Protection in an Armored Division The Iron Way

By Major Luke J. Grieder

J oint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations, defines protection as the "preservation of the effectiveness and survivability of mission-related military and nonmilitary personnel, equipment, facilities, information, and infrastructure deployed or located within or outside the boundaries of a given operational area."¹ While this definition seems straightforward, effectively planning and executing the numerous tasks associated with the protection warfighting function (WfF)—which requires the integration of various discrete WfFs—can be challenging. This article outlines how the 1st Armored Division (1AD), known as America's Tank Division, approaches protection during large-scale combat operations. It also shares best practices that emerged from the preparation and execution of Warfighter Exercise (WFX) 25-1, conducted in October 2024.

"Converse of Targeting" Methodology

As one of the newest Army WfFs, protection needs to be better understood and adequately integrated into mission planning and execution across the force. A common issue that hinders protection from effectively preserving combat power and ensuring freedom of maneuver is that various protection-related branches—such as Military Police, Air Defense, Engineer, and Chemical-operate in isolated "silos of excellence." Additionally, failure to properly integrate and synchronize other WfFs into protection planning efforts is also common and compounded by staffing constraints across multiple command nodes. Facing these challenges, the 1AD protection enterprise significantly modified its processes, procedures, and fighting products during the command post exercises (CPXs) leading up to WFX 25-1. Much of the change was initiated with the arrival of Major General Curtis D. Taylor, the current commanding general of 1AD.

Upon taking command in July 2024, Major General Taylor provided initial guidance regarding each WfF—including a vision statement on protection within the division, in which he indicated that protection would be viewed as the converse of targeting and that the division Protection Working Group (PWG) would serve as a counter to the enemy's Targeting Working Group. With this clear vision and a command-driven culture emphasizing protection planning, the 1AD protection cell worked diligently to

enhance its approach to the PWG and development of the protection prioritization list (PPL). The protection enterprise was directed to base planning efforts from the perspective of the enemy, with a particular focus on the enemy's high-payoff target list (HPTL). As demonstrated by 1AD during CPX I-III, adhering to this process provides a clear understanding of what the enemy is likely to target and highlights the collection and delivery methods the enemy may use against items on the HPTL. Additionally, this methodology enabled the 1AD protection enterprise to more effectively prioritize critical assets, prescribe tasks (such as survivability moves, dispersion efforts, and alternating of Q-53 radar queuing cycles), and align protection enablers or other capabilities to mitigate risk. The analytical outputs were codified in the air tasking order (ATO) cycle on PPLs and were subsequently updated or adjusted through daily PWGs.

PWG Adjustments: Maintaining a 96-Hour Planning Horizon

During the CPX train-up for WFX 25-1, the 1AD protection enterprise faced challenges in maintaining a 96-hour planning horizon for critical tasks, such as making adjustments to the PPL, reallocating protection enablers, and conducting risk management analysis. To improve planning efficiency and focus within this 96-hour timeframe, the protection cell implemented significant changes to the PWG meeting agenda, the list of required attendees, and the assignments for briefings. Key revisions included the following:

- Opening the working group with a briefing by a division plans officer (G-5) focused on the division fight 96+ hours out. This provided timely planning updates and set the tone for keeping the discussion focused on three to four ATOs out.
- Reordering the PPL discussion and analysis (by ATO), starting at 96 hours out and working backward to the current fight. Staff analysis, discussion, and decisions that were focused on 96 hours out were prioritized and captured first.
- Preceding each PPL discussion (by ATO) with updated enemy HPTL analysis provided by the intelligence officer

(G-2). This improved the PPL discussion and analysis by providing critical updates to enemy HPTL items, targeting, tactics, patterns, and G-2 concerns. The continual reevaluation of the enemy HPTL within the 72-, 48-, and 24-hour windows was crucial to this effort, resulting in a more refined protection cell notion of enemy targeting objectives.

- Reorganizing the briefing order by priority of protection and reserving the final portion of the meeting for downtrace unit updates. This ensured that subordinate units had time to brief the protection enterprise, raise concerns, request additional enabler support, and provide critical input from their perspectives across the area of operations.
- Cutting all formal division staff briefing requirements, allowing only "by exception" critical updates pertinent to 1AD protection efforts. This preserved valuable time for G-5 updates, PPL discussions, and downtrace unit briefings.

After implementing these changes to the PWG meeting agenda, the 1AD protection enterprise experienced significant improvements in several areas, including overall operational awareness, PPL discussion and analysis, synchronization with subordinate units, promptness of requests for additional forces, and time management during the working group meeting. Output was primarily concentrated on decisions that needed Deputy Commanding General–Support approval. This included decisions concerning PPL updates, recommendations for the dynamic retasking of enablers, and refined protection guidance that was published in the daily fragmentary order.

Revamping of the PPL Template

Throughout CPX I-III, the 1AD protection enterprise developed multiple iterations of a PPL template to enhance the prioritization of mission-critical assets and the threats and hazards associated with each asset. These updates incorporated aligned enablers or mitigations and assessments of residual risks. The revised versions of the PPL were tailored to meet specific requirements set forth by the division commander. The top items on the PPL were assigned three layers of protection to address ground, air, and indirect fire threats. To codify these threats and synchronize the enablers or mitigations for comprehensive coverage across all three protection layers, adjustments were made to the doctrinal PPL template that has historically been used by 1AD, as outlined in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-37, *Protection.*²

In the final PPL template, recognized as a best practice by the Mission Command Training Program during WFX 25-1, assets were organized into a three-tiered system based on their mission criticality (rather than using a simple 1–N priority list). (See Table 1.) Additionally, the format allowed for the identification of specific threats to each asset, presentation of a three-layer coverage status, and outline of specific units and tasks designed to mitigate risks through active and passive measures. The three tiers were—

- **Tier 1 (Mission-critical):** Loss of asset would result in mission failure. Assets receive prioritized resources to mitigate risk and cover all three layers of protection.
- **Tier 2:** Loss of asset would result in a severely degraded capability to accomplish the mission. Assets have three layers of protection to the greatest extent possible.
- **Tier 3:** Loss of asset would result in a degraded capability to accomplish the mission. Mission requirements/ enabler availability determine the alignment of protection assets.

The transition to a tiered PPL with three-layer coverage status led to immediate positive outcomes. Specifically, it enhanced the prioritization of protection enablers, improved residual risk management, and facilitated asset movement between tiers. The tiered list presented division senior leaders with a clearer understanding of asset prioritization than the mere changing of numerical values would have. These modifications ultimately increased clarity and efficiency in discussions related to risk and enabler alignment and enabled the division to quickly capture changes and publish them in the daily fragmentary order.

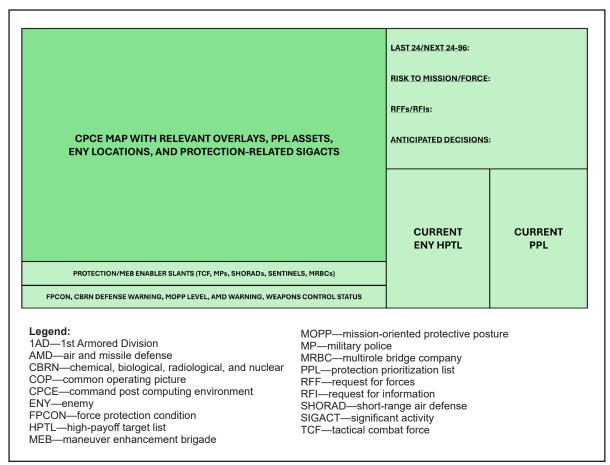
Revision of the Protection Common Operating Picture

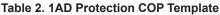
A significant revision implemented by the 1AD protection enterprise involved redesigning the division protection common operating picture. Utilizing the virtual joint operating center as the primary collaboration point, staff sections and essential entities related to the protection mission (G-2, division transportation officer, maneuver enhancement brigade) were provided with a dedicated space to share updates and products from various working groups. This information was consolidated into a comprehensive protection common operating picture slide, which displayed crucial details, including PPL changes, asset locations, enabler combat power, risks to the mission and forces, and significant activities related to protection. (See Tables 2 and 3.) The virtual joint operating center protection common operating picture streamlined communication across different command nodes and ensured that updated products were disseminated throughout the protection enterprise.

Changes to Rear Command Post Manning

Roster changes in the 1AD rear command post (RCP) significantly enhanced the ability of the protection enterprise to conduct effective PWGs and synchronize protection efforts across various WfFs. Increased representation from the division staff, including the division sustainment brigade, G-2, operations (G-3), air cell, fires cell, and G-5, improved WfF integration and facilitated more effective PPL analysis during the PWG, regardless of operational tempo or virtual communication challenges. This expanded staffing capacity allowed greater focus on incorporating protection into future operations planning at the RCP and division headquarters. Additionally, the increased representation from the maneuver enhancement brigade, including more operations planners, liaison officers, and air defense personnel, improved coordination of enabler support for the PPL and

	Mitigations/Coverage Notes	-Atternate firing positions must be constructed IVO templated battery firing site		-HIMARS must conduct survivability move after each fire mission		 ADA coverage limited to early engagement along AAoAs FARPs must conduct survivabilty move after aircraft utilize site 	- ADA coverage limited to early engagement along AAoAs	- MRBCs must remain dispersed during staging and movement across AO IRON		- Limited local security provided by HN LE - No active CFZ (out of range) - Limited local ADA coverage by HN MANPADS	 CEC-As will self-secure against ground threats No dedicated CFZs aligned to CEC-As ADA coverage limited to early engagement along AoAs 	- Local security limited/provided by tenant units	N—north N/A—not applicable OBJ—objective ops—operations PAA—position area for artillery PL—phase line PLT—platoon PPL—protection prioritization list RPA—radar position for artillery SPF—special-purpose forces TBM—theater ballistic missile UAS—unmanned aerial system WGX—wet-gap crossing
		- Alternate fii templated b:		- HIMARS mu mission		- ADA covera - FARPs mus site	- ADA covera	- MRBCs mu movement a		- Limited loc - No active C - Limited loc	- CEC-As wil - No dedicat - ADA covera	- Local secur	ystem
	Aligned Units/Enablers	93 MP BN: local security 67 MEB: survivability construction DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: local ADA coverage	2-12 IN BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA-Incal ADA coverage	2-12 IN BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: local ADA coverage	DIVARIY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: local ADA coverage	93 MP BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: early engagement coverage	93 MP BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: early engagement coverage	DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: early engagement coverage 93 MP BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: local ADA coverage	93 MP BN: local security DIVARTY: CFZ 4-60 ADA: early engagement coverage	MSCs: local/self security	MSCS: local/self security MSCS: local/security MARTY: Cr2 PDAB-division sustainment brigade EN—engineer FARP—forward arming and refueling point ECU—government FARP—forward arming and refueling point GOV—government HIMARS—high-mobility artillery rocket system HIMARS—high-mobility artillery rocket system HIMARS—mobility articlery rocket system HIMARS—high-mobility artillery rocket system HIMARS—mobility articlery rocket system HI		
	F IDF ADA												DSB—division sustair EN—engineer FARP—forward armin GLOC—ground line o GOV—government HIMARS—high-mobili HN— host nation IDF—indirect fire IN—indantry VO—in vicinity of LE—law enforcement LSA—logistical suppo MANPAD—man-porta MEB—maneuver enh MRBC—multirole brid MRBC—multirole brid
PPL - ATO JK	Identified Requirement SPF IDF ADA	1x MP of IN PLT 1x ADA PLT	1x MP or IN PLT per RPA 1x ADA PLT	1x MP or IN PLT per PAA 1x ADA PLT		1x MP or IN PLT	1x MP of IN PLT	1x MP or IN CO 1x ADA PLT		1x MP of IN PLT	N/A	1x MP of IN CO 1x ADA PLT	
	Prescriptive Mitigations	Hardened firing positions, displacement ops, local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage	Survivability moves, local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage	Survivability moves after file missions, displacement ops, local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage		Survivability moves after use, local security, CFZ	Survivabilty moves, displacement ops, local security, GFZ	Survivability moves, displacement ops, local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage		Local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage	Survivabilty moves, displacement ops, local security	Survivability moves, survivability construction, displacement ops, local security, CFZ, local ADA coverage	1AD—1st Armored Division AAoA— aerial avenue of approach ADA—air-defense artillery AMD—air and missile defense AO—area of operation As—armored ATO—air tasking order BDE—brigade BN—battalion C2—command and control C4B—combat aviation brigade C2—command and control C2—company CFZ—critical friendly zone C0—company DIV—division DIVATIY—division support area
	Threats	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air, Iamminø	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air	sh mission)	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air, TBM	SPF, IDF, SUAS/Air	establishment throughout AO IRON I ability to accomplish mission)	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air, TBM	SPF, IDF, UAS/Air	SPF, IDF, JAS/Air, TBM	
	Criticality Notes ailure)	Critical for AMD coverage of PPL assets and AO IRON	Critical for 1AD counterfire missions	DIV RPAs Critical for 1AD counterfire missions DIV PAAs Critical for 1AD counterfire and shaping missions	Tier 2 Assets (Loss results in severly degraded ability to accomplish mission)	Critical for CAB deep attack missions	Critical to sustain 1AD tempo N of PL PACKERS	Critical for WGX opns/GLOC establishment throughout AO IRON		Critical for WGX ops/GLOC establishment throughout AO IRON	Critical for mobility operations across AO IRON	Critical for C2 and SPF, IDF, sustainment of 1AD mission UAS/Air, TBM	
	Location ults in mission fe	DSAIRON	DIV RPAS		ilts in severly de	Various	OBJ ATLANTA	>		OBJ VIOLET	Various	OBJ PORTLAND	overage srage d Coverag
	Asset (Owner) Location C Tier 1 Assets (Loss results in mission failure)	Patriot Battery (A/3-4 ADA)	Q53 Radars (DIVARTY)	HIMARS (2-300 FA)	Tier 2 Assets (Loss resu	FARPs (1AD CAB)	LSA IRON 2 (DSB)	MRBCs (111 EN BDE)	Tier 3 Assets (Loss rest	Existing Bridges (HN GOV)	CEC-As (MSCs)	DSA (MEB/DSB)	Legend: Dedicated Coverage Limited Coverage No Dedicated Coverage





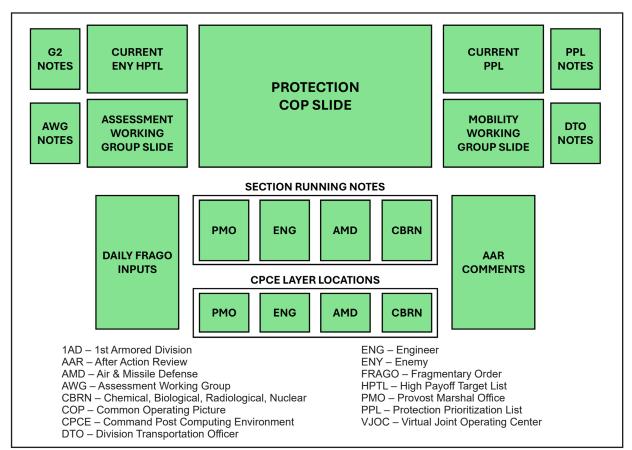


 Table 3. 1AD Protection COP Template

rear area security operations. An additional benefit of these staffing changes included the battle tracking and planning capacity necessary for the RCP to assume command of division operations for short periods as the mission required.

Offensive protection operations in the rear area constituted another added benefit of the RCP manning restructure. With the addition of a dedicated fires cell and an increase in maneuver enhancement brigade representation, operations aimed at targeting special-purpose forces behind the forward line of own troops became more synchronized and deliberate, bolstering efforts to protect critical assets and logistical nodes/operations throughout the rear area. The efficiency of offensive protection operations became especially important during the final phases of WFX 25-1, where the 1AD rear area and ground lines of communication far exceeded the doctrinal security capabilities of the attached maneuver enhancement brigade. The RCP manning changes enabled the 1AD protection enterprise to better integrate collection activities with tactical combat force and military police units across the rear to locate and disrupt special-purpose forces operations targeting PPL assets, command nodes, and critical sustainment operations.

Conclusion

Given the current events in Europe and the range of threats from the strategic support area to the division battlespace, the importance of protection is increasing. Protection requires thorough integration across all WfFs. Through its "Converse of Targeting" methodology, updates to the PWG agenda, and improvements in fighting products, the 1AD protection enterprise succeeded during WFX 25-1. Furthermore, the 1AD protection enterprise found that enhancing the clarity and conciseness of protection-related products prompted leaders from other WfFs to be more willing to allocate additional personnel, resources, and time to address the challenges. By sharing best practices from 1AD, units preparing for their WFXs or deployments can continue to improve their protection efforts, helping to preserve combat power and mitigate threats to their respective formations. **Endnotes:**

¹JP 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022. ²ADP 3-37, *Protection*, 31 July 2019.

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