

Birthday Boys and Girls

THIS 28 June marks the 90th Anniversary of the US Army Chemical Corps. On 28 June 1918, President Wilson ordered the establishment of the US Army Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) as a separate branch of the National Army. The early days of the CWS were not auspicious. Despite the advantage of having watched World War I and chemical warfare unfold in Europe for years, the United States was singularly unprepared for chemical warfare in 1917. The US Army was forced to rely on its allies such as Britain and France for protective equipment and training and they greatly assisted our efforts. Once the Chemical Warfare Service (later known as the Chemical Corps) was established, our capabilities slowly began to grow and become institutionalised.

In 1942 the CWS undertook the responsibility for managing developments in biological as well as chemical warfare. Following the end of World War II and the advent of nuclear warfare, the Chemical Corps was again expanded to cover the missions of nuclear and radiological defence of the Army, giving the Corps what we call today the full CBRN responsibility. During the Korean War, the Corps mechanised the production of napalm, developed the M30 mortar and continued to provide smoke screening operations. With the post-Vietnam demobilisation, the Chemical Corps found itself in danger of abolishment but, in light of the ever-increasing global chemical threat, the move never came to fruition.

In the 1970s the US realised many of its potential adversaries were much better prepared to operate in a CBRN environment. In an effort to bridge this gap the Chemical Corps began a revitalisation during the early 1980s which included the creation of an extensive Chemical infrastructure throughout the Army, activation of numerous Chemical troop units, and



The US Chemical Corps is celebrating its 90th anniversary ©DoD

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the quest for development of new and innovative equipment in order to increase our chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence posture. Through the efforts of many, the Chemical Corps was successful in this endeavour.

The terrorist attacks on America on 11 September 2001 crystallised the understanding that the homeland was not a sanctuary, and the Chemical Corps' role in the protection and defence of the homeland against CBRN threats vastly expanded.

The Chemical Corps forces of today encompass a wide variety of capabilities and configurations. Units range in size from the Chemical Reconnaissance Detachment in the Special Forces Group to the newly activated 48th Chemical Brigade. Chemical teams provide essential capability to the National Guard's Weapon of Mass Destruction – Civil Support Teams, present in every state and territory in the United States. Chemical Soldiers such as the Technical Escort Battalions, Stryker NBC Reconnaissance Platoons or the Biological Integrated Detection System (BIDS) Companies are trained and equipped with some of the most sophisticated CBRN-sensing equipment in the world.

Not content to rest on our laurels, the Chemical Corps continues to strive towards increased capability and added value for our Nation. We are seeking to equip our soldiers and units with the latest advancements in CBRN sensors. Chemical Soldiers are beginning to integrate the latest automated hazard prediction applications. And the Chemical Corps is becoming deeply involved in other important areas of countering WMD – such as consequence management and WMD-elimination.

Our theme for this anniversary year is From Gas Attack to CBRN Response – 90 Years of the Dragon Soldier, and that captures the key thought that, no matter how fancy our equipment, in the end it is a well trained CBRN soldier that makes the difference and we remain dedicated to the idea that it all starts and ends with the soldier.



Vietnam, both Gulf wars and the terrorist challenge kept the Chemical Corps challenged ©DoD

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