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69TH AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY BRIGADE CASES COLORS AS IT PREPARES TO MOVE TO TEXAS

By Staff Sgt. John Queen

69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade Public Affairs Office

WÜRZBURG, Germany -- After more than half a century of service with the U.S. Army in Europe, the 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade cased its colors May 13, formally bidding "Auf wiedersehen" to its longtime home in Germany.

The brigade will unfurl its Colors in the heart of "Cav Country" August 15, at its new home at Fort Hood, Texas.

The brigade was constituted May 17, 1918 as part of the Coastal Artillery Corps. It served briefly in France during World War I and in the Pacific Theater of World War II.

After World War II the unit remained inactive for nearly 10 years, then was called back into service as an Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group when the Cold War began to escalate

The group was activated in 1955 at Gerszewski Barracks in Knielingen, near Karlsruhe, Germany.



STAFF SGT JOHN QUEEN

Col. Joseph Fischetti, commander of the 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade (right), and Sgt. Maj. David Gonzales, the brigade's acting command sergeant major, prepare the units colors for casing during a ceremony on Leighton Barracks in Würzburg, Germany, May 13.

It was deactivated two years later only to be reactivated again in 1960 at Emery Barracks here.

Designated as Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 69th Artillery Group, the unit became one of four artillery groups under the operational command of the 32nd ADA Brigade and the first to field the Hawk missile system.

In 1990 the brigade and elements of the 32nd Army Air Defense Command deployed a task force of four Patriot and two Hawk systems and more than 1,000 Soldiers to Southwest Asia to serve as high- and medium-altitude air defenders for VII Corps during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

On September 1, 1991, the 69th was reassigned as the air defense brigade for V Corps and given a new mission. Instead of providing air defense coverage from fixed locations, it became responsible for the coverage of mobile corps assets. During this time the brigade operated the Army's Patriot and Stinger systems.

In the early '90s the brigade moved its headquarters to Giebelstadt Army Airfield, Germany, and then moved back to Würzburg -- this time at Leighton Barracks -- in 2006.

This week's colors casing ceremony signified the brigade's departure from Germany and an opportunity to say goodbye to Würzburg. V Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Kenneth Hunzeker once led the 1st Infantry Division from Leighton Barracks. In his remarks at the event, Hunzeker noted that the ceremony gave the Army an opportunity to say farewell to a German community that supported it for six decades.

"We have come to know and love the German culture, expressions, folklore and people," he said.

"This ceremony is very bittersweet for me personally," said Hunzeker. "It marks one of the final formal ceremonies here on Leighton Barracks as we get ready to shut the gates on this kaserne and close the final chapter in the U.S. Army's stay in Würzburg."



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