

Letter to the Editor



I read with interest Captain Chad M. Baker's article entitled "CBRN Officer Versus CBRN Warrant Officer" [in the Summer 2011 issue of *Army Chemical Review*]. Now that time has passed since my original article¹ and the first warrant officers have completed training, I would like to submit some more thoughts about the topic.

First, I applaud Captain Baker for his willingness to take a position contrary to mine. Knowing that he wrote his article for the Captain's Career Course "Write an Article for Publication" assignment, I still applaud his willingness to take a contrary stance and I hope to someday meet him to thank him for his fine article. As he referred to some of my thoughts and those of Chief Warrant Officer Two [now Chief Warrant Officer Three] Charles McKnight on the subject, I must confess to a small bit of pride: I have now become an elder Dragon, er statesman. [Okay, maybe not!]

Second, I applaud *Army Chemical Review* for publishing Captain Baker's article! It is to the credit of the Chief of Chemical, Colonel Vance P. Visser, and the *Army Chemical Review* editorial staff that Captain Baker's article, which is contrary to current Chemical Regimental trends, was allowed to be published. It is imperative that *Army Chemical Review* be used by branch officers to publish their thoughts and to serve as a forum for alternative points of view. I have personally been told that several of my previous articles caused disagreement.

Third, I applaud the first class of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) warrant officers. They allowed me the privilege of interrupting their hectic training schedule, and we chatted briefly. I was very impressed by those with whom I spoke. They are all outstanding CBRN Soldiers with solid backgrounds and, without exception, college degrees. All of them were grateful for the opportunity to become the first CBRN warrant officers, and they understood that so much rides on their shoulders. I have absolute faith in their ability!

Finally, some thoughts about the good captain's article. Among the negatives that he noted was the inference that warrant officers would get all the good training, leaving the officers as untrained generalists. I personally don't see that officers will be excluded from technical training, as there will never be a large number of warrant officers and there will always be training available. However, proper professional development planning for officers (and warrant officers) is the key.

As for the thought that CBRN warrant officers will take battalion CBRN officer positions from CBRN officers: Yes, they will. However, there will still be a myriad of these positions left. The primary impact of CBRN warrant officers will be to reduce the number of branch-detailed officers in CBRN officer positions. This should not remove the ability of CBRN officers to learn their trade.

As a soon-to-retire "elder Dragon," I am glad that the Chemical Branch has fine officers such as Captain Baker who are willing to ask "Why?" about decisions made and that we have outstanding CBRN warrant officers helping us keep the Chemical Corps vital! Remember: Change happens, so embrace it!

Elementis, Regamus, Proelium! All Honor and Glory to the Regiment!

Endnote:

¹Robert Walk and Charles McKnight, "Do We Need a CBRN Operations Warrant Officer Corps?" *Army Chemical Review*, July–December 2007.

—Colonel Robert D. Walk