



*During a squad field training exercise in March 2014, the 1st Support Maintenance Company commander validates squads on individual and collective chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives common warrior skills and tasks.*

## Overcoming the Anxiety of the Defense CBRNE Response Force Mission

The 1st Support Maintenance Company prepared for its defense CBRNE response force mission using sergeant's time training and by adding CBRNE tasks to regular duties.

■ By Capt. David A. Lukefahr

The unfamiliarity of a joint task force civil support (JTF-CS) defense CBRNE [chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives] response force (DCRF) mission can cause fear of the unknown to grow within the ranks when a unit receives this tasking. But in reality, a plan to prepare for a DCRF mission is no different

than any other unit-level training plan. It requires a gated training strategy that builds collective tasks from individual to squad to platoon to company level.

With this flow as the foundation, a company can follow a relatively easy glide path to successfully complete the training required for DCRF mission validation. Ultimately, to prepare

for a DCRF mission, a unit trains on readiness in line with the requirements of an always ready Army.

The DCRF mission requires a unit to be on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The unit must be ready to deploy Soldiers and equipment to any continental United States location within 24 hours of receiving an alert. It must then deploy, be on site, and be ready

to respond to a variety of situations, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters, within 72 hours of the alert.

In essence, a DCRF unit should train toward the desired end state of being able to provide the right response with the right expertise in the right amount of time with the right people. Mastering these four goals will allow a unit to help alleviate suffering, expedite recovery, and assist local, state, and federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

### Sergeant's Time Training

The 1st Support Maintenance Company (SMC), 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (now known as 1st Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade), began preparing for the DCRF mission nine months before the required mission assumption date. The preparation began with sergeant's time training covering the individual and squad collective tasks required for Soldiers to operate in a CBRNE environment.

Most of these tasks came from Soldier Training Publication (STP) 21-1-SMCT, Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks Warrior Skills Level 1, Subject Area 8: Survive/React to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Attack/Hazard. During the first three months, platoons trained on these tasks weekly. Every third week of the month, the company also incorporated low density training, allowing maintainers to refine their military occupational specialty duties.

### Combat Training Center Rotation

An unintended benefit that helped build confidence and alleviate anxiety was the company's assignment to support the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, during the 14-02 rotation.

The company assumed the Quartermaster missions of providing classes I (subsistence), IV (construc-

tion and barrier materials), V (ammunition), and IX (repair parts) support along with its usual tasks of field maintenance and recovery support. After completing the rotation, the company knew that assuming a mission outside of its regular or expected mission was not impossible. Instead, the exercise proved that the company could accomplish any task.

The squad field training exercise provided a platform for the company commander to validate each squad's ability to complete 11 tasks and troop leading procedures.

### Field Training Exercises

The squad field training exercise provided a platform for the company commander to validate each squad's ability to complete 11 tasks and troop leading procedures. This built trust in squad-level leaders and confidence within the team.

After validating all of the squads, the company focus shifted to the mission-essential tasks of defending the assigned area and establishing the unit area of operations. The culminating event, a platoon field training exercise, was conducted during the last three months of training.

Although the DCRF mission does not immediately require the initial security measures that come to mind, focusing on the mission-essential task of defend assigned area forced each platoon to establish its area of operations in a defensive posture against CBRNE attacks. The task of setting up an area of operations in an austere environment honed necessary skills, such as setting up tents, convoy operations, and conducting platoon-level tasks in a CBRNE environment.

### EDRE

The last three months of training focused on the mission-essential task of deploy and redeploy the unit. This required the use of an emergency de-

ployment readiness exercise (EDRE).

EDREs are broken into three levels. Level 1 tests the company's ability to muster and the administrative portion of a DCRF alert. Level 2 tests the company's ability to complete all tasks prior to the actual deployment of Soldiers and equipment within 24 hours of notification. Level 3 tests the company's ability to deploy and establish itself at

another location within 72 hours.

**Level 1.** The company began to ensure all deployment requirements were met so that it could be capable of deploying within 24 hours of notification. This included maintaining an accurate phone roster, practicing random alerts to enforce the standards, and most significantly, maintaining the readiness of each Soldier.

The 1st SMC tackled this with weekly company commander and platoon leader meetings to review records systems, including the Deployment and Reconstitution Tracking Software, Soldier readiness processing requirements, the Medical Protection System, individual Digital Training Management System records, the Unit Personnel Accountability Report, the rear-detachment roster, required legal briefings, and DCRF-required immunizations.

Tracking every Soldier on each task may seem tedious, but it allowed leaders to ensure the correct number of Soldiers were deployable.

**Level 2.** The 1st SMC began pre-staging required equipment. The company preloaded all CBRNE, basic load, repair parts, and DCRF equipment into containers in the motor pool. Some equipment, such as classes I and V, still have to be picked up within the 24-hour period

after notification.

The vehicles designated for DCRF were cycled through preventive maintenance checks and services, quality assurance and quality control, and a movement control inspections to ensure all requirements for all modes of transportation were met prior to deployment. These tasks helped the company conduct all EDRE levels.

**Level 3.** The company conducted one EDRE per month and attended the JTF-CS Vibrant Response Exercise at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. This allowed the company to execute a level-3 EDRE even though the element of surprise was not present since time lines were known. This also allowed the company to be validated by JTF-CS to conduct its maintenance mission in support of the DCRF mission. The 1st SMC's primary mission was to provide wheeled and ground support equipment maintenance and wheeled vehicle recovery support.

### Maintainer CBRNE Training

Maintenance support was not a specific focus during sergeant's time training, except for the month-

ly low-density military occupational specialty focus because throughout the DCRF training the mission of providing field-level maintenance and recovery support still existed. The enduring external maintenance support that the 1st SMC provided for the division allowed the company to maintain its technical expertise on maintenance support.

The creative way the noncommissioned officers tackled this dual mission was simply to pretend they had to do the enduring mission in a CBRNE environment. This meant wearing gas masks while conducting tasks such as services, driver's training, combat lifesaver training, physical fitness, and mission support. Once the standard uniform for the company included a gas mask and joint service lightweight integrated suit technology, the idea of being ready for CBRNE situations became second nature for the Soldiers.

### Family Readiness

Soldiers within the company were not the only people assuming the DCRF mission in the 1st SMC. Families also had to make adjust-

ments. No longer were Soldiers home a year, gone a year. Family dynamics and plans had to be adjusted for a 24-hour movement notice.

This caused initial stress levels to rise for families. To combat this, Soldiers and families attended Army Community Service classes, community job fairs, military family life consultant meetings, and chaplain consultations as needed. All Soldiers updated their family care plans.

The family readiness group was important. It used the company's email distribution, Facebook page, and community events to keep families informed. The company also had DCRF family briefings to make sure everyone understood the difference between past deployments and the current mission. Ultimately, company leaders' efforts to make family readiness a priority ensured the Soldiers' readiness and thus mission readiness.

Preparing for the DCRF mission required a change in training and operational procedures for the 1st SMC. Adding CBRNE to its sergeant's time training and Joint Readiness Training Center training and having the maintainers train for CBRNE as they worked helped prepare the unit for the new mission. Including families in the preparation process was key to ensuring Soldier readiness. The result of these efforts is a company whose Soldiers are ready to respond to an alert within 24 hours and ready to establish operations at the deployment location within 72 hours of the alert.

---

Capt. David A. Lukefahr is currently pursuing a master's degree in organizational change from Hawaii Pacific University. He was the commander of the 1st Support Maintenance Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, at Fort Riley, Kansas. He holds a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics and is a graduate of the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course.



*Before staging the vehicles for a convoy during the level-3 emergency deployment readiness exercise in September 2014, noncommissioned officers from the 1st Support Maintenance Company inspect all of the equipment and basic issue items to ensure they are fully mission capable.*