

National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams (WMD-CSTs)

What is it? The Weapons of Mass Destruction - Civil Support Team (WMD-CST) is a high-priority, rapid response, full time Title 32 AGR National Guard unit supporting civil authorities and specifically the local incident commander in responding to an actual or suspected terrorist WMD event/incident, intentional or non-intentional release of CBRN materials, natural or manmade disaster in the United States that has caused or could cause catastrophic loss of life or property damage. This unit is the lead element of the DoD response to a WMD attack and consists of six sections: command, operations, communications, administration / logistics, medical / analytical, and survey. The DoD directed WMD-CST mission is to support civil authorities at a domestic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosive (CBRNE) incident site by identifying CBRNE agents/substances, assessing current and projected consequences, advising on response measures, and assisting with appropriate requests for state support to facilitate additional resources. In the FY07 NDAA, Congress expanded the US Code governing WMD-CST operations to include response to both intentional and unintentional release of nuclear, biological, radiological, toxic or poisonous chemical materials, and natural or manmade disasters in the United States that result in, or could result in, catastrophic loss of life or property.

Each WMD-CST unit comprises 22 highly-skilled Army and Air National Guard Active Guard Reserve (AGR) personnel. The unit is federally funded, trained, equipped, and sustained. By statute, each WMD-CST operates, in Title 32 AGR status, under control of the Governor and can be employed as a state asset without DoD authorization. The Adjutant General either employs the WMD-CST to support a State response under the direction of the Governor or upon request, to support another State's response under a supported Governor. WMD-CSTs are equipped with a mobile analytical laboratory capable of providing complete characterization of chemical, biological or radiological materials and a sophisticated communications suite which provides reachback communications and information integration services with local, state, tribal and Federal agencies. The WMD-CST is designed to enhance support to local Incident Commanders and local emergency responders not to replace either the Incident Command System (ICS) or functions normally performed by the emergency first responder community.

What has the Army done? Currently, 57 WMD-CSTs, established by Congress, have been stood up, one in every State, territory and the District of Columbia with two in California, Florida, and New York. 56 of the 57 CSTs are certified by SECDEF to Congress as operationally ready to accomplish their designated mission. On 30 November 2010, the 24th WMD-CST (NY) was the most recent WMD-CST awarded SECDEF certification. The second CST for Florida is in the final stages of training and is expected to meet certification requirements by the 4th Quarter of FY11.

During FY10, TRADOC and the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence (MSCoE), Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri has continued to help National Guard Bureau (NGB) institutionalize the WMD-CST program within Army processes. Specifically, MSCoE assists NGB in the development of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF) solutions to improve

and sustain this critical program. Additionally, Army North (ARNORTH) continues to conduct External Evaluations to assess the performance for all certified WMD-CSTs on an 18-month cycle. For Chemical, Biological detection and identification items the NGB relies on the efforts of the Joint Program Executive Office – Chemical Biological Defense Program to provide complete lifecycle management of the Analytical Laboratory System and those other items which would enhance detection and identification capabilities. For the lifecycle management of the Unified Command System, the Department of the Army is currently determining which program manager will have responsibility for this system.

In FY07, under a DoD directive identified in the WMD-CST Program Review, TRADOC, in coordination with NGB, conducted a WMD-CST Limited Objective Experiment to validate the WMD CST TDA and determine capability gaps in meeting and sustaining unit doctrinal and mission requirements. Results are being used within DA to recommend future changes in the WMD-CST personnel composition and structure.

WMD-CSTs annually are involved in a significantly high number and variety of immediate response, stand-by and assist missions. In FY10, units responded to 389 immediate response and stand-by mission support requests nationwide. On the national scope, WMD-CSTs responded to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and were prepositioned in Washington State as part of the DoD and NORTHCOM contingent prepared to respond to any CBRN incident in support of Canadian forces during the 2010 Winter Olympics in neighboring Vancouver, British Columbia. Historically, WMD-CSTs have participated in operations during the World Trade Center recovery after 9-11, the Space Shuttle Columbia recovery operations, and numerous National Special Security Events (for example, RNC, DNC, G8 Summit, Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, and other major sporting venues). CSTs were also employed effectively as part of the National Guard response to Hurricane Katrina recovery operations in both Louisiana and Mississippi. Although Katrina did not involve a WMD event, the devastation presented an opportunity to utilize the unique CST skills and operational capabilities to assist in the reestablishment of the local incident command network and to save and protect the lives and property of local residents. The Katrina operations led to the increase in mission areas noted in the FY07 NDAA.

What continued efforts does the Army have planned for the future? The WMD-CST program is on a continuous assessment cycle to evaluate and upgrade equipment, personnel, training, tactics, techniques, procedures and doctrine. The Congressional mandate to both DoD and DA is that these units must sustain leading edge technology and improve skill sets in order to maintain capabilities superiority over potential enemy threats. In the future, with the support of Congress, WMD-CSTs could be involved in deployment operations outside of the U.S. in support of first responder missions and/or Combatant Commander Theater requirements. Therefore, they must be prepared and able to mitigate the consequences of any catastrophic event, whether natural or man-made, and be experts in potential CBRNE effects and countermeasures.

Why is this important to the Army? WMD-CSTs are the lead element of the National Guard immediate response force capabilities and these units are an integral element of the Department of Defense's CBRNE enterprise strategy to support civil authorities, with initial and follow-on forces, in the event of an incident in the United States.