

NBC Warning and Reporting

—procedures unique for RCZ and COMMZ

By MAJ Richard J. Alter

In order to enable commanders at all levels to assess the impact of NBC attacks on plans and decisions, they must be provided with timely, accurate, and evaluated information. Collection, evaluation, and exchange of information on NBC attacks form an extremely important part of the NBC defense system.

The process of NBC warning and reporting throughout the rear combat zone (RCZ) and communications zone (COMMZ) is unique in terms of organization and process. Covering an area of over 153,000 square miles throughout five European countries, the 21st TAACOM NBC warning and reporting system (NBCWRS) is organized and executed on an area basis.

Due to this vast area of responsibility, the NBCWRS organizations are geographically oriented throughout the European RCZ/COMMZ. To ensure full area coverage, this NBCWRS is organized into two levels of responsibility from the observing unit through the TAACOM.

Dictated by STANAG 2103, ATP 45, *Reporting Nuclear Detonations, Biological and Chemical Attacks and Predicting and Warning of Associated Hazards and Hazard Areas*, this NBCWRS organization consists of the source level, the subcollection center (SCC), the collection center (CC), and the control center.

Directed by Headquarters, US Army Europe, the 21st and 310th TAACOM are the designated RCZ/COMMZ NBCWRS control centers. The primary responsibility of the control center is to collect, consolidate, evaluate, manage, and disseminate NBC data reported by all RCZ/COMMZ agencies, to include interface with adjacent US/NATO forces and host nation organizations.

For reporting purposes the TAACOM will report NBC data and information to Central Army Group Europe (CENTAG) and Northern Army Group Europe (NORTHAG) as the higher headquarters. This NBCWRS is managed and controlled by the chemical JB detachment located with each TAACOM.

The formation of the NBCWRS will be accomplished in two phases. Under phase I, NBC attacks and contamination warning and reporting will be accomplished with present (in place) resources and forward deployed organizations. Phase I is controlled entirely by the 21st TAACOM (16th Chemical JB Detachment). Phase II will occur when 310th TAACOM arrives in theater and assumes control of their areas of responsibility (COMMZ). During phase II, the 21st TAACOM will continue to operate as the control center for the RCZ.

Subordinate NBCWRS agencies under the control of the TAACOM consist of area support groups and US military communities and base clusters. The area support groups will form the collection centers. Each support group is designated a specific geographical area to manage those designated subcollection centers (military communities/base clusters), within the specific area of concern. All collection and subcollection centers will exchange NBC information with NBC cells of corresponding host nation units, air bases, naval ports, and civilian authorities, also located within each collection center/subcollection center areas of responsibility.

Presently there are 7 collection centers and 14 subcollection centers operating within the RCZ/COMMZ NBCWRS. Upon wartime deployment this will increase to approximately 8 collection centers and 31 subcollection centers. Subordinate to the subcollection centers is where the source level is found. The NBCWRS source level consists of all US units operating within or in transit through the RCZ/COMMZ. The present NBCWRS organization is illustrated in figure 1 (page 35).

The basic assumption of this system is that early warning of adjacent units is paramount. Units are not typically collocated with their parent unit

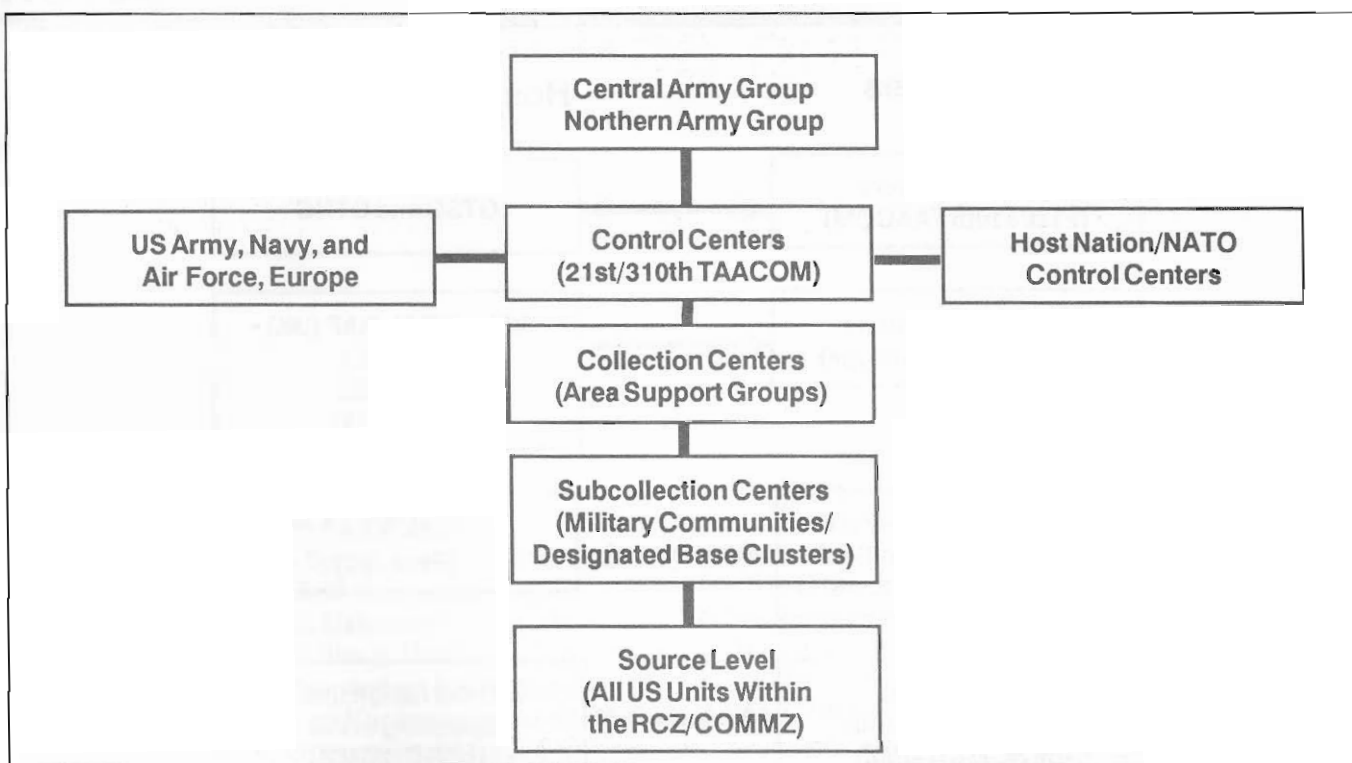


Figure 1. RCZ/COMMZ NBCWRS organization.

within the RCZ/COMMZ. Therefore, higher headquarters are notified subsequently in the event of NBC attacks. The general purpose of this system is to provide commanders at all levels with the essential facts about enemy or unidentified NBC attacks and warnings of actual or predicted hazards.

Specific NBCWRS tasks and functions required to support this system at the source, subcollection center, collection center, and control center level are generally the same as those accomplished by the unit level, battalion level, brigade level, and NBC center level respectively. The key difference, however, is the requirement to directly and thoroughly interface with the host nation counterparts.

Like the US TAACOM NBCWRS organization, the host nation counterpart is also organized to ensure full area coverage. These RCZ host nation NBCWRS counterparts consist primarily of German Territorial Army (GTA) organizations. The host nation NBCWRS control centers that correspond with the US control centers

include the German Territorial Southern Command (GTSC) and the German Territorial Northern Command (GTNC). The host nation collection centers are located with each District Command (Wehrreichskommando, WBK), and their subcollection centers are located at the Military Region (Verteidigungsbezirkkommando, VBK) or Sub-Region Commands (Verteidigungskreiskommando, VKK). At each described level, both US and host nation organizations are interfaced based on their common geographical area of responsibility.

Within the COMMZ, the host nation counterparts consist of the Belgium and Netherlands Military District Commands and National Territorial Command respectively. Within Luxemburg and the United Kingdom, the interface is made with the NBC cell located within the National Warning Center and Royal Air Force Headquarters respectively. Figure 2 depicts the designated level of interface between the TAACOM

NBCWRS organizations and the RCZ/COMMZ host nation organizations. Through this interface of NBC data and information sharing, full RCZ/COMMZ area coverage can be maintained to ensure NBC attack warnings are processed in a timely manner. For additional information on the GTA, see the January 1990 *CML*, *Army Chemical Review* article by LTC G. L. Dotzauer titled "German Territorial Army Provides Support to US Forces in Europe."

Presently the NBCWRS communication process includes the use of existing assets (telephone, FAX, and TELEX). Progress has been made to upgrade this NBCWRS communication process. It's expected the NBCWRS will be fully incorporated into the US Army Europe Tactical Command and Control System (UTACCS) within the next 12 months.

This automated improvement will allow the NBCWRS to be executed through the use of computer hardware and software, broadening the overall RCZ/COMMZ area coverage

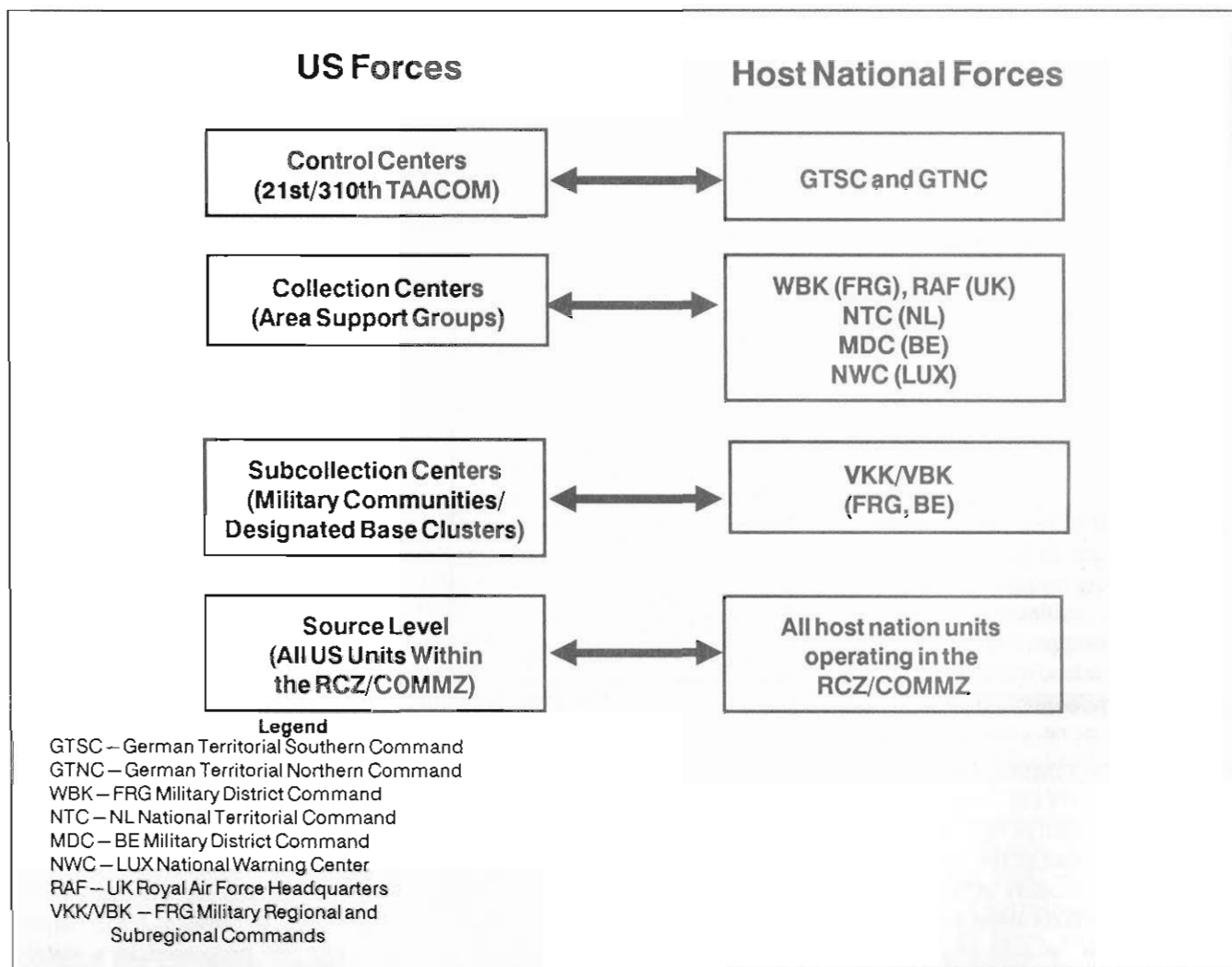


Figure 2. RCZ/COMMZ NBCWRS host nation interface.

capability. By allowing NBC data to be manipulated by computer, less human error can be expected, and the communication of necessary NBC attack warning information to all US organizations can be accomplished within minutes. In addition to automating the NBCWRS through the RCZ/COMMZ, the TAACOM, Corps, and major subordinate and separate commands throughout Europe are evaluating a concept that will allow sharing of NBC attack data between the RCZ/COMMZ and the forward combat zone. This concept

addresses the use of a standard NBC attack situation report (NBC SITREP) to be exchanged between each participant on a 12-hour period.

Even though the NBC threat is declining in Europe, the need to maintain effective NBC warning and reporting capabilities remains a necessity. Through the continued efforts of expanding the understanding and process of the RCZ/COMMZ NBCWRS and maintaining effective interface and cooperation with all US forces and host national counterparts, this requirement can be met.

At the time this article was written, MAJ Richard J. Alter was serving as the commander of the 16th Chemical JB Detachment, 21st Theater Area Army Command, West Germany. His previous assignments include senior chemical and biological instructor at the US Academy of Health Sciences; commander of the 172d Chemical Company (SG); chemical officer at brigade, group, and division level; rifle company executive officer; and rifle and scout platoon leader. Commissioned as an Infantry officer in 1978, MAJ Alter holds a BS degree in biology and an MA degree in management. He is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Chemical Officer Advance Course, CAS³, Command and General Staff College, airborne, and air assault school.