

Utility Men: Dragon Soldiers on Point With the Army Medical Department in Iraq

By Lieutenant Colonel Vince B. Holman

A common goal of the U.S. Army Chemical Corps and the U.S. Army Medical Department is to protect the force. The Chemical Corps provides the Army with the ability to fight chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats; while the Army Medical Department strives to conserve the fighting strength through combat health service support. Chemical Corps and Army Medical Department Soldiers and units have participated in every stage of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, conducting a variety of missions while demonstrating unmatched dedication and adaptability. An example of the critical linkage of the two entities can be seen in Dragon Soldier “utility men” (officer and enlisted) walking on point with a task force from the 62d Medical Brigade (TF62 MED)—the Army’s only deployed medical task force.

The Operation Iraqi Freedom Medical Task Force provides quality health service support in the Iraqi theater of operations. Two combat support hospitals and one Air Force hospital provide Level III care from seven geographically dispersed locations, and two multifunctional medical battalions provide the full spectrum of joint health service support (combat health logistics, dental services, evacuation, forward surgical resuscitation, hospitalization, optometry services, veterinary services, and treatment). In addition, one combat support hospital provides Level I through V medical care for detainees and one multifunctional medical battalion with an area support medical company provides medical support for Theater Internment Facility Reconciliation Center operations. Task force personnel anticipate providing force health protection support to an at-risk population of more than 450,000 U.S. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines; contractors; coalition partners; and Iraqi security forces. The task force also provides technical supervision of medical assets and conducts nested medical operations, including cooperative medical engagements, across the entire Multinational Corps–Iraq battlespace to improve the health care system of Iraq.

Two Dragon Soldiers—Captain Nicole Von Benken (TF62 MED CBRN officer, security manager, and intelligence officer [S2]) and Staff Sergeant Fredrick Bryant (TF62 MED Battle Cell noncommissioned officer [NCO] in charge)—are key players who, when called upon, are capable of serving in any capacity within the medical task force headquarters. Proven experts in

managing chaos, these individuals have been instrumental in the success of TF62 MED.

CBRN

Although the CBRN threat within the theater has remained relatively benign, the two Dragon Soldiers tirelessly work with the headquarters Force Health Protection Section to quickly analyze information and provide guidance for mitigating potential CBRN threats as they emerge, ensuring the protection of patients and the force. The combined expertise of Captain Von Benken and Staff Sergeant Bryant has bolstered the preparedness of theater hospitals to handle emergency CBRN casualties. The comprehensive CBRN Casualty Plan and periodic simulations of CBRN casualty decontamination ensure that personnel remain proficient in the decontamination and movement of CBRN casualties.

Security

In many organizations, Military Occupational Specialty 74 Soldiers work in the headquarters S2/Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2) or operations and training officer (S3)/Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (G-3) sections. The medical task force is no exception. Dragon Soldiers bring a myriad of security operations experience to the headquarters and to the task force as a whole.

Captain Von Benken provides command guidance for personnel and physical security, antiterrorism (AT), and force protection (FP). She also supervises two senior NCOs in the performance of their duties as security and AT/FP staff NCOs. Her oversight of TF62 MED vulnerability assessments has spurred FP improvements at every subordinate unit location, improving lifesaving capabilities of Level III medical treatment facilities.

Intelligence

The *Task Force 62 Medical Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (MIPOE)* document, which was researched and published by Captain Von Benken and TF62 MED force health protection subject matter experts, is the most comprehensive document of its type in the history of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The template for the MIPOE was constructed

according to Field Manual (FM) 4-02, Appendix B; and the document has become the gold standard for medical intelligence products within the Iraqi theater of operations. It contains comprehensive instructions regarding medical intelligence preparation of the operational environment, such as—

- Define the operational environment.
 - Identify significant characteristics of the environment.
 - Identify the limits of the command area of operations.
 - Establish the limits of the area of interest.
 - Identify the level of detail required and the time available to conduct MIPOE.
 - Evaluate existing information and intelligence of medical significance, and identify intelligence gaps.
 - Collect information required to fill gaps.
- Describe the operational environment effects.
 - Geography.
 - Political and socioeconomic situation.
 - Threat forces capabilities and effects.
 - Infrastructure.
 - Medical infrastructure.
 - Analysis of services provided by nongovernment and international organizations.
- Integrate the threat, and consolidate information.
 - Friendly and enemy courses of action.
 - Geographic-related threat issues.
 - Additional elements of medical information and intelligence.

The MIPOE, which continues to be the “playbook” by which the medical task force conducts mission analysis and the military decision-making process, was submitted to the Defense Intelligence Agency, Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center.

Chemical Soldiers are natural analysts of the operational environment. Captain Von Benken and her section have provided timely, accurate, and relevant intelligence analysis of the operational environment to task force commanders and staff. They synchronize, coordinate, and integrate operational intelligence information across the task force. They support the medical task force deliberate planning effort with requisite intelligence data and serve as the TF62 MED battle staff subject matter experts.

Battle Command

The knowledge and experience of a Dragon Soldier is also beneficial in exercising command and control warfighting functions and systems. Staff Sergeant Bryant was instrumental in assisting the TF62 MED Battle Cell with the execution of battle drills during sixty-five rocket and mortar attacks and fourteen mass casualty situations. Additionally, his timely

review and publication of more than 500 orders have ensured that commanders of the task force and direct reporting units have had the ability to make informed decisions, delegate authority, and synchronize the task force toward mission accomplishment and success. Staff Sergeant Bryant’s technical automation expertise greatly enhances the flow and exchange of information between his section and subordinate units, further promoting his ability to manage arenas not normally in his scope of practice.

Lessons Learned

Based on experience, it was determined that Chemical Corps personnel assigned to a medical task force should complete the following:

- Antiterrorism Level II Training.
- Security Manager Course.
- Battle Staff NCO Course.
- Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Course.
- Middle East Orientation Course.
- Dynamics of International Terrorism Course.
- Responsible Officer Course.
- 70H Plans, Operations, Intelligence, Security, and Training Course or Joint Medical Operations Course.

In addition, Chemical Corps personnel should be proficient with the following software:

- Jail Population Analysis System.
- Command Post of the Future.
- FalconView.
- Fusion.
- Ventrilo.
- ImageWare Systems.
- Internet relay chat programs.
- Microsoft Office products.

Summary

The Dragon Soldier is a valued utility man and an asset to the medical task force. Dragon Soldiers and Army Medical Department Soldiers serving together in forward-deployed medical units collectively protect the force and assist the Army in fighting CBRN threats. All team members develop doctrine for medical task force emplacement across a counterinsurgency operational environment. Chemical Corps officers and NCOs assigned to TF62 MED are critical to mission success. 

Reference:

FM 4-02, *Force Health Protection in a Global Environment*, 13 February 2003.

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