

# CBRNE CO TMs in Support of WMD-E Operations

By Lieutenant Colonel Pete Lofy



The concept of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) company teams (CO TMs) involves the combination and task organization of technical escort (TE) and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) units with decontamination platoons to create a highly effective force for supporting weapons of mass destruction elimination (WMD-E) operations. This concept was put to the test during a 48th Chemical Brigade field training exercise (FTX) and during the Chemical Corps Regimental Week in June 2008.

## A Modular Army

As our Army transforms to modular formations, based mainly on the combined arms formations of brigade combat teams (BCTs), CBRNE units must also adapt to support the warfighter. The concept of CO TMs (combined arms formations) is not new; commanders use combined arms to increase the effects of combat power through complementary and reinforcing capabilities.<sup>1</sup> Maneuver units have organized CO TMs for years, combining armor and mechanized infantry platoons to create “heavy” CO TMs. Chemical battalions have also been task-organizing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) assets into CO TMs for some time. These ad hoc “force packages” were built for specific mission sets, and they supported units training at combined arms training centers and those deployed in combat. Some of the newly transformed CBRN combat support companies are products of this thinking, combining CBRN reconnaissance and decontamination platoons to produce multifunctional CO TM “packages” designed to support BCTs, mainly in a Cold War battle. However, our current operating environment requires more flexible formations that are capable of countering a spectrum of CBRNE threats. Adapting CBRNE structures and capabilities to the modular force will ensure that CBRNE forces are available alongside warfighters in the future.

## WMD-E Operations

Operational-level WMD-E doctrine for joint task force (TF) elimination operations has been established in Field Manual (Interim) (FMI) 3-90.10; however, WMD-E has yet

to be clarified in tactical doctrine. The eight military mission areas, which are described in the “National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction” and further detailed in FMI 3-90.10, consist of—

- Security cooperation and partner activities.
- Threat reduction cooperation.
- Interdiction operations.
- Offensive operations.
- Elimination operations.
- Active defense.
- Passive defense.
- Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) consequence management.

CBRNE forces are manned and equipped to provide direct support and execution of elimination operations (including the tactical tasks of isolation, exploitation, destruction, monitoring, and redirection), passive defense, and consequence management. With regard to elimination operations, CBRNE forces generally support isolation, exploitation, and destruction—leaving monitoring and redirection to contracted support or other U.S. governmental agencies.<sup>2</sup> The ability of CBRNE forces to conduct destruction operations is limited to the small-scale destruction of chemical munitions. TE units carry out these missions daily in the United States and in support of deployed operations.

This article focuses on the remaining two tactical tasks— isolation and exploitation. FMI 3-90.10 describes isolation as “. . . the overall encirclement of the [adversary’s] WMD program.” Some argue with the exact wording of this definition, but it provides a starting point. Presumptive identification, which is a subtask of isolation, is carried out by CBRNE forces. These CBRNE forces could be organic to the maneuver force (such as the CBRN reconnaissance platoon of the BCT), or they could be task-organized, specialized forces (such as TE or mobile analytical laboratories). Presumptive identification gives the combatant commander an initial indication of whether or not WMD material is located at the site; it is only the initial step in verifying whether WMD actually exists.

According to FMI 3-90.10, “The intent of exploitation is to gain an understanding of an adversary’s WMD programs and capabilities to attribute and connect to the adversary’s network, which may determine future targets; collect evidence of a WMD program; and provide protection from immediate WMD threats, if required.”<sup>3</sup> Again, some may argue with this description; but it also serves as a starting point. This brief discussion of WMD-E operations provides a backdrop for developing the structure of and equipping and training CBRNE CO TMs. The structure, capabilities, and missions of these teams can now be detailed; and we can see how they fit into WMD-E.

### Evolution of CBRNE CO TMs

About one month before the 48th Chemical Brigade was activated, the skeleton brigade staff, augmented with subject matter experts and communications equipment from the 20th Support Command (CBRNE), participated in a major command post exercise (CPX) that involved WMD-E operations. We realized that, given the limited number of TE units, we would need to leverage the numbers and capabilities of Soldiers in conventional CBRN units to accomplish WMD-E on a broad scale. This exercise was the first opportunity to put the theoretical construction of the CBRNE CO TM into practice—at least in the world of simulation. The thought and planning that went into the development of these teams was energy well-spent.

During this exercise, the list of possible WMD or sensitive sites was long. The mission of TF 48 (the 48th Chemical Brigade task-organized with appropriate combat support and combat service support units), battalion TFs, and CBRNE CO TMs was to control WMD by conducting WMD-E operations at these sites. The mission was accomplished by task-organizing available assets to form CBRNE CO TMs based on the WMD sites assigned to them. Because no two sites were the same, neither were any two CBRNE CO TMs the same. While some sites lent themselves to chemical or biological storage or



**A CBRN CO TM prepares for missions during the 48th Chemical Brigade FTX.**

production, others were “stockpile heavy” sites, requiring more manpower for elimination. Some sites were very large in scale and scope, requiring the complementary technical expertise of TE and EOD units and the reconnaissance capability of Soldiers in a decontamination platoon. The CBRNE CO TMs planned and executed the following missions and tasks:

- CBRN reconnaissance, decontamination, and monitoring.
- Elimination.
- Disablement (limited).
- On-site analysis of WMD (CBRNE) materials.
- Munitions assessment.
- Render-safe procedures.
- Initial hazards mitigation and packaging.
- TE.

Regardless of the site type or desired end state, there were four basic components of the CBRNE CO TMs—company headquarters (TE, EOD, or conventional CBRN) for command and control and limited sustainment; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives response team (CRT); EOD team (three EOD Soldiers); and a “specialized” decontamination platoon. (See chart on facing page.) These decontamination platoons were outfitted with and trained on the equipment set contained in hazard response platoons currently serving in Iraq. For the purpose of this article, these specialized decontamination platoons will be referred to as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear protection, exploitation, and decontamination (CPED) platoons.

The TE and EOD units were equipped with highly technical, commercial, off-the-shelf equipment; and the CPED platoons were outfitted with a set of equipment similar to the Joint CBRN Dismounted Reconnaissance System, allowing the detection and identification of an array of toxic industrial materials and chemical and biological warfare agents. This equipment also allowed the performance of some exploitation tasks, including presumptive identification, sampling, and packaging of WMD



**A CBRNE CO TM from the 22d Chemical Battalion trains at the First Lieutenant Joseph Terry CBRN WMD Response Training Facility.**

and hazmat. CBRNE CO TMs varied in size from five or six Soldiers (who might be airlifted to conduct an assessment or quick “snatch and grab” at a site) to as many as one hundred Soldiers with augmentation from mechanized smoke and armored reconnaissance platoons (for security purposes).

The basic concept of the CBRNE CO TM was refined; and teams were provided with structure, capability, and a mission during this exercise. These CO TMs were task-organized into a combined arms team from TE, EOD, and conventional CBRN units to expand the WMD-E capabilities of the TE CRT. “Combined arms is achieved through organizational design and temporary reorganization (tailored and task-organized forces).”<sup>4</sup>

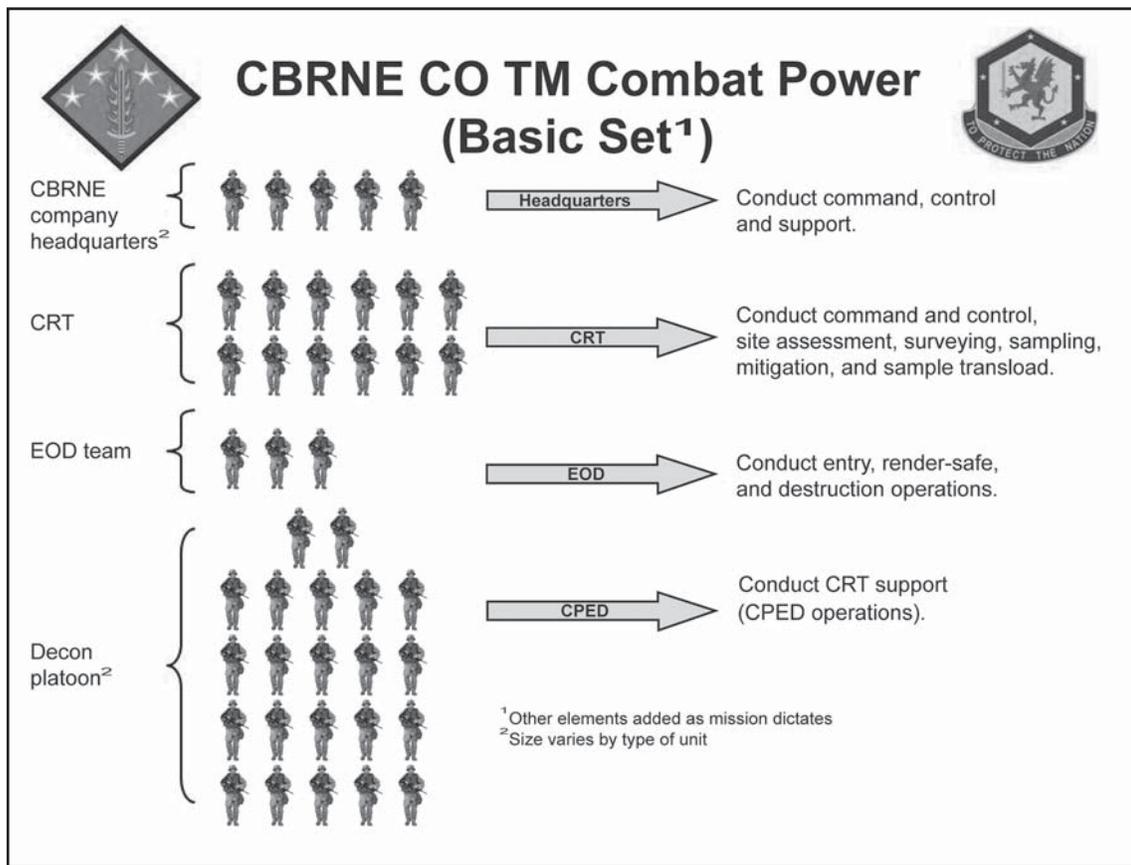
### Concept to Reality

To put the theory into practice, Operation Spartan Agoge Focus I was designed to validate the CBRNE CO TM concept and develop battalion and company level WMD-E tactics, techniques, and procedures for the CBRNE CO TM, CBRNE battalion TF, and brigade. This was done under field conditions and in simulation. For the FTX portion, the 48th Chemical Brigade enlisted the support of the 2d Chemical Battalion. This battalion was transformed into a CBRNE battalion TF (TF 2) by augmentation with a TE company headquarters and CRTs from the 110th Chemical Battalion; a decontamination platoon from the 59th Chemical Company; and a cast of observers,

controllers, and others from all over the United States. TF 2 used many battalion assets to task-organize the attachments into three CBRNE CO TMs. Simultaneously, in the Battle Simulation Center at Fort Hood, battalion TF commanders built and executed simulated missions that were also valuable for furthering the concept of building and employing CBRNE CO TMs.

The scenarios used in the FTX and CPX involved various types of WMD sites (chemical, homemade explosives, biological laboratories, munitions stockpiles)—all of which were developed using lessons learned from recent military and homeland defense operations. The scenarios built for the FTX provided CBRNE CO TMs with realistic training in difficult settings such as tunnel and urban complexes.

As expected, the initial integration of CBRNE CO TMs proved to be somewhat of a challenge, as the different functional units of the team worked to determine how they fit into the newly formed organization. This challenge was overcome by the CBRNE CO TM commanders, who built units that had never been organized and utilized in this manner. In addition, there was no doctrinal basis for forming, equipping, or using these teams. After the initial challenges were overcome, the CBRNE CO TMs performed well and numerous lessons were captured during after-action reviews that occurred during and following the exercise.



CBRNE CO TM Structure

Just weeks after the brigade FTX, the concept of CBRNE CO TMs was again tested—this time during Chemical Corps Regimental Week at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The purpose of this event was to conduct a capabilities exercise (CAPEX), which would further develop tactics, techniques, and procedures and provide senior leaders with a firsthand look at the utility and capabilities of the CBRNE CO TM. The CAPEX was led by a CBRNE CO TM commander and a CRT from the 22d Chemical Battalion. The CPED platoon was from the 59th Chemical Company and had recently graduated from the CBRN Dismounted Reconnaissance Course and participated in the brigade FTX. No additional EOD team members (other than those from the CRT) were used. The 2d Chemical Battalion operations and training officer (S3) designed the challenging scenarios for the CAPEX. Again, the CO TM faced situations that were based on recently acquired intelligence.

Military and civilian visitors from the United States and foreign organizations witnessed the CAPEX, which was conducted in the First Lieutenant Joseph Terry CBRN WMD Response Training Facility and the Chemical Defense Training Facility. Both facilities provided demanding, realistic scenarios for the CO TMs, and the Chemical Defense Training Facility allowed teams to train in the presence of toxic chemical warfare agents. Again, lessons were captured and the CBRNE CO TM concept matured.

CBRNE CO TMs will train during the 48th Chemical Brigade FTX at Fort Hood in September 2008, where they will once again prove their capabilities in support of WMD-E operations.

## Future of CO TMs

Are CO TMs the future of CBRNE structure for WMD-E? Can this concept be applied to other CBRN formations and missions? Are the Chemical and EOD communities and their respective schools ready to support this new structure with doctrine, organization, training, leader development, materiel, personnel, and facilities? Will the CBRNE community adapt to support the warfighter in the contemporary operating environment? These questions cannot be answered here, but the success of this concept should change the way we think about CBRNE force structure and employment and make us realize that we must either evolve as our environment changes or expect to fall behind. 

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### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>FM 3-0, *Operations*, 27 February 2008.

<sup>2</sup>FMI 3-90.10, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High Yield Explosives Operational Headquarters*, 24 January 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>FM 3-0.

### References:

“National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 13 February 2006.

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