

Integrate NBC

—commander's planning guidance for the NBC staff

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How many times have you witnessed the omission of NBC when the commander gave his planning guidance for an upcoming operation? Without some initial guidance to focus the integration of NBC assets and NBC protection measures, the NBC staff is left in a void.

Integrating NBC defense measures will be much easier when your commander provides guidance on how he sees NBC assets supporting the operation and specifies acceptable or non-acceptable risks in regard to troop protection measures. Working with our commanders to integrate NBC defense operations will provide for success on the integrated battlefield.

A brigade commander's NBC planning guidance example allows us to identify and study the essential areas of concern for NBC operations. In this example, a heavy division chemical company (-) with headquarters section, the mechanized smoke platoon, one decontamination platoon, and one NBC reconnaissance squad are attached to the brigade. The brigade is the division's main effort for an offensive operation. The commander is speaking to the NBC staff (sidebar, right):

"I want the attached chemical company (-) to support the brigade's main effort. Coordinate NBC threat analysis in detail with the S2 staff to best conduct our offense to avoid contamination. If we can't avoid it, my intent is to fight contaminated. If maneuver units become contaminated any time after H-2 (H-hour being LD), they are to fight contaminated until such time that decon can be conducted. This does not include the reserves.

"Plan and coordinate decon sites to allow flexibility and prompt execution. Look at conducting operational decon at our initial objectives to return fighting units back into battle. Priority of decon during the fight is to the reserves, combat support, and combat service support elements. I want the staff to analyze the decon plan of the reserves in detail. I do not want the reserves conducting decon operations when it is time to commit them. Before and after the main battle, priority is to maneuver and field artillery units. Stress these priorities with the task force NBC staffs and ensure they comply with this directive.

"I want the smoke platoon to support the main attack. We'll retain command and control of the smoke platoon at brigade level; the main effort task force commander will have his hands full. Develop a comprehensive plan that integrates all our available assets and is event driven, not time driven.

"Use the NBC recon squad to support mobility of our maneuver units. Coordinate with the S2 to integrate NBC recon into the R&S plan and the inclusion of NBC into the decision support template. I want the staff to consider conventional recon assets for augmenting NBC recon and vice-versa. I want to place this squad in direct support of the main effort, so analyze and coordinate this with the main effort task force S3 and NBC staff.

"It is unacceptable to lose major combat power to contamination; that is, a specialty platoon and/or a maneuver company/team. I will, however, accept brigade elements fighting degraded by MOPP and in protective posture. I am concerned about our soldiers' ability to quickly identify chemical hazards and minimizing casualties due to chemical agents. I want chemical defense equipment reports scrubbed thoroughly and cross-leveling of essential items directed, if necessary.

"We have a great opportunity to use our NBC assets as the combat multipliers that they are and I want to take full advantage of their capabilities. What are your questions?"

The commander must issue guidance to the NBC staff on a variety of subjects to set the course for not only employing NBC recon, decon, and smoke elements, but also NBC protection measures. Guidance must encompass the whole of the operation, not just a single phase. If this does not occur, the NBC staff must seek specifics or clarification and be prepared to provide advice and/or recommendations. The guidance should allow for flexibility and sustainability and provide sufficient focus to optimize NBC support for the scheme of maneuver.

We will identify the key areas and look at the specifics of this guidance to effectively implement NBC operations in accordance with the commander's intent. By identifying the key areas, we give ourselves a mental checklist of the areas we expect the commander to address. This will allow us to ensure comprehensive guidance is provided in the future so we can solicit information should it be omitted. The key areas of NBC planning guidance are: the commander's intent for fighting contaminated; employment considerations for NBC assets; acceptable or non-acceptable risks; MOPP level guidance; and any other NBC concerns the commander may have.

NBC planning guidance, along with the guidance issued to the rest of the staff, provides a common starting point for planning and provides focus for development of courses of action by the staff.

Integration of NBC assets and timely execution of NBC protective measures will be made much easier with this focus. Let's review the NBC planning guidance and look at the specifics in each area of concern so we'll be better prepared to initiate the planning process in a field environment.

Fighting Contaminated

Of major significance not just to the NBC staff, but to the entire

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command, is the commander's intent for fighting contaminated. Our commander has specified that, if necessary, he intends to have his elements fight contaminated. They will not be immediately pulled out of the fight.

This is significant because it lets his subordinates know when to expect to conduct decon if required; therefore, they can devote their attention to fighting. This is also significant because it gives the staff the groundwork of what to plan for in regard to decon operations. The commander stated that should maneuver units become contaminated after H-2, they will conduct operational decon when the initial objectives have been secured, at the earliest.

This portion of guidance not only provides a time frame for decon operations, but also tells the NBC staff, chemical company commander, and the decon platoon leader the time period (H-2) they can plan to break down and prepare for repositioning, if they are not involved in executing a mission.

Considering NBC Assets

Our commander gave employment considerations for NBC reconnaissance, decontamination, and smoke operations along with NBC protection measures. Just because you do not have all these NBC assets chopped to your unit for a mission does not mean you should not consider these type operations. Conventional recon assets (scouts, for example) can be used to conduct NBC recon. Integration of organic decon assets must be planned

and coordinated, and the use of projected smoke, VEESS, smoke pots and grenades must be synchronized.

Protection measures should predominately be found in unit field standing operating procedures, but due to nature of the NBC threat, the commander may feel it necessary to direct specific active and/or passive measures for the staff to develop, plan, and coordinate.

NBC Reconnaissance. The commander directed the use of NBC recon to support mobility of maneuver units. If there is any doubt as to what the commander means by this or any other guidance/directions, seek clarification. Insure you understand the commander's meaning to plan and coordinate operations to meet his intent. He wants NBC recon forward in the battle as opposed to using them in the brigade's rear area.

You might develop options to employ the NBC recon and present these in a decision brief format to get final approval for their mission. When developing options for this asset, refer to FM 3-19, *NBC Reconnaissance*, to quickly review employment concepts or ideas and coordinate with the unit's leadership on technical aspects which might influence their employment.

The commander told us to consider using conventional recon assets for NBC purposes and vice-versa. There is no reason to leave NBC recon elements out of the recon-counter-recon battle, just as there is no reason to not use scouts to augment NBC recon. In this case, the commander provided specific command and control guidance for the recon squad. Had this not been given, you would

also propose a command or support relationship and be prepared to defend it when making the recommendation.

Decontamination. The commander told us to look at conducting operational decon at our initial objectives and gave general guidance for priorities. He did not, however, state under whose command and control the platoon is to operate or any concerns for conduct of thorough decon operations. Remember, planning guidance is to focus the staff on developing a course of action; for us, the focus is on integrating our combat support with the scheme of maneuver.

Decon integration is simplified with the application of our doctrinal principles (found in FM 3-5, *NBC Decontamination*). Combining these principles with the commander's guidance, planning and preparing for decon operations can be integrated effectively. Coordination with the task force NBC staffs, the supporting chemical unit and other supporting units (medical for patient/casualty decon, MP for route control, for example) must address specifics for effective decon operations to occur. Work through details during the planning and preparation phases to prevent confusion at the decon site and not keep soldiers in MOPP longer than necessary or away from the fight.

Smoke Operations. Like the NBC recon squad, the commander gave general employment instructions for the smoke platoon and specific guidance for the command and control. Again, if you are not sure of the commander's intent (that is, "support the main attack"), seek

clarification. Also, be prepared to develop options to accomplish his intent and coordinate other available smoke assets (that is, projected/indirect smoke, VEES, smoke pots, and smoke grenades). You must wear your hat as "Synch Smoke" to ensure effective integration and synchronization of smoke to support maneuver.

Acceptable/Non-acceptable Risks.

The commander informed us that it is acceptable to fight degraded by placing soldiers in MOPP, but unacceptable to lose major combat power to contamination. With this guidance, we can plan to integrate NBC recon to support maneuver units (to prevent the entering of contaminated areas) and integrate protection measures. Other areas the commander may address include time periods for conducting NBC operations in relation to other critical events, maneuvering friendly units in smoke, use of other assets (MPs for decon site traffic control, for example) in close proximity to contamination, and/or troop safety criteria.

MOPP Level

Our commander did not provide any guidance concerning MOPP levels specifically, but he did state that he was willing to have units fight degraded by MOPP. Therefore, we must inquire to seek particular concerns and be prepared to make a recommendation or accept a "field standing operating procedure MOPP status" in haste. As *Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm* taught us, MOPP suits are not only expensive, they can place a strain on

the logistics channels. Ensure the flexibility of the MOPP system is considered and that the recommended MOPP level falls within common sense. There is no need to place an entire command in MOPP if they are not all expected to be in a hazard area.

Other Concerns

This is the proverbial "catchall" portion that is open for any NBC areas that the commander may want to discuss or that you, the NBC staff, may desire to seek guidance on. Our commander stated his concern for identifying chemical hazards and desire to minimize casualties, and directed CDE reports be scrubbed. This may be interpreted as making sure equipment is readily supplied and refresher training conducted in certain areas. We could see any of several issues addressed here to include: command and control of decon sites; patient/casualty decon; additional active and/or passive NBC protection measures to emphasize and enforce; critical information requirements of an NBC nature, and so forth.

Your role as an NBC staff member is to plan NBC defense operations IAW the commander's intent. Planning and coordinating these operations will be much easier when you receive guidance that covers the key areas identified in this article. Applying the key areas of NBC planning guidance will facilitate effective integration of NBC operations and assets to avoid contamination and minimize the effects of hazards on the battlefield.