

Obtaining Maximum Effectiveness From Your Chemical Assets

by Captain Tom Duncan

One of the most significant trends we have seen on the Bronco 62 Team (Brigade NBC Training Team) at the National Training Center (NTC) is difficulty integrating chemical assets into a task force or brigade combat team scheme of maneuver. This results in inadequate combat support from chemical assets and poorly developed unit Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) defense measures. Failure to integrate all the battlefield operating systems into each operation increases the difficulty of achieving your objectives and can cost soldiers their lives. Reversing this trend requires a two-pronged attack.

First, we must educate combat arms officers, specifically task force (TF) and brigade combat team (BCT) commanders, operations (S3) and executive officers (XO), on how to get the highest possible return from their NBC section and chemical section with minimum effort.

Also, the Chemical School, the Combat Training Centers, and individual chemical soldiers must continue to strive toward improving our corps.

This article will focus on the first initiative, educating combat arms officers on the best use of chemical assets as a combat multiplier. You should expect your chemical officer (CHEMO) to aggressively pursue his role in the military decision-making process (MDMP), but the S3 or XO must also be aware of what to expect from him in order to assist in his professional development. My intent is for this article to serve as a start point toward understanding what to expect from your NBC staff section, and to familiarize you with some of the doctrinal references available to assist you in overseeing your chemical staff and attached assets.

Lack of NBC Asset Integration

It is Training Day 04 at the NTC. The brigade combat team's armor battalion



approaches the enemy's obstacle belt and prepares to establish a deliberate breach.

Although the task force commander has a mechanical smoke platoon and an NBC reconnaissance squad in his task organization, he will not use them in this fight. His task force chemical officer has not presented, or been asked for, recommendations on how to use these combat multipliers. The task force commander is also unaware that the chemical officer has not talked with the task force S2 to ensure accurate templating of enemy chemical munitions targeting. As a result, he will not see how the enemy will use these munitions to shape the battlefield.

His task force immediately begins to receive direct and indirect fire. Attrition

of the breach team significantly slows their efforts, allowing the enemy time to target the armor task force with non-persistent munitions to slow our breach efforts. The enemy shot a persistent chemical strike to slow the advance of the second echelon, while continuing the attrition of the task force with direct and indirect fires.

Our attempt to establish a breach without the use of mechanical smoke has allowed the enemy to accurately target us with multiple weapons systems. The lack of focus for NBC recon resulted in the slow establishment of a safe bypass route for follow-on forces. The failure of our battle staff to use all available assets has resulted in our failing to seize the objective. **NoBody Cares** can quickly turn into **Nothing But Casualties**.

Chemical Officer Duties and Responsibilities

So what is the best way to get the most out of your chemical officer, NCO, and attached chemical assets? The answer begins with knowing what to demand from that individual. The following are some of the chemical officer's duties and responsibilities IAW *FM 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations*:

- Recommends course of action (COA) to minimize vulnerability (to enemy NBC munitions).
- Plans, supervises, and coordinates NBC decontamination operations.
- Plans, supervises, and coordinates NBC reconnaissance operations.
- Plans and recommends integration of smoke and obscurants into tactical operations.
- Collects, evaluates, and distributes NBC attack and contamination data.

This is not an all-inclusive list of CHEMO duties. However, I will focus on these main areas in this article. The questions we will examine now are:

- What do these duties mean during day-to-day field operations?
- How do we integrate our CHEMOs to gain maximum value with minimal effort?
- What doctrinal products should we expect from our CHEMO to facilitate giving clear and concise recommendations to the commander?

Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP)

One of the three advantages of the MDMP is to produce "the greatest integration, coordination, and synchronization for an operation and minimize the risk of overlooking a critical aspect." (*FM 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations*, p. 5-1) We have already seen that the CHEMO is responsible for integrating NBC recon, mechanical smoke, and decon assets. This process begins with the first step of the MDMP, Receipt of Mission.

At the NTC, I have often seen NBC soldiers excluded from the MDMP. Successful integration of chemical assets requires a chemical representative in the MDMP. This does not have to be a member of your staff NBC section. It can be the leadership from the chemical element that is task organized to your

TF or BCT. You should expect the same work from your CHEMO that you expect from your other staff sections. The CHEMO should begin as soon as we receive the mission by ensuring he has all tools required for mission analysis (i.e., maps, unit SOPs, FMs, existing staff estimates, etc.)

During Mission Analysis, your CHEMO should begin analyzing the base order, task organization, and NBC annex to determine if there are specified, implied, or essential tasks that impact attached chemical assets or our MOPP analysis. You should also expect your CHEMO to begin integrating with the rest of the staff, specifically the S2. Your CHEMO should assist the S2 in templating the most dangerous and most-likely NBC weapons use. This analysis drives our task organization of NBC recon and decontamination assets.

Just as with all of your staff officers, your CHEMO owes you an NBC staff estimate, IAW *FM 3-101, Chemical Staffs and Units*, p. D-3. This estimate doctrinally includes the following at the end of mission analysis:

- Restated mission.
- Effects of weather and terrain on enemy smoke and NBC weapons, or weapons of mass destruction (WMD), employment.
- Enemy situation as it relates to WMD use.
- Friendly situation as it relates to chemical assets and initial recommendations for MOPP levels.

Keep in mind that this estimate is a tool for your CHEMO to use to facilitate clear and concise information flow, recommendations to the commander, and staff integration. This is a working document that should be developed throughout the course of the MDMP. As your CHEMO works through the COA development, he should continue to develop the four paragraphs mentioned above, then develop the rest of the estimate to provide a tool for the COA decision brief.

The remainder of the NBC staff estimate (*FM 3-101, Chemical Staffs and Units*, p. D-3) includes the following:

- COA analysis
- Course of action comparison – Compares advantages and disadvantages of each as it relates to enemy use of weap-

ons of mass destruction and our utilization of attached chemical assets.

- COA recommendation – The COA that is least affected by enemy WMD use, and chemical assets can best support.

The NBC estimate must be complete by the end of COA analysis (wargame). One of the best ways to ensure the CHEMO is integrated is to ensure his involvement in COA development and analysis. This uses your CHEMO's technical expertise and ensures staff integration. For example:

- S2 and CHEMO – Refine templated WMD targets.
- S3 and CHEMO – Ensure clear task/purpose and expedient task organization of chemical assets.
- S4 and CHEMO – Ensure detailed plan in place to support logistical requirements of decontamination operations.
- Fire Support Officer and CHEMO – Develop a smoke plan that incorporates artillery and mechanical smoke that best supports the mission.

We need to take a closer look at what we specifically expect from your CHEMO's recommendation at the end of COA analysis. His recommendation should include the following details:

- Chemical asset mission priorities ensure there is a clear task and purpose for chemical elements prior to COA analysis, and that the task and purpose best support the chosen COA.
- Identify critical anticipated enemy NBC and smoke actions, both friendly and enemy, and ensure there is a planned counteraction.
- Ensure our planned task organization best supports our chemical assets task and purpose.
- Critical task (and purpose) for subordinate units. (This may not just be a chemical asset. For example a company team may be tasked to provide security to a smoke platoon until they are in position to begin smoke operations.)
- NBC recon, decontamination and smoke graphic control measures in order to ensure clarity to supporting and supported elements. For example, the smoke platoon has to know what box on the ground they are to cover with smoke, and the company team and engineers working in that smoke must understand the planned smoke coverage

so they can include that in their planning process.

- MOPP levels must also be considered. MOPP level 2 for an entire brigade may not be the answer. Infantry on a 10 km road march may need to be at MOPP level 0. A tank may need to be buttoned up with their overpressure system on while in MOPP level 2, and systems lacking overpressure may need to be in MOPP level 4, when going through terrain where a chemical strike has been templated. MOPP analysis needs more attention by the S2, S3 and CHEMO than we typically see given at the NTC.

- Assumed risks need to be made clear to the commander. Too often commanders are unaware of risks assumed by the staff.

The NBC estimate format found in *FM 3-101, Chemical Staffs and Units*, D-4, gives your CHEMO a clear and concise format that will allow him to contribute during the MDMP. It also provides focus to Annex J (NBC Annex) in your operations order (OPORD). When the CHEMO is involved in the entire MDMP, the final step of orders production should simply be a matter of cutting and pasting known information into the proper format IAW with *FM 101-5, Chemical Staffs and Units*, p. H-56.

Your CHEMO in Rehearsals

FM 101-5, p. G-9, states a rehearsal allows participants to visualize and synchronize the concept of operation. Incorporation of your CHEMO and chemical asset leadership is just as critical to mission success as the integration of any other battlefield operating system. Another technique is to ensure the CHEMO's key points have been incorporated into the S3, S2, FSO, and chemical unit leadership's briefs. This can be successful if the proper staff interaction has conducted throughout the MDMP. The OPORD brief and rehearsal are the only way your subordinate commanders will truly understand how to protect themselves from enemy WMD use, and how attached chemical assets will help them to stay alive and accomplish their mission.

Your Chemical Officer During Execution

If your CHEMO is not involved in the MDMP during execution, he should be keeping a running estimate. (If he is not

available due to ongoing MDMP, his NBC NCO can keep the running estimate). A staff estimate consists of facts, events, and conclusions (based on current or anticipated situations) and recommendations on how available resources are best used and what additional resources are required (*FM 101-5*, p. 4-4).

As the first paragraph changes, you expect your S2 to tell you what the enemy will do next, the S3 to explain what our counteraction will be, and the FSO to be ready to support that plan with timely and accurate fires. But we often do not integrate all of our combat multipliers, to include chemical assets.

If the enemy does not use his persistent chemical munitions where they were templated to be used, your CHEMO may recommend refocusing NBC recon, moving decon assets to a different decontamination point, and raising the MOPP level (and/or buttoning up) different units than were planned. Inserting your CHEMO into the MDMP is the place to start, but demanding that your NBC section remains situationally aware is essential to maintain your combat power in an NBC environment.

You must create the conditions for your NBC section to succeed during execution. The CHEMO can still serve as a battle captain, plans officer, or other roles within the Tactical Operations Center. But there must be established systems for allowing the CHEMO to maintain situational awareness and be available to make recommendations through the S3 or XO to the commander.

Another technique to consider is splitting your CHEMO and chemical NCO. Either by putting them on different shifts to ensure 24-hour coverage, or placing one with the TOC and the other with the TAC. This will facilitate the availability of NBC specialists at critical times during your operations.

What You Owe Attached Chemical Asset Leadership

You must meet the chemical company commander or platoon leader half way when they are integrating themselves into your task force. Although your CHEMO should be the point man for this coordination, your job is not simply to provide quality assurance. Chemical leadership must receive WARNOs, be present for the OPORD brief, receive relevant graphics (SITEMP, ma-

neuver, combat service support at a minimum), as well as a clear task and purpose.

Remember that no one in your command knows how to use these assets better than the young officers, NCOs, and soldiers operating the equipment. We have to ensure they have the tools to formulate their plan and the opportunity to bring recommendations for the use of their assets back to your staff.

Our Army's doctrine, *FM 3-101, Chemical Staffs and Units*, p. 4-7, states that the supported unit commander has only one primary responsibility, effective use of chemical assets to accomplish missions. All you need to do to accomplish that task is to integrate your CHEMO and chemical unit leadership into the MDMP, allow them to contribute in the TOC at critical times during execution to make recommendations to the commander, and always provide a clear task and purpose to chemical assets.

What to Expect from Company NBC NCOs

The last task you should expect of your NBC staff section is that they are assisting company commanders to professionally develop company NBC NCOs. *FM 3-101, Chemical Staff and Units*, p. C-8, is the source document for your company NBC NCO's duties and responsibilities. The company NBC NCO is the specialist who will assist his commander in preparing to fight in an NBC environment. The NBC NCO is also responsible for the following:

- Ensuring NBC common task training is done to standard.
- Integrating NBC collective tasks into unit training.
- Integrating NBC as a condition for performance of METL tasks.
- Maintaining chemical defense equipment status.
- NBC warning and reporting.
- Advising his commander on NBC avoidance, protective posture, Flame Field Expedient use, decontamination and smoke operations.

Your CHEMO is not doing his job if he is not assisting the chain of command in professionally developing these junior NCOs.

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Conclusion

Looking at the example in the beginning of the article, the enemy used non-persistent and persistent chemical agents on the battlefield. Your unit must be ready to fight with NBC as a condition of the battlefield.

The trends we see at the NTC are our staffs' failure to template chemical weapons use, then focus NBC recon and decon assets on the most dangerous or most likely templated target, smoke plans that are poorly developed and do not integrate artillery *and* mechanized smoke, and no detailed decon planning. Reversing these trends requires proper staff integration from the beginning of the MDMP through re consolidating/reorganization. You should expect your CHEMO to aggressively pursue his role in the MDMP, but the S3 or XO must also be aware of what to expect from their CHEMO in order to assist in his professional development. The bottom line is this: training and integrating your CHEMO will help you to maximize combat power and accomplish your mission.

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