

RESERVE UNIT TRAINS ON BIDS

By Sergeant First Class Craig Pickett

The sun set over the Mojave Desert at Fort Irwin, California, as the Army Reserve Soldiers of the 375th Chemical Company set up operations for participation in Operation Sand Castle (OSC).¹ The company ensured that Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Santa Fe were safe by detecting and reporting any biological agents in the night air. The Chemical operations specialists participated in OSC as part of their three-week annual training.

OSC is an exercise designed for Army Reserve engineers to execute construction and support missions in a fully tactical environment, part of a 10-year project to improve the National Training Center (NTC). The

375th was tasked with integrating engineer operations and acting as resident experts on chemical attacks. The mission provided the company with a tactical scenario that trained Soldiers to operate in a desert environment; however, most of the engineer Soldiers didn't see much of the Chemical Soldiers because the agents were deployed at night.

The company's 2006 annual training (conducted in Utah) was more technical and dealt with testing new equipment and working with the other services. Soldiers spent most of their time in mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) gear. In 2007, the Soldiers from the 375th worked extensively with the Biological Integrated Detection System (BIDS)—a self-contained system mounted on a high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) and used to monitor the air and record data.

Soldiers on a BIDS team operate on a twenty-four hour rotation in support of a battalion. "Once [*sic*] something is detected, we call battalion and inform them. At that point, everyone goes to MOPP level four," explained a Soldier from the 375th. At the same time, the BIDS collected and recorded all pertinent data regarding potentially deadly agents. A vial was filled with an air sample, sealed, packaged, and evacuated to a lab where it was analyzed to identify the contents and possible source. "When there is a hit, it is much like a urinalysis sample," said the Soldier from the 375th. The Soldiers took similar steps to ensure that chain-of-custody procedures were documented and never broken.²

The BIDS team in the field continued to monitor the air until it was deemed breathable and then notified the battalion when declaring the all clear. The operations officer and acting commander for the mission felt this was the capstone of all battle assemblies for the 375th Chemical Company. "It's more of a tactical operation that is incorporating everything."

The Soldiers of the 375th were living and working in a field environment, learning much about each other as they spent time together. From eating chow served from a mobile kitchen trailer to pulling guard duty through the night, no training opportunity was missed. For some,



Soldiers from the 375th Chemical Company set up camouflage netting on the BIDS.

this was their first experience in the desert; for others, it was their first field training. One of these Soldiers, a private from St. Louis, summed up the exercise very simply: "I love the 375th; we're like a family. . . . I like doing BIDS, the work is exciting." 🎧

Endnotes:

¹Each month throughout the year, Reserve Soldiers train on one or two tasks.

²It is crucial that personnel follow chain-of-custody procedures when processing a sample, as legality issues may be a factor if prosecution is deemed necessary.



Sergeant First Class Pickett is a member of the 350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, a Reserve unit from Indianapolis, Indiana.

Two Soldiers set up the communications system while others prepare the inside of the BIDS for night operations.



2008 Nominations for the Hall of Fame and Distinguished Member of the Corps Honors



Nominations are being accepted for the Chemical Corps Regimental Association (CCRA) Hall of Fame and Distinguished Member of the Corps honors.

- ⚔ **Hall of Fame.** This award is extended to Chemical personnel (living or deceased) who have spent their professional careers serving the Chemical Corps. Their service to the Corps must be extraordinary.
- ⚔ **Distinguished Member of the Corps.** This award is extended to living members who served the Corps in their professional lives and continue to serve it in their personal lives. Active Army military and current federal civilian personnel are not eligible for the program. The nominations are

limited to personnel who have been retired for at least two years.

For nomination criteria and submission requirements see <<http://www.chemical-corps.org/honors>>. Nomination packets should be sent to:

Commandant
U.S. Army Chemical School
Regimental Historian
ATTN: ATSN-CM-CS-H
Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-8926

All packets must arrive before 5 May 2008. For more information, call (573) 563-7339 or e-mail <david.chuber@us.army.mil> or <christy.lindberg@us.army.mil>.