



**18th Engineer Brigade
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PRESS RELEASE

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Bagram VII helps prepare Polish, American Task Force for Afghanistan

Story by Cpt. Sonie L. Munson, 18th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs

KIELCE, Poland – The phrase “train as we fight” is applicable across the Army and around the world, and it was the standard during the recent training exercise March 4-10 at Bukowka Barracks here.

Bagram VII is a joint training exercise, which included members of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command’s 18th Engineer Brigade, the Joint Forces Headquarters of the Illinois National Guard, the Polish 2nd Mechanized Corps and the Joint Multi-National Simulations Center Grafenwoehr. These agencies worked together to prepare and certify the 1st Polish Armored Brigade and Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

During the opening ceremony, Polish army Maj. Gen. Zbigniew Glowienka, the exercise director and commander of the Polish 2nd Mech. Corps, said the exercise’s aim was to ensure that the Task Force White Eagle’s headquarters is prepared for International Security Assistance Force operations in Afghanistan.

During the exercise, the unit will be tested for combat for the first time using Joint Conflict and Tactical Simulations, Glowienka added.

Bagram VII was the seventh readiness exercise to certify the Polish task force is ready for its six-month rotation to Afghanistan. However, there were a lot of firsts during the exercise.

Some of these firsts included the use of simulation platforms provided by the Joint Multi-National Simulations Center Grafenwoehr, the use of the 18th Eng. Bde. as the higher headquarters and the embedding of Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard, who will deploy with the 1st Polish Armored Bde. to Afghanistan.

The Joint Multi-National Simulations Center Grafenwoehr assisted the exercise by providing all the simulation systems free of charge, including JCATS, Blue Force Tracker, Command Post of the Future and Unmanned Aerial Simulation Systems. These simulation systems provided the task force with the ability to respond to numerous scenarios, which better tested the task force's tactical operations procedures.

When Polish army Lt. Col. Piotr Fajkowski, B Battle Group commander, 1st Polish Armored Bde., was asked what the hardest part of Bagram VII was, he said, "to learn the systems and to compare what information it provided. But it was nice to learn the systems we will use in theater step-by-step before our deployment."

The 18th Eng. Bde., with members of the Illinois National Guard and the Polish 2nd Mech. Corps, made the exercise even more realistic by role-playing Combined Joint Task Force-East, the unit the task force will report to in Afghanistan.

During the exercise, the 18th Eng. Bde. monitored how Task Force White Eagle responded to the scenarios, from tactical operations to responding to the civilian populous and the local media.

“Our mission is twofold: to ensure Task Force White Eagle receives the most realistic training possible and to build a positive relationship with our Polish allies,” said Col. Paul M. Paolozzi, the 18th Eng. Bde. commander.

This was accomplished by selecting subject matter experts from the brigade in areas such as operations, logistics, intelligence, signal, interpreters and public affairs, resulting in relevant training and a new lasting relationship with the 2nd Mech. Corps and Task Force White Eagle.

“We are one team, not Polish or American Soldiers,” said Polish army Maj. Stanislaw Koppczynski, the chief of the Tactical Operation Center for Polish Land Forces.

This exercise and the upcoming deployment is the first time in the 17- year relationship between the Illinois National Guard and the Polish army where National Guard Soldiers will imbed with Task Force White Eagle during its six-month rotation.

“Partnering with the Polish army is a vital part of our mission success and being allowed to train prior to deployment together will allow us to be mission effective once we reach Afghanistan,” said Cpt. Tim Newman, the battle captain for Task Force White Eagle, from Plainfield, Ill.

CUTLINES:



Thomas Lasch, the simulations director from the Joint Multi-National Simulations Center Grafenwoehr, explains the Unmanned Aerial Simulator operated by Sgt. 1st Class John J. Walker, the intelligence noncommissioned officer of the 18th Engineer Brigade, to Polish armed forces leaders Mar. 5 during Bagram VII at Bukowka Barracks in Kielce, Poland. (U.S. Army Photo)



Polish army Maj. Stanislaw Koppczynski, the chief of the Tactical Operation Center, Task Force White Eagle, shares a celebratory handshake with 1st Lt. Al Chong, the intelligence officer of Task Force White Eagle, after successful completion of an exercise rehearsal Mar. 5 during Bagram VII at Bukowka Barracks in Kielce, Poland. (U.S. Army Photo)



Capt. Tim Newman, the battle captain for Task Force White Eagle, gives guidance to his Polish Command Post of the Future operators during Bagram VII. Bagram VII was the final training exercise validating that Task Force White Eagle is prepared for its upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. (U.S.; Army Photo)



Polish army Brig. Gen. Andrzej Przekwas, the commander of Task Force White Eagle, briefs his election security plan during a mock governance meeting at Bukowka Barracks in Kielce, Poland. (U.S. Army Photo)