

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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



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SOLDIERS, FAMILIES OF 2ND BRIGADE, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION SPEND A DAY GETTING TO KNOW GRAFENWOEHR

By Pfc. Michael Syner

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

GRAFENWOEHR TRAINING AREA, Germany -- Approximately 300 Soldiers and family members from the 1st Infantry Division's Schweinfurt-based 2nd Brigade Combat Team toured the Grafenwoehr military community Jan. 12 to get familiar with the community where the brigade will soon relocate.



SPC SEAN FINCH

Soldiers and family members from the Schweinfurt, Germany-based 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, check out family housing in the Grafenwoehr's Netzaberg Housing Area during a familiarization tour of the post Jan. 12. About 300 Schweinfurt Soldiers and family members toured the base where the brigade is soon to relocate.

The daylong excursion began at noon, when buses picked up Schweinfurt Soldiers and families for the roughly two-hour drive to Grafenwoehr.

The first stop at "Graf" was the base's recently opened Army and Air Force Exchange Service shopping center. Eyes widened when the Schweinfurt visitors saw the post exchange, many for the first time.

"This is a beautiful PX," said Yvonne Spiller as she, her husband Sgt.

Artis R. Spiller, and the couple's two children perused the selection offered by the new facility.

Sgt. Spiller, who is assigned to the 2nd BCT's 57th Signal Company, said the exchange will serve his family's needs well.

PX manager Stephanie Burns said the two-story facility, opened in September 2007, boasts more square footage than any other AAFES exchange in Europe. The shopping center also offers several restaurants and specialized concession shops in its mall-like setting.

The Schweinfurt visitors also had the opportunity to see the new commissary that is part of the shopping center complex. Garrison officials say the store is more than triple the size of the previous facility, and offers more brands – a total of 11,230 items – for shoppers to choose from.

From the shopping center, tour participants bundled into the post's theater for a brief overview of the community, led by Col. Brian T. Boyle, the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr commander.



PFC MICHAEL SYNER

Yvonne Spiller shops in the post exchange at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area with her children, Tyrell, 8, and Kenny, 9, during a tour of the post Jan. 12. The Spillers were among approximately 300 Soldiers and family members from the Schweinfurt, Germany-based 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, who spent the day becoming familiar with the base where the brigade is soon to relocate.

“Our mission is to get you acquainted with our community,” Boyle told the visitors. “We are sure you will find it satisfactory, and that you will enjoy being here.”

Following the briefing, the 2nd Brigade visitors learned that shopping services, while impressive, aren't the only new features in town. Next up came what the majority of the Schweinfurt group seemed most interested in seeing -- Grafenwoehr's on- and off-post housing areas.

“I'm really concerned about the living conditions,” said Staff Sgt. Brett E. McHaney of the brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry. “We are leaving the home we're (settled) in,” he added, as his wife, Rachel, nodded in agreement.

The tour made a sweep through the post's recently renovated on-post housing area and past the community's elementary and middle schools – the high school is located in the

nearby Army community at Vilseck – before taking the group on a walk-through of homes in the new off-post Netzaburg Housing Area.

Danny Brannon, an engineer with the Installation Management Agency-Europe, said Netzaburg contains more than 550 new houses. There are 11 home designs varying in size from 1,300 to 1,900 square feet. After seeing such a variety of housing available to suit families of all sizes, with floor plans stretching from two to five bedrooms, modern interiors and visually appealing exteriors, the 2nd BCT families appeared content with the arrangements.

“This housing is better than what I was offered when I initially took my commission,” said V Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Kenneth W. Hunzeker, who joined the group for the in-depth look at Grafenwoehr. “It’s amazing.”

Even the previously skeptical McHaney admitted he finished his tour enthusiastic about the move.

“I believe that the quality of life here is better for us,” he said.



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