25th Infantry Division CBRN Section, Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-11: "Tradition" Versus "Reality"

By Major William Joseph Epolito, P.E.

Why write this article? Because there is an institutional push to standardize how divisions could or should use the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) section to meet the commander's requirements and mission sets in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The current threat does not warrant the traditional use of the CBRN section; but the institutional Army has not provided division commanders or, more importantly, division CBRN leaders with the information, tools, or "top cover" to effectively serve as valuable division assets—except for the provision of personnel to fill other, more critical positions such as force protection (FP) officers/noncommissioned officers (NCOs) or liaison or protocol officers. After seven years of persistent conflict, it seems that the U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School (USACBRNS) could do more for CBRN Soldiers in the field. The USACBRNS should provide division CBRN leaders with a "blueprint to success" constructed from the numerous, repetitive, after-action review (AAR) comments from previously deployed divisions.

This article is intended to help CBRN personnel become valuable assets to division commanders without the need to "find their way in the dark." It does not provide a doctrinal solution, and it does not address a specific theater of operations (other than the specification of a counterinsurgency environment). This article does not contain the answers to all problems; it simply offers a method for addressing them.

Traditional CBRN Section Versus New Protection Cell

The modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) for divisional CBRN sections is undergoing a significant shift. For the 25th Infantry Division (ID), that shift will take place in Spring 2010. At that time, the total number of personnel in the 25th ID CBRN section will be reduced from thirteen to ten, with two explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel. In addition, the CBRN section will no longer stand alone; it will be organized under the protection cell.

There are two problems with the new MTOE. First, the protection cell is to be led by a lieutenant colonel who will be required to provide guidance, direction, and oversight of four other lieutenant colonels. Given the diverse missions of the various sections of the protection cell—provost marshal (PM), air and missile defense (AMD), CBRN, and personnel recovery—and the tension that may develop, it seems that the chief of the cell should be a colonel. Second, the loss of authorizations may create hardships for CBRN sections during the next deployment. Many CBRN sections serve as sources of personnel for other command priority positions such as FP officers/NCOs and liaison and protocol officers, and the commander will expect this to continue. This will make it even more difficult for the CBRN section to retain the personnel necessary to effectively execute assigned missions. To compound this problem, EOD personnel cannot be swapped one for one with CBRN personnel because EOD personnel generally become part of the counter improvised explosive device (C-IED) cell during deployment; they do not belong to the CBRN section unless the CBRN section is assigned the C-IED mission. Unfortunately, personnel tasking rosters are usually approved without input from CBRN sections.

The USACBRNS should immediately initiate an information operations campaign to address the new divisional CBRN structure and explain how it can best be used by the

25th ID personnel strength

Grade	Personnel Under Current MTOE	Personnel Under New MTOE	Remarks
O-5	1	1	
O-4	3	3	One 74A replaced with an 89E (EOD)
O-3	1	1	
E-9	1	1	
E-8	0	1	89D (EOD)
E-7	5	3	
E-6	1	0	
E-5	1	0	
	Total: 13	**Total: 10**	

division commander. Further, the new MTOE could best be implemented through the CBRN section assumption of the C-IED mission. This would positively impact the division by assisting the division commander in fulfilling mission priorities. In addition, the C-IED mission is an enduring mission that always requires additional military personnel. It is also the mission that would provide the best opportunity for maintaining CBRN section integrity. The C-IED mission would seem to be a better use of the CBRN section than the FP mission because it would allow the section to retain EOD personnel and it would be better aligned with the changing nature of the Chemical Corps from CBRN-only mission sets to a joint CBRN/EOD mission set, as is the case in the 20th Support Command and technical escort units.

Reality

Relating the experiences of the 25th ID in the areas of section manning and mission planning, CBRN/unit status report (USR) missions, and FP missions may be of some help to those of you who are about to embark upon a similar journey. Perhaps, learning how we dealt with these issues will provide you with a head start that we did not have. Hopefully, this will allow you to be even more successful than we were.

Section Manning and Mission Planning

Section manning and mission planning were the first pressing issues we faced. Our situation was complicated by the fact that the "top three" (chief, deputy, and sergeant major) arrived just months before our deployment. Although the previous leadership was responsible for preparing the section for deployment, the outgoing leaders may have lacked the focus and planning necessary for adequate preparation. This potential problem could be mitigated by assigning the top three during the reset period[1] of Army force generation.

Section manning was our main issue. Although we were manned at full strength, we were tasked to provide the protocol chief, the tactical command post operations officer, and three liaison officers. While we were aware that there would be some taskings, we did not expect to be tasked for five personnel—especially since we were to be assigned the CBRN/USR and FP missions. But, by outlining our mission, personnel requirements, and impacts due to personnel reductions, we were able to reverse the loss of three additional section personnel. The CBRN/USR and FP missions had previously been conducted by twelve personnel from two different sections (versus the nine personnel we were to have in our section). To help mitigate this shortage, we worked with the PM section to obtain an attached military police NCO that could serve as a subject matter expert in the FP cell. Based on our experience, we highly recommend that CBRN sections begin aggressively inquiring about the tasking roster (which is generally kept close-hold until just a few months before deployment) very early in the process—possibly even acquiring a backdoor copy of the roster before it is approved. Waiting too long to learn of personnel taskings negatively impacts mission preparation and training.

The solidification of our deployed mission to a nontraditional environment was a secondary issue. The CBRN/USR mission was assumed; but we requested to retain the FP mission (a repeat mission from our last deployment), and our chain of command concurred. This allowed us to maintain unity in the section and avoid sending personnel to execute other missions. Given the current MTOE, the FP mission is the most realistic and logical CBRN mission, since CBRN is a part of the overall FP mission and since the PM section is often too busy to execute their doctrinally assigned FP mission. We recommend that CBRN sections assume missions that allow them to maintain as much section unity as possible. Personnel who are tasked outside the CBRN section do not receive the same personal attention or branch-specific professional development as those who remain within the CBRN section. This situation can be somewhat mitigated by maintaining a connection with tasked personnel; however, it can be difficult to maintain such a connection when personnel are located at different installations.

The implementation of Army-wide solutions to issues that are identified by units is a very slow process. Therefore, we also recommend that you search for AARs and implement as many relevant recommendations as possible. Many correctable problems are repeated tour after tour because no one spent the time or manpower necessary to research applicable AAR recommendations.

CBRN/USR Missions

Our main CBRN/USR mission was to manage equipment and respond to and assess hazmat caches and unexploded chemical rounds. This article addresses three main areas—predeployment training, CBRN equipment readiness, and brigade combat team (BCT) reconnaissance platoon employment.

Recommendations for predeployment training include—

- Technical escort training for some division CBRN NCOs and the entire BCT reconnaissance platoon. This training provides relevant, in-depth information about hazmat and CBRN response.
- Resident and deployment-focused hazmat training using toxic industrial chemical protection and detection equipment (TICPDE). This training covers the response to, and assessment of, discovered hazmat and unexploded chemical rounds.

Much of the CBRN equipment available to maneuver units in the deployment environment is nonstandard, off-the-shelf equipment that requires specialized training and maintenance for operation. Two primary examples of this equipment are the Fixed-Site Decontamination System and TICPDE. The Fixed-Site Decontamination System, which is used for terrain and airfield decontamination, consists of a pickup-mounted, hose-and-nozzle assembly that sprays a foamy substance. The TICPDE set is used in responding to and assessing discovered hazmat.

The primary mission of the BCT reconnaissance platoon is to perform CBRN reconnaissance in support of the BCT, but reconnaissance platoons also conduct non-CBRN missions such

as personal security detachment and route clearance missions. The 1/25 Stryker BCT enhanced our commander's mission by forming a partnership with EOD attached support and assuming the role of a weapons intelligence team (WIT) to quickly respond to a CBRN mission. Since many CBRN response missions were conducted with or in support of EOD units, this was a "marriage made in heaven." EOD personnel used the reconnaissance platoon for augmented security, intelligence collection and, when necessary, CBRN response. Three 1/25 Stryker BCT Soldiers were sent to a seven-week National Ground Intelligence Center WIT course; when they returned, they conducted platoon training on the WIT mission. The concept of joint CBRN and EOD is a win-win situation that should serve as a model for all BCT reconnaissance platoons to emulate.

FP Missions

The FP mission is the most frequent additional task assigned to CBRN sections; it is also one of the areas in which most personnel require additional training and guidance to make an immediate impact. This article addresses FP mission areas involving references, organization and manning, planning, training, and funding.

The primary FP mission references are Army Regulation (AR) 525-13 and Field Manual (FM) 3-0 for overarching principles and policy and Graphic Training Aid (GTA) 90-01-011 for deployment operations and policies. FM 3-37, which is a new but very useful reference, should be used for organization and planning (including the organization and planning of the FP mission) within the protection cell. Other useful references include unit and echelons-above-unit standing operating procedures, operation orders, fragmentary orders, and on-the-job training. There are many other Department of the Army (DA) references; however, we did not find them to be very useful in planning and executing our deployed FP mission.

The organization and manning of the CBRN section are critical to effectively and efficiently execute the FP mission—especially considering the likely low personnel strength of the section. Figure 1 shows what is, in our experience, the most effective method of organizing the CBRN section for the FP mission. However, due to personnel shortages, we were unable to fully adopt this organization. In our case, I was the deputy and was also forced to serve as the FP officer—a position which required about 80 percent of my time. In addition, we were unable to hire a DA civilian FP manager in time for deployment.

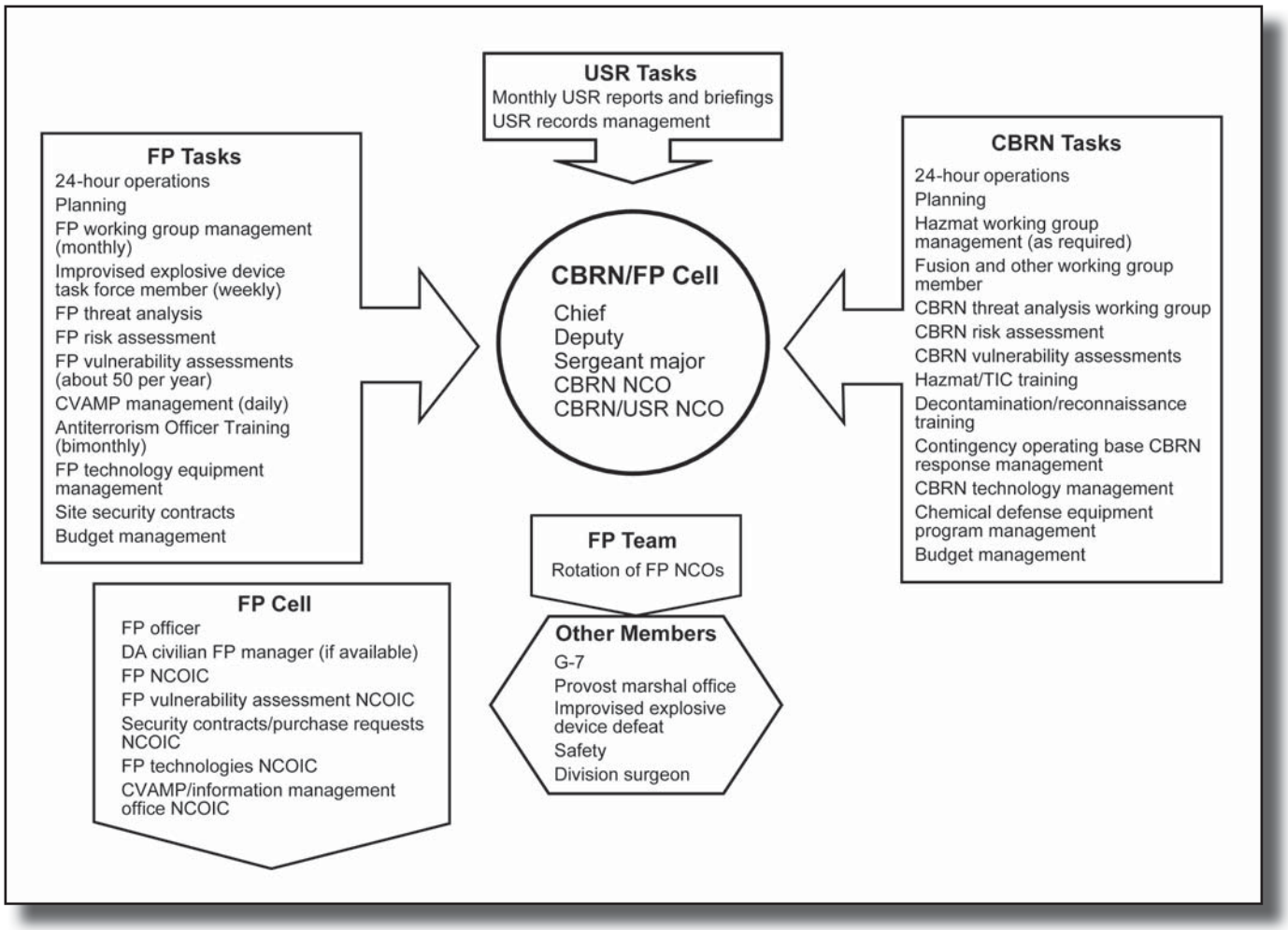

Figure 1. Organization of the 25th ID CBRN section

Fortunately, the attached military police NCO that we were able to obtain for assistance with the FP mission allowed us to accomplish more than we would have otherwise. Because the Military Police Corps is the proponent for FP, it is a great resource from which to seek assistance—even if attaching an NCO is not possible. Considering the strength of the CBRN section, the best solution would be to assign a field grade officer as the FP officer and 60 to 75 percent of the section personnel to the FP mission, as that is the mission that requires the most manpower and time. The CBRN/USR mission can be accomplished by two highly capable senior NCOs, with only leadership and guidance from the chief, deputy, and sergeant major, who are then available to provide leadership and direction to the entire section. Due to the upcoming changes in CBRN section personnel authorizations based on the new division protection cell concept, the availability of personnel to execute the FP mission will change in the future. You will need to reconsider personnel assignments and execution to effectively accomplish the FP mission.

Planning is another major component of the FP mission. Our first planning effort involved understanding the mission and determining how to execute it. To do this, we used AR 525-13 and FM 3-0 to develop a campaign plan concept in which we referred to FP as the "Kevlar fabric that protects our Soldiers" (see Figure 2). Now that FM 3-37 has been published, it should also be used. Through the initial planning, we became aware of the very broad nature of FP and the necessity of working closely with many other division staff sections, including the surgeon; engineers; and safety, PM, AMD, aviation and personnel recovery, information operations, and EOD sections. Our second planning effort involved the incorporation of our subject matter expertise in division planning efforts. At first, this was difficult because we were not a part of the operations and plans (G-3) "inner circle." But, after demonstrating what we could offer, we were able to work our way into becoming an integral part of the division planning efforts. In addition, the 25th ID commanding general and command sergeant major took the opportunity at many planning briefings and updates to stress the importance of FP. We recommend that you encourage your commanding general and command sergeant major to do the same. This will help ensure your access to, and influence over, division planning efforts. If personnel are available, we also recommend that at

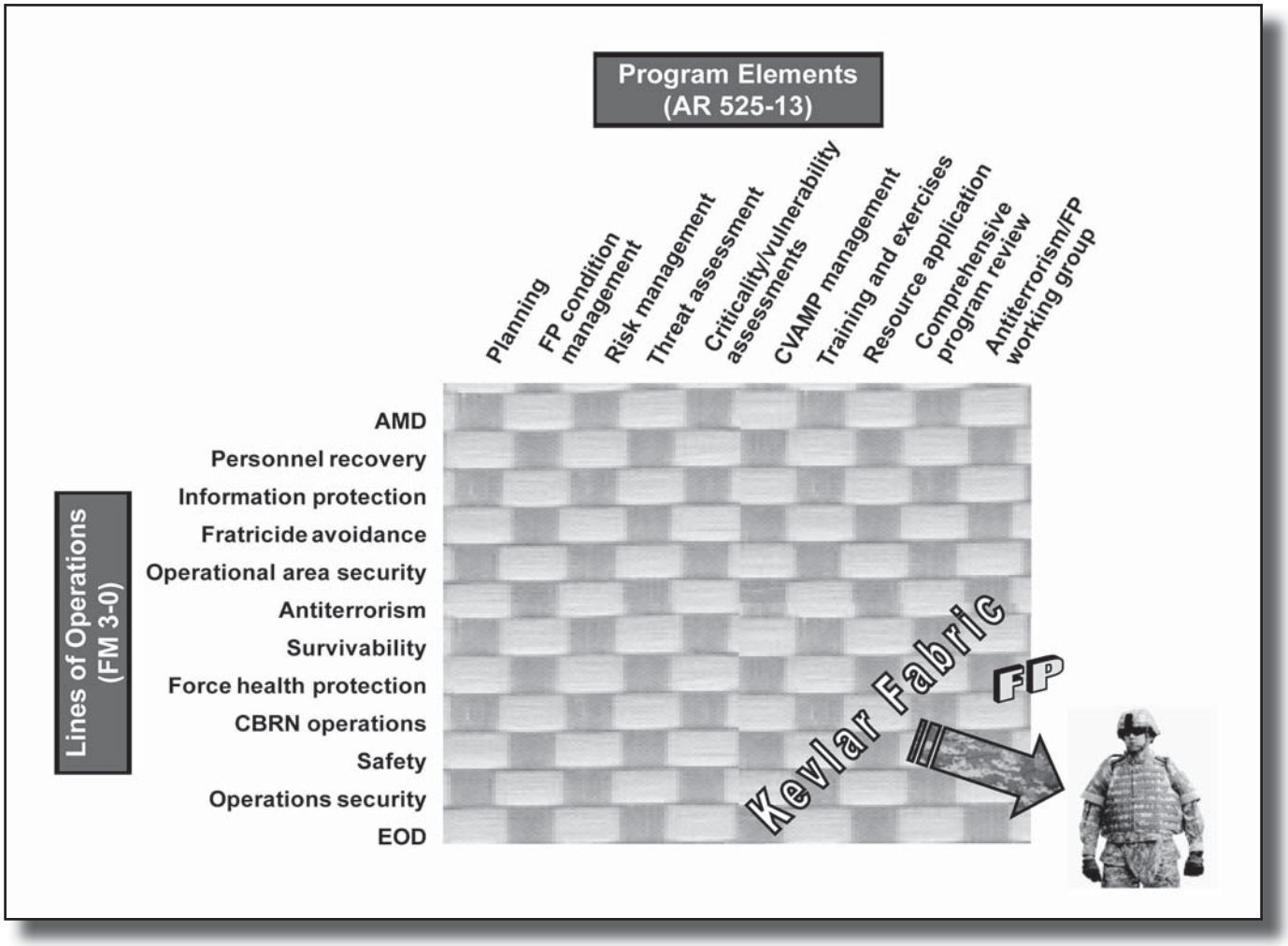

Figure 2. 25th ID CBRN/FP campaign plan concept

least one person be attached to the future operations cell to help maintain situational awareness.

Training assists in effectively executing the FP mission. Nearly all training should be conducted in the rear before deploying. The most wide-reaching predeployment training is Antiterrorism Officer Training. All personnel are required to complete a one-hour, Level I course, which can be accessed online or taken in person from a trained, Level II instructor. All FP officers and NCOs at battalion level and above are required to complete a one-week, Level II basic course, which is generally conducted by mobile training teams (MTTs) at local installations. However, all section personnel—whether they conduct FP missions or not—should attend the training. This allows maximum flexibility in the event that the section becomes short-handed due to leave or other situations. While this training is available in theater, it is often difficult for personnel to attend due to mission requirements and travel time. Division level FP officers are required to complete a one-week, Level II advanced course, which is offered at the U.S. Army Military Police School, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. We recommend that the chief, deputy, sergeant major, FP officer (if other than the deputy), and FP noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) also attend. "Victory over terrorism" (VTER) funds are available through the garrison FP office for attendance at this course. Although the Level II basic and advanced courses do not provide much training on the execution of deployed FP missions, they do cover fundamental FP concepts and procedures that will assist with mission execution. Level IV training, which is generally conducted biannually in one central location, is recommended for commanders (O-6 and above). Due to the current operational tempo, it is difficult to schedule personnel to attend this training.

The Contracting Officer Representative (COR) Course and Master Camera Course are also useful. While you will not serve as the COR, you will most likely manage private security contracts. The one-week, MTT COR Course will help you understand the process and COR responsibilities and assist with contract management. The 24-day Master Camera Course, which is conducted at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, consists of instruction on the capabilities and limitations of tower and aerostat technologies that are managed by the FP section. Other useful local or online FP training courses include physical security courses, MTT C-IED training, and Core Vulnerability Assessment Management Program (CVAMP) training; the CVAMP training is available through the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) Antiterrorism Enterprise Portal.

Although funding is generally a complex, complicated nightmare, there are two programs in place to ensure that the critical FP mission receives adequate funding—the VTER and Combating Terrorism–Readiness Initiative Fund (CbT-RIF) programs. VTER funds, which are normally allocated to, and managed by, major command antiterrorism offices, are used for equipment, supplies, training, and exercises for emerging antiterrorism/FP requirements when other funding is not available. The funds cannot be expended on in-theater deployments, but can be used in the garrison environment. The CbT-RIF is similar to VTER funds, but CbT-RIF funds are managed at higher levels and are usually used for very expensive items and projects. A long lead time is required for the approval of CbT-RIF expenditures. Additional information regarding CbT-RIF funds can be found in GTA 90-01-011.

The Rapid Equipping Force is a very efficient and effective source. It is a funding/fielding program that generally provides off-the-shelf equipment and technology and is available for the funding of short-term, deployed FP requirements. We often used the Rapid Equipping Force for surveillance, speed mitigation, sniper screens, and other vulnerability mitigation. The force integration officer can be consulted for more information regarding this funding source.

A great division FP section not only identifies vulnerabilities, but also helps the unit mitigate them. Funding is a key component to that mitigation, and the unit often needs the help of the FP section to "break through the red tape." For example, when we arrived in Iraq, the assistant chiefs of staff for logistics (G-4), signal (G-6), and engineers (G-7) processed most of the division purchase requests and commitments (PR&Cs) without staffing them through our FP section to ensure that they met FP requirements and standards. However, we immediately began working with the G-4, G-6, and G-7 to effectively manage FP-related PR&Cs and to champion the PR&Cs required to mitigate the vulnerabilities. We recommend that you do the same.

Summary

We recommend that you take the following actions to make the CBRN/USR and FP missions work:

- Plan for all assigned and expected missions immediately. This is necessary for selling your capabilities and keeping your section together.
- Assume significant reductions in the number of section personnel, and immediately begin fighting to retain personnel.
- Seek additional subject matter experts from the PM section if you are responsible for the FP mission.
- Network with division staff. Much information can be obtained through these backdoor relationships.
- Seek additional missions if CBRN/USR is your only assigned responsibility. The traditional mission is not enough to maintain section unity.
- Search for AARs, and implement as many recommendations as possible. Many correctable problems are repeated tour after tour because no one spent the time or manpower required to make the necessary corrections.
- Conduct garrison CBRN and other mission training before deployment; do not wait to be notified that it is available.
- Convince garrison organic BCTs that using the reconnaissance platoon as a WIT is the best use of platoon expertise, manpower, and equipment.

- Learn the mission of deployed, task-organized BCTs, and ensure that attached BCT reconnaissance platoons are properly staffed before arriving in theater. If possible, convince the BCTs to use the reconnaissance platoons as WITs.
- Encourage your commanding general, deputy commanding general, and command sergeant major to stress the importance of FP whenever possible—especially during planning briefings and updates. This will provide you with many opportunities and help you gain the influence and resources that you need to protect the force.
- Use the skills that every CBRN officer and NCO has learned throughout their career. Claw, scratch, fight, and beg your way to making an impact in your unit. You will likely be surprised at how staff savvy you are in relation to Soldiers from other career fields.

Conclusion

This article is intended to fill an information void and describe the institutional push to standardize how divisions could or should use CBRN sections. While our traditional mission sets may not be as relevant to today's counterinsurgency operations, our skills, experience, dedication and, most of all, our intense drive to make a difference are. If we provide the division with what we have to offer, we will become relevant once again—maybe not for our CBRN skills, but for our ability to make a difference no matter where we are.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Lieutenant Colonel Forté Ward (CBRN chief), Sergeant Major Melvin Fields (CBRN sergeant major), Master Sergeant Dewayne Hackey (FP NCO), Master Sergeant David Kenner (PM FP NCO), Sergeant First Class Jay Hart (FP NCOIC), Sergeant First Class Chauncy Hatcher (CBRN/USR NCO), Sergeant First Class Oscar Manners (CBRN operations sergeant), Sergeant First Class Michael Peterson (PM FP NCO), Staff Sergeant Anthony Rowley (FP NCO), and Staff Sergeant Jammie Camacho (FP NCO) for their support during this deployment and for their contributions to this article. We would not have succeeded without you!

Endnote:

[1]The term "reset" is used to describe the period during which a unit undergoes Soldier-family reintegration, staffing and equipping regeneration, and limited individual training that renders the unit capable of performing civil support operations.

References:

AR 525-13, *Antiterrorism*, 11 September 2008.

FM 3-0, *Operations*, 27 February 2008.

FM 3-37, *Protection*, 30 September 2009.

GTA 90-01-011, *Joint Forward Operations Base (JFOB) Force Protection Handbook*, December 2006.

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Editor's Note. *A for-official-use-only (FOUO) version of this article is available at* <https://protectionnet.bcks.army.mil>.

86th Chemical Mortar Battalion Reunion

The 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion Association will hold a reunion at the Guesthouse Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, 14–18 April 2010. Special entertainment is scheduled for Thursday night, 15 April.

For more information, write to Mr. George Murray, 818 West 62d Street, Anniston, AL 36206, or e-mail him at <*gputzer1024@yahoo.com*>.