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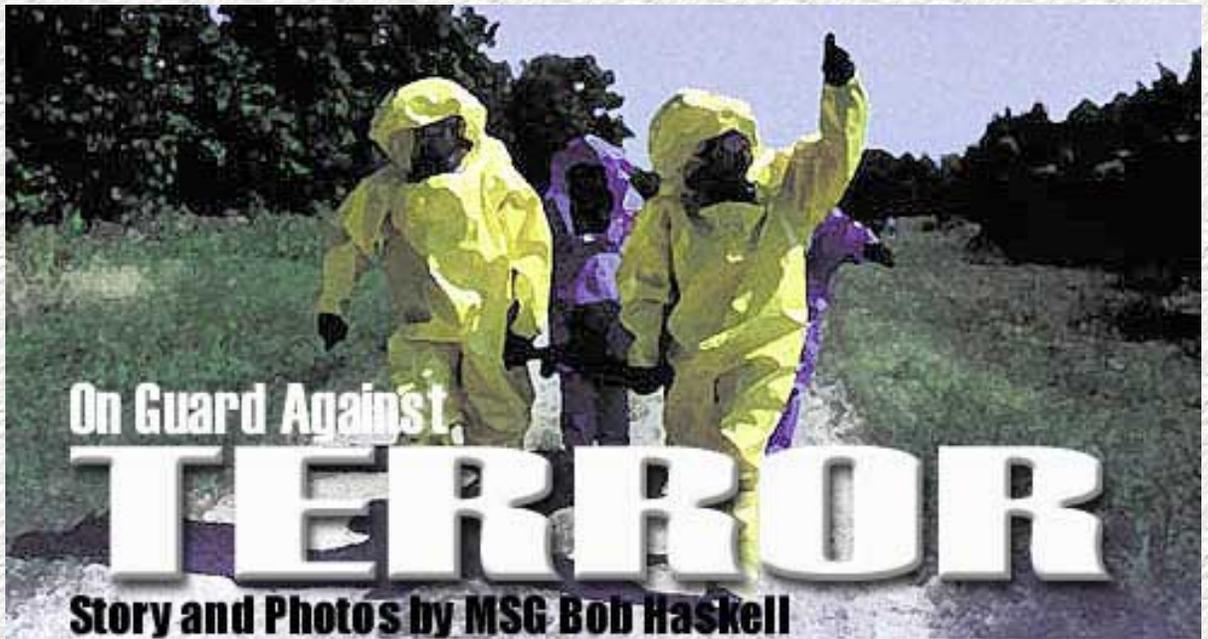
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Features



SOME 200 National Guard soldiers -- new players in America's campaign against terrorism -- recently spent 37 at the Army's Chemical School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Often, they donned blue and yellow chemical suits that became saunas in the burning Missouri heat.

Soldiers already proficient in special forces operations, military intelligence, and civilian and military medical techniques applied their knowledge to realistic training scenarios.

Team members constantly monitored each other's oxygen levels and equipment functions during realistic training scenarios that included collecting samples of chemicals following an explosion at a college dining hall; evaluating suspicious substances discovered in a barn and in a bath-tub inside a private residence; and checking fluid leaking from the trunk of a suspected terrorist's car that had crashed during a high-speed chase.

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At the same time, active Army observer-controllers and civilian equipment experts checked soldiers' responses to events, including their responses to false alarms.



National Guard soldiers carry a buddy with a simulated injury out of a "contaminated" zone during recent training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

"Having the equipment to identify a hoax is also very important. Hoaxes can be a big part of our world," said MAJ Chris Petty, executive officer for the Colorado National Guard detachment.

As members of 10 congressionally funded military support detachments from across the country, the National Guard soldiers will be called on to help civilian authorities deal with potential nuclear, biological and chemical weapons incidents, Army officials said.

Their mission will include entering bombed buildings to collect and identify unknown materials that could kill police, emergency medical response teams and other early-response personnel.



A suitable equipped military support detachment soldier prepares to enter a "contaminated" building.

Officials also anticipate the detachments will participate in security details for such high-visibility events as gubernatorial inaugurations and sporting events.

"Terrorism's on the rise," said Georgia Army Guard CPL Daniel Polanski, a former 82nd Airborne Division soldier who joined the Georgia detachment after working seven months with a local police department. "It's so easy to learn how to make weapons of mass destruction and to go into stores to buy the materials."

Polanski and the others underwent training as part of the Defense Department's new program to help the nation defend against terrorist attacks, such as this decade's bombings of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the World Trade Center in New York.

"This is a new business for us," said Fifth U.S. Army COL David Annen, training program commandant. The Army's senior leaders want to ensure that an appropriate number of people are available to perform the mission and that they are provided the right equipment.

"I'm really encouraged by the soldiers' training progress during the short time they've been here," Annen said. "They are senior, experienced people. They've done really well."

They have also forged the way for 17 additional Guard detachments Congress is considering adding to the antiterrorism force, said MG Fred Rees, vice chief of the National Guard Bureau.

"The first 10 teams will give us a baseline capability. They'll be out there providing an initial safety net until we can get other teams in place," Rees said.

Since January 1999 the full-time Guard soldiers have attended specialized classes to learn about handling hazardous materials, the dynamics of international terrorism and how to perform medical procedures in contaminated areas.

Chemical-agent monitors, combustible-gas indicators and photo-ionization detectors were among the state-of-the-art equipment used in hands-on training.



During decontamination, team members first rinse down their protective suits. The small pool is used to rinse off footwear.

"I've learned that there's a lot of stuff out there we don't want to be exposed to," said SPC Edward Parker Jr., administrative assistant for the California team. "I've gone through all of the training because if a member of our team goes down, I go in. We have to be able to save ourselves so we can save others."

"The National Guard has never performed a function like this. That's what interested me," said Georgia Army Guard SGT Daniel Cook, a high school history teacher who took a reduction in rank to join a three-member, initial-entry team.

The training at Fort Leonard Wood coincided with the August release of a year-long Defense Department study expected to improve the way reserve-component soldiers will be used in 2000 and beyond.



Gathering samples of a suspected "chemical agent" is made more difficult by the cumbersome chemical suits worn by these three soldiers.

"This is an inclusive look at how we're going to utilize and rely on the Guard and Reserve in the future," said Charles Cragin, acting assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, about the study, "Reserve Component Employment 2005."

well as new missions," Cragin said.

"I think members of the National Guard and Reserve are going to get a lot of professional and personal satisfaction as we delineate some existing missions, as

Public acceptance will be the key to the new Guard detachments' long-term success, Annen added. "That means they must always be prepared.

"And they have to market themselves and their capabilities within their areas so the local incident commanders, who would take charge of emergency situations, know the teams are to help," he said.

Additionally, detachments must keep on training and building databases so their soldiers know the cities and the buildings they might have to enter during the confusion of a crisis, Annen said.