

# ***Joint Task Force Elimination Integration and Combined Elimination Team Training in the Republic of Korea***

*By Lieutenant Colonel John C. Barber*

During exercise Ulchi Focus Lens (UFL) 2007 (conducted in August 2007), the Army's 20th Support Command (SUPCOM) Headquarters and the U.S. Strategic Command Joint Elimination Coordination Element (JECE) strategically deployed to the Republic of Korea (ROK), where together they formed a joint task force for weapons of mass destruction–elimination (JTF-E) operations in support of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). During this same time period, two weapons of mass destruction (WMD) joint response teams from the 110th Technical Escort (TE) battalion deployed to the ROK and led two weeks of combined sensitive-site exploitation (SSE) training with teams from the Chemical Special Forces Battalion, ROK Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Defense Command.

The “National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction” defines elimination as “military operations to systematically locate, characterize, secure, disable, and/or destroy a state or non-state [*sic*] actor’s WMD programs and related capabilities in hostile or uncertain environments.”<sup>1</sup> More specifically, elimination operations—

- Prevent the looting or capture of WMD and related materials.
- Render harmless or destroy weapons, material, agents, and delivery systems that pose an immediate or direct threat.
- Control documents and other media to prevent further WMD proliferation or regeneration.

CFC ground components lack the specialized teams, equipment, and expertise necessary to exploit the potentially large number of WMD sites in North Korea. Beginning in 2005, CFC and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) addressed the need to train with a WMD elimination task force in support of combined and joint mission-essential tasks. To fully achieve standards, CFC needed to successfully integrate a JTF-E during an annual exercise, develop a concept of operations, and incorporate JTF-E operations into its plans.

The February 2006 “Quadrennial Defense Review Report” (QDR) directed the following: “Expand the Army’s 20th Support Command (CBRNE) [Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives] capabilities to enable it to serve as a Joint Task Force [*sic*] capable of rapid deployment to command and control WMD Elimination [*sic*] and site exploitation missions by September 2007.”<sup>2</sup> Upon receipt of a combatant command request for forces at the U.S. Joint Forces Command, elements of the 20th SUPCOM, the JECE, and other agencies come together to form the JTF-E headquarters. Although the subordinate units of the JTF-E operation are predominantly Army, some are specialized interagency assets. The JTF-E is not a standing joint task force.

During the February 2006 plenary session of the Counterproliferation Working Group (CPWG), the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) and U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense for Counterproliferation Policy began discussing the need to integrate a JTF-E into CFC, develop ROK capabilities for internal command and control of elimination operations, and establish specialized teams to conduct SSE. As a result of the CPWG, CFC initiated plans to begin two major partnership-building activities between the United States and ROK. The first initiative involved annual combined WMD SSE team training, and the second involved the integration of the JTF-E headquarters into CFC during UFL 2007.

## **Combined WMD SSE Team Training**

For the first iteration of WMD SSE team training, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency provided funding to send 15 soldiers from the ROK NBC Defense Command Chemical Special Forces Battalion to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, to train with the 22d Chemical Battalion (TE). In September 2006, ROK soldiers, accompanied by the CFC C35<sup>3</sup> Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Plans Branch, traveled to Aberdeen Proving Ground and trained with the 22d



**U.S. and ROK soldiers conduct decontamination following exploitation of a chemical storage facility.**

Chemical Battalion for two weeks. This training marked the beginning of an ongoing effort between the United States and ROK to build ROK capabilities for conducting highly technical SSE missions.

The second iteration of combined SSE training occurred in August 2007 in conjunction with UFL 2007. Two U.S. joint response teams from the 110th Chemical Battalion (TE) deployed from Fort Lewis, Washington, to the ROK for two weeks of training with the ROK Chemical Special Forces Battalion. The ROK NBC Defense Command, in coordination with the 50th ROK Infantry Division, hosted the training at an urban warfare training site that replicated a small North Korean village. After a week of classes and hands-on training, U.S. Soldiers joined ROK soldiers to form combined SSE teams. During the second week, the combined SSE teams encountered scenarios that involved entry into a sensitive-site facility, the use of a Portable Isotopic Neutron Spectroscopy System to conduct nonintrusive chemical-ordnance assessment for characterization of unexploded chemical munitions, and detailed personnel decontamination following each mission.

The United States and ROK plan to continue this annual training, alternating the location between the two countries. The goal is to build 12 ROK joint response teams with SSE capabilities similar to those of U.S. TE battalions.

### **JTF-E Integration into CFC**

Immediately following the QDR in February 2006, planners from CFC and the 20th SUPCOM began discussing the possibility of using UFL 2007 to conduct the JTF-E initial operational capability validation exercise.

In December 2006, planners from the 20th SUPCOM attended the initial CFC planning conference for UFL 2007 and confirmed that this exercise would be the perfect venue for their upcoming validation exercise.

During the UFL 2007 midplanning conference in February 2007, the CFC CWMD Plans Branch and six planners from the 20th SUPCOM hosted a JTF-E workshop to begin detailed planning and coordination across the CFC staff. The primary objectives were to develop a concept of operations, command and control architecture, command relationships, scenario event lists, and intelligence summaries for North Korean WMD sites. In addition, the group began planning all logistical support (including strategic lift, transportation, work space and appropriate communications for the operational command post, and operational work spaces within the CFC command post) for 20th SUPCOM coordination elements.

Action officer level planning and coordination continued throughout the spring. The plenary session of the U.S./ROK CPWG met in Washington, D.C., in May 2007. During the session, senior policy officials on both sides agreed to support JTF-E participation in UFL 2007. They also agreed to continue the combined SSE training and pursuit of the ROK capability to command and control elimination operations. With the assurance that CFC was not in conflict with U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense or ROK MND policy, the United Nations Command/CFC commander approved JTF-E participation in UFL 2007 based partly on the progress achieved through the CPWG.

In final preparation for participation in UFL 2007, Lieutenant General Raymond P. Ayres, Jr. (Retired) (UFL senior observer) and Brigadier General Kevin R. Wendel (Commander, 20th SUPCOM) visited Korea in June and facilitated a week-long workshop with the CFC staff, U.S. Joint Forces Command, 20th SUPCOM, and JECE. The primary objectives of the seminar were to inform the CFC staff of the JTF-E capabilities, agree on the command relationship, develop a concept for integrating the coordination elements into the CFC staff and subordinate components, and develop a concept of operations for supporting ground components in SSE operations.

In August 2007, more than 130 personnel from the 20th SUPCOM and JECE deployed to the ROK and established a JTF-E under the operational control of CFC for exercise UFL 2007. Coordination elements (CEs) from the JTF-E were located with the CFC C35 Future Operations Division, C35 CWMD Plans Branch,



**A Soldier breaches the entrance to a suspected chemical weapons storage facility.**

Intelligence (C2), and Combined Unconventional Warfare Task Force. The JTF-E headquarters communicated with CFC and CEs using the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System–Korea network and monitored updates to the CFC commander via the click-to-meet feature of the network. The click-to-meet capability allowed the JTF-E to collaboratively conduct deliberate planning for several chemical/biological WMD sites in North Korea with the CFC staff and CEs throughout the exercise. In addition, the JTF-E worked with the C35 CWMD planners to develop a draft “Elimination Operations” tab for inclusion in the CWMD appendix to the CFC operations plan.

With respect to security cooperation and partnership building, the JTF-E headquarters hosted representatives from the ROK MND, ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, ROK NBC Defense Command, and Korean Arms Verification Agency to assist the ROK in developing an internal capability for command and control of elimination operations. The effort culminated in an invitation from Brigadier General Wendel to Brigadier General Kwon-

Hon Lee (Commander, ROK NBC Defense Command) and his staff to attend the JTF-E final draft presentation on the concept of operations for JTF-E support to the CFC Ground Component Command.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusions can be drawn from three separate perspectives—CFC/USFK, ROK, and 20th SUPCOM/ JECE. From the CFC/USFK perspective, UFL 2007 provided the opportunity to train to standard according to the combined and joint mission-essential task lists, thus integrating a capability to command and control elimination operations and provide highly skilled SSE teams to the ground components for the exploitation of North Korean WMD sites. For all future theater level exercises, the JTF-E will be integrated into CFC as a “combined” JTF-E. From the ROK perspective, UFL 2007 and the combined team training greatly enhanced efforts to develop internal capabilities for elimination operations. Finally, from the JTF-E perspective, UFL 2007 provided the 20th SUPCOM with the opportunity to complete initial operational capability validation by September 2007 as directed by the QDR. With respect to JTF-E integration into CFC during UFL 2007, General B.B. Bell (Commander, United Nations Command, CFC, and USFK) concluded, “We all learned enormously together, and I can clearly endorse an initial operational capability of this outfit.” Lieutenant General Ayres (Retired) stated, “I consider their participation in UFL to have been a complete success. JTF-E has developed an operational focus that is suitable for a command that is OPCON [operational control] to a COCOM [combatant command].”

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>“National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., 13 February 2006.

<sup>2</sup>“Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” U.S. Department of Defense, 6 February 2006.

<sup>3</sup>The “C” refers to combined U.S./ROK staff, whereas a “J” would refer to joint U.S. staff only. “C35” refers to the future operations section of the C3 (as opposed to the current operations section, which is referred to as “C33”).

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