

## After Action Report

DATE: 16 March, 2007

SUBJECT: After Action Report – DICE 07

FROM: Robert Hollister  
TO: Mike Evans, CC Emergency Services  
CC: Local Emergency Planning Committee  
RACES Team

### 1. PURPOSE:

This report briefly describes the support provided by the RACES Communications team during participation in the Department of Defense Interoperability Communications Exercise (DICE) 07 hosted by the Joint Interoperability Test Center (JITC) at Fort Huachuca during the period 13-15 March 2007. It further describes the activities of the team while using the Cochise County Mobile Communications Unit (MCU) during this exercise.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

DICE 07 activity provides a unique opportunity for emergency responders around the state to participate in an unparalleled learning experience. This year responders from city, county, state, federal and military agencies assembled at Fort Huachuca to participate in a simulated terrorist attack in Benson AZ. The scenario simulated an attack on two major transportation arteries (Interstate 10 and the Union Pacific Railroad) passing through Benson. The situation was made even more severe by simulating the release of Chlorine gas and Nitric Acid from damage rail cars and 18-wheel over the road trucks. Starting as a local incident, the requirement for multiple agencies and the injection of hostage incident quickly elevated it to a situation requiring unified command. A specific goal for the Cochise County team was to ensure the recently assigned nationwide interoperability channels (VTAC/UTAC) were tested and functional within the county.

### 3. LESSONS OBSERVED

#### MCU Specific

Equipment Load: We have had our truck a little over a year now and we are accumulating a lot of stuff. It is time for a good clean out, sort, and repack. Some of the stuff that we have not used in the past year we should probably leave out of the truck. Some weekend in the near future we need to do that. What we keep, we need to be sure we finish labeling the compartments when we put it back so that we can quickly find the stuff we need.

MCU Input/Output Panel: While setting up an external phone patch with the 91st Civil Support Team through the Input/Output panel we discovered that one of our internal patch panels did not get labeled so we need to complete that task. We need to include a short section in the MCU manual on how that works.

Satellite/TracStar - While setting up in our position we pointed the nose of the truck due north. This puts the mast, when erected, almost in direct path with our satellite feed. Fortunately we did not notice any significant degradation but it would be better to avoid that situation in the future by pointing in a north east or north west direction, but not due north. Additionally there seems to be an issue with the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) link. We were able to receive an incoming call to the network but unable to initiate an outgoing call.

Laptop Computer Configuration - While setting up the replacement laptop computer, scanner drivers were not loaded. Consequently, we were unable to scan a document for forwarding during the exercise. Also, at the beginning of the exercise the current MCU Hotmail password was not in a location for new users to be able to quickly log on to the computer. That has been resolved. Unless you use it on a regular basis it is not something everyone uses often enough to remember.

MCU WiFi Configuration - The JITC Information Assurance analyst dropped by and suggested that we apply a level of firewall protection to our WiFi network. The WiFi network was configured as an open network for anyone who might be in range. He suggested that in today's threat environment that is really a bad idea. He briefly discussed some of the possible threats and how that could impact our ability to complete our mission if any of several threats decided to shut down our network or do damage to our onboard computers. That issue was resolved on Thursday and now requires a password confirmation to access the network.

Power Backup – During the exercise we had a real world power outage when a vehicle hit a power pole and knocked the power out at our location. The biggest impact was to the TracStar Satellite Controller, Network Router, and ACU Controller. Our regular component of radios (not the ACU stack) is configured to operate from the coach batteries and were not impacted at all. The digital/map support computer is already connected to an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) so was also unaffected. The laptop internal battery covered the outage with no impact either. I recommend that a small unit be purchased for to support the three previously mentioned items for a period until we can get the generator started up. We lost satellite sync and had to reboot the TracStar controller and the router.

MCU Ground Stake - One of the members was a little over zealous in putting our ground stake in. When it came time to get it out he was not there to help us extract it. We were able to borrow a vehicle screw jack from the Red Cross and used it to leverage against the ground connector and gradually pulled it up. It is appropriate to drive it in but we need to be sure we can get it back out after the mission is complete.

MCU Mast – During the morning on Thursday we discovered that the Mast had depressurized and lowered apparently by itself. We put it back up with no problem and it remained up until we intentionally put it down. This is the first occurrence of that we are aware of. It stayed up all day on Tuesday and Wednesday without a problem.

Message Handling - Our Winlink 2000 network equipment continues to work very well. All of our Situation Reports were sent out using the Winlink network during this exercise. Several of our operators received some great hands-on training using this system as well as some familiarization using the IC-213 message format. Additionally we were able assist the operators in the Arizona State Communications Van setup their Airmail/IcePac software and get them operational on the Winlink network. They are now operational at both the AZ State Emergency Operations Center and in their mobile van. We did however identify one of the PMBO stations in California that seemed to be causing a delay in traffic delivery. We will continue to test that and see if that was just an anomaly.

Red Cross Office - We had not checked out the Red Cross office downtown for awhile. We were able to bring it up for this event and ensure that we have another person ready to man that facility if need be. We should probably rotate operators to all the Blue Eagle locations and retest all our deployed equipment.

VTAC Operations – One of our goals for this event was to test our nationwide interoperability channels. To do this we wanted to use the VHF channels designated as VTAC 2 with all the participants. Initially, not all the participants had radios configured to operate on these channels. The good news is everyone had at least one, if not more, operational by the end of the exercise. I consider that a major success all by itself. Unfortunately we were unable to complete the testing with other components of the county not located at Fort Huachuca. That will require additional coordination. We discover some interference between a specific MARS HF channel and the VTAC 1 channel. We will continue to research that particular issue.

Interoperability - The whole DICE experience provides an excellent opportunity to work with other agencies, and although the technology is important, so are the personal relationships and partnerships as we work together, develop policies, and practice procedures. I feel that we have continued to move forward in this arena. We still have more to learn and need to continue practicing these skills. I am looking forward to another opportunity next year to continue the learning process. The use of the Glendale Police Department Unified Command Center to host the morning briefings and afternoon "hot washes" was very beneficial. Although we did not take full advantage of all the capabilities they had to offer, their participation certainly made the exercise go more smoothly than it would have without them. Similarly I don't think we were able to fully utilize or integrate the FEMA MERS Team, 91<sup>st</sup> CST or the Red Cross elements into the play but their presence was still beneficial from a learning point of view.

Exercise Control - I believe that I took too big a bite from the apple this year. As a result some things did not happen that should have. We definitely need a larger control cell/staff to ensure that the ICS structure is fully implemented and adopt a more formal approach to evaluating the processes. I am also willing to let someone else be the scenario controller and allow me to focus on just being the MCU Team leader. If there are not more volunteers to assist in this process next year then we should evaluate our commitment to participate. Fortunately Al Jensen from Tempe Fire assisted on

Wednesday but we really need a larger exercise control team to ensure everyone gets fully utilized and integrated into the play.

#### 4. COMMENTS

No mission specific comments on this event.

#### 5. ACTION ITEMS

- Schedule a clean up day to sort and clear unused items out of MCU.
- Complete labeling the Patch Panel, including a section for patches in the training manual
- Coordinate with Cochise County IT to insure that the Cochise County Sheriff Dispatch Console has these VTAC channels installed/configured.
- Coordinate with Cochise County IT Department to resolve the VOIP satellite phone system issue.
- Coordinate with Cochise County IT to load appropriate document scanner software/drivers to allow use of the scanning capability of the printer/scanner system installed in the MCU.
- Purchase a small UPS for the TracStar Controller and the LAN Router.

## Appendix – Participating Agencies

91st Civil Support Team, NG  
American Red Cross  
AZ State Department of Emergency Management  
Cochise County Emergency Services RACES Team  
FEMA MERS Team 6  
Glendale Police Department  
United States Coast Guard

### Cochise County RACES/ARES Team Members

Bob Hollister N7INK/AAR9KK/AAA9SD  
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Tom Rice N7CJX  
Leland Lehr KE7GUM  
Greg Thompson KC7GNM  
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Roy Eaton KE7LIZ  
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### AZ State RACES

Jerry Justus KB7TUG - AZ DEMA  
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Al Jensen KE7FSD - Tempe Fire

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American Red Cross  
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