

# The 2007 CBRN Critical Task Selection Board: Building the Foundation for CBRN Training

By Mrs. Lisa Merrill

*"I truly feel with the ever-changing environment, the Chemical Corps' mission has evolved from a conventional NBC passive-defense role to now encompass full-spectrum CBRN operations, including consequence management, weapons of mass destruction elimination, etc. Therefore, causing us as a Corps to realize that in order for our Dragon Soldiers to be equipped with the right skill sets and to have relevancy, we must refine our lesson plans."*

—Command Sergeant Major Patrick Alston  
Regimental Command Sergeant Major,  
U.S. Army Chemical Corps

Big changes are coming to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) training at the U.S. Army Chemical School (USACMLS). The school is currently reworking the curriculum for CBRN initial military training (IMT) (Advanced Individual Training [AIT], Basic Officer Leader Courses, and professional military education [PME]) and Basic and Advanced Noncommissioned Officer and Captains' Career Courses. The effort began in late 2006 and will result in new programs of instruction (POIs) for all IMT and PME courses during Fiscal Year 2008.

The USACMLS commandant, Brigadier General Thomas Spoehr, charged the Directorate of Training and Training Development (DOT&TD) with the mission to gather data from the field and incorporate current trends, future equipment, and organizational and concept plans into institutional training. The goal of this effort was to provide Soldiers and leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary to counter threats and hazards in CBRN operations. To do this, DOT&TD conducted a job analysis (in early 2007) for all skill levels in military occupational specialties (MOSs) 74D and 74A, which culminated in a critical task selection board (CTSB) in July.

CTSBs lay the foundation for training requirements. They are designed to recommend critical individual tasks for each skill level to the commandant, through the use of job surveys, personal experiences, and subject matter experts. This data provides input to evolving doctrine, technology, and force structure to shape the training required for Soldiers in future institutional training courses. With the range of new requirements and continually evolving doctrine, the time is right to reevaluate critical tasks in CBRN training.

## CBRN Job Skills Survey

The 2007 CTSB process began with a survey of 74D Soldiers and NCOs and 74A officers. Responses were solicited to a number of questions designed to identify key areas for CTSB members to focus their efforts. While the school maintains an inventory of tasks, the survey helped identify training gaps or tasks to be considered by the board.

Survey respondents provided data that was used to shape the task inventory considered by CTSB members. Respondents, 70 percent of whom were veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom, offered insight into the demands placed on CBRN Soldiers in current operations. For example, sensitive-site exploitation (SSE) and sensitive-site assessment (SSA) skills were among the most frequently mentioned areas requiring more focus in institutional training. Other skills



Sensitive-site exploitation exercise

frequently cited were hazardous material (HAZMAT) response, toxic industrial chemicals and material training, and CBRN reconnaissance.

In addition to the questions regarding competencies and skills, survey respondents were asked to prioritize general training requirements for CBRN Soldiers, such as ranking major subject areas according to training focus. Areas scoring the highest were CBRN SSA, CBRN decontamination, and chemical-biological threats and hazards. Obscurants were the lowest ranking selection on the list.

### CTSB Process

The CTSB panel convened 23–27 July 2007 at the USACMLS. Two separate boards were conducted: one board selected tasks for enlisted skill levels 1 through 4; the other board selected officer tasks for levels O1 through O3. Board members were selected from a diverse set of units that included Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard components. The enlisted board was chaired by a command sergeant major and included two staff sergeants, three sergeants first class, and two first sergeants. The officer board was chaired by a lieutenant colonel and consisted of two first lieutenants, two captains, two majors, and one lieutenant colonel.

In his opening remarks to the board, Brigadier General Spoehr challenged the members to “be bold, rather than timid” to help achieve the Corps’ vision. He encouraged them to “think holistically about the entire Chemical Corps: Active, Guard, Reserve, [weapons of mass destruction–civil support team] WMD-CST, [special operations force] SOF, battle staff, unit, NCO, officer.”

Regarding the board’s mission, Brigadier General Spoehr said, “This is the Chemical Corps’ opportunity



**Confined-space training**

to firmly establish critical training requirements using a process that gathers collective experiences and lessons learned from the field to positively impact training today and prepare it to meet the challenges of tomorrow. While this process will shape the future of the Chemical Corps at its most basic level, the outcome of decisions made during this board will impact the Army’s future force and the Chemical Corps in far-reaching and significant ways.”

After reviewing the results of the job skills survey, the board was given the opportunity to meet with doctrine developers and materiel system developers to get the latest information on emerging technology and doctrinal changes. They worked on evaluating tasks from the total task inventory and voted on the criticality of each task. The board determined the appropriate skill level for training each critical task and the location of the training (at the institution or the unit). As the commandant directed, the board made some innovative decisions regarding not only what should be trained, but also how and where it would be trained. For example, members recommended distributed learning (dL) options for some tasks to augment or replace institutional training.

### Curriculum Revision

After recording the recommendations from the board, training developers began evaluating the new critical task list against current training. Laying the POIs against the proposed task lists, developers drafted a list of training gaps and training to be eliminated, and determined where minor modifications to current training would meet the boards’ intent. Meanwhile, the new critical task lists were staffed for approval by the commandant.

Some areas of the curriculum (based on the CTSB recommendations) will be eliminated, shifted to unit



**Rescue exercise in a hazardous environment**

training, or conducted via Web-based dL products. Additionally, some tasks were migrated downward from higher skill levels to lower ones, reflecting the skill level of Soldiers actually performing the tasks in the field. Based on the board's recommendations, all resident courses will see a significant reduction in obscuration training (smoke and flame). Other areas, such as traditional plotting techniques, will be revised to focus on methods that are more technology-driven, using the joint warning and reporting network (JWARN) or other digital systems to accomplish tasks in a more timely and accurate manner. Finally, there will be significant additions to training at all levels, to include HAZMAT training, and some HAZMAT certification opportunities within PME training courses.

Changes based on the CTSB recommendations are beginning now. Students are already receiving training on JWARN at all levels. HAZMAT training in AIT, Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, Basic Officer Leader Course, and Captains' Career Course is already receiving positive feedback from students for its relevance in the current fight. Hands-on training in SSE and SSA complements more traditional CBRN training, bringing abstract knowledge and concepts into practical application. By the summer of 2008, virtually all of the board's recommendations will be evident in training.

The curriculum for CBRN courses at the USACMLS will always be flexible and fluid to accommodate emerging tactics, techniques, and procedures; lessons learned; and new doctrine and technology. However, a solid foundation of task training, built on the recommendations



**Packaging and sealing contaminated materials**

of warfighters with knowledge and experience, is essential to building institutional training that meets the needs of the commanders and Soldiers in an Army at war. The 2007 CBRN CTSB gives training at the USACMLS that foundation—a foundation grounded in the experience of real CBRN Soldiers. 

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## **Instructor Training Promotion Opportunities**

### **Immediate Opportunities for Chemical Captains, Lieutenants, and Noncommissioned Officers**

The U.S. Army Chemical School has openings in its U.S. Army Reserve, Drilling Individual Mobilization Augmentee (DIMA) detachment. The detachment conducts the Chemical Captain's Career Course for the Reserve Component twice a year. If you are interested in becoming an instructor or a member of the support staff, please contact Lieutenant Colonel Barrett Parker by telephone at (573) 563-7105 or e-mail at <[barrett-parker@us.army.mil](mailto:barrett-parker@us.army.mil)>.

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