

OPINION

# Problems with gas

Union Carbide has once again demonstrated its inability at handling toxic chemicals. Last year, a chemical derivative of methyl isocyanate leaked from a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, killing more than 2,000 people. Sunday, a similar leak occurred at a Union Carbide plant in Institute, W. Va. Six employees were injured, 125 Institute residents were hospitalized and thousands were trapped indoors.

The Institute accident didn't have the fatalities the Bhopal incident did, but the principle remains unchanged. Union Carbide claimed the Indian accident couldn't happen in the United States. It blamed the Bhopal problem on inexperienced technicians.

Obviously, Union Carbide's problems run deeper than merely the location of its plants. It blamed the accident in Institute on a "pressure buildup." It claims the surrounding community was never in danger.

But thousands of people were inconvenienced by the accident. Warning systems designed to alert the community to such an accident did not work as efficiently as they were supposed to. Why was there not a device to warn plant workers of a pressure buildup before a valve failed and the chemicals were released into the air?

The citizens of Institute are lucky their town did not become another Bhopal. How many accidents must Union Carbide experience before it realizes its methods of handling toxic chemicals are deficient?

If Union Carbide is going to deal with toxic chemicals, it needs to learn to keep its gas under control.

The Battalion Editorial Board



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# Maneuvers at Ft. Hood

The sacrifice in the name of democracy is good ...

I've never wanted to join the Army. I've never liked guns and I've liked the thought of using them even less. But as I write this column my feet are hanging out the side of a Huey helicopter 4,500 feet above Temple.



Loren Steffy

Recently, Karl Pallmeyer and I received an invitation from Sgt. James Parker of Texas Army National Guard to accompany several members of Bryan's 163 Armored Cavalry Regiment to Ft. Hood and watch them do maneuvers.

The only words that describe Ft.

Hood this time of year — at least the parts we were in — are big, hot and dusty. After few hours, I'm more than ready to head back to College Station. Many of the men from the Bryan unit have been at the installation for almost two weeks.

We were issued canteens before we left because of the heat and heavy long-sleeved shirts so the sun didn't turn our skin into fried wontons.

I've seen countless war movies, watched every episode of "M\*A\*S\*H" and heard my share of horror stories about life in the armed forces. But despite all this conditioning, I was still shocked by what these guys eat.

We were given a complementary MRE — a meal-ready-to-eat. De-

hydrated everything in a heat-sealed plastic bag. It made the food in the MSC taste like gourmet cuisine.

As I bit into the cold, greasy, alleged hot dog, I got the full grasp of what was going on at Ft. Hood. These guys aren't out there to quell some megalomaniacal desires or live out some fantasy about blasting commies, they are out there for us. Sure, they may have fantasized about shooting invading Russians, but they could do that at home.

They're out there in the heat and the dust, eating food most cockroaches would avoid like Raid so that we can enjoy democratic freedom. Many of them are using their only vacation time to practice protecting the ideals and rights we just assume will be there every morning when we wake up.

My stereotypical view of a guardsman as a trigger-happy, beer-drinking lunatic who likes to play army with his buddies on the weekends is shattered. No one would live like this just for a chance to play Rambo.

With all the billions of dollars the United States budgets for defense, these guys benefit the least from those expenditures. Most of their Jeeps are old, their uniforms are fraying around the edges and their weaponry is basically whatever the "regular Army" decides it no longer wants.

These guys don't fit the commercial image the Army promotes in their ad campaigns, but they could do the job if the situation arises. Certainly their training makes them more qualified to fire an M-16 or drive a tank than I am.

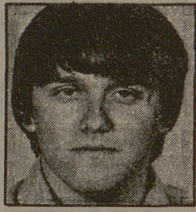
While I was wiping the dust out of my face and trying not to fall off the back of a jeep, I remembered the phrase, "It's a dirty job but somebody has to do it." Someone has to be the soldier and someone has to be the journalist.

If we ever went to war, America would be much better off being protected by them rather than me. I'm not the soldier type. I like wearing my hair too long, and I like voicing my opinion too much. But I also recognize that if no one wanted to be a soldier, I wouldn't have those freedoms. Someone has to be ready if those freedoms are threatened.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page Editor for The Battalion.

... but the food, hours and work area are terrible!

It takes a special type of man to be in the National Guard. You have to be able to stand the extreme heat of the desert or the extreme cold of the artic. You have to be able to travel for days without rest. You have to be ready to react to an enemy attack. You have to be ready to attack or retreat at a moments notice. You have to eat Army food.



Karl Pallmeyer

Last Thursday my editor and I had an opportunity to see how the Guard lives. For the past week, several companies of the Texas National Guard have been going through training maneuvers at Ft. Hood.

Sgt. Parker of the Bryan National Guard was going to fly down to Ft. Hood and asked The Battalion and KBTX-TV to send someone along. Being one who likes to experience new things, especially when my editor tells me to, I agreed to go.

I got up at 0500 hours Thursday, that's five o'clock in the morning for the rest of the world. I am not one who likes to get up early. My freshman year I decided that I would never take an 8:00 class again so I wasn't used to the morning.

I grabbed my camera and met my editor for breakfast at a restaurant. I was in no condition to cook even a bowl of cereal. After a good hot breakfast and several cups of coffee, I was ready to leap into battle.

We arrived at the armory and were briefed. We would leave Bryan by helicopter, arrive at Ft. Hood in about an hour, then take a jeep around the battle ground for about two hours and then take the helicopter back to Bryan. It sounded like fun. A reporter and cameraman from KBTX showed up later and were given the same briefing. We were given helmets, fatigue jackets and canteens.

The helicopter landed and the pilot briefed us on what to do if the helicopter crashed. Being the first time I had ridden on any sort of aircraft I was a little nervous, but once we got in the air everything was alright. At 4500

feet in the air you get a totally new perspective on the world and it's nice and cool.

When we got to Ft. Hood we circled over the battlefield. Below us were tanks, artillery vehicles and lots of Guardsmen. As we landed in a clearing I was the first one off the helicopter. I ran, keeping my head down, to a couple of jeeps parked by a nearby tree. Once all of our party had gotten over to the jeeps we loaded up and rode to where the action was.

We came down into a valley where some jeeps, tanks and artillery vehicles were waiting to be attacked. I jumped out the jeep and started taking pictures of the men and their machines. When I told the men on one of the artillery vehicles that I was from The Battalion they were thrilled, they went to Texas A&M too. I took their pictures while my editor got their names and talked to them. Before they got the order to move out they gave us a present, an MRE (meal ready-to-eat). An MRE contains an entree and some other stuff to make a complete meal. Some have steak, some have pork, some have weenies, some have spaghetti and some have things that are not readily identified. The old Army C rations, which were not the best tasting things in the world, had been replaced by the even worse MREs. I put our prize in my camera bag and we went back to the jeep.

Back at the jeep the commander didn't look too happy. We were about to be overrun by the enemy. No shots were being fired on these maneuvers, they were just trying to see who could get into and out of position the quickest.

We loaded up the jeeps and narrowly escaped capture. We drove up to a hill over looking our previous position and waited while tanks and artillery vehicles drove by raising a cloud of dust. It was getting very hot at this time and the dust didn't help matters. The men in the jeep broke out an MRE to share with the reporter from KBTX. Since she looked a lot better than either my editor or myself we understood the special special treatment she was getting from these men who hadn't seen a woman in almost a week. This MRE contained weenies. After trying one of the weenies I decided I could wait until we got back home for lunch.

We got back in the jeeps and drove by a place where a bunch of Guardsmen were buying lunch from a guy in a catering van. Considering the way the MRE tasted I bet the caterer was making a heavy profit.

Then the real fun started. We drove up a hill that had not much of a road. I have ridden many roller coasters in my day but none could compare to the ride up that hill. When we finally got to the

top I had no trouble getting out of the jeep. The commander showed us the valley where the enemy was about to come through. He said that they would be trapped and all we had to do was wait.

But it was time to go back to the helicopter. I had some fun but I was hot, tired, dirty, hungry for real food, my camera had been turned into a dustball, my canteen was almost empty and I was

ready for the nice cool helicopter ride back home. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to get back home if I stayed for the battle.

When my editor and I got back to Bryan we had a burger and went back to The Battalion's newsroom. Everyone wanted to hear our war stories as we broke out the MRE to share with the staff. Our MRE contained a pork patty, applesauce, cheese spread, crackers, cookies, chewing gum, a spoon and five sheets of toilet paper. The cookies weren't too bad, the crackers tasted like plywood and the cheese spread was too disgusting to even look at. My editor took the chewing gum, the applesauce and the pork patty. We both wondered what good five sheets of toilet paper would be out in the field.

It takes a special type of person to be in the National Guard and I'm not that special.

Karl Pallmeyer is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.



Greg Curry, an Aggie National Guardsman on maneuvers at Ft. Hood, shows off the Army's idea of food to go — a meal-ready-to-eat.

photo by KARL PALLMEYER

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