

A U.S. Army Soldiers with the 300th Military Police Brigade, perform military police duties during Mojave Falcon 25 at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., June 6, 2025. Mojave Falcon, the first Army Reserve exercise of its kind, tests readiness and support capabilities across a coast-to-coast battlefield in a Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) environment. ***(U.S. Army Photo by Master Sgt. Justin P. Morelli)***

MILITARY POLICE SURVIVABILITY IN LSCO

Rebuilding the Military Police Corps for the Modern Battlefield

By Captain Nicholas Maule

As the U.S. Army shifts its focus from counterinsurgency (COIN) to large-scale combat operations (LSCO), the survivability of military police units must be urgently reevaluated. Over the past 20 years, the Military Police Corps developed and refined tactics suited for COIN, emphasizing mounted operations, high visibility, and access over fieldcraft, concealment, and survivability. While these tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) proved effective in Iraq and Afghanistan, they are now dangerously outdated. In LSCO, military police face a battlefield saturated with advanced threats from unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) and loitering munitions to electronic warfare and long-range precision fires. Based on direct observations from the last 10 brigade rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC)—the Army's premier Combat Training Center for preparing brigade combat teams (BCTs) for LSCO—it is clear that the Military Police Corps is not currently postured to survive, let alone thrive, in this contested and lethal environment.

Military Police formations repeatedly demonstrate a set of legacy behaviors that make them vulnerable. Vehicles are parked in open terrain without regard for cover, concealment, or dispersion. Command posts remain static for too long, exposed to detection and indirect fire. Units operate predictably and almost exclusively mounted, with little emphasis on dismounted patrolling, terrain masking, or noise and light discipline. Camouflage is often poorly applied or ignored, and signature management—visual, thermal,



Spc. Joseph Kenney, left, and Spc. Nicholas Jewett, both military police officers with the 715th Military Police Company, Florida Army National Guard, secure concertina wire to the hood of their Humvee during the unit's rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson, Louisiana, June 5, 2023. The rotation allowed soldiers the ability to build greater cohesiveness and readiness as they trained on large-scale combat operations. ***(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy)***

and electromagnetic—is rarely enforced. These trends are consistent across rotations and result in rapid attrition of military police combat power once enemy reconnaissance-fires networks begin targeting rear areas. What we are seeing is not a lack of effort or professionalism; it is a systemic issue born from two decades of COIN-oriented training and doctrine that no longer applies to the LSCO fight.

In LSCO, there is no sanctuary. The idea that military police can operate "behind the line" is outdated and dangerous. Peer and near-peer adversaries possess integrated targeting systems that fuse aerial reconnaissance, cyber capabilities, and real-time fires. A single drone can compromise the position of an entire platoon. A static command post (CP) can be targeted by artillery within minutes. If military police fail to adopt survivability as a core discipline, their ability to enable freedom of movement, protect sustainment operations, and support maneuver commanders will collapse. The ripple effects are significant: BCTs lose mobility, supply lines become vulnerable, rear-area security degrades, and the overall tempo of the operation slows under threat of disruption and attrition.

If the Military Police Corps continues to rely on TTP rooted in COIN, it will suffer devastating losses in LSCO and risk becoming a liability rather than a combat multiplier. Military Police—who are trained to operate only in mounted configurations, without fieldcraft or an understanding of terrain-based tactics—will be hunted and destroyed in a fight against a peer threat. Worse, they will be unable to protect the units they support. The survivability gap we see in current military police units is not theoretical; it is observable, repeatable, and exploited during every Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation. Survivability is no longer an optional task; it is a warfighting imperative.

To correct this trajectory, survivability must be institutionalized at every level of military police training and leader development. It must start at One Station Unit Training (OSUT), where new Soldiers must be taught fieldcraft fundamentals: camouflage, concealment, dismounted movement, digging fighting positions, and recognizing and reacting to UASs. These tasks must be treated with the same importance as weapons qualification or Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS). At the Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), new military police officers must learn how to plan and emplace concealed CPs, enforce movement discipline, rehearse tactical withdrawal, and site antiarmor and drone-defeat systems. Officers must understand how to manage visual, thermal, and electromagnetic signatures and how to apply terrain analysis to survivability, not just maneuver.

At the Captains Career Course (CCC), survivability must become an operational-level planning factor. Military police company commanders must be trained to design dispersed operations, rotate positions,

U.S. Army Pfc. Rebecah Henrickson, a military police officer with the 385th Military Police Battalion, wears a new outer tactical vest at Fort Stewart, Georgia, May 1, 2026. A tactical vest is a specialized body armor system designed for military police to provide both protection and operational versatility in a variety of missions. ***(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Anthony Herrera)***





A service member inspects a Saab Barracuda Solar Shade Systems, an ultra-lightweight camouflage net system used to cover a structure and reduce fuel cost, during an "Operation Energy" expo here Oct. 23, 2014. U.S. Army Central's Operation Energy Working Group hosted the run and expo to raise awareness of energy conservation and informed Soldiers and leaders of ways they can contribute to the success of the campaign. The shade can reduce the solar loading by 85 percent, which studies have shown can typically reduce the temperature of the shelter by at least 15 degrees and have about a 22 percent fuel savings. ***(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy R. Myers, U.S. Army Central)***

integrate layered defenses, and rehearse rapid displacement. They must learn to fight dismounted; operate without digital enablers; and survive in degraded, contested environments. This includes deliberate integration of counter-UASs, listening posts/observation posts (LPOPs), smoke employment, ultra-lightweight camouflage net systems (ULCANS), and deceptive signature generation. Leadership development should assess officers on how well they enforce survivability across their formations and not just how they brief or execute a mission.

Beyond institutional education, the Military Police Corps must update doctrine to reflect the modern battlefield. Current field manuals must incorporate survivability-focused guidance: terrain masking, camouflage SOPs, hide-site selection, dispersion techniques, and rapid-withdrawal procedures. These must be included in Field Manual (FM) 3-39 and Army techniques publications related to military police operations in support of LSCO. Commanders must drive a cultural shift within their units, reinforcing that survivability is not synonymous with passivity; it is active protection that enables continued combat operations. Camouflage inspections must become as routine as precombat checks/precombat inspections (PCCs/PCIs). Every movement must consider enemy intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Every CP must be planned with the assumption of enemy targeting.

Military police must also retrain themselves to fight like infantry when necessary. Conducting dismounted operations, building and occupying fighting positions, patrolling, executing ambushes, and implementing terrain denial must become part of the military police skillset and not just enabler functions delegated to maneuver units. Signature management must be second nature: units must enforce strict light and noise discipline, minimize electronic emissions, and mask heat and movement signatures. Equipment and standard operating procedures (SOPs) must evolve to support this: adding more camouflage nets; improving UAS sensors; fielding lightweight tools for defensive construction; and designing practical training scenarios that replicate peer threats, red air, and multidomain attacks.

The cost of failing to adapt is not abstract; it is already visible at JRTCs. Military police platoons are frequently destroyed in the opening days of LSCO scenarios due to poor concealment, predictable movement, and lack of survivability TTPs. These losses delay BCT-level operations and force maneuver units to assume military police responsibilities, creating operational risk and degrading tempo. The Military Police Corps cannot allow this trend to continue.

Pfc. Barry Gorman, a military police assigned to 8th Military Police Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, mans a M240B machine gun inside a M1151A1 HMMWV at Fort Polk, Louisiana, on Feb. 15, 2108. The 8th MP Brigade and 25th Infantry Division are participating in an annual rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center. ***(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Armando R. Limon, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division)***





U.S. Army Cpt. Jeffery Horne, assigned to the 709th Military Police Battalion, discusses troop movements with Col. Richard Stearns, Commander of the 18th Military Police Brigade, during a Command Post Exercise at the 7th Army Training Command's Grafenwoehr Training Area, Feb. 27th, 2025. During the exercise, Soldiers assigned to 615th MP company captured opposition forces, and processed them through a detainee holding area, in preparation for their roll in the upcoming Defender 25 exercise. ***(U.S. Army photo by Kevin Sterling Payne)***

If we are to remain relevant, capable, and combat-effective in LSCO, we must abandon the comfortable habits of COIN and embrace the hard truths of the future battlefield.

The Military Police Corps must lead this change. Our role as protectors of the force begins with protecting ourselves. Survivability must become a culture: trained at one station unit training (OSUT), reinforced at Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), refined at Captains Career Course (CCC), and demanded by commanders across the force. If the Corps can institutionalize a survivability-first mindset rooted in dismounted tactics, terrain-based operations, and threat-driven planning, we will not only endure in LSCO—we will become a decisive asset. This transformation is uncomfortable, but necessary. The battlefield is watching, and the next fight will not wait.

Captain Maule *is a planner for 2d Multi-Domain Task Force. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal science from Central Washington University, Ellensburg, and a master's degree in organizational security management from Webster University.*

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