

Operation Foal Eagle: Combined CBRNE Training With ROK Forces

By Specialist Aaron Carpenter

Operation Foal Eagle (a field training exercise held in association with Key Resolve 2009 in the Republic of Korea [ROK], 14–17 March 2009) served as an opportunity for coalition chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) forces to demonstrate their capabilities during a trying period for the U.S.-ROK alliance and North Korea.

As the scenario progressed, North Korea threatened to launch a space satellite and tensions on the Korean Peninsula increased. The efforts of the 1st Area Medical Laboratory (AML), 110th Chemical Battalion (Technical Escort), CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA), ROK Chemical Special Forces, and ROK Mobile Analysis Laboratory were integrated during the exercise. The 1st AML and CARA are highly specialized units, while the 110th Chemical Battalion is responsible for a variety of CBRNE capabilities, including its technical escort mission. “Our purpose is to analyze materials and do a presumptive field analysis,” said Sergeant First Class Shane Webber, team leader from Bravo Company, 110th Chemical Battalion. 1st AML and CARA have the technical expertise to retest the samples and provide confirmatory analyses.

Brigadier General Jeffrey J. Snow (commander of the Combined Joint Task Force for the Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction [CJTF-E]), Brigadier General Jae Ho Lee (commander of the ROK Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical [NBC] Defense Command), and Brigadier General Kwan Heon Lee

(commander of the ROK Army Chemical School) observed the training exercise.

This was the second CJTF-E combined exercise held on the Korean Peninsula, and considerable progress has been made. Lieutenant Colonel Ken Pell, executive officer for 1st AML, indicated that the opportunity to work with the ROK NBC Defense Command benefitted personnel from both countries. “Our Soldiers were excited to train with their ROK CBRNE counterparts, and the types of questions the ROK CBRNE soldiers were asking shows me how interested they are to learn and how close we are in CBRNE capabilities,” he said.

First Lieutenant Sarang Lee, a biological analyst with the Mobile Analyses Laboratory, said that he noticed a difference in priorities between U.S. and ROK CBRNE personnel. He indicated that U.S. Soldiers apply a more deliberate process, while ROK soldiers concentrate more on speedy results. He also noted procedural differences in sample collection between the two countries. According to First Lieutenant Lee, U.S. sample collection involves chains of custody and U.S. laboratories are run in a more systematic manner.

Should a conflict break out on the Korean Peninsula, training events and exercises such as Key Resolve and Operation Foal Eagle will prove to be invaluable experiences for the service members and civilians involved. The collaboration and working relationships established could be significant during combined missions on the battlefield.

“Operation Foal Eagle provides us with a means of evaluating our

progress as a combined task force,” said Brigadier General Snow, “and based on conversations with my ROK counterparts and what I’ve seen here during the exercise, this training has been an invaluable experience for both sides. I am looking forward to continuing this relationship in the coming years.”

Specialist Carpenter is a print journalist with the 28th Public Affairs Detachment, Fort Lewis, Washington. He holds a bachelor’s degree in speech from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa.



A demonstration by members of the 110th Chemical Battalion and CARA during Operation Foal Eagle