

# First Class Graduates From CBRN Warrant Officer Course

*Article and photograph by Mr. Robert Johnson*

When 14 Army warrant officers recently graduated from the 9-week Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Warrant Officer Basic Course, the total number of CBRN warrant officers in the Army increased to 14.

“This is the first class ever of Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear warrant officers,” said Marine Chief Warrant Officer Five Domah Diggs, director of the CBRN Defense School, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. “These 14 Army [warrant officers] represent the very first in the Army, and they will graduate with seven Marine warrant officers in their class.”

The 14 Army warrant officers understand the importance of being the very first warrant officers of the career field. “We know that we will be looked upon to set the standards and the expectations of the job when we get to our units,” said Warrant Officer Matthew Chrisman. “It will be a lot of pressure on us because no one [in the Army] has ever had a [CBRN] warrant officer assigned to their unit. We literally are going to create our roles in the units.”

According to Mr. Tom Crow, personnel development specialist for the U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School (USACBRNS), the Army CBRN warrant officer was a vision of Brigadier General Stanley Lillie, former commandant of USACBRNS. “This day has been about 6 years in the making,” Mr. Crow said. “[Brigadier] General Lillie wanted a technical person in the field. He felt the warrant officer was the best approach to the increasingly technical aspects of the chemical field. Officers and noncommissioned officers had to focus on their leadership skills as well as the tactical side, and the warrant officer could focus on the technical aspects of the Chemical Corps.”

“In addition to having that technician with the unit, the [CBRN] warrant officer will decrease the necessity of branch-detailing lieutenants into the Chemical Corps,” Crow

added. (Branch-detailing refers to the practice of assigning Soldiers to the Corps for a couple of years before sending them back to their basic branch for the remainder of their careers.)

Colonel David Wilcox, former commander of the 3d Chemical Brigade, was the guest speaker at the CBRN Warrant Officer Basic Course graduation ceremony. He spoke to the graduates about their potential impact in the field and what will be expected of them. He also advised them to seek out the top CBRN officer and noncommissioned officer of the unit and the senior warrant officer on the installation to learn about expectations.

“You can define your role in the unit, but you must realize that we won’t ask you if you know technical aspects of the job. We expect you to know the technical aspects of the job,” Colonel Wilcox said. “Being the first—there will be adjustments. You have to blaze the way.”

The warrant officers’ attendance at the CBRN Warrant Officer Basic Course followed their earlier graduation from the Warrant Officer Candidate Course at Fort Rucker, Alabama, in the spring. The Warrant Officer Candidate Course is a 4- or 6-week course, depending upon rank.

According to Mr. Crow, most of the warrant officers who graduated from the first CBRN Warrant Officer Basic Course will be assigned to artillery and chemical battalions.

The USACBRNS will maintain contact with the new graduates and gather feedback regarding their initial tours to improve the curriculum for follow-on classes and to capture history in the making. “And who doesn’t want to be part of history?” Warrant Officer Chrisman asked. “We’re making it, today.”



*Mr. Johnson is the managing editor of the Fort Leonard Wood Guidon.*



Members of the first class of Army CBRN warrant officers and their noncommissioned officer leaders