

# *The New FP Role of the Chemical Corps*

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*“Under the [Base Expeditionary Targeting and Surveillance Systems–Combined (BETSS-C)] Programme, the Army Asymmetric Warfare Office plans to spend \$1.5 billion to acquire 300 more towers for Afghanistan and Iraq and equip the more than 200 existing towers with improved surveillance, communications, and [command and control] systems.”<sup>1</sup>*

The BETSS-C is only one program that represents a small percentage of the vast amount of money allotted for the “sense and warn” aspect of force protection (FP). Some aspects of FP require a unique set of capabilities and competencies, and the lack of structured FP cells at the battalion, squadron, and brigade levels is a concern. The chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) sections within the current modular organization can provide structured cells from the battalion/squadron level to division/corps level, filling the operational FP cell gap.

Before defining the roles and responsibilities of the FP cell, the definition of FP must first be established. Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 2000.12 defines FP as “actions taken to prevent or mitigate hostile actions against [Department of Defense] personnel (including family members), resources, facilities, and critical information. These actions conserve the force’s fighting potential so it can be applied at the decisive time and place and incorporate the coordinated and synchronized offensive and defensive measures to enable the effective employment of the Joint Force while degrading the opportunities of the enemy. [FP] does not include actions to defeat the enemy or protect against accidents, weather, or disease”<sup>2</sup> The importance of FP to mission success can be inferred from this definition. The role of the FP cell is to execute the commander’s antiterrorism (AT)/FP program. It is the responsibility of the FP cell to ensure that military units are not disrupted while executing their mission-essential tasks.

At the division level, the FP cell coordinates through FP working groups and manages the flow of information down to subordinate units through direct lines of communication. Through criticality and vulnerability assessments, the FP cell identifies potential gaps and weaknesses requiring attention in areas that might be overlooked by units—including the areas of physical security and risk management. The FP cell also manages the combatant commander’s initiative fund for the

acquisition and fielding of new FP technology. In a statement before the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee and Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, Major General Robert Lennox stated, “. . . we have adapted our institutional processes to expedite the latest force protection equipment to our deployed forces, whether they are combat brigades or sustainment forces. We recognize that this enemy is highly adaptive; and we have established systems, enabled by your funding and support, to responsibly procure equipment and promising technologies at an ever-increasing pace.”<sup>3</sup> Advances in technology have led to an increase in the procurement of FP equipment, which is big business in Iraq and Afghanistan today. The fielding of equipment into the country is supervised by program managers; however, once the equipment is signed for, the unit becomes responsible. Because FP is of paramount importance in combat zones, it is necessary to understand how the FP cell functions.

Although the statement of a commander’s intent may emphasize the value of FP in relation to mission accomplishment, actual practice on the ground may not reflect a corresponding level of importance. For example, attempts to identify theater forward operating bases and combat outposts via FP officers during my most recent deployment to Afghanistan met with limited results. The FP officers were comprised of representatives from most branches (including military police, field artillery, chemical, engineer, infantry, and air defense artillery), and they ranged from sergeants first class to majors. Some were AT/FP Level II-certified, but most were not (although FP officers are required to obtain such certification no later than six months after assignment).<sup>4</sup> Most of the FP officers were assigned to that position as an additional duty and were, therefore, wearing multiple operational hats.

As challenging as it was to obtain information at the division level, obtaining it at the brigade level was even more problematic. While units received new equipment at an

accelerated rate, issues with the fielding and implementation of that equipment remained. The lack of a structured FP cell at the battalion/squadron and brigade levels severely hindered the unit's ability to conduct operations. Thus, a structured cell containing preexisting elements in modular units is required for an exemplary FP program.

The current modular division contains four protection cells that operate from the tactical command post—the protection/provost marshal, protection/engineer operations, protection/air defense, and protection/CBRN cells. Combined Joint Task Force 82 was CBRN-based, while its predecessor (Combined Joint Task Force 101) was air defense artillery-based. The protection/engineer operations cell continues to be used in counterinsurgency fights and peacekeeping operations. The provost marshal is engaged with detainee operations. This division model can be used at subordinate level commands with the same effectiveness.

Personnel with experience in the realm of FP are familiar with the maxim “everything is force protection.” However, focusing on “everything” results in a focus on nothing. Under those circumstances, FP becomes ineffective—and the mission and lives are placed at risk. The Chemical Corps has the organization and structure necessary to support FP at all levels, from the battalion/squadron to the corps. As a branch, we should seize the opportunity to make an impact at the highest levels by embracing the FP role. We should focus on training our young officers and noncommissioned officers to be FP experts. ●●●

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Ian Kemp, “Securing the Base,” *Armada International*, Issue 5, October/November 2008, <[http://www.armada.ch/08-5/article-full\\_08-5.pdf](http://www.armada.ch/08-5/article-full_08-5.pdf)>, accessed on 27 October 2009.

<sup>2</sup>DODD 2000.12, *DOD Antiterrorism (AT) Program*, 18 August 2003, <<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/200012p.pdf>>, accessed on 23 October 2009.

<sup>3</sup>“Statement by Major General Robert Lennox, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7; Brigadier General Peter N. Fuller, Program Executive Officer Soldier; Mr. Kevin M. Fahey, Program Executive Officer, Combat Support and Combat Service Support, Before the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee and Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, on the Army Force Protection Programs,” First Session, 111th Congress, 4 February 2009, <[http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/ALSPEF020409/Lennox\\_Fuller\\_Fahey\\_Testimony020409.pdf](http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/ALSPEF020409/Lennox_Fuller_Fahey_Testimony020409.pdf)>, accessed on 23 October 2009.

<sup>4</sup>Army Regulation (AR) 525-13, *Antiterrorism*, 11 September 2008.

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## ALABAMA UNITS ACTIVATE

On 15 April 2009, two more Alabama Army National Guard units entered active duty in support of the War on Terrorism.

Departure ceremonies were held on 21 April for the 1343d Chemical Company at the Fort Payne Army National Guard Readiness Center, Fort Payne, Alabama, and for the 151st Chemical Battalion at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Gadsden, Alabama.

City, county, and state officials joined senior National Guard personnel at the brief ceremonies. Following the ceremonies, both units departed for Fort Hood, Texas, to begin an intensive train-up period.

The 1343d Chemical Company now performs in-theater security missions, and the 151st Chemical Battalion serves as a command and control headquarters for units that provide support services to Soldiers and civilians in Kuwait and Iraq.

With the mobilization of these two chemical units, more than 14,000 Alabama Army and Air National Guard members have been called to active duty in the War on Terrorism since 11 September 2001.