

# Army NRBC

## Operations on National Territory

On September 11, 2001, the Al Qaïda terrorist organization hit the United States in the very heart of New York City by destroying the World Trade Center twin towers, killing more than 3,000 people. Nine hundred days later, March 11, 2003, simultaneous explosions on several trains in Madrid during the early rush hour struck the Spanish population and killed almost 200. The AZF plant accident in Toulouse is only the most recent case among our national catastrophes. The two common features of these events is the **large number of victims generated in the population**, and less importantly, **the significant level of property damage**.

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL CUNY, (CFAT, NRBC DEPARTMENT CHIEF)

Among the potential scenarios that we might confront, those instigated by international terrorism certainly have the strongest psychological impact due to their unpredictability and associated consequences. One might raise legitimate questions about the potential impact of these events had radiological, biological, or chemical products been present. Subsequently, what are the assets at our disposal, especially within the Army, to respond to such crises ?

There is currently a growing concern about **our real ability to intervene on national territory in the event of a radiological, biological or chemical incident**, but the concern itself is not new. Anticipating its potential contribution within this specific framework, the

Army recently carried out a major study on its current and future potential. Hitherto, this contribution was formalized at joint level by a protocol that would allow the Defense Ministry, upon requisition

or after a specific request for assistance, to provide the Ministry of Interior with specific personnel and equipment. In 2003, the Army Chief of Staff decided to **add to existing NRBC**

**capability** by standing up a NRBC defense group (currently at Draguignan moving to Fontevraud in 2005). By 2008 this group will have a regimental structure of 7 companies (namely 5



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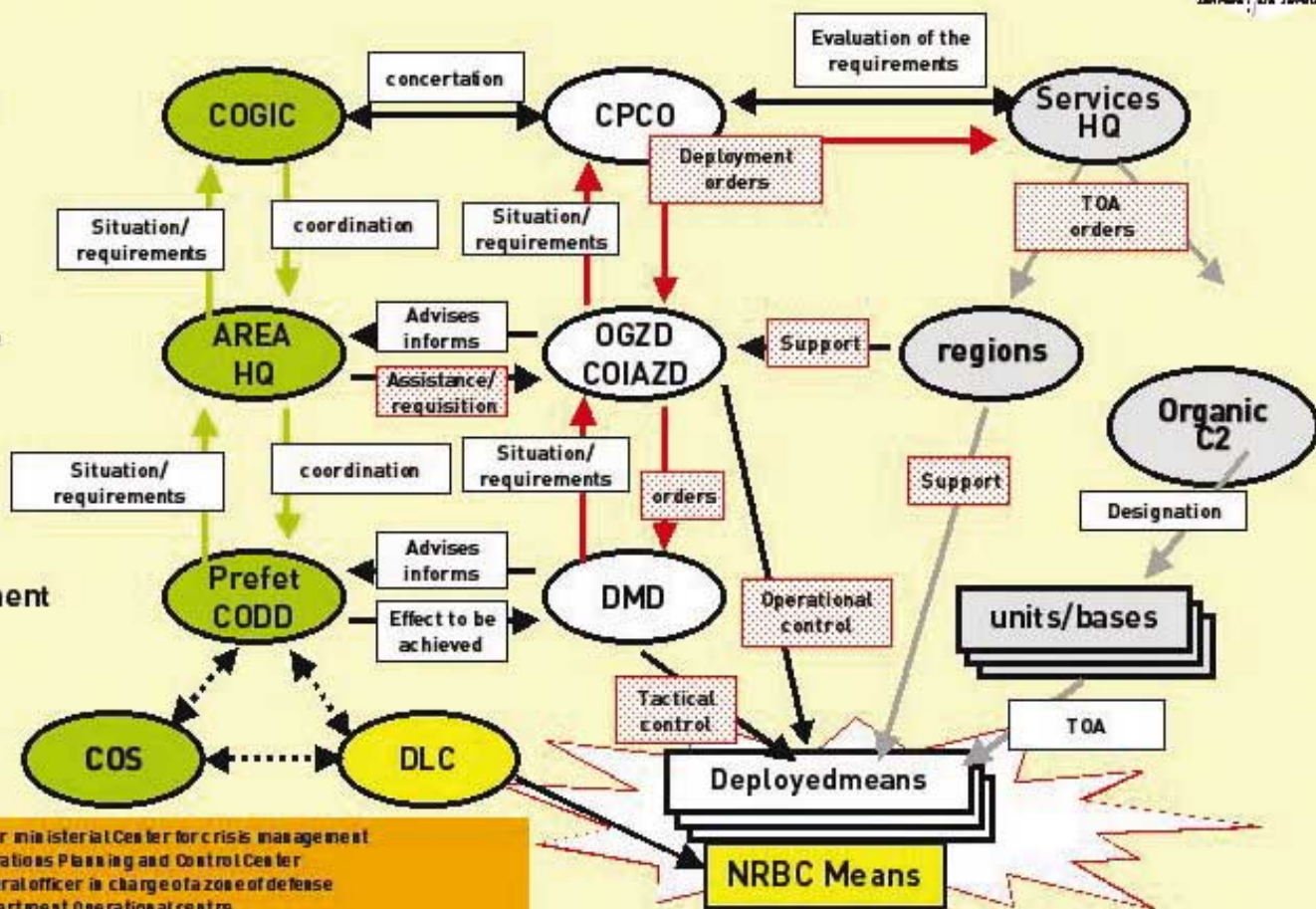


# INTEGRATION WITHIN CIMIC ORGANIZATION

Central level

Defense area

Department



COGIC: Inter ministerial Center for crisis management  
 CPCO: Operations Planning and Control Center  
 OGZD: General officer in charge of a zone of defense  
 CODD: Departmental Operational centre  
 COIAZD: Departmental Joint Operational centre  
 COS: Rescue or assistance operations command  
 DLC: C2 and liaison element  
 DMD: Departmental military representative

NRBC companies, 1UCL<sup>1</sup> and 1 UAS<sup>2</sup>). One of the consequences of this decision was to **redefine the employment concepts for this unit** as part of NRBC involvement on national territory.

This was the **subject of a study by the CFAT<sup>3</sup> for the Army staff. The Army staff has not yet validated the conclusions** drawn by the working group. In conjunction with joint and interdepartmental offices, it wishes to make sure that the proposals are consistent with the objectives set forth in

development concepts. The process will assess the relevance of the entire set of proposals before approving them.

The following will present only **proposals brought forth** during the above-mentioned study. For the time being they are not official decisions.

## Nature and Framework of Commitment

Intervention on our national territory encompasses both **support missions**

**to public services and assistance missions** the Army might have to conduct at the request of administrative authorities. National plans such as PIRATOX, BIOTOX and PIRATOME describe particular methods to reinforce public services, to employ the assets available, and procedures in the event of NRBC incidents. The essential element remains meeting a NRBC threat and of conducting an operation to assist the population in an NRBC environment.

## Mission

The Army's objective is to provide know-how in **support of first aid units assisting civilian populations** during three specific portions of a crisis:

- first aid
- control and management
- reconstitution

## Capabilities

NRBC's specific intervention capabilities consist primarily of the Land Component Command's **NBC defense Group**, and the **12 medical decontamination units** belonging to the two medical regiments of the Land Logistic Force (FLT).

**Modularity** remains the major structural advantage of these operational units and enables the Army to respond to a particular effects-based request by fielding powerful, tailored assets.

These elements can:

- **Conduct reconnaissance and sample probing missions**, intended to analyze and identify toxic agents by virtue of the NBC RECCE<sup>4</sup> VAB in particular, a piece of equipment that constitutes a true mobile laboratory as well as the spearhead of NRBC defense. This mission can

also be conducted using EREs (reconnaissance and evaluation teams) capable of conducting specific analysis and assessing risky situations.

- **Carry out crisis management operations:**

by delineating and immediately communicating to the decisional level the geographical limits of contaminated areas, thus allowing an alert about the progress of a possible toxic cloud to be disseminated to the population, or an alert about the existence of an area contaminated by radioactive material.

- Provide assistance by activating sites for **treating people** (wounded or not), as well as reconditioning equipment and infrastructure via the VLRA NBC, soon to be upgraded with a new piece of equipment, the SDA (system for in-depth decontamination).

Any intervention on national territory constitutes a very specific situation. It requires being very reactive in order to be effective.

Notwithstanding the possibility of a pre-existing protocol, the creation of an intervention unit of reference with structural characteristics enabling it to address all the above listed

operations has been recommended. Its characteristics are:

- a specific non-dedicated module, both OPINT<sup>5</sup> and OPEX<sup>6</sup> capable;
- air transportable, for rapid deployment;
- self-sufficient, including C2 elements and specialized support cell;
- adaptable, according to the "plug and play" principle, which would enable it to be immediately included in national and/or international organizations without particular adjustment;
- an operational architecture built around a key nucleus comprising C2, liaison, and support cells to which could be aggregated reconnaissance and/or decontamination cells enabling various adjustments while holding to the "no more than absolutely necessary" rule.

Although appropriately tailored, but taking advantage of its high performance capability and proven personnel, this module represents a **flexible and effective operational solution** able to significantly contribute to NRBC situations, on civilian behalf, within the overall Civil Military Cooperation structure.

*1 Command and liaison company.  
2 Admin. and combat support company.  
3 Land Forces Command.  
4 Infantry Fighting vehicle dedicated to NBC reconnaissance.  
5 Operations on national territory.  
6 Operations outside of the national territory.*

**By 2008**, the Army should be able to simultaneously deploy **four of these modules** providing a capacity to treat several hundred persons per hour. The Army continues to **fine-tune its wherewithal** with this type of unit giving it a larger index of operational and ad-hoc responses. The Army will thus be **ready to deal with NRBC incidents of any nature** for deployed forces, and provide public services with credible and customized assistance on national territory.