

716th Military Police Battalion: The Future of Air Assault Military Police



By First Lieutenant Sam M. Carlson

As the U.S. Army navigates through the transformation from counterinsurgency operations to large-scale air assault operations, the 716th Military Police Battalion, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, strives to leverage change to create something new: the air assault military police battalion. Due to its Fort Campbell location, the 716th Military Police Battalion has a long history of supporting the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell motto, "Rendezvous with Destiny."

On 25 January 2025, the 716th Military Police Battalion participated in a patching ceremony signaling their realignment under the 101st Airborne Division. This movement was the first step in aligning military police protection efforts with support air assault operations. The battalion wants to redefine how detention operations, security and mobility support, and other protection operations integrate with and best enable the 101st Airborne Division large-scale air assault mission.

Military police units are often employed as protection warfighting function enablers. While air assault operations are inherently mobile, they rely on numerous key nodes to effectively support large-scale air assault operations. Critical sites such as landing zones, pickup zones, and forward arming and refueling points create disaggregated and dispersed protection priorities that military police can protect to preserve maneuver combat power. Military police alignment to disaggregated protection priorities allows maneuver units to disperse combat power on the objective instead of expending critical combat power at security pickup zones and forward arming and refueling points. As forward arming and refueling point locations become key terrain for enabling large-scale air assault, they also become high-payoff targets for enemy forces. The combination of weapons, the ability to self-transport, and the organic observation equipment that military police units bring to the fight make them highly adaptable to securing these sites. While the core of air assault operations leverages speed as security, less mobile and highly targetable large-scale air assault support structures can benefit from the ability of the air assault military police battalion to move at the speed of maneuver while enabling protection.

Although large-scale air assault missions are fast-paced and unique, military police can effectively integrate into these operations in a manner similar to the one used for the passage of lines or gap crossings. The same tactics, techniques, and procedures used in these operations to enable the ability of the division or brigade combat team to maneuver by using defiles, signage, and holding areas are also applicable in mobility support to large-scale air assault missions. A properly integrated military police company possesses the structure and training to organize and control the flow of personnel and equipment at landing and pickup zones. By implementing the movement control plan, the air assault military police unit enables the synchronization of moving units through the control of marshalling areas, holding areas, defiles, and force flow signage areas. In addition, the robust headquarters section of the military police company creates the bandwidth not only to execute these mobility tasks, but also to integrate with adjacent and higher units to manage force flow, freeing up combat power and sustaining operational tempo.

Along with delivering mobility and protection support for large-scale air assault operations, the air assault military police formation provides unique support to detention operations. In a fast-paced air assault operation, the drain of combat power associated with safeguarding surrendering and captured prisoners of war could severely reduce tempo. However, in this situation, air assault military police are critical to enabling a maneuver commander. The air assault military police battalion execution of a highly mobile, air-assault-capable detention operation such as a hasty detainee collection point (operated by dismounted military police, minimal equipment, and a remote autonomous integrated defense engagement rover that is sling-loaded by a Chinook helicopter) mitigates potential detainee problems. This small element frees up combat power and is capable of coordinating the movement of captured personnel to the rear area, further enabling friendly force freedom of maneuver. Therefore, the integration of air assault military police into large-scale air assault detention planning would clearly allow better control of detainees by subject matter experts and minimize operational risk while maximizing combat power on the objective.

The 716th Military Police Battalion is transforming to meet new requirements; however, more change is needed. The 716th has always championed the air assault culture, but greater emphasis on advanced air assault enabling skills must continue. An increased focus on pathfinder, rappel master, fast rope insertion/extraction systems/special patrol insertion extraction systems, and the Air Assault Sustainers Course would better enable future air assault military police battalions to fight and win.

The 716th Military Police Battalion must update its modified table of organization and equipment to be able to move at the speed of maneuver. The divestment of nonair-assault-capable equipment is necessary. The future air assault military police battalion will require equipment that matches the needs of the units the 716th supports. The integration of infantry squad vehicles or similar platforms into the air assault military police unit modified table of organization and equipment is a critical next step to ensure that maneuver counterparts are supported. Likewise, advanced key enabler training is required to enable light and highly mobile air assault units.

During the past year, the 716th Military Police Battalion provided advanced training on man-portable air-defense systems; counter-small unmanned aircraft systems; and mobile detention operations. These enabling skills, coupled with the structural reorganization to move military police companies toward four lighter and more mobile platoons, bring innovation and outsized value to the military police support of the 101st Airborne Division. Air assault military police units can now provide maneuver commanders enhanced flexibility to maximize combat power on the objective. While other units can complete these tasks, the unique structure and capability of air assault military police units create a low-cost, high-reward solution.

The utilization of military police forces as an integral part of large-scale air assault operations maximizes combat power on the objective while reducing operational risk. As the 716th Military Police Battalion transforms alongside the 101st Airborne Division, they train to create a one-of-a-kind unit, which ensures that the Military Police Corps is ready to Assist, Protect, Defend the Screaming Eagles' next "Rendezvous with Destiny."



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