



NEWS RELEASE

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Factsheet - SAF's Chemical and Biological Defence Capability

History

The Gulf War highlighted the increased threat of chemical weapons and the SAF began individual Chemical Defence familiarisation training for its servicemen in 1991. By 1996, the SAF had developed a limited chemical response capability, and this was fielded during the World Trade Organisation Conference held in Singapore. Since Apr 2001, two units from the 39th Battalion Singapore Combat Engineers (SCE) and the Medical Response Force (MRF) from the SAF Medical Corps have provided the SAF's immediate response force in the event of chemical-biological incidents.

Following the Sept 11 attacks when security in Singapore was stepped up, the SAF's stand-by forces have been working with Home Team agencies to provide security coverage for significant international events. These included the World Trade Organisation-Informal Ministerial Meeting (WTO-IMM) in Oct 2001, Asian Aerospace Show 2002 and 2004, and the three Shangri-La Dialogue conferences 2002 - 2004.

The CBRE Defence Group

The complexity of terrorist threats and the danger of multiple attacks call for a suite of comprehensive preventive measures to be put in place. The CBRE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive) Defence Group was formed to enhance the SAF's counter-terrorist capabilities to address this multi-faceted threat.

The CBRE Defence Group manages all issues concerning counter-terrorist CBRE development and consists of:

- a. 36 SCE, which is the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit specialising in defusing explosive devices.

b. 39 SCE, which is the Chemical and Biological Defence Unit. It decontaminates incident sites that contain chemical or biological hazards and provides a sustained, multi-incident response capability. 39 SCE works with the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) in the event of a chemical attack.

c. The Medical Response Force (MRF) from the SAF Medical Corps, which provides on-scene medical treatment for casualties of chemical and biological agents.

Other Capabilities and Developments

The SAF's other capabilities include research and development programmes in collaboration with the Centre for Chemical Defence, Defence Science Organisation-National Laboratories (CCD, DSO-NL), and the Defence Science and Technology Agency's Defence Medical Research Institute (DSTA, DMRI). These agencies provide the necessary scientific support for the SAF's response forces.

The SAF has also developed contingency plans to deal with radiological incidents involving "dirty bombs". In addition, the movement of radiological materials in Singapore is closely regulated and monitored by the Centre for Radiation Protection of the Health Sciences Authority.