



The Inaugural Protection and Maneuver Support Senior Leader Forum



By Colonel Barrett K. Parker (Retired) and First Sergeant Michael A. Koren (Retired)

The inaugural Protection and Maneuver Support Senior Leader Forum, held 23–25 July 2024 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, was a grandly lauded endeavor that inspired some of the most notable Army luminaries to travel—many for the first time—to one of the premier hunting, camping, and fishing areas of the Midwest to discuss recent evolutions and the future of the protection domain. Visitors to Fort Leonard Wood enjoyed the warm, sunny weather while they engaged in superb dialogue and observed well-planned and well-orchestrated demonstrations related to the most complex Army warfighting function.

The forum kicked off with several keynote speakers. Each speaker addressed the unique Army perspective on how protection must be synchronized in support of the Army of 2030 while the Army postures for 2040. The Chief of Staff of the Army, Sergeant Major of the Army, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center served as the esteemed members of the Army's senior leader panel, held with standing room only in Lincoln Hall at the Ike Skelton Complex. While the panel members discussed a wide variety of diverse topics, two underlying themes emerged: The protection warfighting function is an integral part of the Army's future fight, and protection must be on the minds of leaders at all echelons and components.

The first day of the forum culminated with Colonel Joseph E. Elsner, Training and Doctrine Command Proponent Office (TPO)–Protection, comprehensively describing the event setting for the next day—a threat-informed, wet-gap crossing modified to fit the terrain at Training Area 250, where a live demonstration of the combined protection effects of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear; engineer; military police; explosive ordnance; fires; cyber; electronic warfare; air defense; and space and missile defense assets would be conducted. The results of protection warfighting function actions, activities, and tasks on a 2030 battlefield ensure that protected maneuver can be brought into focus for the Army.

After opening remarks on the second day, large, white buses transported anxious observer-passengers to a location about a kilometer away from the actual wet-gap crossing site. Over the next 3 hours, participants received a series of briefings, discussed displays, and provided presentations, demonstrating how various and diverse protection equities would be arrayed in support of a wet-gap crossing—but in a significantly compressed space. At the conclusion of these activities, participants had the opportunity to view a waterborne demonstration, in which an M-1135 Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Reconnaissance Vehicle was rafted to the far shore.

The afternoon session of the second day of the forum consisted of a roundtable discussion on protection integration, which was chaired by division and corps commanders. Again, despite the wide variety of presenter experiences, there were two overarching themes: The protection warfighting function is an integral part of the Army's future fight, and leaders must be cognizant of protection capabilities at their echelons and components. The roundtable chairs held deliberate discussions and made strong points with regard to ensuring that allies and partners understand how the Army incorporates protection into operations.

During the afternoons of the first 2 days of the forum, the Protection and Maneuver Support Industry Exposition was held at Nutter Field House. Hosted by the Engineer, Military Police, and Chemical Corps Regimental Associations, the exposition consisted of vendor displays from a wide variety of industry partners; the displays filled the field house to capacity and occupied most of the sprawling parking lot.

The final half-day of the forum was focused on modernization and U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center of Excellence (MSCoE) and science and technology initiatives.

What are the expectations for the future? In coordination with the other centers of excellence, MSCoE will continue to drive change and enhance understanding of the protection warfighting function throughout the next year. MSCoE will also continue to conduct annual protection senior leader forums to inform and better prepare leaders across the operational forces, centers of excellence, and partner nations to increase shared understanding relative to the protection enterprise. Planning for next year's forum has already started, and MSCoE is excited to share what it comes up with next!



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