



Fort Lewis Chemical Soldiers Participate in YS 51

By Second Lieutenant Kristy Moore

Soldiers from the I Corps chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) cell and the 23d Chemical Battalion (Fort Lewis, Washington) traveled to Osaka, Japan, to participate in Yama Sakura 51 (YS 51). YS 51, a joint exercise for U.S. Forces and members of the Japanese Middle Army, took place 9–15 February 2007 at Camp Itami. The

six-day exercise was not just a joint warfighter exercise between two countries but, rather, a unique relationship-building opportunity. And Chemical Soldiers welcomed the opportunity.¹ “For me, the exercise provided a rare opportunity to work side by side with CBRNE personnel from both the U.S. Marines and the Japanese Middle Army. I enjoyed getting to know my Japanese counterparts; and the exchange of information, ideas, and practices will definitely increase my ability to be an effective CBRNE officer,” revealed an officer from I Corps. Additionally, a staff sergeant from I Corps stated that “seeing the Japanese equipment was very interesting. Some of the equipment extras they have for [decontamination] decon, we could and should incorporate into ours. I would really enjoy doing an actual decon [exercise] with them to see how they perform in the field.” Soldiers were also provided the opportunity to work with U.S. Marine Corps personnel. One Soldier stated that he thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with his Marine Corps counterparts, stating that “working with . . . the Marine Corps has been an experience to see the difference in how our own services differ in their approach to decon. Where we use decon platoons, Marines are all responsible for decon.” One Marine also shared, “From my personal experience, it was a pleasure working with the Army counterparts. As always, the other services underestimate the capabilities



The Japanese Middle Army nuclear, biological, and chemical reconnaissance vehicle was part of the decontamination equipment on display at Camp Soho.

that you can bring to the table. It takes working in a close environment such as this exercise to truly appreciate the caliber of our counterparts. I learned a lot in the last two weeks. I know [that] I'm going back to my parent unit with a better understanding and a lot of respect for the Army [chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear] CBRN Soldiers . . . There is 10 percent of Army doctrine that I cannot apply to my ethics but, in general, it has been a superb experience and, most importantly, we have learned a lot about our fellow [sic] CBRN Soldiers.”

A social gathering allowed all Chemical parties to meet and discuss the differences in CBRNE programs. One unique opportunity included meeting Lieutenant Colonel Katumi Masaru Nakamura, Chief of the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Center for the Japanese Middle Army. Lieutenant Colonel Nakamura, who participated in the Tokyo subway decontamination operation, provided an incident brief, photographs of the area, and video coverage of the operation.^{2,3} Additionally, the Japanese Chemical Corps provided a tour of Camp Soho so that U.S. Forces could view Japanese decontamination and reconnaissance equipment. A participating staff sergeant regarded the tour as an “outstanding experience to see how other countries do the same tasks with different equipment.”

Not all Chemical Soldiers who participated in the exercise were fortunate enough to travel to Japan. These



Lieutenant Colonel Nakamura explains Japanese decontamination equipment to the I Corps CBRN Officer.

Soldiers were instrumental in manning the Simulations Center at Fort Lewis. The Simulations Center personnel drive the exercise by acting as commanders and controlling troop and equipment movement on the battlefield. The instructions from the Joint Force Land Component Command provided direction for the simulated battle. When asked what the overall consensus of the experience was, Soldiers in the Simulation Center replied, “Yama Sakura was a time-consuming practical exercise that taught us how to work outside of our fields, as well as at levels we have never worked at; nonetheless, it was an overall learning experience for us all.”

The YS 51 exercise was a learning experience for Soldiers—an experience that they can build on. As always, Dragon Soldiers prove that they not only do their part, but go above and beyond the standard! 🇺🇸🇯🇵

Endnotes:

¹U.S. Marine Corps personnel from the Joint Force Land Component Command also participated in the exercises.

²The March 1995 sarin incident was an act of terrorism against the government of Japan.

³Lieutenant Colonel Nakamura is considered a celebrity in the Japanese Chemical Corps.



Personnel from the Japanese Middle Army demonstrate the front spray bar on their decontamination vehicle.

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