

Weapon Storage Site Inspections

by First Lieutenant Justin W. Verhey

Weapon storage site inspections are used to ensure the Entity Armed Forces (EAF) of Bosnia-Herzegovina maintain accountability of their weapons and munitions. The accountability is then checked regularly by SFOR. The Dayton Accords and the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) make the EAF store all their weapons in centralized locations. These sites range in size from company-sized arms rooms to corps-sized installations. Each location is responsible for maintaining accountability of all the weapons and ammunition at the site. The sites are checked regularly to ensure no weapons have been moved on or off the site without permission from SFOR. These inspections are important since they ensure the EAF are not mobilizing their equipment for use against SFOR or another entity.

This article will outline the steps necessary to successfully complete an inspection. The article is based upon the Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment's SOPs and experiences in Bosnia. It is also based upon observations watching the Russians conduct inspections around Bijelina, in Northeast Bosnia.

The inspection process can be broken down into three distinct phases; preparation, pre-inspection, and the actual inspection. The process should begin a week before the actual inspection occurs with the preparation phase. The success of the operation is dependent upon this first phase of the operation.

The preparation phase begins by signing out the weapon storage site (WSS) folder from the S2. As a minimum, the folder contains a map of the compound and an inventory of what is stored there. However, most folders contain much more. The better folders also have all of the previous inspections, movement documents, and destruction certificates. While at the S2, the inspection leader should also make sure the EAF is notified through the Joint Military Commission (JMC). Also, he should ask if there are any PIR for the site, such as conditions of the weapons, construction at the site, or weapons of special interest.



Inspecting officer checks small arms storage at Bosnian site. - Photos: ILT Shane Celeen

The most important information in the folder is the inventory list. The nomenclatures of some items on the list are in Serbo-Croat, while others are in English. The inspector should become familiar with as many of the weapons on the list as possible. I found a good way to accomplish this was asking interpreters with military experience to help in identification. In an ideal operation, this same interpreter will accompany you for the inspection to aid in the identification. Another good source of weapon and ammunition identification is the EOD team. They often have pictures of all the weapons and in some cases the weapons themselves. The time spent learning the equipment saves time during the actual inspection. Also, if you are familiar with the weapons and ammunition, it will eliminate confusion during the inspection.

The inspection list is also invaluable because it will aid in the plan of execution for the site. The smaller the inventory, the fewer people need to be involved in the operation. The most basic site will just need an inspection team of 3-4 people and an outside security team made up of 5-6 soldiers. If the site is large, several inspection teams might be needed along with the outside security team.

The second vital item in the WSS folder is the site map. Sometimes the map is

complemented by satellite images of the site. Using these assets, plan where to position your vehicles (we normally utilized up-armored HMMWVs for the inspections). The outside vehicles need to be positioned both to provide security of the site and to aid in quick entrance and exit to foster a professional image. Some sites have room inside for parking the vehicles, while some don't. In the first case, at least two vehicles must be positioned outside the compound to provide security and possibly isolate the compound if a situation arises. When positioning the vehicles, analyze the terrain and the buildings in the area to maximize the fields of fire into a compound. Also consider the avenues of approach into the compound. What can you realistically cover? The vehicles on the inside need to be positioned so they can quickly leave and do not interfere with movement inside the camp. If there is no room for the vehicles inside, the inspection team should park as close to the gate as possible, while the outside security section needs to set up in a good overwatch position. If possible, coordinate with the previous unit that inspected the site to find out where they positioned their vehicles and any problems that arose during the last inspection.

During the preparation phase, we rehearsed detailed contingency plans. We foresaw several possible areas in which problems might arise. The contingencies we foresaw included weapon seizures, a fire or explosion in the compound, threats to the inspection teams by the EAF, hostage situations, or a large civilian crowd assembling at the compound. Every soldier must know exactly what to do in these situations to avoid confusion.

The most important contingency to rehearse is that of a weapon seizure. If a weapon needs to be seized, wait until the entire inspection is complete to seize the weapon. Assess the stability of the weapon. If there is a question of the stability of the weapon, call higher and ask for EOD assistance at the site. If the weapon is safe, have the vehicles go to REDCON 1. If vehicles are inside the compound, drive a vehicle to the building where the weapon is stored and quickly place the weapon inside the designated



At left, a column of T-35-85s and a Soviet-built transport helicopter in storage at a weapons site in Bosnia.

At lower left, a T-54 and an APC.



this case, note the new location of the weapon and move on. Sometimes, major movements occur inside the compounds and writing down the new locations is not practical. When this occurred, we demanded that the EAF provide us a copy of the new inventories to avoid confusion on where the equipment was moved. If a discrepancy cannot be explained during the pre-inspection, remind the entity that if the discrepancy cannot be resolved during the inspection, the equipment is subject to confiscation. Only two teams are involved during the pre-inspection, the outside security team and the inside paperwork team. The inside team should only have three people involved in the inspection; the inspector, an interpreter (again the interpreter should have military experience), and a security/RTO man positioned outside any building the team goes to. The outside security team consists of vehicle drivers, vehicle gunners, an interpreter, and a team leader.

vehicle. We brought a five-ton truck to sites where we had problems with the pre-inspection, to ensure we could remove any type or amount of ammunition or equipment. The key to this contingency is speed, so the EAF does not have time to alert the local population that SFOR is taking their weapons.

Another contingency that needs to be addressed is that of a fire or explosion inside the compound. A centralized rally point needs to be designated for this contingency. If the inside inspection team felt threatened, the contingency plan called for everybody at the site to chamber a round, the vehicles to go to REDCON 1, and the inspection team to quickly go to its vehicles and leave the compound. The same plan would be implemented if the outside security felt threatened by either a large crowd or by the EAF. Finally, if a hostage situation ever developed, the outside vehicles would immediately seal off the compound and would not let anyone in or out. The idea is that if SFOR

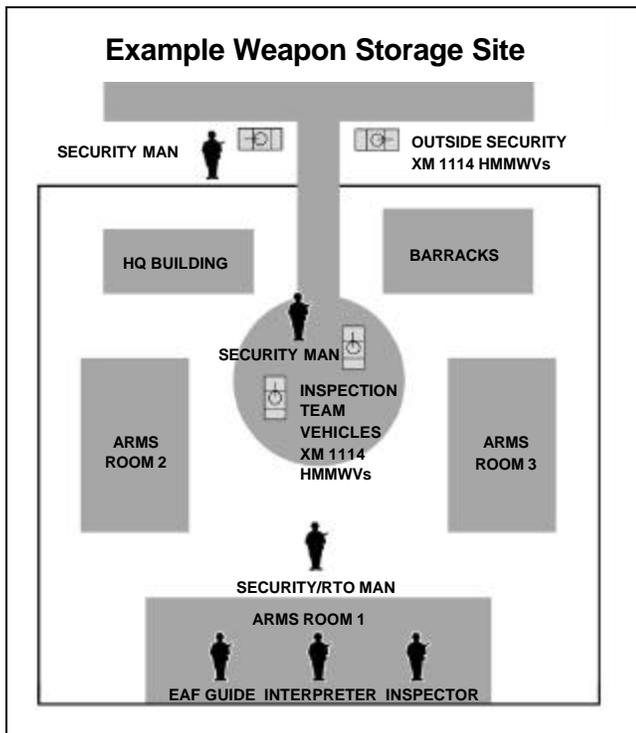
personnel are taken hostage, then SFOR will hold everyone at the site hostage.

During the preparation phase, assemble and check the necessary equipment. We used the PCI list shown in Figure 1. As soon as your NCOs complete the PCI checklist, the pre-inspection can begin.

The next phase is the pre-inspection phase. The pre-inspections are conducted 48-72 hours prior to the actual inspection. The pre-inspection compares SFOR's and the entity's paperwork to identify and resolve inventory discrepancies before the inspection. If there is a discrepancy, it is usually explainable. The normal causes of discrepancies are that weapons were moved or destroyed since the last inspection and SFOR's inventory has not been updated. If this situation arises, find the document that details the movement or destruction and note the document control number. Another cause of discrepancies is that the EAF moves weapons between arms rooms and does not tell SFOR about it until the pre-inspection. In

Another reason for the pre-inspection is to quickly brief the EAF on your inspection plan. Tell the EAF the day of the actual inspection and roughly what time the inspection will start. Also tell them how many inspection teams you will have in the compound so they will have the correct number of guides. During the entire pre-inspection the EAF will feel you out. Act professionally to gain their confidence, which will aid in the inspection itself. The EAF are striving to be professional soldiers and will be easier to work with if you are also.

The last phase is the actual inspection. The same personnel that participated in the pre-inspection need to participate in the actual inspection. The inspection team's vehicles need to be positioned before the inspection starts, preferably in the same positions. At the minimum, each inspection team needs an inspector, an interpreter, and a security/RTO ele-



ment. The idea is to minimize the number of people inside the buildings of the compound. On some inspections other people, such as the S2, EOD, or a JMC representative, will accompany the inspection. The rest of the platoon needs to stay with the vehicles and maintain security around them. The inspection teams should immediately link up with the EAF and begin the inspection. During the inspection, the security man should remain outside the EAF's arms rooms and keep the rest of the platoon informed of the location of the inspection team. It is important for the security man to send regular SITREPS even if there is little to report. This keeps the outside element alert and ready to react if a situation arises.

The platoon leader who conducts the inspection is the key to the entire operation. He needs to be organized and efficient. All the equipment at the site does not need to be counted every time. The JMC handbook states all air defense, heavy weapons, and heavy weapon ammunition needs to be counted every time. Then only one of the following needs to be counted: long-barreled weapons, mines, tube-launched projectiles and ammunition (37mm and above), and grenades. The remaining three categories need spot-checking. The next time the site is inspected, choose another category to inventory. Then repeat this process on future inspections until all categories have been inventoried. In reality, the process the handbook recommends will rarely work because the EAF may move equipment in and out of arms rooms, and the unit doing the inspection is not always

of the equipment is stored in crates with the type and number of items inside clearly labeled on the crate. It is fine to count the numbers on the crates, but spot-check a few of the crates to ensure the numbers are correct. If a discrepancy exists for a particular room, recount the disputed item. If the discrepancy still exists, note it down and move on. More often than not, the discrepancy will be corrected in another room. This is fine as long as the amount of equipment or ammunition at the site remains the same. While you are at the site, ensure you check all the items on the inventory. When this is done, the inspection is complete.

If there was a discrepancy that was not resolved, the disputed equipment is subject to confiscation, which must be authorized by the battalion commander. He can also adjust the inventory at the site and hold the EAF responsible for the new number on future inspections. If a confiscation does occur, all equipment will be confiscated 1 for 1, regardless of whether it is an overage or a shortage. For example: if the EAF is accountable for 100 AK-47s and you only can find 95, confiscate 5 rifles. When a confiscation occurs, fill out a DA 4137 form and give a copy to the

the same due to unit rotations and troop taskings. The best way to inspect the site is to simply count 100% of all categories.

No matter which category you decide to inspect, decide upon a way to inspect each room and stick with it throughout the entire inspection. The key to the actual inventory is counting the munitions at the site in a consistent manner. If you do not inventory the site in a consistent manner, *you will fail*. I found the best way to inspect was to start at one side of the room and work across the room. A lot

EAF. Do not apologize for the confiscation. The EAFs signed the GFAP and agreed to abide by the rules. SFOR is merely in Bosnia to fairly uphold the agreement.

Regardless of whether a seizure occurs, execute a professional exit. This complements the entire professional appearance that you uphold throughout the entire inspection. When the platoon returns from the inspection, completely debrief the S2 and the battle captain on what occurred during the inspection. Remember to cover any PIR that was requested. Also update the WSSI folder with any changes to the inventory or site plans that you discovered. It is a good idea to check the folder a week after the inspection to ensure these changes were noted. Finally, conduct an AAR with the entire inspection team. More often than not, even the lowest-ranking soldier can see something to improve upon. As soon as this is done, the mission is complete.

1LT Justin W. Verhey was commissioned at the University of Colorado at Boulder in December 1996. He deployed to Bosnia from October 1997 until March 1998, working out of Eagle Base, Camp Bedrock, and Camp Uglivek. Currently, he is the scout platoon leader for 1-37 AR in Friedberg, Germany. He has attended the Armor Officer Basic Course and Airborne School.

Weapon Storage Site Equipment/PCI List

Per Team	In a Vehicle
Short Range Commo like PRC 126	Crow Bars
Inventory of Site	Hammers
Site Map	Bolt Cutters
Clipboard	Chisels
Camera	Tanker Bars
Extra Pens	Wire Cutters
Flashlight w/extra batteries	
DA 4137S (for confiscation)	
JMC Handbook	
Interpreter	
Chalk	
Seals (To seal boxes that you want to avoid re-inventorying in the future)	
Scratch Paper	
Calculator	

Figure 1: WSSI Inspection Packing List