

Operations Other Than War

—smoke integration

By CPT Andrew Herbst

I received 3 years experience as a light infantry battalion chemical officer and dual purpose platoon leader while stationed in Berlin. The 12 months spent as platoon leader were the best of my 11 years service in a variety of positions in both active and reserve units. I found the smoke aspect of the dual purpose job to be the most rewarding.

The chemical platoon's 23 dragon soldiers maintained six M157s and two tank and pump units for sustained smoke operations from July 1992 to July 1993. We conducted smoke operations at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Engineer Qualification Area and Maneuver Rights Area in Wildflecken, and Doughboy Cities I and II in local MOUT training areas. We supported two light infantry battalions, 5-502 IN and 6-502 IN, as well as separates that included E-320 Field Artillery and 42d Engineers. In my tenure as platoon leader, the M157 operators accumulated approximately 40 hours of smoke operation; their equipment consumed approximately 5,700 gallons of fog oil.

I'll address the employment of smoke in operations other than war (OOTW) as they pertain to FM 100-5, *Operations*. While in Silopi, Turkey, in July 1992, as part of *Operation Provide Comfort II*, I spoke often with British officers and soldiers who conducted OOTW in Northern Ireland. This was my official exposure



Photo courtesy Soldiers magazine.



Dragon soldiers are writing the doctrine on smoke operations in operations other than war.

to OOTW. We consistently returned to four particular OOTW tasks that included: convoy operations, checkpoints, food distribution points, and airfield operations. These four tasks would later become the platoon's battle drills for smoke integration in OOTW.

The chemical platoon began smoke integration training in OOTW when I came on board in July 1992. Current world events drove the OOTW sensitivity to new heights. My platoon was the only one of its kind in the brigade. We were required to respond to new operational requirements. Our success depended on the aggressiveness of our leaders. Mission training plans for smoke operations in OOTW did not exist. So, the platoon's soldiers were responsible for setting the standard in the integration of smoke in OOTW.

Initially, we were consumed by the wargaming process. We developed a variety of scenarios based on current Bosnian-Serb intelligence. We trained

diligently, realizing that our upcoming exercises would become the only experiences to draw upon once deployed. Tasks were prioritized according to their prevalence in OOTW.

Smoke in support of convoy operations was trained first. Smoke use at checkpoints; food distribution points and airfields followed. The brigade intelligence section provided country studies, profiles on benevolent groups, and the current disposition of select NATO forces. The Combat Maneuver Training Center provided an OOTW after-action review that evaluated Dutch Commando's operations in Hohenfels. CNN provided coverage of NATO forces conducting OOTW in Bosnia. We assimilated these mediums and were convinced that smoke could become a formidable combat multiplier in OOTW. It could protect the force and preserve the lives of soldiers and their equipment.

In OOTW, conservation of life

begins at the embarkation point, where loaded convoys move precious cargo to areas of need. Convoys are vulnerable throughout their operation. Force protection is their rule. In accordance with FM 3-50, *Smoke Operations*, carefully placed smoke increases a convoy's survivability by:

- screening its movement,
- isolating hostile forces, and
- providing a reactionary force capable of assisting in the breaking of contact with belligerent groups.

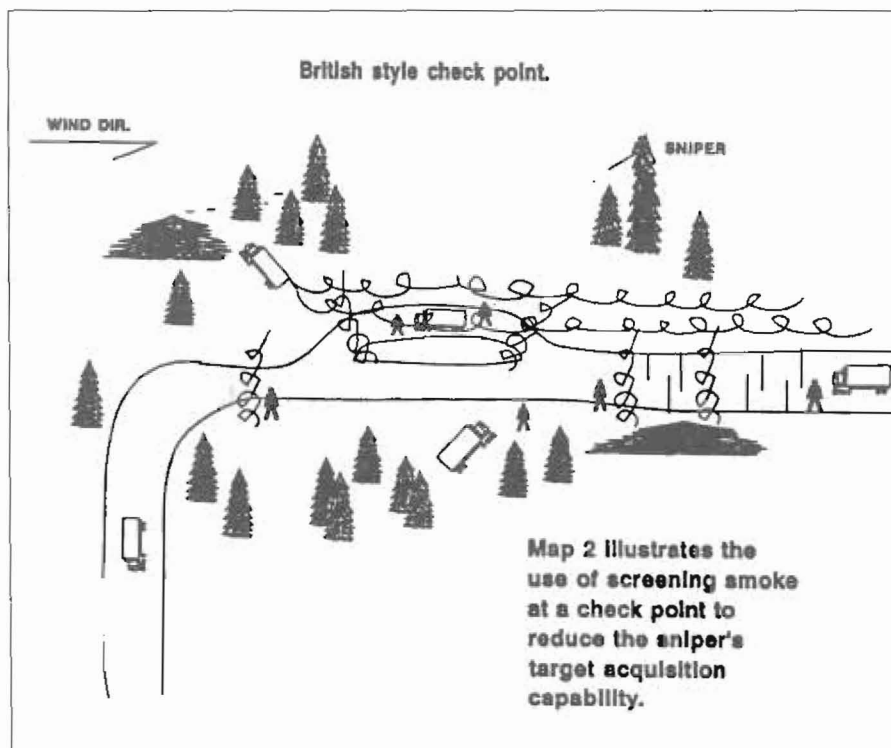
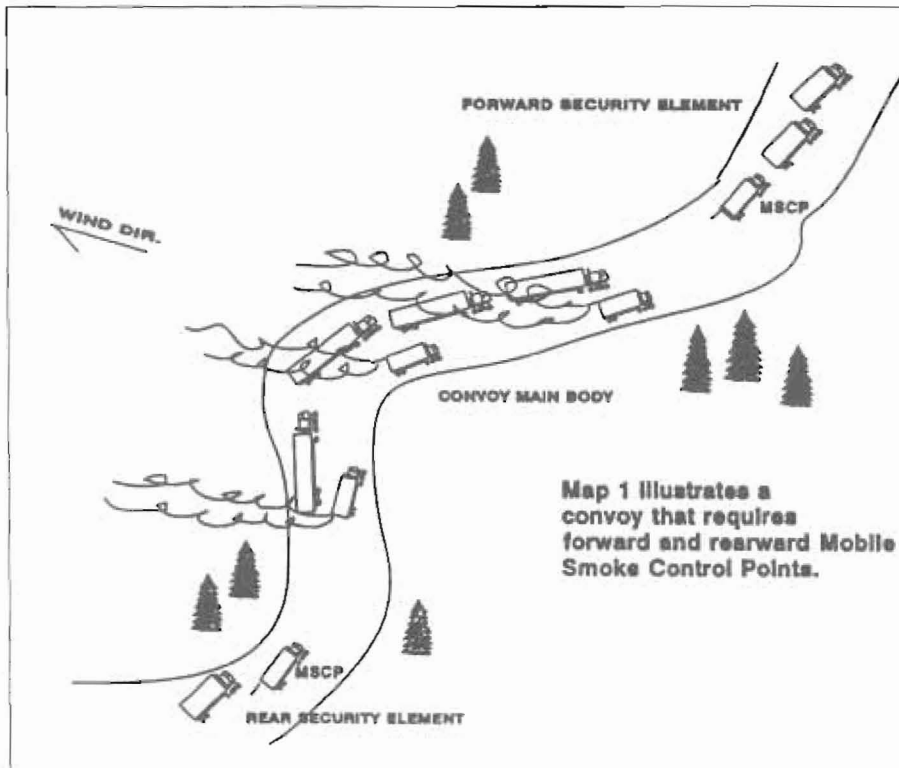
These tasks are accomplished by careful planning, rehearsing, and precision execution. Several factors impact on smoke requirements :

- the size of the convoy,
- the mission's length,
- weather and road conditions, and
- threat level.

The size of the convoy and weather and road conditions dictate how the M157s will be employed during the operation. The mission's length and threat level impact on logistical

requirements such as fuel, weapons, and ammunition. Experience has proven that the platoon's mobile smoke control point is best positioned with the forward security element.

Using an M157 for this purpose adds flexibility to the operation. A rear mobile smoke control point is required when the convoy extends past the forward mobile smoke control



point's field of view for extended periods. Initially, M157s are best positioned throughout the convoy and abreast of its units (Map 1). A note of caution: obscuring smoke may cause hazardous driving conditions, reduce convoy speed and/or could result in breaks in contact along the convoy route. Risks associated with movement through obscurants are reduced when training is conducted in similar conditions, the intensity of vehicular visual markers is increased, and vehicle commanders are required to actively participate during movement. The risk of sustaining sniper casualties at checkpoints is great. This risk is reduced when screening smoke is integrated into the security plan. Within seconds, a pre-positioned M157 can provide a quick smoke screen over the checkpoint. In addition, the M157 operators can tie into the security plan and provide additional firepower and communications systems. The M157(s) normally is OPCON to the checkpoint officer in charge and best placed in hiding, upwind of the checkpoint (Map 2).

Smoke pots are positioned upwind of the M157(s) and electrically ignited when fires are taken from its upwind side. Once the sniper's location is pinpointed, the static M157 is capable of transitioning into the mobile mode and shifts the screen to afford greater coverage.

Hostile threat by snipers and other organized forces is an obvious one, and the threat by the masses: refugees and civilians, although less obvious, is just as likely to occur at food distribution points. In this operation, smoke increases survivability in two distinct ways. First, as with checkpoints, smoke delivered between friendly and hostile forces degrades their ability to harm soldiers and civilians. Once fired upon, the M157(s) begins smoke that blankets the area and prevents further unobscured observation of friendly forces and civilians. Secondly, smoke

is used to quell rioting associated with distribution of food and supplies to refugees. In this case, smoke isolates the crowd and causes confusion. The mob responds by scattering and seeking smoke-free areas.

Furthermore, a method of crowd dispersion which warrants the approval of higher authority and when lesser methods of force are attempted, is the use of riot control agents in conjunction with the M1057 system. CS powder scattered above the generator's baffles is dispersed with fog oil particles. Smoke generator operators and friendly forces operating in the vicinity must take care to protect themselves against the RCA's incapacitating effects.

During airfield operations, obscuring smoke protects workers, soldiers, and their equipment by hindering enemy surveillance and by degrading his ability to engage targets of opportunity. It is a precision smoke operation, since aircraft have

minimum visibility requirements. Mobile smoke screens airfield activities and protects the secrecy of select cargo. Command and control of M157s at the airfield is best accomplished from the tower, where the entire airfield can be observed. This mission is normally coordinated with the airlift control element and unit's arrival/departure airfield control group.

Present dragon soldiers are writing the doctrine on smoke operations in operations other than war. They are gathering information from a variety of sources assimilating the data and developing MTPs that support the integration of smoke in OOTW. They are on the initiative and breaking new found in the peacekeeping and peacemaking operations associated with conflicts on Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Somalia, and Haiti.

Convoy operations, checkpoints, food distribution points, and airfield operations are fundamental OOTW

tasks that require precision smoke to increase the survivability of personnel and materiel. This endstate, preservation of life and materiel, is most often accomplished by the platoon leader who dismounts, marches to the sound of the guns, and leads his platoon from the front.

At the time this article was written, CPT Andrew M. Herbst was assigned as the 82d Airborne Division Artillery Chemical Officer. CPT Herbst has a BA in Biological Science from Florida Atlantic University. His source of commission is Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He is a graduate of chemical officer basic and advanced courses. Previous assignments include battalion chemical officer, 5-502 and 6-502 Infantry Battalions, and dual-purpose platoon leader, Berlin Brigade.