection cells and formations at the brigade, division, and corps levels. The combination of facility modernization and policy updates will allow Army units to regularly integrate aspects of information advantage, counter-unmanned aircraft systems, and other protection efforts across extended ranges. This will improve the quality of training, making it more realistic and increasing the Army’s readiness to defeat complex threats.

Conclusion

There is no single solution to providing the protection WFF capability necessary for the Army. However, a cornerstone training and education solution will help propagate doctrinal knowledge, impart the best methods for applying materiel solutions, and provide protection professionals who can help organizations tackle complex challenges from threat forces. The Army must continue to develop critical solutions across and through DOTMLPF-P for the protection WFF. This work is not undertaken only by and at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence. Modernizing protection is an Army solution that requires Army work. Investing in integrated protection WFF solutions across the Army

proponents is absolutely necessary in order for the United States to prevail in competition, crisis, and conflict against any threat.



Endnotes:

¹The term “pacing threats” refers to competitors that are making significant progress toward challenging U.S. defense strategy. (Brittany De Lea, “Biden Defense Chief Dubs China the ‘Pacing Threat’ Amid Ascending,” *Military and Defense*, 19 January 2021.)

²FM 3-0, *Operations*, 6 October 2012 (currently under revision).

³ADP 3-37, *Protection*, 31 July 2019 (currently under revision).

⁴2022 *National Defense Strategy*, U.S. Department of Defense, submitted to Congress for review on 28 March 2022.

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Photograph Guide

Photographs contribute a great deal to the visual appeal of an article. When submitting them with your article, please keep the following in mind:

- **Subject matter**—Action shots that show Soldiers who are training or performing their jobs are the best way to enhance an article. Static photographs of landscapes, structures, or distant machinery in action are less useful. Photographs of groups of people smiling at the camera or “grip and grin” shots add little to an article and are unlikely to be used.
- **Format**—Photographs saved in JPEG (or JPG) format and sent as attachments to an e-mail are best. Photographs and other graphics should not be embedded in a Microsoft® Word document or PowerPoint presentation. Graphics files are large, and e-mail systems frequently have limits to the size of messages that can be sent. For example, our system cannot accept messages larger than 20 megabytes (MB). One solution is to send separate e-mails with just one or two attachments each.
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