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AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK TEAM GOES LIVE IN ROMANIA, BULGARIA TO SUPPORT JOINT TASK FORCE-EAST

By Tom Saunders

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

MIHAIL KOGALNICEANU AIR BASE, Romania -- The American Forces Network is on the air in Romania with deployable broadcasting capabilities supporting the Joint Task Force-East "proof of principle" exercise ongoing here through Oct. 22.



SGT JUSTIN NIETO

Staff Sgt. Randall "Action" Jackson, station commander for the American Forces Network Vicenza affiliate and NCO-in-charge of the Tactical Mobile Radio and Television System deployed in support of the ongoing "proof of principle" exercise for Joint Task Force-East in Romania and Bulgaria, broadcasts from the TMRTVS at the exercise's headquarters at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, Romania.

"The system that we brought down here is the Tactical Mobile Radio and Television System," said Lt. Col. Donald M. Ross, commander of American Forces Network-South, based in Vicenza, Italy. "What this does for JTF-East is bring immediate command information along with news and

entertainment to everyone deployed here to support JTF-East."

The TMRTVS is capable of broadcasting on two radio and two television

frequencies simultaneously. It also has the capability of providing a cable head end to any austere location for any four AFN cable channels. A cable head end is basically a router for any combination of available AFN channels. Due to the length of the exercise, however, the common areas at MK Air Base are equipped with satellite receivers and decoders for televisions.

This marks the first time AFN has established broadcast operations in Romania and represents the first successful back-to-back deployment of its TMRTVS, Ross said.

The system, designed to be highly mobile and operational within two hours, recently supported exercise Immediate Response in Poland. Following Immediate Response the system was packed up and transported here within four days.

AFN-Romania began broadcasting two live radio shows daily at the air base from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on FM 107.0. The radius of the radio broadcast is approximately eight kilometers, and those live broadcasts are slated to continue through the exercise here. During times when AFN-Romania is not airing a live show, the AFN broadcast signal U.S. Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen listen to in Italy, Germany and other countries in Western Europe is available to the base.

“It’s great, because this system is designed to support just this type of a mission,” said Ross. “It is not intended to be a permanent facility.”

The AFN-Romania team consists of six members trained on the use of the system through repeated exercises, leading up to a culmination event such as the JTF-East exercise or any number of other tactical exercises in U.S. European Command.

There are four military broadcasters on the team -- three Soldiers and one Sailor -- augmented by two audiovisual technicians whose job is to keep the system running.

The broadcasters are full-time AFN reporters and disc jockeys. Two members of the team are currently in Bulgaria working with U.S. and Bulgarian Soldiers at Exercise Lion Strike, the Bulgarian segment of the proof of principle exercise.

“I’m really glad to have the chance to be a part of this exercise, and doing this just reinforces why we’re here,” said Staff Sgt. Randall “Action” Jackson, AFN Vicenza station commander and TMRTVS team NCO-in-charge. “We support the troops and help in some small way to tell the commander’s story.”



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