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NATO and the Expanding NBC/WMD Threat During Contingency Operations

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The factors of proliferation; international and domestic nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) terrorism; low-level toxic industrial hazards; and modern technology now leave us with the prospect of attack by briefcase-sized nuclear weapons, or even smaller chemical or biological weapons, and delivery by a person or vehicle (as opposed to missiles). Such an attack could come with little or no warning. The spontaneity of such attacks as those in Dhahran, Oklahoma, and the Tokyo and Paris undergrounds suggests that NATO and U.S. military units could be targets in peacetime as well as during contingency operations.

Time to think ahead

Now is the time to think ahead and anticipate future NBC operations, antiterrorism/force protection (AT/FP) operations, and the role of NBC specialists and NBC units. This is particularly true if we see the evolution of future wars moving away from (or adding to) the "Industrial Age War" to the "Post-Industrial Age War," with its emphasis on warfare without "rules."



Spanish soldiers of the NATO force on patrol

This article proposes a broadening of how we look at and approach the NBC function in these times of increasing multinational, coalition, and peace-oriented operations aimed at preventing or de-escalating future wars or conflicts. I believe global access to information, modern media reporting (which can be broadcast instantly around the world, merging strategic, operational, and tactical impacts), the Gulf War Syndrome controversy, and the threat of international domestic NBC terrorism has changed the nature of NBC operations to the point that force protection against hazards from the lowest levels of chemical, biological, and radiological exposure (to include industrial compounds) is more of a necessity than ever, because of the increasing awareness or sensitivity towards these weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Operation Joint Endeavor

During Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, chemical/NBC officers and NCOs in NATO's Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) and Peace Implementation Force had to find and identify NBC/industrial hazards, protect their soldiers from exposure, determine possible

dangers, and plot potential downwind hazards. As the ARRC chemical officer, I referred to the NBC threat as the NBC&E (environmental) threat. Additionally, division-level NBC officers and I coordinated numerous chemical weapons convention-type verification inspections of suspected chemical production/storage facilities and suspected chemical-filled ammunition in a tactical environment. In the future, tactical/operational-level NBC officers also could be expected to perform/coordinate highly technical NBC missions (Chemical Weapons Convention-type verification and destruction operations, low-level detection, artillery round analysis, industrial/environmental assessments, and inspection of chemical production/industrial facilities), which are usually of operational/strategic importance.

In Bosnia, I saw the extreme sensitivity that higher-level U.S. commanders exhibited toward NBC/industrial hazards during the operation that could be the template for future contingency and combat operations. I believe this new sensitivity in NBC operations could lead NATO adversaries or its members' adversaries to direct the threat of use, or actual use, of NBC weapons toward strategic and political-level command-and-control (C2) capabilities in lieu of tactical or operational C2 capabilities. This could involve the specific targeting of C2 capabilities to attack operational effectiveness, as well as the targeting of other sources to attack political willpower. This does not minimize the effects of NBC at the tactical/operational levels, but the real battlefield could be at the strategic/political level centers of gravity. This would be especially true if our adversaries learned anything from the allies' (particularly the United States and the United Kingdom) experiences in the Persian Gulf War and the U.S. sensitivities concerning force protection in Bosnia and decide to attack NATO and the U.S. weaknesses rather than trying to match their strengths. An effective adversary information campaign and media reporting can only make it worse in the future. The following, I believe, are some reasons to target NATO's strategic- and political-level C2 capabilities:



Deployment/operations map for HQs ARRC in Bosnia-Herzegovina from Dec 95 to Nov 96

Threat to Civilians

First, the proliferation of ballistic missiles as well as covert/terrorist attacks has returned the NBC threat back to its original target—the civilian population. A good example is the sarin attacks in Tokyo and Matsumoto (Japan) by Aum Shinriyoko. Additionally, North Korea's



The Sudaso Chemical Plant near Tuzla; inset shows a spill of liquid mercury inside the plant.



HQs ARRC soldiers react to a “simulated” SCUD attack during a corp-level BCTP Warfighter exercise.

development and possible export of extended-range ballistic missiles may allow long-range ballistic missiles and WMDs to reach European and/or American cities in the future. Our political leaders and commanders could either back down, explain the targeting of enemy NBC weapons (if they can), or allow exposure of our civilian population if they are faced with—

- The possibility of NBC use.
- The lack of NBC expertise in NATO and Joint headquarters and units and the current state of NBC use.
- The lack of NBC expertise in NATO units and the current state of NBC detection.
- The lack of protective equipment among the military and civilian population.

Low-Level Hazards

Second, low-level chemical and radiological hazards (such as burning oil wells and damaged chemical/nuclear facilities), normally considered insignificant, have become more important because of the strategic/political sensitivity associated with their discovery and possible exposure. Damaged nuclear power plants and industrial chemical and agricultural facilities may require temporary or permanent maintenance support. As a result, strategic and political decision makers may require an ad hoc NBC, medical, and environmental cell be deployed to provide coordination and control for toxic industrial incidents and situations, particularly in Partnership for Peace countries.

Third, because of the sensitivities of the Gulf War Syndrome and the recent Khobar Tower attack against U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, current and future ground commanders/commanders in chief from the United States (as well as their political leaders) may have to show that they have done all that they can do to mitigate the effects/

exposure to NBC/industrial hazards. In other words, what will be the U.S. public's/Congress's perception of a U.S. commander's responsibility or his culpability in future conflicts or terrorist incidents? If our political leaders and NATO commanders in chief are potentially vulnerable targets, we then would expect U.S. Joint headquarters and NATO higher-level headquarters to be staffed with sufficient NBC specialists (rank and number of NBC personnel). The current authorization at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is two lieutenant colonels and an additional nuclear policy duty officer at Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. It is even worse in the NATO multinational theater and corps-level headquarters. If U.S. and NATO theater and corps-level headquarters deploy for contingency and/or combat operations in the southern periphery of Europe, then resourcing needs to be above the current minimal levels and not dependent on contributing nations to provide augmentees to fill shortages after a crisis has developed.

Consider this, the first theater-level headquarters in Bosnia, Headquarters Implementation Force (AFSOUTH), was not authorized a peacetime NBC specialist; this function is only performed as an additional duty. The NATO corps headquarters (ARRC) that was in command of the land component of the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force for Operation Joint Endeavor and ran the ground operation in Bosnia is only assigned one peacetime chemical officer—a U.S. Army major. The successor headquarters to headquarters Implementation Force (IFOR), headquarters Stabilization Force (SFOR) was initially assigned one U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and an NCO; now the NBC function is done as an additional duty. Even with a lieutenant colonel, this rank represents little more than desk officer-level visibility in a theater-level headquarters; the same could be said of a major at a corps-level headquarters. My experiences in Bosnia have shown that the high-level intelligence agencies tend to integrate sensitive NBC information considerably higher than the major- and lieutenant colonel-level desk officer. If this were to happen in the future, it is possible that desk-level NBC officers could be left out of the loop in receiving and actioning time-sensitive and crucial NBC related information.

In summary, the nature of the NBC threat and NBC operations has expanded. The question now at hand is how do we address these changes, anticipate the future, and prepare to adapt to these changes? As a minimum, I believe there should be a critical examination of the rank structure, manning, and role of chemical/NBC officers in higher-level U.S. Joint and NATO headquarters to include U.S. Joint Command Headquarters; Headquarters SHAPE; and NATO theater-level, corps-level, and division-level headquarters.

ARRC NBC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY (DEC 95- NOV 96)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Situation/Action</i>
Nov 95 - Feb 96	ARRC NBC IPB disseminated to divisions; NBC reconnaissance directed to verify the NBC IPB upon deployment to Bosnia.
Dec 95 - Feb 96	ARRC requirement for all assigned and supporting multinational units to report their NBC equipment status to the G3 NBC.
Jan 96	Begin NBC recon of Sudaso Chemical Plant, vicinity Tuzla, in Multinational Division North (U.S. sector): follow-on inspection in July 96.
Jan 96	Begin NBC reconnaissance of base camps in Multinational Division North.
Jan 96	Radiological source found at Jaice in Multinational Division Southwest (UK sector).
Jan - Feb 96	Identification of suspected radiological site, vicinity Kostainic, in Northwest Bosnia (Multinational Division Southwest).
Feb 96	Ammonium hydroxide found at Hadzici in Multinational Division Southeast (French sector).
Feb 96	NBC meeting with all corps and divisional NBC officers at HQ ARRC in Sarajevo, Bosnia.
Apr 96	Discovery of six 120-mm mortar rounds with yellow markings at Brcko in Multinational Division North; destroyed on recommendation of U.S. and ARRC chemical officers after assessment that they were not chemical rounds.
Jul 96	Second NBC reconnaissance of Sudaso Chemical Plant, vicinity Tuzla, in Multinational Division North (U.S. Sector) directed by the U.S. division chain of command.
Jul - Sep 96	Thiodiglycol, precursor for mustard agent, found in Potoci Chemical Site, vicinity Mostar (Multinational Division Southeast).
Aug - Sep 96	U.S. government-directed chemical reconnaissance of seven former JNA CW sites (this verified ARRC chemical officer's initial NBC IPB in Nov-Feb).
Sep 96	ARRC Chemical Officer conducted CWC-type inspection of the Vitez Chemical Plant in Multinational Division Southwest.
Oct 96	Execution of Operation Nebula ("secret" verification operation) at Zenica (Multinational Division North) and Sarajevo (Multinational Division Southeast).
Oct - Nov 96	120-mm mortar rounds with liquid fill discovered in Multinational Division North; U.S. Tech Escort Team deployed from the United States at requirement of the United States division commander to have 100 percent verification that they are not chemical rounds before destruction can begin despite assessment by U.S. and ARRC chemical officers that they are not chemical rounds.