Members of the 200th Military Police Command conduct a shift change briefing during Avenger Triad 25 (AvT25) at Grafenwohr, Germany, 27 Oct. 2025. AvT25 is a U.S. Army Europe-Africa Command computer assisted command post exercise designed to train U.S. and multinational units in large scale combat operations in a competitive simulated environment (***Photo by Staff Sergeant Arthur Ruepong***)

REDEFINING THE ROLE OF MILITARY POLICE

Commanders in Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO)

By Captain Nicholas Maule

As the U.S. Army transitions from the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) to large-scale combat operations (LSCO), a critical shift must occur in the roles and responsibilities of military police company commanders. Historically, military police commanders functioned primarily as tactical leaders during GWOT, focused on decentralized law enforcement, route security, detainee operations, and presence patrols to support counterinsurgency (COIN) missions and stability tasks. These tasks required minimal involvement in the broader operational planning framework and reinforced tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that proved essential for mission success in the COIN environment. However, the LSCO environment presents a fundamentally different battlefield—one defined by complex, hightempo, largescale operations—that requires military police commanders to evolve into integrated protection planners embedded in the military decisionmaking process (MDMP) at both the battalion and brigade levels, enabling mission sets that support maneuver forces in both the offensive and defensive fight.

Military police commanders are uniquely positioned to serve as subject matter experts in protection due to their doctrinal knowledge and operational experience. Yet, a pervasive challenge remains: military police commanders often do not perceive MDMP participation as their responsibility nor is it doctrinally stated as a prescribed role or responsibility. Instead, they await taskings from the staff, resulting in missed opportunities to shape protection plans. This mindset must change. The military police commander is not merely a tactical executor but the senior military police and protection integrator for the battalion and possibly the second senior in the entire brigade. Without their leadership in planning, the brigade's protection capabilities are poorly coordinated, underutilized, and ineffective.

Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations in FY24 and FY25 highlighted this gap. Military police units were frequently excluded from MDMP or brought in too late, leading to misaligned taskings and underemployment during decisive operations. Military police support was absent from breaching operations in the offense and inadequately involved in securing engineer operations or obstacle emplacement in the defense. Military police were relegated to traditional tasks such as traffic control points

Interagency training specialist, Rick Clements, provides feedback to members of the Barbados Police Service Tactical Response Unit during close quarters combat training at exercise TRADEWINDS 24 (TW24) in Christ Church, Barbados, May 12, 2024. TW24 is a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored, regionally oriented annual exercise and is part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Large Scale Global Exercise 24, a series of all-domain military exercises executed alongside Allies and partners around the globe. ***(Photo by Sgt. Joshua Taeckens)***

(TCPs) or convoy security—functions vital, but insufficient, in LSCO. LSCO requires military police platoons to support shaping operations and decisive engagements, which necessitates synchronization above the squad level and deliberate planning at the platoon and company levels.

Military police commanders must fully understand how brigades fight and how to employ military police capabilities to enable the brigade's protection framework. In the offense, military police support breach operations by securing breach lanes, processing enemy prisoners of war, and preventing enemy reinfiltration. In the defense, they provide critical site security, secure routes and ground lines of communication, and screen or delay enemy forces in support of obstacle emplacement and mobility operations. These missions are significantly more complex than COIN-era tasks and require planning integration early and continuously with maneuver units.

U.S. Army Soldiers from the 800th Military Police Company, 308th Military Police Company and the 127th Military Police Company set up at the Schoonover field in Fort Hunter Liggett, for Mojave Falcon, May 31, 2025. U.S. Army Soldiers from the 800th Military Police Company, 308th Military Police Company, 127th Military Police Battalion and 311th Expeditionary Sustainment Command collaborate in support of Mojave Falcon, an Army Reserve exercise that tests unit's readiness and support capabilities across a coast-to-coast battlefield in a Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) environment. This is a multi-faceted first-of-its-kind training exercise that integrates Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX), Global Medic, Quartermaster Liquid Logistics Exercise (QLLEX), Port Operations and Nationwide Move. (***Photo by Pfc. Marvin Garcia***)

Moreover, this shift necessitates a redistribution of responsibilities within the military police company. As commanders focus on protection planning at the battalion and brigade level, platoon leaders, executive officers (XOs), and operations staff must assume greater responsibility for execution, logistics, and internal coordination at the company level. Platoon leaders must synchronize efforts across not only their squads but their adjacent platoons, while XOs manage sustainment and reporting. This empowers the company to remain tactically effective in the current fight while the commander supports operational protection planning for the future fight.

It is imperative that military police education aligns with this operational requirement. While captains are taught MDMP at the career course, the current curriculum does not define planning as a command responsibility in LSCO. This leaves a gap in understanding, where military police commanders see planning as a staff function rather than their duty. In contrast, engineer officers at the company and platoon levels are expected to plan in support of maneuver units as technical experts. Military police officers must be held to a similar standard. Their ability to shape the protection plan is critical to brigade success.

To address this issue, doctrine must be updated to clearly define the military police commander's role in protection planning and integration into MDMP. FM 3-39, *Military Police Operations*, and related doctrinal publications should articulate military police responsibilities in breaching support, obstacle security, rear-area protection, and sustainment node defense.[1] Military police involvement in protection working groups and synchronization meetings must be codified, and doctrinal language must move beyond counterinsurgency-era terminology.

The institutional education pipeline must reinforce this doctrine. The military police Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) must introduce lieutenants to the protection warfighting function and its integration with maneuver, fires, intelligence, and sustainment. The military police Captains Career Course (CCC) must expand MDMP participation and planning exercises, emphasizing the role of the military police commander as a protection planner at the brigade level. Exercises should include realistic LSCO scenarios that require protection planning for breaching, defense, and rear operations.

Failure to make these changes risks continued misalignment of military police capabilities in LSCO. Military police forces will be late to the fight, misemployed, and ineffective. Breach operations will lack critical support, leading to stalled momentum and higher casualties. Engineers will emplace obstacles without security, compromising the brigade's defense, and rear

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. (***Photo by Master Sgt. Justin P. Morelli***)

areas will remain vulnerable to enemy exploitation. In contrast, when military police commanders are embedded in planning, the brigade benefits from faster threat response, a stronger common operating picture, better synchronized protection, and increased freedom of maneuver.

To support implementation, leader development programs should be revised to train junior leaders to assume more responsibility within military police combat support companies. Protection-focused training scenarios should be integrated into home station and combined arms training. Military police must regularly participate in brigade-level protection working groups and WarFighter Exercise events to build planning proficiency and credibility with maneuver counterparts.

In conclusion, the future of the military police corps in LSCO depends on reestablishing the military police commander's role as a protection planner and operational integrator. This shift requires updated doctrine, improved education, redistributed company leadership responsibilities, and protection-focused training. Only through these changes can military police fully enable the brigade's decisive operations and maintain their relevance as a critical enabler in the future fight.

Captain Maule is the Military Police Team Senior Observer Coach Trainer at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk. 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.

Endnote

[1] Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-39, Military Police Operations. 2025. Washington, DC: Department of the Army.

**The contents of this article do not represent the official views of, nor are they endorsed by, the U.S. Army, the DoW, or the U.S. government.*