

U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2009-09-09-1

2009: THE YEAR OF THE NCO

Sept. 9, 2009

U.S. Army Europe chaplains, chaplain assistants get trained, refreshed at annual leadership event

By Staff Sgt. Patricia Deal

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

GARMISCH, Germany – Just as they often help to rejuvenate the spirits of those they support, U.S. Army Europe’s chaplains and chaplain assistants took time out of their schedules for reflection and renewal this month during their annual Religious Support Operations Leadership Training conference here.



STAFF SGT PATRICIA DEAL

Chap. (Lt. Col.) William Barefield, chief of the training development division of the U.S. Chaplain Center and School, Fort Jackson, S.C. (right), shares a box of chocolates with Pvt. 2 Marcus Walthers to demonstrate that each Soldier is different on the inside. Barefield presented a workshop on “Transforming World View” to Walthers and other chaplains and chaplain assistants during a recent five-day Religious Support Operations Leadership Training event in Garmisch, Germany.

One hundred sixty-one chaplains and chaplain assistants, making up 80 Unit Ministry Teams, came from locations throughout Germany, Italy and Kosovo for the five-day event.

The annual RSOLT provides UMTs specific training on pertinent religious support topics, as well as providing UMT members with updates from their career fields. This year’s training coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Army chaplain assistant program and the 234th anniversary of the Army Chaplain Corps.

“This type of training is vital to the development of the Unit Ministry Teams in Europe. It allows for their spiritual resiliency to become stronger and better,” said USAREUR and Seventh Army Chaplain (Col.) Charles Ray Bailey. “The teams learn ways to enhance their skill set in order for them to take care of the military families in Europe.”

The office of the U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains determines the focus of the training for all chaplains and chaplain assistants. This year’s theme, “Spiritual Leadership: Renewing the Soldier’s Mind” centered on spiritual resiliency. Bailey then determines the specific topics that meet the training requirements for operations in Europe. Topics for this year’s RSOLT were “Transforming World View,” “Christian Perspectives of

Grief” and “Spiritual Resiliency.”

“Expanding our UMTs’ knowledge base in the areas of world religion and cultural issues, and enhancing their ability to deal with the human dimensional aspects of issues that Soldiers and family members may encounter, makes the teams more proficient and allows them to better perform the religious support mission back at their unit,” Bailey said.

The colonel said this year’s training also complements the Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, a holistic fitness approach to enhance the emotional and physical health of Soldiers, families, and Army civilian employees designed to improve performance and build resilience.

“The Soldiers’ mind is just one aspect. For Soldiers to be strong and resilient, we need to consider all aspects of their lives -- body, mind, spirit,” Bailey added. “Our goal with spiritual resiliency is to emphasize better programming and also refresh and reconstruct programs we have to make sure they’re relevant to support Soldiers and their family members.”

Chaplain (Col.) Gordon Groseclose, chief of the department of pastoral ministry training at the Army Medical Department and School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, said he believes that the dynamics of resiliency are what helps Soldiers deal successfully with the physical, emotional social, family and spiritual aspects of their lives, with spiritual resiliency capturing one part of Soldier resiliency.

During his presentation, Groseclose emphasized the importance for attendees to develop and grow their own resiliency.

“Chaplains and chaplain assistants work in a tough environment. They continue to give and give, and run the risk of their well running dry. Part of spiritual resiliency is to be able to realize the need to stop and replenish your well, to always have something to give when someone needs a cup of water,” he explained. “Chaplains and chaplain assistants pay a heavy price for walking with their Soldiers, so to speak. Training opportunities like this are important for them to stop to reflect and recharge so they go back renewed and refreshed physically, emotionally, and spiritually.”

As they concentrated on “Renewing the Soldier’s Mind,” chaplains and chaplain assistants also were able to rejuvenate themselves, as some time at the training is spent networking and communicating with one another.

“It is just such a refreshing break from the day-to-day stress we face. It’s not like when we have a bad day we can unload on the Soldiers we support,” said Sgt. Faheem Blount, a chaplain assistant at Landstuhl (Germany) Regional Medical Center. “I really value training like this. I can relieve some of my stress that’s been accumulating, and at the same time learn some new ways to help myself better support my Soldiers.”

Blount said he has had his share of dealing with Soldiers’ stressors while supporting the wounded warriors at LRMC. Before that, he was deployed to Afghanistan with an airborne brigade combat team for 15 months, where he suffered through the deaths of several Soldiers in his unit.

At some point in their careers, UMT members must face the realities of helping members of their organizations deal with death and suffering. Chaplain (Col.) Wayne Kirk, deputy mobilization chaplain at Fort Dix, N.J., offered some insights and strategies during a workshop on “Loss, Grief, Suffering, and Hope.”

Chaplains and chaplain assistants definitely benefit from all facets of RSOLT, said Sgt. Maj. Pamela Neal, USAREUR senior chaplain assistant.

RSOLT is conducted in two phases, to allow all USAREUR UMT members to take part, while still ensuring uninterrupted chaplain and chaplain assistant support to the command. The second phase is scheduled for the end of September.

“It’s the one time a year we can all get together to get necessary updates and training to ensure we are better able to provide religious support activities all throughout Europe,” Neal said. “We spend so much of our time taking care of the Soldiers and their families that we need this time to take care of ourselves.”



Visit the U.S. Army Europe home page at: www.hqusareur.army.mil

Additional U.S. Army Europe images are available online at:
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/usarmyeurope>