

Training to Win

—should we make it fun?

by MAJ Edward Bardill
Division Chemical Officer, 3ID

For too many years, we (the Chemical Corps) have tried to motivate our commanders at all levels to conduct NBC training through *fear* and unrealistic *special events*. Today, commanders understand why NBC training is necessary, but they have been conditioned by previous training attempts, most of which are still being employed by chemical personnel. The results are that a lot of units expend time and resources conducting so-called NBC training that does little to prepare soldiers for the realities of the NBC environment.

Previous Training Techniques

Most, if not all, training programs lead off with a Threat briefing to teach soldiers why we must train for the NBC environment. However, we sometimes overstate the case and emphasize an overwhelming threat without addressing the vulnerabilities of the Threat forces. What we have done is start our program on a negative note and put our soldiers on the road to becoming psychological casualties of war.

The "mask chamber" (or "gas chamber" as it is affectionately known) is another popular training technique used by all units. What

some of us fail to realize is that the manner in which it is used can enhance or kill an NBC program. Too often the concentration of CS is excessive. Soldiers not only experience CS symptoms but also lose their breakfast. We are trying to motivate by *fear* to encourage training, but what we have really accomplished is step two in developing future psychological casualties, casualties.

The exercise known as the "mask confidence exercise" is designed to demonstrate to soldiers that their masks will protect them from an invisible, aerosolized agent and to demonstrate effects of CS. But what we have been really accomplishing is demonstrating to our soldiers that they can't win against CS and they have no hope against nerve agents.

The next technique is known as the "special event." Everyone has seen it in post newspapers, AFN TV, and training publications—PT in MOPP4, MOPP4 volleyball, and so forth. Those using special events for training feel we are acclimatizing our soldiers to MOPP4 and *making it fun*. What you find most often is that this is the only type of NBC training conducted.

NBC is not integrated into the other mission tasks of the unit because of the emphasis on gunnery and maneuver. To counteract the negative aspects of NBC such as the mask chamber, we have to now make it fun!

We shouldn't strive to make fun things completely unrelated to mission tasks. We should strive for personal satisfaction of the soldier by training him/her to a standard, testing against that standard through exercises and the feeling of accomplishment that comes from being successful. Confidence in themselves and their equipment is the goal, not fun activities that have no correlation to the battlefield.

What Makes Sense

Motivating commanders and units involves three key aspects. First, we must present (the first time for many commanders) a positive approach to NBC training, the basis of which is training management. This approach should begin with a balanced Threat brief that causes the soldiers to respect the threat but not have unreasoning fear. This positive approach should emphasize to the unit that through the use of individual, concurrent, and integrated realistic training soldiers

will have more confidence in themselves, their leaders, and their equipment. Thus, the unit will be less susceptible to the physical and psychological effects of NBC warfare.

The second aspect involves training as we will fight—no special events like MOPP4 volleyball. NBC warfare is not a separate form of war, but is a battlefield condition like rain, snow, heat, and night. Units must be trained to accomplish their wartime missions under all battlefield conditions, one of which is NBC. Any time we separate NBC from other training events, we condition our soldiers to always regard NBC operations as a separate form of warfare. We will ensure their failure on the battlefield.

Consideration of NBC must be natural and automatic just as is any other battle drill. When I conducted seminars at Fort Leavenworth for the brigade and battalion command

designees in the pre-command course, I told them to ask themselves one question: "Will I have to do this mission in war?" If the answer is yes, you must train under all conditions, one of which is NBC. If the answer is no, don't waste your time and resources.

The third aspect involves each of us being thoroughly familiar with how the Army fights. We must understand our unit's mission, capabilities, equipment, and how it fits into combined arms operations. The Army and its commanders do not need and cannot afford chemical technicians who know and talk only NBC. The Army needs professionals who understand how their units will operate in war and who possess a chemical specialty. This is key to selling your training programs—talk their language, understand their limitations, and structure a training program that the commander will support.

We have wasted many hours, resources, and opportunities to learn the hard way that you *never* motivate by fear. Commanders and units will be more receptive if presented with common sense programs that are positive, realistic, and do not dwell on the negative consequences of NBC training.

MAJ Edward A. Bardill is the division chemical officer of the 3d Infantry Division in Wurzburg, Germany. He was commissioned a second lieutenant upon graduation from Tennessee Tech University in 1969. His past assignments include company commander, DIVARTY chemical officer, assistant division chemical officer, and author/instructor at Command and General Staff College. He is a graduate of the Chemical Officer Basic Course, Chemical Officer Advance Course, and the US Army Command and General Staff College.

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