

Measuring NBC Readiness

—the challenge is NBC readiness in the 90s

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What is NBC readiness? How do you know if you are ready, and, if you are, what your level of readiness is? I propose that the US Army take a new direction in addressing the key question of effectiveness. This direction requires that each proponent (read this as service school) analyze its collective tasks in view of an NBC environment.

Place each combat task performed in one of three categories:

- cannot be done and other tasks replace it;
- can be done simply by wearing MOPP gear;
- must be done but requires different procedures or equipment.

After these three categories are developed, you will have a list of those tasks a unit must do under NBC conditions. A unit's ability to accomplish those tasks would, for the first time, provide an objective measure of NBC readiness. For years the US Army has tried to equate NBC readiness to some combination of equipment availability, individual task proficiency, NBC team training, and the ability of a unit to do the NBC tasks in an ARTEP. Very simply put, all of these are prerequisites to NBC readiness.

The equipment must be available and operational, individual soldiers (from private to the Chief of Staff) must be able to survive; unit NBC teams must be able to monitor, decontaminate, etcetera; and the unit leadership must do those NBC things the ARTEP requires.

However, the key question still remains: Can the unit do its mission in an NBC environment? You will know when your unit approaches some degree of NBC readiness when NBC is no longer a task on the training schedule, but a condition for the performance of mission tasks.

For the past year I have worked for the Directorate of Evaluation and Standardization (DOES) at the Chemical School. During that time we completed studies on the standardization of NBC training in the service schools, the ability of Military Qualification Standards (MQS) I (precommissioning training) to produce students who are ready for Officer Basic Course (OBC) instruction, and the effectiveness of Career Management Field 54 (Chemical) in conjunction with TRADOC Analysis Center—White Sands, New Mexico.

In very general terms, we say that training is not standardized, that incoming OBC students are not trained to standard, and that preparing nonchemical personnel to use their chemical resources is a most significant training problem.

We gathered data from thousands of chemical and nonchemical soldiers and compared what we expected them to be doing with what they reported doing. We looked at how nonchemical supervisors were using their chemical assets and found that both groups were consistent in what they said was going on. The problem was that what they were doing was consistently *wrong*.

The emphasis for both groups was

on maintaining equipment and publications. The emphasis should have been on preparing leaders to lead in an NBC environment. This reflects back to the fact that units continue to work on the prerequisites of NBC readiness without ever going into the heart of the matter. An excellent example—a number of personnel stated their unit NBC standing operating procedures instructions were sufficiently detailed to enable them to survive an attack. We standardize survival procedures in STP 21-1, The Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks. A unit NBC SOP should not repeat those procedures. It should address the "who" for accomplishing those NBC tasks contained in the ARTEP or Mission Training Plan (MTP) (if fielded); it should identify what procedures must be changed if an NBC environment exists.

I argue that identifying what procedures must be changed in an NBC environment is a key issue and must become a proponent responsibility. For now, units can add program mechanical aids or identify increased resources as requirements to perform specified missions under NBC conditions, or, in some cases, develop alternative procedures. These should be included in the unit SOP.

As a prerequisite to establishing NBC readiness standards, I also propose standardizing an NBC training strategy for the US Army. This strategy goes back to the premise that, when a unit has reached a high state of NBC readiness, NBC is no longer a task on the training schedule but a condition for the performance of all other tasks. To reach this point, we must walk out soldiers through three "gates."

The first gate consists of the survival tasks in STP 21-1. These tasks are trained to standards during Initial Entry Training and refreshed by hip-pocket or opportunity training thereafter. Specifically, this training includes:

- Maintain, wear, remove, and store MOPP gear.
- Decontaminate skin and personal equipment.
- React to nuclear hazard.
- React to chemical/biological hazard.
- Use M9 paper.
- Exchange MOPP gear.
- Employ self aid/first aid.
- Operate/maintain M11 or M13 decon apparatus (those MOS positions requiring personnel to drive/operate equipment or work as a crew).

For our future officers, we must emphasize attitudes and mind sets. We must cover such things as the historical perspective of chemicals. Why were they used in World War I, not used in World War II, and are now emerging in third world conflicts? We must convince people that they can survive and do their job in a contaminated environment. I propose an MQS I "in-school" curriculum that includes:

- History of NBC weapons.
- Psychological effects of NBC.
- Ethics and morality of NBC weapons.
- NBC on the air-land battlefield.
- Contamination avoidance.
- Protection.
- Decontamination.
- Smoke operations.
- Flame operations.

The "decision makers" pass through the second gate. Here, in the Primary Leadership Development Course and OBC, emphasis is placed on those tasks necessary to lead/operate on the air-land battlefield. For all leaders, this training includes:

- Use, maintain, interpret M256 Kit, IM 93, and IM 174.
- Lead MOPP gear exchange.
- Conduct unmasking procedures.
- Supervise crossing contaminated areas.
- Conduct hasty decon.
- Direct preparation for an NBC attack.
- Implement MOPP (MOPP Analysis).

- Supervise fitting a mask.
- Plan and supervise use of automatic chemical agent alarm.
- Collect/report total dose.
- Supervise radiation monitoring.

Included within this second gate are those things company-sized unit leaders must train their NBC teams to do. These actions must support and facilitate mission operations. All leaders must be familiar with the capabilities and limitations of these teams and supporting chemical units. Specifically, unit teams must be trained to:

- Use, maintain, interpret AN/PDR-27 and M8/M8A1 alarm.
- Prepare NBC 1 and NBC 4 reports and, at battalion and above, NBC 6 reports.
- Interpret NBC 2, 3, and 5 reports, and, at battalion and above, NUCWARN/CHEMWARN.
- Prepare simplified fallout prediction, downwind hazard prediction.
- Conduct radiological or chemical survey.
- Conduct biological sampling.
- Conduct deliberate decontamination.
- Predict the effects of contamination on future operations.

Finally, at the third gate we start to achieve real NBC readiness. In the service schools, this means NBC is trained not as a task but as a *condition* which may modify or change the performance of unit specific tasks. At this gate NBC is viewed somewhat like cold weather operations. We just may put on additional equipment and do the job or we may need to build a new piece of equipment entirely. For the unit this means that we must decide what our mission-critical tasks are and divide them into the three categories mentioned at the beginning of this article; then we can talk about NBC readiness.

For units, we talk about NBC readiness in terms of what we can do given NBC conditions. If the task simply requires going to MOPP4 and

performing the task, then we achieve NBC readiness by including enough iterations in MOPP4 to achieve the desired standard. If the task simply is not done in a contaminated area, then identify what will be done instead and practice it. If the task must be done and MOPP4 creates an impossible situation, then training may not be the answer.

We may need to develop new equipment, force structure, or doctrine before NBC readiness becomes possible. Only when units are actively trying to achieve NBC readiness—and there is field feedback—will these things be identified. Without some well-sharpened measures of effectiveness, how can we argue for more resources to achieve some mythical level of NBC readiness?

Your challenge? Give me better ways to achieve readiness. My challenge? To listen with an open mind. Our challenge? To make NBC readiness a reality in the 90s! ☛☛

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