



Cougars Conduct Mission Readiness Exercise

By Major Eric Towns

The Port of Tacoma on Commencement Bay in Southern Puget Sound, Washington, was the stage for the culminating event of the September 2009 mission readiness exercise for the 62d Chemical Company “Cougars,” 23d Chemical Battalion, Fort Lewis, Washington. The port served as the “North Westlandian Seaport of Debarkation (SPOD)” during the exercise.

Twenty-four hours before this event, a simulated foreign ship had docked, discharging at least one leaking container. Since then, workers at the North Westlandian SPOD had been complaining of headaches and nausea. The Cougars, who were at “Camp Eagle” (located 25 miles away), were called upon to determine the extent of contamination and eliminate the hazard if possible.

As the sun rose over Mt. Rainier, four Cougar platoons closed in on the port—1st Platoon was the first to arrive. Using two M93 Fox chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) reconnaissance vehicles, they determined the presence of a hazard in the area where the containers had been moved.

The company commander ordered the decontamination platoon to begin terrain decontamination operations using Falcon Fixed-Site Decontamination Systems (FSDSs) and to establish a water resupply point in support of the FSDSs. The Soldiers who were manning the FSDS spray bars and deck guns launched into action and methodically emplaced the decontaminant on the contaminated area of the container yard.

The hazardous response platoon then began executing their battle drills. Their job was to determine from which container(s) the contaminant was leaking, presumptively identify the contaminant, and obtain samples for further analysis. The platoon leader simultaneously orchestrated the setup of the personnel decontamination station, the suiting of the initial-entry party (IEP), and the preparation of the rescue team. She then ordered the IEP to systematically search six containers that were identified on the ship’s manifest. Within 45 minutes, the IEP had detected the presence of a contaminant in two of the containers. Shortly thereafter, a casualty was reported and the rescue team

sprung into action. The casualty was doffed, decontaminated, and treated. Next, the sampling team collected and transloaded the samples. The hazardous response platoon teams were then processed through the personnel decontamination station.

Once the specific containers had been identified, the FSDS operators unrolled their hoses and applied a decontaminant to the interiors and exteriors of the affected containers.

Following the FSDS terrain and fixed-site decontamination and a final Fox survey to confirm the absence of contamination, it was time to conduct decontamination operations on these vehicles and personnel. The 3d Platoon had previously established a detailed equipment decontamination line for the decontamination of vehicles. And in lieu of a standard detailed troop decontamination line, the decontamination of personnel was performed at the personnel decontamination station that had been established by the hazardous response platoon.

After downrange personnel and equipment were decontaminated, close-out operations were conducted and detailed equipment decontamination personnel were processed through the personnel decontamination station. Finally, the personnel decontamination station was closed, final monitoring was conducted, and clothing and equipment were removed from the last of the personnel.

The 62d Chemical Company Cougars proved their ability to perform directed, mission-essential tasks, and the company commander demonstrated his ability to command and control complex CBRN operations.

Editor's Note. The 62d Chemical Company is currently providing consequence management support to the U.S. Central Command area of operations in Kuwait. 

Major Towns is the executive officer, 23d Chemical Battalion. He holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Boston University and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University.

