

Introduction

NBC weapons are among the most hazardous on the battlefield. The doctrine of many potential enemies calls for their wartime employment of NBC weapons. In order to deter an enemy from exercising this option, US forces must be continuously prepared to fight and win under NBC conditions.

To fight and win under NBC conditions requires an application of the three fundamentals of NBC defense—contamination avoidance, protection, and decontamination, at all levels of command, coupled with an effective retaliatory response.

Avoidance

The first fundamental of NBC defense is avoidance. Avoidance addresses individual and/or unit measures taken to avoid or minimize NBC attacks and reduce the effects of NBC hazards. By taking measures to avoid the effects of NBC attacks, units can reduce their protective postures and decrease the likelihood and extent of decontamination required. FM 3-100 provides a general discussion of avoidance measures. See FM 3-3 for a detailed discussion.

Protection

The second fundamental of NBC defense is NBC protection. Protection is one of the four dynamics of combat power and consists of two primary components: actions to counter the enemies firepower and actions to maintain the health and morale of soldiers. NBC protection encompasses both of these components. Its goal is the conservation of the fighting potential of the force so that it can be applied at the decisive time and place. We divide NBC protection into three broad areas—force, collective, and individual protection.

Force Protection

Force protection involves actions taken by a commander to reduce the vulnerability of his force to an NBC attack. At the lower levels of command, battalion and below, this will require that the unit conduct a procedure called MOPP analysis. The final result of this analysis will be a determination of protective equipment to be worn by unit soldiers. However, several other decisions concerning alarm placement and automatic masking criteria will be

required as a part of the analysis. Forces above battalion level will conduct a process called vulnerability assessment and risk reduction. The vulnerability assessment is an estimate of the probable impact on the force of an enemy NBC attack. It occurs both prior to and after initiation of NBC warfare. This assessment will be used in conjunction with mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available (METT-T) information to determine acceptable means of reducing force vulnerability to enemy attack.

Collective Protection

Collective protection addresses the use of shelters to provide a contamination-free environment for selected portions of the force. It is protection provided to a group of individuals that permits relaxation of individual NBC protection.

Individual Protection

Individual protection involves those actions taken by individual soldiers to survive and continue the mission under NBC conditions. It also addresses protection provided to an individual in an NBC environment by protective clothing and/or personal equipment.

Decontamination

The third fundamental of NBC defense is decontamination. It is the reduction of the contamination hazard by removal or neutralization of hazardous levels of NBC contamination on personnel and material. FM 3-100 provides a general discussion of decontamination. See FM 3-5 for a detailed discussion.

Retaliation

Defensive measures alone are not an effective response to enemy NBC attacks. The US retains the right to retaliate in response to enemy NBC attack. Depending upon the situation, this retaliation may take the form of nuclear, conventional, or political options. There is no requirement that the US response be strictly proportional to an enemy attack in kind; US offensive biological and chemical operations are prohibited. See FM 3-100/FMFM 11-2, Chemical Operations for a general discussion of NBC retaliation.