

REACH



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Hanford Fire trains with the U.S. Marines

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The Volpentest HAMMER Training and Education Center was awash in brown, green and tan Oct. 14-18 as the U.S. Marine Corps Chemical Biological Incident Response Force, or CBIRF, trained with the Hanford Fire Department.

It wasn't the first time CBIRF had been at HAMMER working with the Hanford Fire Department. In the spring of 1998, four CBIRF team members critiqued it as the HFD responded to a simulated nerve-gas scenario. And several Marines observed a site-wide exercise at the tank farms in 1999.

This recent experience at HAMMER, however, was the first time so large a contingent of CBIRF's Marines have trained here.

Born of necessity

CBIRF is a Marine Corps unit formed after the 1995 terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway system. The attack demonstrated the need for a U.S. chemical, biological, radiological and high-yield explosive response team. The Marine Warfighting Laboratory developed the concept, and by the spring of 1996, CBIRF was formed.

The mission of CBIRF, which is based in Indian Head, Md., is to augment civilian first-response teams in detecting and identifying agents, performing search- and-rescue operations, decontaminating personnel and providing emergency medical care. The unit has 380 Marines and sailors, and can be deployed nationally or internationally.

A special group of 90 CBIRF personnel form the Initial Response Force that maintains a 24-hour readiness posture and can be deployed within one hour.



Marines with the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force practice rappelling at Hanford's Volpentest HAMMER Training and Education Center.

Continued on page 2.

Hanford Fire trains with the U.S. Marines, cont.

Real as it gets

Accompanied by Hanford firefighters, Marines practiced rappelling and high-angle rescue at HAMMER's six-story training tower. They simulated search-and-rescue operations at the HAMMER Burn Building, the Search and Rescue Building and the Confined Space Prop.

They did "shoot-don't-shoot" exercises with the Hanford Patrol and practiced medical response using an actual Huey Helicopter from Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane.



A U.S. Marine Corps trainee uses the HAMMER Confined Space Prop in a search-and-rescue simulation.

During an Oct. 18 exercise, both Hanford Fire and the Marines put their fine-tuned skills to the test by responding to a simulated emergency involving terrorists and chemicals. The scenario began at the HAMMER Railcar/Truck Burn Pad where the "terrorists" had caused a chlorine railcar to derail.

Those who respond to an incident involving chlorine must act quickly to minimize injuries and fatalities. The chlorine leak had to be mitigated. This was accomplished by Hanford fire-fighters, who arrived first to set up incident command. There were more than 40 live "victims" (Hanford Site workers mostly) in town-houses (the HAMMER Burn Building) and a high-rise (the HAMMER Training Tower).

The Marines attended to the rescue and decontamination of both the victims and the responders. The four-hour exercise also involved the 10th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team of the Washington Army National Guard.

Performed well

The Hanford Fire Department received high marks for its part in the drill. In a KNDU television newscast requested by NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw, CBIRF commander Colonel T.X. Hammes praised the Hanford Fire Department for its response techniques and said it was better prepared than most first-response units he had worked with.

Hanford Fire Department Battalion Chief Dave Hare has been involved with CBIRF since 1997, when he spent five days giving radiological training to the Marines. "This was an absolutely wonderful experience for our local first responders," Hare said of the recent exercise. "Besides the actual training experience, there was a lot of cross training going on behind the scenes. Not only did we learn a lot, we were able to share our search-and-rescue expertise with the Marines, Seattle Fire, the National Guard, the Richland Police Bomb Squad and others in attendance at HAMMER. There was a lot of interaction."

As a result of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, plans are in the works to join the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, the Marine Security Guard Battalion and the Chemical, Biological Incident Response Force under one command. The action would combine highly effective but separate anti-terrorism units into one Marine Corps unit better suited for the war on terrorism. ♦