

The 355th Chemical Company: Training With the Best to Become the Best

By Captain Herschel H. Flowers

The training scenario is set. It is the day before New Year's Eve in Las Vegas, Nevada. While tens of thousands of people are preparing to party, a small group of highly specialized Soldiers and law enforcement personnel embark on a reconnaissance mission. They want to ensure that the excitement which will soon be taking over the Las Vegas Strip comes only from revelers welcoming the New Year—not from unauthorized personnel or substances positioned beneath The Strip.

Although the 92d Civil Support Team from Nevada and local law enforcement personnel regularly participate in these exercises, U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard chemical companies rarely get a chance to experience the fast-paced environments so often encountered by these specialized units. However, four members of the 355th Chemical Company trained with the 92d Civil Support Team during this exercise so that they would be prepared to help out if existing personnel required augmentation. The experience was an invaluable opportunity for the Soldiers to learn from the best in the business.

The four Soldiers of the 355th actively participated in all steps of the exercise, from preparation and equipment preload through the after-action review that was designed to identify areas to be sustained and improved for future missions. Two of

the Soldiers served on the primary support team, and the other two served on the rapid intervention team. Both teams worked with local authorities and members of civilian agencies. The emphasis was placed on force protection to allow the Soldiers to become comfortable in working with law enforcement personnel; however, civilian agencies also had the opportunity to become comfortable with the procedures designed to provide security for Soldiers.

When the exercise was complete, the four members of the 355th returned to their unit with a wealth of knowledge that they are now responsible for passing along to their fellow Soldiers. If the unit is called upon to provide vital support during a large-scale incident, they will be ready. 

Captain Flowers is a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear officer with the Reconnaissance Training Department; Technical Training Division (Reserve Component); U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He holds a bachelor's degree in law and a juris doctorate degree from the University of Costa Rica and a master's degree in international trade law from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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Army Chemical Review
464 MANSCEN Loop, Building 3201, Suite 2661
Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-8926

<leon.mdotacr@conus.army.mil>