

CBRNe: First Response



Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, PVSM, AVSM, SM (Retd), Director CENJOWS

Editorial Team



Lt Gen PS Mehta, VSM, DCIDS (DOT)



South Asia Defence and Strategic Review conducted a symposium on CBRNe Response in concert with 'Centre for Joint Warfare Studies' on 30 Nov 2016 at the IDSA Auditorium, New Delhi. The subject is engaging the attention of the world as CBRNe threats are looming large due to the explosive situations obtaining in many parts of the world and the changing nature of conflict wherein asymmetric warfare is gaining primacy over conventional conflicts.

Session 1: Opening and Keynote Session

The opening session was chaired by Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), Director CENJOWS and he had to say the following: -

- The aim of the symposium is to provide a common platform to enable understand each other's capabilities and achieve congruence so that capacity building can be appropriately done.



Sachin Gupta, FLIR

- It is imperative that we are duly prepared as we live in a nuclear neighbourhood and are also engaged in a long-standing proxy war, being waged by our neighbour.

The opening address was delivered by Lt Gen PS Mehta, VSM, DCIDS(DOT). Excerpts: -

- The Geo- Politics of the times that we live in are complex with the intricate interplay of conflicting social, religious and political forces influencing mindsets and consequent actions.
- We need to have appropriate doctrine and cohesive plans which co-opt all concerned agencies.
- Preparation and training are of the essence and these must integrate both the civil and military.

A key note address was delivered by Lt Gen P M Bali, VSM, DGPP. The General Officer stated the following: -

- The threats from each category of CBRNe weapons will pose different types of challenges. Thus, there is a need to understand them to be able to meet them with appropriate responses.
- The vulnerability because these threats is enhanced by conflict zones with waning state apparatus, dynamic biological & chemical programmes, vigorous nuclear energy projects, lack of regulatory mechanisms, spectre of terrorist & jihadi networks, high population density, poor health infrastructure and limited resources for disaster relief.



Lt Gen PM Bali, VSM, DGPP

A special address was given by Lt Gen CS Narayanan, VSM***, DCIDS (Med), wherein he dwelled at length on the aspects related to CBRNe forensics. Thereafter Dr Marcus Erbdinger of FLIR spoke of Early Warning Applications for Vehicle-Integrated CBRNE Threat Detection Systems.

Session 2: Improving Chemical and Biological Defence Systems

The session was chaired by Lt Gen Amit Sharma, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, the former C-in- C of the Strategic Forces Command. He said that we have come a long way in the past decade but still need to cover a lot of ground in the field, he also stressed upon the need for a cohesive approach by all agencies concerned. During the session, there were talks given by Brig M Mehrotra, DDG PP, CBRN, Mr David Nam of FLIR and Brig DN Karan, DDG MS (IT). The talks were followed by a panel discussion on “Challenges of Integrating and Unifying the Response, Support Assets and Implementing Domestic Nuclear Detection Efforts”. The participants during the discussion were Brig M Mehrotra, DDG PP, CBRN, Capt Ceasar Basu, PD, NBCD, (IN), Wg Cdr J Jairaj, JD NBC, IAF, Dr Maya Kumari, Jt Dir, LS, DRDO and Mr Sachin Gupta of FLIR. The salient issues that emerged are enumerated below: -



Lt Gen CS Narayanan, VSM*
DCIDS (MED), HQ IDS, MoD**

- The armed forces are not the ‘First Response’ in the event of an untoward incident pertaining to CBRNe. This response would come from the designated agencies nominated for the task at the national level viz the NDMA.
- We need trained health professionals, suitably equipped laboratories (especially in the case of biological events) and ambulances, to be used for evacuation, should have the requisite equipment.
- We must be prepared in all respects -organisations, equipment and training.

Takeaways

- **Crux.** The threat of CBRNe is omnipresent and we therefore need to prepare in right earnest to meet the challenges that would come forth. Not only do we have to look at our vulnerabilities but also aim at reducing the risks by appropriate training, equipping, medical preparedness and making the organizations, created to deal with these threats, effective.





Dr Markus Erbedinger, FLIR



K SASTRY, RRG Engineering



David Nam, FLIR

- **Training.** Training would indeed form the lynchpin of an efficient and competent response mechanism. To this end, we need to look at Centres of Excellence, which have the necessary wherewithal, to include both human and other resources, to be able to impart appropriate training. We also need to increase collaborative efforts with International Training Institutes. Simulation is a proven training method which needs to be made use of to the maximum extent feasible; for this purpose, various computer models are available in the international market. In addition, we need to carry out mock drills in conjunction with civil agencies.

- **Collaborative Approach.** The need for having a cohesive approach cannot but be stressed enough. We need to have a collective response involving all agencies like NDMA, the para military forces and the three services. To this end, we need to have common SOPs and availability of each other's data bases to include capabilities and inadequacies. This would help quicker and rapid response to any untoward incident.

- **Equipment.** Though the armed forces are not equipment deficient we still need to lay emphasis on R&D and make equipment procurement policies, which do not get bogged

down in procedural wrangles and cause delays. This is an absolute must. In addition, we must look at placing the required equipment and manpower trained to operate it (which enables detection of hazardous and suspicious materials) at airports, seaports and other vulnerable areas.

- **Medical Aspects.** Hospitals need to be appropriately equipped and we need hospitals spread across the length and breadth of the country, which can deal with emergency situations. Ambulances required for evacuation must have all necessary equipment.

- **Stringent Regulatory Mechanisms.** These are required so that import of hazardous materials and sale and movement of such materials within our boundaries are controlled. This should be supplemented by intelligence networks, which must report all suspicious activity.

- **Organisation.** Besides the outfits in the Corps of Engineers which are specifically trained to handle CBRNe tasks, we must have organisations for the said tasks at the field formation level; these could be adhoc structures, amalgamating specialised CBRNe trained personnel and their medical counterparts. Such, organisations could be activated during emergencies. SA



BRIG M Mehrotra, DDG PP CBRN



Wg Cdr R J Jairaj, IAF



Dr Maya Kumari, Jt Dir LR, DRDO