

National Training Center Offers New Training Opportunities

*By Major Brant Hoskins, Captain Todd Heintzelman,
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The brigade combat team (BCT) gave the task force 18 hours to prepare and execute a cordon-and-search mission of three buildings in the industrial area of town known as Abar Layla. Human intelligence (HUMINT) reports indicated that a known bomb maker and an insurgent financier would be conducting a meeting with local insurgent leaders. The mission of the task force was clear—to kill or capture the insurgents to prevent future attacks on coalition forces. The task force followed its battle drill and conducted troop-leading procedures down to the squad level. One hour prior to the search, as the outer cordon was being set, B Company received sniper fire and the command post received two mortar rounds. Although no casualties were reported, it was clear that the enemy knew the task force was coming.

“Bandit 6, this is Bandit Oscar. The outer cordon is set. Request permission to establish inner cordon.”

“Bandit Oscar, Bandit 6 affirmative. Establish the inner cordon.”

Six minutes pass before the first report comes over the command net from the inner cordon. “Bandit 6, this is Cowboy 6. Positions C1, C2, and C3 are established. C4 is not yet established. An unknown number of insurgents firing small arms from Building B175 have pinned down my squad near Building B182.”

“Cowboy 6, this is Bandit 6. Roger, stand by. I am sending B13 and B14 [MIA1] to SBF 1. As soon as they arrive, coordinate directly to fire and maneuver your squad into and through Building B175. Notify

me as soon as C4 is occupied so we can begin the search.”

Twelve minutes later, a loud blast is heard. “Bandit Oscar, this is Cowboy 6. Contact!”

The task force commander knew from the sound of the explosion that something drastic had happened. “Sir,” the company commander’s voice quivered, “I need CASEVAC [casualty evacuation] now! I have four KIA [killed in action] and three wounded—all litter priority. Also send the vehicle recovery team. B13 is severely damaged and not able to move under its own power.”

The operation came to a screeching halt; CASEVAC was now the priority. In the ensuing investigation, it was discovered that B14 had fired upon insurgents in the building with a high-explosive antitank round that immediately caused the sympathetic detonation of more than 1,000 gallons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and diesel fuel. It was later discovered that Building B175 was actually the regional production and storage facility for the Iraqi State Fertilizer Company. The lesson learned on this day was clear—involve the chemical officer in the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) and subsequent planning. The chemical officer possesses information about mission locations. In this instance, if he had participated in the planning, the unit may have eliminated the insurgent threat with minimal casualties and collateral damage.

This training scenario (and many similar scenarios) are offered at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. Over the past two years, monumental changes have taken place at the NTC with one purpose in mind:

providing Soldiers with the best possible training prior to deployment into hostile theaters. Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) training is no exception. We have received wonderful feedback from chemical Soldiers in the field, and this information has helped us tailor NTC training and facilities to enhance Soldier preparations. In an effort to continue providing quality training at the NTC, we feel it is necessary that fellow chemical Soldiers and leaders know how we have changed, what we have to offer, and how we can work together to maximize the training benefits offered to Soldiers during the month-long stay.

A Brand New NTC

“This is not your father’s NTC” is a comment frequently made by senior leaders. Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), NTC training was focused almost solely on the high-intensity end of the contemporary operational environment (COE), with minor diversions into stability operations and support operations (SOSO). In the CBRN arena, this meant large-scale artillery attacks or tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs) with long- and short-duration agents. This training paid off handsomely for the Army during OIF and OEF, but the reality of in-theater operations has

changed and, therefore, so has the NTC. As OIF and OEF theaters have matured, unit after-action reviews (AARs) and reach-back programs have reflected the need for changes to ensure continued relevance. This change required a transition from the high-intensity range to the mid-low-intensity range (SOSO), while still maintaining the capability to return to the high-intensity COE. By incorporating the changes to the COE, the NTC is able to offer Soldiers the best training possible (with even more exciting opportunities on the horizon).

Urban Training Sites

Since 2002, the number of urban training sites and villages at the NTC has increased from 4 to 12. These villages vary in size from a few buildings to elaborate towns with markets, mosques, businesses, and houses. During the rotations, operational forces and Arabic-speaking role players occupy these villages. The size of the populations may vary from as low as 25 to more than 250. Soldiers are consistently challenged by the unique dynamics presented in the villages. These scenarios often depict insurgents using the villages as safe havens to stage attacks on coalition forces or as cover to fire mortars on local base camps (see *Figure 1*).

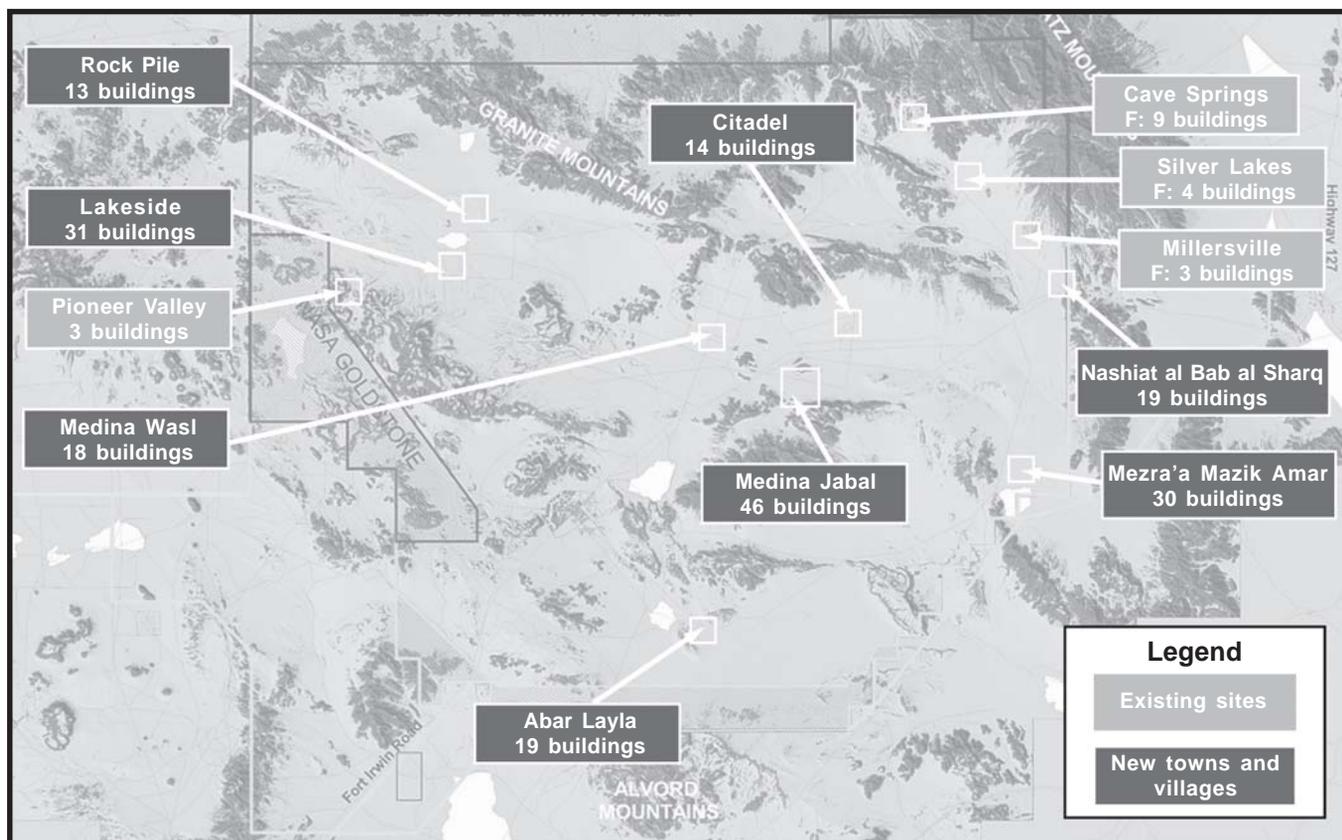


Figure 1. Urban training sites

Tunnel Complexes

The addition of intricate tunnel complexes throughout the training area has provided new training opportunities (see *Figures 2 and 3*). Remote insurgent bases and clandestine ammunition caches are included in the training scenarios (see *Figure 4, page 24*).

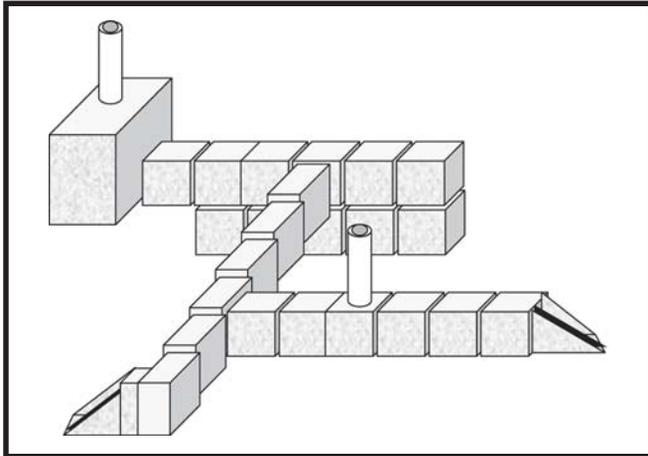


Figure 2. Alpine Valley

Base Camps

Base Camps Detroit, Seattle, Denver, and Dallas now dot the NTC landscape (see Base Camp Denver in *Figure 5, page 24*). These semipermanent structures have large tents for sleeping, eating, and command and control (C2) operations. Entry and exit points are strictly controlled; guard towers are occupied 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and detainee facilities are operational. The base camps receive a steady stream of mortar and rocket attacks, which forces units to react to the threat and rehearse tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP).

New Training

The changing nature of threats from Iraq and Afghanistan has allowed us to develop interesting and challenging CBRN training that targets not only chemical Soldiers but also the BCT leaders and their staffs. *Figures 6 through 9, pages 24 and 25*, depict some of the CBRN training conducted in the last year.

Future projects include oil fires, a pesticide production facility, and a damaged water treatment plant. The exciting

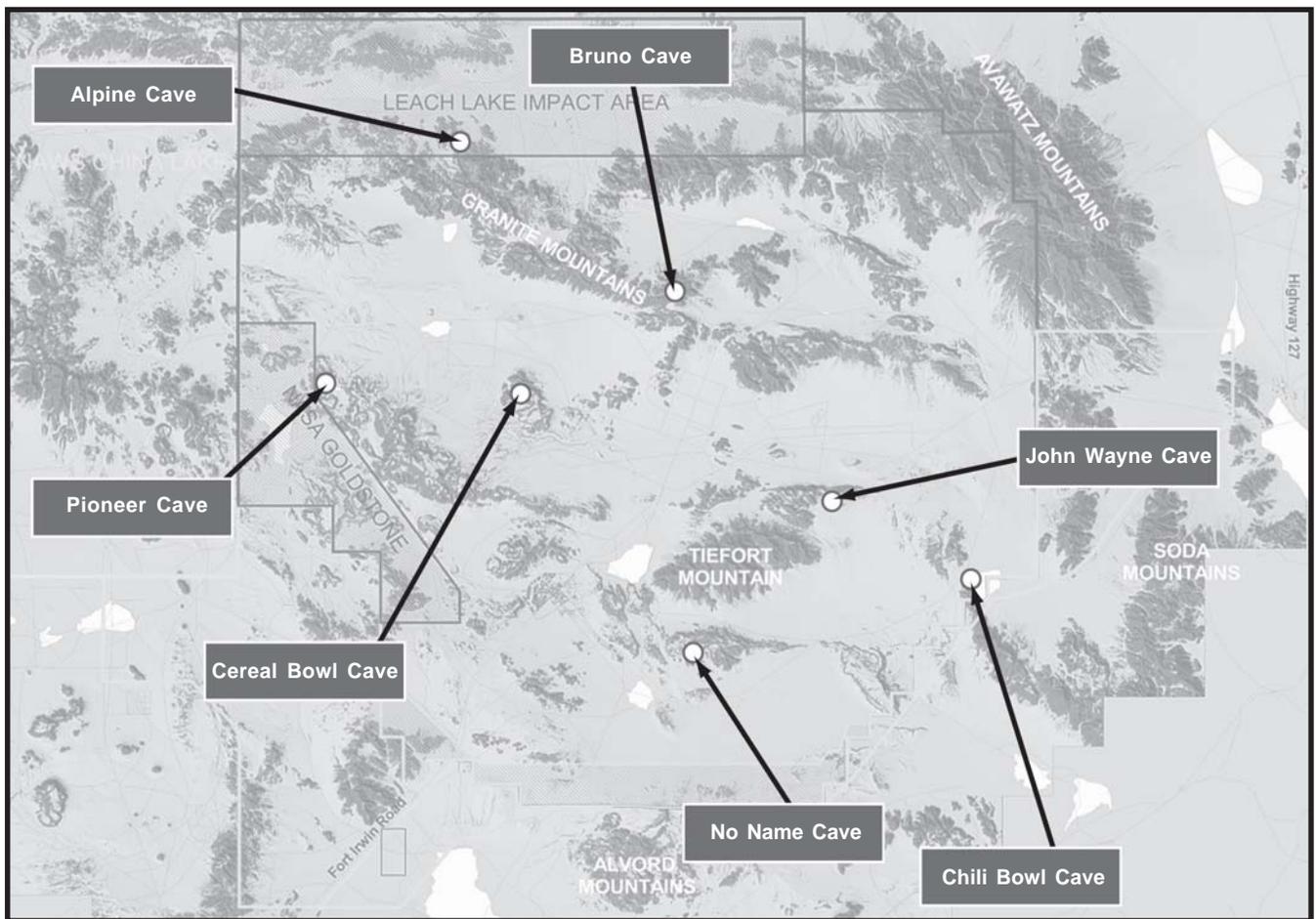


Figure 3. Tunnel/cave locations



Figure 4. Example of an uncovered cave



Figure 5. Base Camp Denver

part of these scenarios is that they not only target chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive (CBRNE) training objectives but other SOSO training

objectives. For example, an operational oil pipeline, fertilizer plant, and pesticide production facility all provide jobs. If damaged, they create an industrial hazard and anger in the town's population. It takes only one event to demonstrate to senior BCT leaders that toxic industrial chemicals (TIC) and toxic industrial material (TIM)

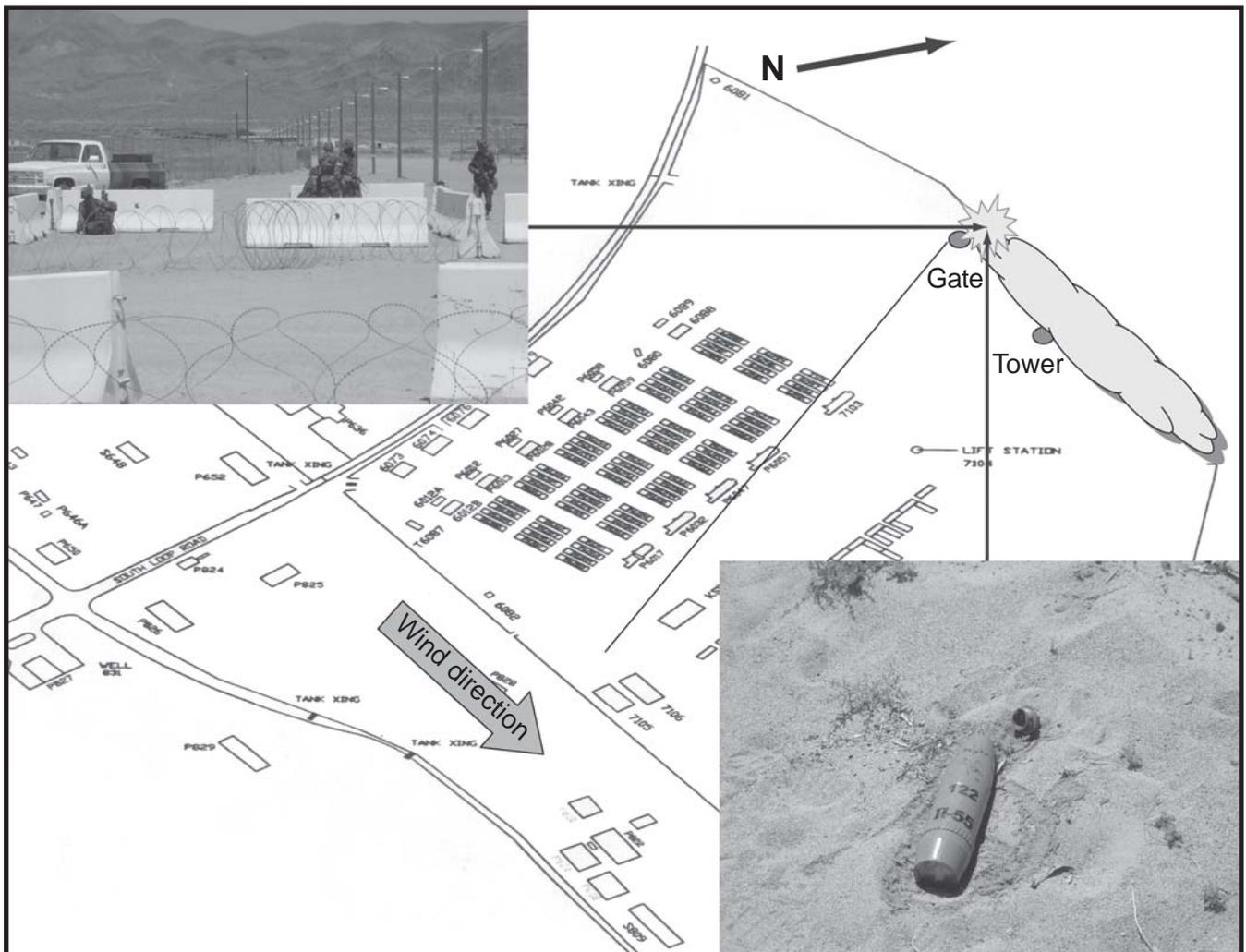


Figure 6. On 17 May 2004, insurgents used a WME improvised explosive device in the vicinity of Baghdad. On 29 May 2004, the device made its first appearance at NTC.



Figure 7. Terrain decontamination of a pesticide spill at Mezra'a Mazik Amar

hazards cannot be ignored. The unique scenarios to combat weapons of mass effect (WME) also challenge our Soldiers. How do you rid half a town of the noxious vapors from a pesticide spill—with suppression, terrain decontamination, weathering, or evacuation? We have been able to develop some “out-of-the-box” training at the NTC, but the potential for even more relevant and focused training exists.

What Can Be

Through conversations with chemical leaders who have spent time in Iraq or Afghanistan, it is very apparent that experiences are varied and, therefore, the opinions about CBRN training for deploying units is varied. The ideas range from constructing sophisticated clandestine laboratories and elaborate industrial facilities to using coincidental contact with WME ammunition and scenarios

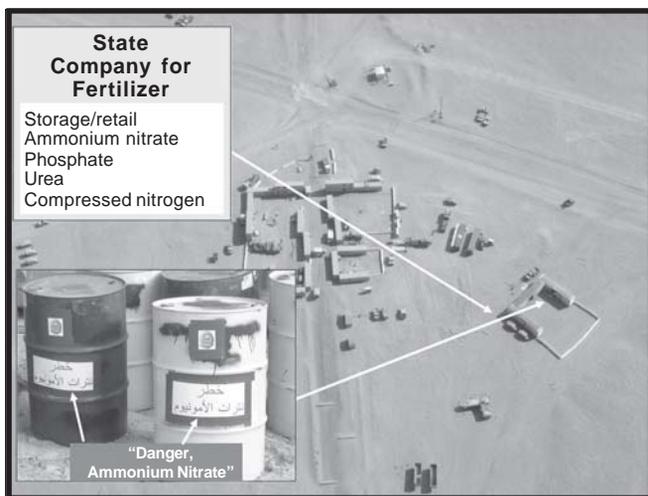


Figure 8. Fertilizer storage facility, Medina Wasl

involving insurgent use of WMEs. All of the ideas are solid and provide excellent training events, but they often are not incorporated because the necessary coordination between player units and the NTC is not made. Coordination may sound like an insurmountable bureaucratic hurdle, but the process is straightforward. With a little foresight in planning, the sky is the limit. The timeline for rotation to the NTC, as outlined in Forces Command (FORSCOM) Regulation 350-50-1, is shown in *Figure 10, page 26*.¹ Refer to the timeline, and then use the following guidelines to ensure that specific CBRN training is included in your training package:

- At D-360: Submit your CBRN training requirements to your BCT commander for his consideration and approval. This is the most important step because he will have to “go to bat” with the division and corps commanders. Ensure that approved CBRN training objectives are included with the other training objectives submitted in the D-210 letter to corps headquarters for approval.

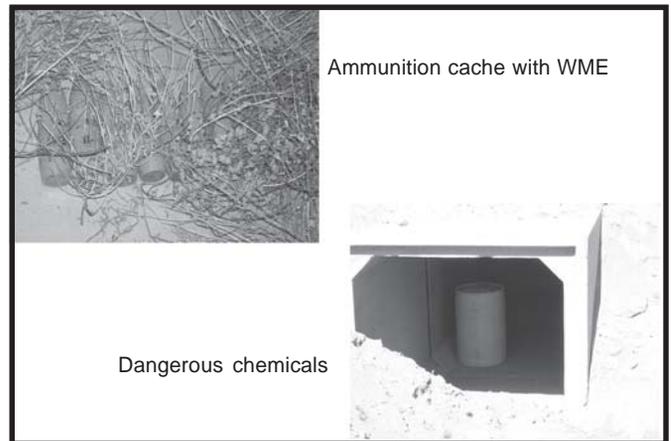


Figure 9. Ammunition cache with WME, Cave Complex

- At D-150: Coordinate with the Bronco 62 team during the leader training program. We will discuss approved training objectives, pending scenarios, and other important information. Since the leader training program is conducted during the scenario development phase, there is flexibility to work with the planning team to incorporate a commander’s training requirements.
- At D-Day: Ensure that the BCT chemical officer and noncommissioned officer in charge attend the Bronco 62 team in-brief orientation, and coordinate with the CBRN observer/controller team. This face-to-face coordination will allow

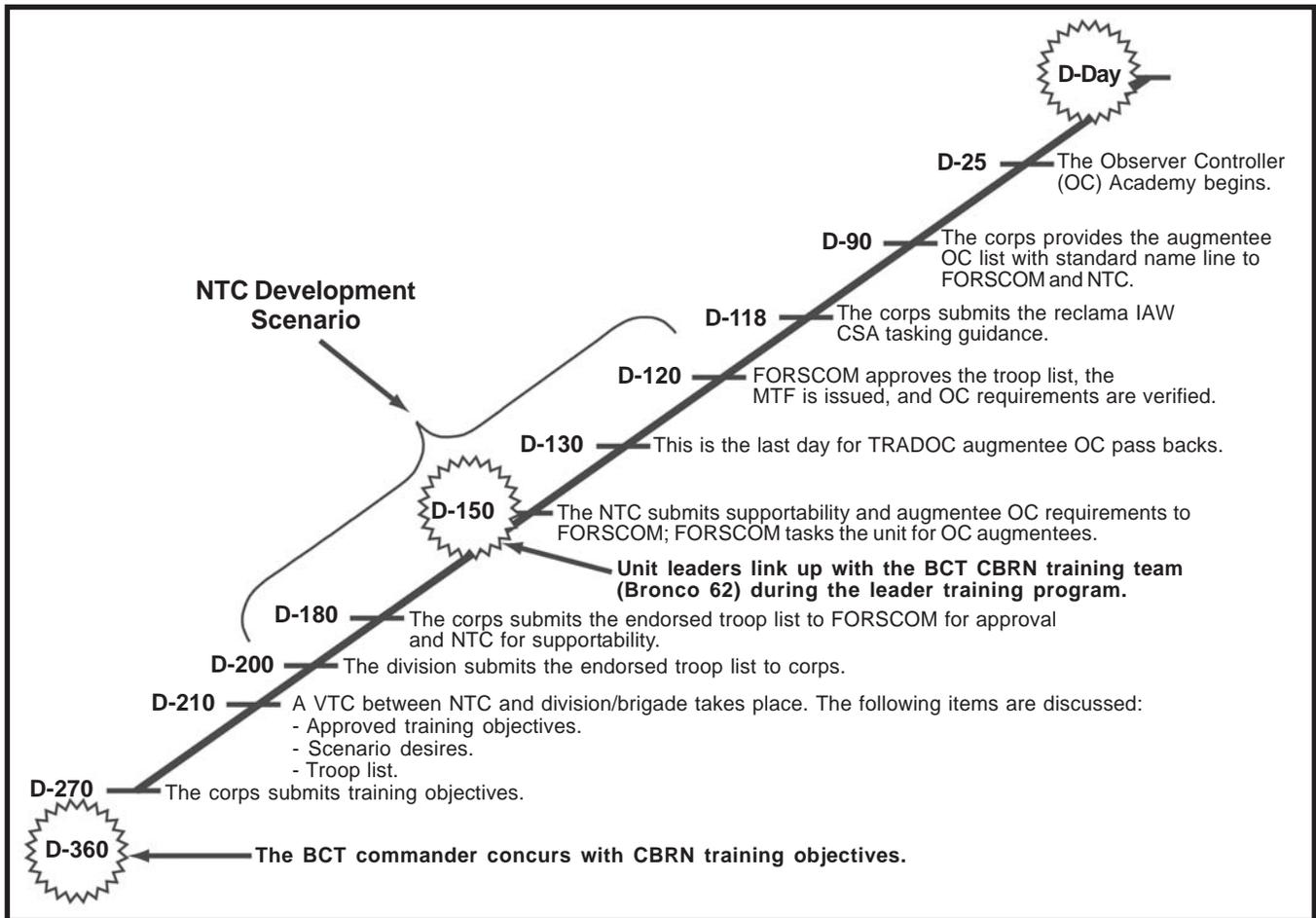


Figure 10. NTC troop list cycle

us to discuss last-minute changes and resolve pending issues.

- Contact the Bronco 62 team by phone (DSN 470-6668 or commercial 760-380-6668) or visit our Web site at <www.irwin.army.mil> any time. We will be more than happy to answer questions, discuss training objectives, and provide general information or assistance.

Final Thoughts

Current operations clearly demonstrate the continued need to train CBRN tasks. The NTC, in conjunction with

our chemical partners in the field, possesses the land, the facilities, and the ability to provide training opportunities that meet applicable standards and relevance. The key to getting this done is coordination prior to arriving at the NTC. Contact the Bronco 62 team at the earliest opportunity. We will make every effort to ensure that your unit training needs are met. Our goal is to take advantage of the experience gained in theater and ensure that Soldiers are prepared for operations in theater. 🎖️

Endnote

¹FORSCOM Regulation 350-50-1, *Training at the National Training Center*, 1 July 2002.

Major Hoskins is the senior brigade CBRN trainer at the NTC. His previous assignments include commander, 89th Chemical Company, Fort Carson, Colorado; assistant regimental chemical officer, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Carson; company tactical officer, Chemical Officer Basic Course, Fort McClellan, Alabama; brigade and battalion chemical officer, 1st Armored Division, Germany; and reconnaissance platoon leader, 25th Chemical Company, Germany.

Captain Heintzelman is the chemical company trainer at the NTC. His previous assignments include commander, 62d Chemical Company, Camp Humphreys, Korea; platoon leader, assistant operations staff officer (S3), and battalion logistics staff officer (S4), 23d Chemical Battalion, Camp Carroll, Korea.

Sergeant First Class Cuffee is the brigade chemical platoon trainer at the NTC. He was previously assigned as platoon sergeant for the Fox reconnaissance vehicle, 2d Platoon, 51st Chemical Company, where he deployed to Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq in support of Operation Neon Falcon, OEF, and OIF.