

# Joint Protection Efforts

*By Master Sergeant Russell W. Haney*

**P**rotection is vital to every military joint operations area (JOA) worldwide. The two primary functions of joint protection are force protection and force health protection. Some of the tasks within these functions include providing air, missile, and space defense and physical security; protecting information; and conducting cyberspace security.<sup>1</sup> These protective functions operate along with active and passive defense measures, technology measures, medical readiness, and emergency management and response. This article analyzes joint force protection and force health protection efforts and provides insight into how sergeants major can benefit from the information.

## **Force Protection**

The force protection function is critical in protecting resources, information, and facilities and reducing threats by means of preventative measures taken to deter the use of lethal force. All units must maintain a shared unity of effort toward force protection. In JOAs such as U.S. embassies, the Department of Defense geographic combatant commander is ultimately responsible for force protection.<sup>2</sup> In JOAs such as operational bases, the base commander establishes a command and control center known as the base defense operations center.<sup>3</sup> Geographic combatant commanders prioritize the operations of base defense operations centers in making decisions and establishing policies that maintain stability while hardening the JOA against each threat level by planning and inserting actions such as active and passive defense measures and technology implementation.

## **Active Defense Measures**

Active defense measures consist of strategically implemented proactive procedures that safeguard JOAs by reducing the likelihood of attacks on multidomain JOA operations. Examples of active defense measures include physical barriers, cyber monitoring, air defense, and document classification. The most common active physical barriers are concrete barriers that are primarily employed on the perimeter of JOAs and strategically placed at control points. For example, fully deployed active barriers at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, access control points “can withstand large

vehicles attempting to access the installation without authorization.”<sup>4</sup> The same active measures have been implemented at joint installations as well as U.S. embassies abroad to actively protect personnel from vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and other threats.

## **Passive Defense Measures**

Although passive defense measures are less easily recognized than active ones, they are also essential to the force protection mission. Passive defense measures “make friendly forces, systems, and facilities difficult to locate, strike, and destroy.”<sup>5</sup> Joint force commanders (JFCs) ensure that assigned personnel are trained and practicing passive defense measures such as operational security, information management/control, and camouflage and cover usage. Operational security and information management/control measures protect sensitive files and data that could compromise protection, mission movements, and other details and lead to adversarial courses of action that raise threat levels. The use of camouflage and cover is an effective method for troops to blend into an area; however, adversaries may also use such passive defense measures.

## **Technology Measures to Reduce Fratricide**

Technology advances on a daily basis, and all militaries continuously pursue ways to integrate technological progress into their capabilities. One of many purposes of JOA implementation of technology for force protection is the mitigation of fratricide.<sup>6</sup> When possible, JFCs require the use of technology to reduce fratricide by mandating the implementation of friend or foe locators, Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below trackers, and other resources that establish global positions. During the beginning phases of the Global War on Terrorism, U.S. Air Force Major Andrew A. Gebara emphasized the need to standardize technology to provide situational awareness across combined and joint spectrums.<sup>7</sup> In accordance with Major Gebara’s emphasis, the 554th Military Police Company, Stuttgart, Germany, did not conduct a single convoy during its 12-month deployment to Afghanistan (from 2009 to 2010) without turning on all Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below trackers.

The implementation of technological measures to assist in force protection has increasingly become more critical during the last 3 decades.

## Force Health Protection

Force health protection, which sustains joint force capabilities through personnel readiness efforts, is essential to the welfare of all Service members. According to Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, “Force health complements force protection efforts by promoting, improving, preserving, or restoring the behavioral or physical well-being of Service members.”<sup>8</sup> Two primary ways that JFCs and military health systems promote these efforts are by conducting medical readiness screenings and providing emergency management and response services.

### Medical Readiness Screenings

Medical readiness screenings affect the ability to get tasks completed and improve force health protection; they are vital to joint operations. As indicated in JP 3-0, “Force health protection functions include casualty prevention, preventive medicine, health surveillance, combat and operational stress control, preventive dentistry, vision readiness, hearing conservation, laboratory services, and veterinary services.”<sup>9</sup> Joint Service members must ensure that screening results fall within a standardized range of compliance in order to maintain medical readiness; JFCs monitor compliance with these functions to sustain overall force health protection. In JOAs where detainees are housed, monthly medical screenings are provided as part of force health protection.<sup>10</sup> Emergency management and response services refer Service members to appropriate providers when screenings reveal irregularities.

### Emergency Management and Response

Emergency management and response efforts support force health protection by acting as last lines of effort; they are necessary to preserve life and overall mission readiness. JOA emergency management and response efforts include containing outbreaks of contagious viruses and dealing with bacteria and other health threats.<sup>11</sup> Most joint locations have medical stations equipped with trained personnel. Without emergency management and response capabilities, JOAs would not be stable.

## Application of Force Protection and Force Health Protection

Sergeants major play vital roles in advising commanders and training units and, in the future, may prioritize force protection and force health protection training as prerequisites for deployments or assignments to JOAs. Sergeants major may implement a week-long training course that addresses various aspects of protection, including 3 days of classroom exercises on force protection, force health protection, and technology for mitigating fratricide; a day of live exercises based on the students’ newfound classroom knowledge; and a day for past or present JFCs to discuss what student-Soldiers should expect when arriving at their joint locations.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to analyze force protection and force health protection, along with protection functions, and suggest a course of action that sergeants major may use to bolster protections. Force protection includes various active and passive defense measures that strengthen JOAs as well as technology measures that help mitigate fratricide. Force health protection involves medical readiness and emergency management, and response procedures enforced by JFCs and delegated commanders.



### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>JP 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022.

<sup>2</sup>JP 3-10, *Joint Security Operations in Theater*, 25 July 2019.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Alexandra Shea, “Post Physical Security Grow Stronger with Addition of Active Barriers,” U.S. Army, <<https://home.army.mil/jackson/about/news/post-physical-security-grow-stronger-addition-active-barriers>>, accessed on 21 November 2024.

<sup>5</sup>JP 3-0, p. III-41.

<sup>6</sup>JP-3-0.

<sup>7</sup>Andrew A. Gebara, *Beyond the Wild Blue-on-Blue: Leveraging Counter-Fratricide Technologies for Operational Effects*, 2006, <<https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA508734.pdf>>, accessed on 5 December 2024.

<sup>8</sup>JP 3-0, p. III-41.

<sup>9</sup>JP 3-0, p. III-46.

<sup>10</sup>JP 3-0.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

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*Master Sergeant Haney is a student in Class 75 at the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the American Military University.*