



INTRODUCTION TO FORCE PROTECTION

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The 21st Century has, thus far, been characterized by a significant shift in Air Force responsibilities and an increased exposure of its resources to worldwide threats. This point is underscored by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and ongoing operations worldwide. Today, potential opponents are less predictable, leveraging the increased availability of both high and low technology weapons, including [weapons of mass destruction](#). The Air Force's ability to project US [airpower](#) requires protection from these threats at home, in transit, and abroad.

Due to the increased lethality of international and domestic threats, it is imperative the Air Force take strong measures to protect personnel and installations around the world, as part of a coordinated and integrated joint force. How the Air Force protects forces is critical to global engagement. An [air expeditionary task force](#) poised to respond to global taskings within hours should establish the capability to fully protect its forces.

Commanders at all levels should have an effective force protection program. Commanders are responsible for protecting their people and the warfighting resources necessary to perform any military operation. We are obligated by the moral necessity of protecting our [Airmen](#) to ensure force protection (FP) is a part of Air Force culture. Understanding and using FP doctrine will help ensure the successful protection of people and resources.

FP supports [combat support](#) and its supporting capability of "[Protect the Force](#)." Protecting Department of Defense personnel and resources is critical to the Service's ability to perform its mission.

FORCE PROTECTION DEFINED

Joint doctrine defines FP as "[p]reventive measures taken to mitigate hostile actions against Department of Defense personnel (to include family members), resources, facilities, and critical information" (Joint Publication 3-0, [Joint Operations](#)). FP is a fundamental principle of all military operations as a way to ensure the survivability of a commander's forces.

A comparison of the joint definition with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), definition is instructive. NATO doctrine explains that “[t]he operational environment may have no discernable ‘front-lines’ or ‘rear area’ and an adversary may be expected to target Allied vulnerabilities anywhere with a wide range of capabilities.”¹ Consequently, NATO defines FP as “[m]easures and means to minimize the vulnerability of personnel, facilities, materiel, operations, and activities from threats and hazards in order to preserve freedom of action and operational effectiveness thereby contributing to mission success.”²

¹ Allied Joint Publication 3.14, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Force Protection*.

² *Ibid.*