

A Recipe for NBC Staff Improvement

—ingredients for increased effectiveness

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The NBC NCO went off shift at the specified time with other staff members who were on the night shift. The chemical officer began his preparation for the day's combat operations. The unit was to LD in an hour-and-a-half for an offensive mission in support of a divisional main effort on its flank.

The chemical officer monitored the status of the subordinate unit's final preparations over the radio and closely followed the S2's update of the enemy. The chemical officer tried to display an appearance and attitude of self assurance, but wondered if everything that could have been accomplished to prepare the unit for NBC defense operations had, in fact, been completed.

I will address six key points requiring action of the NBC staff to support tactical operations based on the experience of other NBC staffs who have fought simulated battles at the National Training Center. It is essential for the NBC staff to prepare itself and its unit for NBC operations since this is the essence of their responsibility. The importance of presenting this information is so chemical officers and NBC NCOs may improve their effectiveness and efficiency as an NBC staff.

Know, Understand, and Apply Doctrine

The NBC staff must first be able to apply NBC doctrine to support the unit they are a part of and responsible to. This includes not only being an expert in NBC doctrine, but having a thorough understanding of the supported unit's doctrine. This is the basis of being tactically proficient.

As a staff officer/NCO in a maneuver unit, be sure you know the capabilities of chemical defense equipment and that of the maneuver unit. Know how this equipment is best employed in different type missions (offensively and defensively). Recommend employment procedures/missions for NBC assets that will take advantage of equipment capabilities. Understand the enemy's doctrine.

Threat NBC employment doctrine and capabilities, offensive and defensive maneuver doctrine, equipment capabilities, and what the enemy has previously done are all essential items of knowing and understanding the enemy. You must understand the threat NBC doctrine to counter enemy NBC actions on the battlefield.

Integrate NBC into IPB and the Staff Planning Process

The NBC staff must not be content to simply rewrite or reissue

higher NBC annexes for the next mission. NBC staff work is continuous in that you need to reassess the threat, update vulnerability and MOPP analyses, and monitor the current situation for NBC events that will impact on NBC defense and smoke operations. Then you must plan and coordinate NBC defense and smoke operations in detail.

Although NBC is not covered in detail in FM 34-130, *Intelligent Preparation of the Battlefield* [IPB], the NBC staff can follow the guidelines established in this manual for integrating NBC into the IPB process and use these procedures in validating the NBC threat.

Additionally, refer to and apply chapters 2 and 3 of FM 3-4, *NBC Protection* (dated May 1992) to effectively integrate NBC into the IPB process. End products of integrating NBC into the IPB process include MOPP level and time, automatic masking criteria, terrain and weather effects on enemy chemical employment and smoke operations, enemy doctrine for chemical and smoke employment, NBC-named areas of interest and target areas of interest in the R&S plan, NBC recon missions in the R&S plan, templated positioning of employment systems (regimental and divisional artillery

groups), and NBC events in the decision support template.

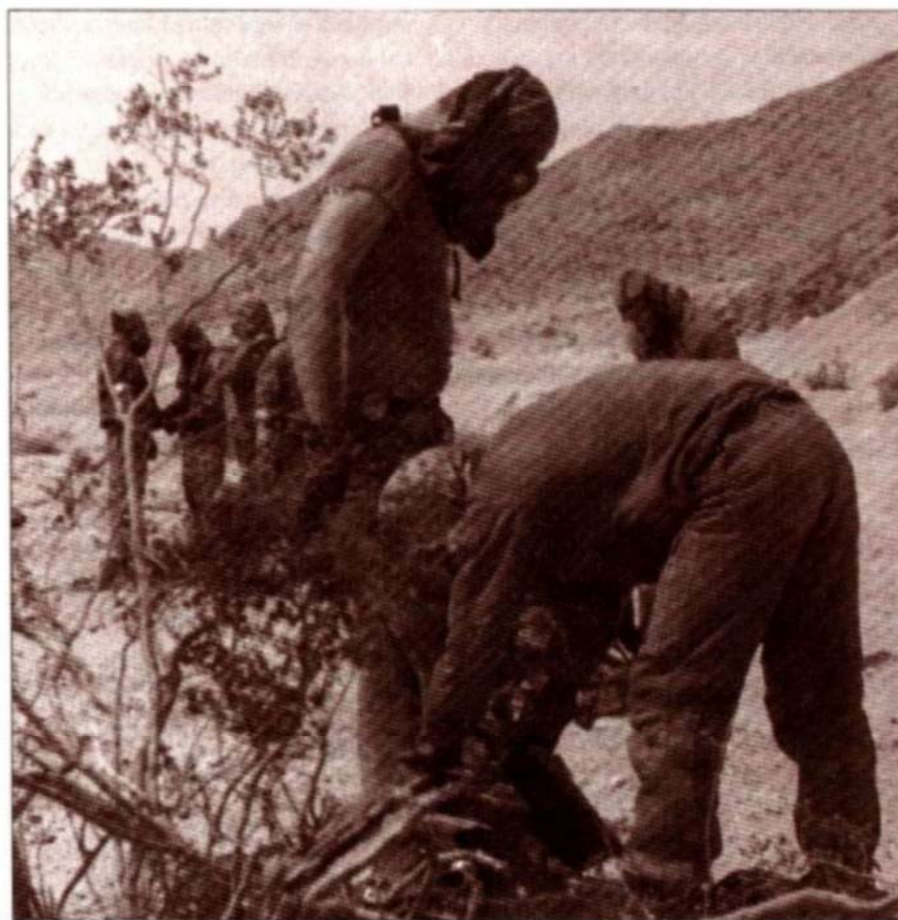
Once you believe you have painted a sound picture of the NBC threat and have assessed its impacts on the operation, *plan* and *coordinate* NBC defense operations by getting actively involved in the staff planning process. You cannot afford to sit in the corner of the tactical operations center and think that a supporting staff action for NBC operations is going to occur by osmosis or because it is stated in the SOP. You must aggressively make sure that leaders and doers are encouraged to do their part.

You must understand your commander's guidance received during the staff planning process and his intent for the operation. Solicit the commander's planning guidance for NBC defense and smoke operations, if not provided. This will prevent wasting time and effort.

Commander's planning guidance should include his/her intent for fighting contaminated, acceptable/non-acceptable NBC risks, focus for decon operations and priorities, and concept for smoke operations. Determine how best to employ NBC assets within the intent of the commander. Develop options for these assets, integrating them into the different courses of action worked out by the staff for the commander's decision.

Only when you have identified how to best support the commander's intent can you plan and coordinate NBC operations. If, based on your experience and expertise, the commander's concept does not appear feasible, then make the recommendation you believe best supports his intent.

A single area of NBC operations that clearly demonstrates the need to complete effective planning and coordination is hasty decon operations within the unit. Hasty decon sites are



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normally established, but the coordination required to effect the operation lacks substance.

First, plan hasty decon sites that best support the scheme of maneuver. Then ensure all the equipment, supplies, trained personnel, and other support requirements are fully coordinated. Is there a standard procedure that outlines what vehicle delivers MOPP suits, if the driver is thoroughly briefed on the mission? Or will it be a "Hey, you!" event with little and/or ineffective command and control of the operation, resulting in unnecessary casualties and a combat element removed from the battle for longer than need be?

Planning and coordinating NBC operations requires covering an exten-

sive amount of detail with various staff elements. Appendix B, *Battlefield Task List for Commanders and Staff Officers* to FM 3-100 is a very useful reference that unfortunately too few chemical officers are aware of or do not readily use.

A tool such as this helps ensure essential issues are not forgotten during the planning and coordination of NBC operations. These tools can be incorporated into SOPs and refined or updated with expanding knowledge and more experience. For example, FM 3-50, *Deliberate Smoke Operations*, includes an excellent tool—*Sample smoke mission coordination checklist* (figure 14).

Obviously there are many facets to effective planning and coordinating

NBC operations. These will often overwhelm a person attempting to complete them all by himself/herself. Teamwork among the NBC staff can reduce this burden immeasurably for the chemical officer and provide the opportunity for an NBC NCO to get the practical experience.

This becomes critical should the chemical officer be unavailable during this planning period. We all know that separate functions exist for officers and NCOs within TOC operations, but when the chemical officer is off doing the unit status report, the NBC NCO has to be able to fill in as the defacto chemical officer.

Having both the experience and tools to work from will make planning and coordinating NBC defense and smoke operations manageable for the NBC NCO when acting alone.

Have SOPs for NBC and Staff Operations.

The good thing about SOPs is that they can institute routine or required actions that anyone in the unit should be able to read and follow. The unfortunate thing is the NBC portion is usually nonexistent or inadequate.

Don't wait until a major training exercise to develop the NBC standing operating procedures. Do your homework beforehand and establish procedures that fully cover your area of responsibility and operations. The training exercise should validate the completeness of the SOP and serve as a means to refine procedures, not be the instrument to develop procedures that are not already implemented. There are many fine unit SOPs to draw ideas from. Coordinate with the NBC personnel within the unit you are assigned and collectively develop the SOP. The best place to begin this process is to examine duties and responsibilities of NBC personnel at the various unit levels. Specify the tasks

required to support the unit in a tactical scenario based on Appendix C, FM 3-100, *NBC Defense, Chemical Warfare, Smoke, and Flame Operations*, dated May 1991.

Don't forget the duties and responsibilities that involve chemical defense equipment. Including chemical defense equipment into load plans and precombat checks/inspections is a primary concern in ensuring that forces are prepared for combat operations. Establish responsibility for uploading chemical defense equipment, checking the operational and employment status of equipment, and the procedures for reporting information.

It is more effective to check and make sure that chemical alarms are emplaced in the unit's assembly area/battle positions than to call around to subordinate units and try to get this completed to an acceptable standard every time it is required. NBC defense measures at unit level should be covered in some detail, particularly contamination avoidance measures, since these are key to NBC defense.

Establishing responsibilities for simple or common sense actions such as ensuring the use of camouflage and exercising dispersion will not just remind units that these are required actions, but reinforce basic, sound defensive combat procedures.

Checklists will serve as detailed reminders of necessary measures covering a broad range of topics from precombat inspections to staff briefings. The value of checklists rests in completion and enforcement; otherwise, they serve as only additional pages to a useless document.

Establish and Implement Effective Communications

There is usually no prescribed means of communication to keep

abreast of NBC operations. Because of this, you have to use all available means to coordinate effectively with other NBC staffs and/or personnel.

The important thing to remember is that good working relationships will facilitate effective communications. Maintaining the current situation of NBC operations means being proactive in effecting communications with NBC personnel in higher, lower, and adjacent units. You may normally receive the majority of essential NBC communications from the operations and intelligence net, but should this net be active in transmitting other critical information during a specific NBC event, you don't want to find yourself wanting for communications. Should an event require your immediate action, you need a means of communication to accomplish this.

The key element to achieving effective communication is an aggressive commitment to getting information out when and to whom it is needed. Several avenues to explore are occasional use of the command net, the operations and intelligence net, and the fire support coordination net.

TACFIRE not only has communications with higher staffs, but normally goes down to the company/team level where the unit FIST works. This is a great vehicle for sending routine traffic like the effective and/or chemical downwind messages.

The maneuver control system is just one of the newer systems being fielded to battalion level. In stationary positions, wire and runners can also be effectively used for passing NBC information.

Again it must be emphasized, you need to be aggressive and innovative in communicating essential information expeditiously. Your counterpart

at other units and/or staffs depends on you to provide critical NBC information, just as you depend on others for the same should something occur in their areas of operation. A good working relationship will facilitate timely communications between NBC staffs.

Maintain Status of NBC-trained Personnel and Chemical Defense Equipment

NBC staffs must track where functional chemical defense equipment is within their units and know the trained and responsible primary and alternate operators. It is too easy to task a subordinate unit for an NBC mission and then believe there should be no reason for the unit to fail in accomplishing the mission at the specified time.

In reality, there may be many distractors to prevent this mission from being completed. Maybe the primary and alternate operators of the equipment were wounded, or components to the equipment are not on hand or operational (batteries, for example), or some other unforeseen circumstances. The NBC staff must take the lead in maintaining this required information so that the right unit is tasked for the mission.

It is unacceptable to take a hands-off approach to this area believing that this is the business of the NBC personnel at the next lower level, but it also does not imply that this has to be micro-managed at the highest level either.

The NBC SOP often directs that specific NBC teams be maintained within units, but often fails to assign responsibility for maintaining this information. If this issue is adequately covered in the NBC SOP and a responsible party does, in fact, maintain this information, then NBC

missions will more often be completed when required.

What happens when the unit occupies its battle position and the primary operator of the chemical alarm has been evacuated earlier for wounds received and the alternate operator cannot find the wire to attach the detector to the alarm? Does the equipment just sit idle, or is there a system in place to ensure chemical alarms are emplaced to best provide early warning to the unit?

Does this same system provide fur-

ther guidance for periodically checking the wind direction? In our original example, is the chemical officer apprehensive that the unit may not have effectively positioned its chemical alarms to provide warning for the unit as it completes final combat preparations in the assembly area? After all, it's only an hour-and-a-half to LD with the sun rising shortly, and the enemy has previously conducted successful chemical attacks this time of the day with devastating results.



What happens when the chemical alarm operator has been evacuated? Does the equipment sit idle? Is there a system to ensure the alarms are emplaced to provide early warning to the unit?

The task organization in the OPORD may not reflect the habitual unit relationships that the battalion or brigade has trained with before and, therefore, some unknown factors will exist for the staff to consider. One of these critical factors that should be swiftly resolved by the NBC staff is the status of chemical defense equipment and the proficiency level of NBC training within the attached unit. Too often we assume there are no significant shortages within cross-attached units or, if there are shortages, that these will be filled by the parent unit. We also normally assume that the unit has qualified operators for authorized chemical defense equipment.

Checking and resolving these issues can prevent unknown factors from causing disastrous results during combat operations. Consider the inclusion of an NBC team roster and chemical defense equipment checklist into the SOP that can be filled out by cross-attached units. Review this with the unit leadership and resolve issues and/or shortages to ensure this attached unit can continue its assigned mission on the integrated battlefield.

Get Involved in Subordinates' Preparations, Task Force Rehearsals.

Staff work is not completed when the OPORD is issued. Supervising preparations for combat must follow. With attached NBC assets (NBC recon, smoke, and/or decon elements), ensure they know the commander's intent and concept for the operation, have accurate and complete graphics, understand their mission and the command and control mechanism to effect their support, and have the re-

quired logistics set in place to reasonably ensure success.

The attached unit may normally provide resupply of some items that have not previously been a concern at your level, but what happens when they don't have transportation readily available? Are you prepared to arrange this for them to get the NBC support your unit requires?

Supervising preparations at the staff level reduces the chances of old Mister Murphy getting involved in NBC operations. The staff must be proactive in following the progress of preparations and lending assistance when needed. It can also inform the commander of the status of critical NBC support that he needs.

Enforcement of precombat checks or inspections can simplify supervision of organic elements' preparations. Incorporating these into the SOP with actual checklists produced and acetated helps leaders at each level. The keys for success rest in enforcement of precombat checks/precombat inspections and resolution or corrective actions on shortcomings.

Be an active participant at the task force rehearsal. Ensure the attached NBC unit leaders are present and include them in the rehearsal. Do not allow them to be silent participants; actively involve the NBC unit leaders in the rehearsal. Ensure they know the commander's operational concept and their unit's role in achieving success.

Paint a clear picture of the uncooperative NBC threat at the rehearsal should the S2 fail to do so and make sure the unit knows what NBC events they can expect during the operation. Ensure the unit leadership and staff know the commander's intent for

fighting contaminated; rehearse what actions to take upon an NBC attack or becoming contaminated; review maneuver decisions that must be made due to NBC events; go over NBC reporting procedures, nets, and who to report to; and recount immediate and follow-on actions.

Review planned friendly smoke operations, whether this is in your unit, an adjacent unit, or higher element. This will prevent uncertainty should friendly smoke operations be seen or encountered during the mission. Including NBC in the rehearsal will reduce the likelihood of NBC events disrupting command and control or having a major, negative impact on the mission.

The NBC staff can significantly influence the combat readiness of their unit, while increasing their own efficiency and effectiveness, by implementing the measures outlined above. With these half dozen key points for the NBC staff to follow in planning and preparing for tactical operations, the unit stands a much better chance of surviving and winning on the integrated battlefield. Numerous missions at the National Training Center have witnessed these key points not being followed and/or having been poorly executed by the NBC staff with dismal operational results for the unit.

Our goal is to complete our staff responsibilities to the best of our abilities, ensure our units are as best equipped and trained as possible, and not just survive on the integrated battlefield, but win. These six key points for the NBC staff are essential to meet this goal.