



Joint Senior Leader Course 2009: A Focus on Combating WMD and Providing CBRN Defense

By Lieutenant Colonel Hillary A. Luton

In an international environment where the “if” and “when” of a potential terrorist attack are nearly interchangeable, we must be cognizant of the types of attacks that are possible—if not likely. The Joint Chiefs of Staff Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment Directorate (J8); Joint Requirements Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN); and U.S. Army CBRN School jointly host a course that not only addresses the “if” and “when,” but also covers several topics related to CBRN warfare.

The four-day Joint Senior Leader Course (JSLC), which was most recently held at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, 23–26 July 2009, is also offered in April and December of each year. The course is available to senior leaders from all Services and components with a rank of lieutenant colonel (or O-5 equivalent) or above or sergeant major (or E-9 equivalent), Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, other interagency personnel, and coalition partners interested in CBRN defense and response.

The basic objective of JSLC is to educate senior leaders about DOD policies, programs, organizations, and efforts to combat weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to explain how DOD forces are incorporated into homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities. Students are trained in the areas of CBRN fundamentals, CBRN defense, WMD threats and elimination, consequence management, and coordination against terrorism. In addition to receiving chemical warfare instruction from a historical perspective, participants gain firsthand experience with live-agent training. They also gain an understanding and appreciation of the latest cutting-edge, state-of-the-art CBRN technologies and techniques and have the opportunity to improve the CBRN knowledge base.

JSLC students are introduced to a wide range of agencies involved in defending and reacting to CBRN threats. The course could even be described as “super purple,” in that it brings joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational groups together to collaboratively work on a common problem, thereby elevating the knowledge level and better protecting nations.

The course featured several outstanding speakers, including U.S. Ambassador Donald A. Mahley, former U.S. Department of State special negotiator for chemical and biological arms

control; the Honorable John D. Ashcroft, former U.S. Attorney General; and Dr. Steve Bucci, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas’ Security Affairs. CBRN representatives from all U.S. military branches and several foreign military organizations provided insight into current CBRN defense policies, relations, and activities.

During his presentation, Ashcroft indicated that, although chemical technology has been in existence since World War I, advancements in technology make it necessary to “use technology effectively in order to respond effectively.” He further stated that the purpose of security is to enhance freedom—not to take it away.

Bucci also addressed the importance of national security and the need to be prepared for domestic threats. “We have a viable threat today,” he said. He explained that our enemies have defined what they want to do, described what they can do, and stated that they will not give up. He went on to describe the efforts involved in domestic defense and explain that the domestic plan will man, plan, budget, and equip for a variety of defensive measures, including CBRN threats.

According to Major General Gregg F. Martin, commander of the Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood, CBRN is “the biggest strategic threat to our Nation.” The ability of agencies to communicate effectively, share information, and work together for the benefit of national defense is of paramount importance. Even if it is not possible to determine where and when an attack will take place, it is possible and necessary to be prepared for anything.

For more information on future JSCL courses, contact Mr. Terry Johnson at <terry.johnson28@conus.army.mil>, (573) 563-6090 (commercial), or 676-6090 (DSN).

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