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German infantry school students train for Afghanistan deployment on U.S. Army training area in Schweinfurt

By Mark Heeter

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SCHWEINFURT, Germany – Before heading out into the snow-covered fields of “Area M,” the training area just northwest of Schweinfurt, three soldiers from the German Army Infantry School in Hammelburg wrapped their heads in turbans and set out to wreak a little mayhem.



MARK HEETER

A German soldier role-playing as an insurgent moves in to agitate a small unit from the German Army's 1st Light Infantry Regiment on the U.S. Army's Training "Area M" near Schweinfurt Jan. 24. Soldiers of the Bundeswehr regiment used the area to prepare for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

About 30 minutes later, after the snow had quickly turned to freezing rain pushed along by whipping winds, the soldiers reappeared from behind some bare trees to face their nemesis -- soldiers from the Bundeswehr's 1st Light Infantry Regiment who were using the training area Jan. 24.

The unit is training for an upcoming mission as the Quick Reaction Force for the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

“All this is the good working relationship we have with the German infantry school,” said Michael Cormier, partnership officer with U.S. Army Europe's 172nd Infantry Brigade, who helped coordinate the Germans' use of local training areas.

“That's what we're here for. We support them and they support us,” Cormier said.

Sniper students from the school have used Area M and Camp Robertson training area in the past to allow them to train in "unfamiliar territory," one of the students' requirements.

Planners from the infantry school said they found something special in the Schweinfurt training areas.

“We got to Schweinfurt because it’s a wide open area and we have to train our QRF,” said Master Sgt. Mario Jungblut, one of the infantry school cadre involved in the training. “The area is great for a QRF.”

Capt. Sven Kaestner, who evaluated the unit during the training, agreed that the Schweinfurt training areas offer something that is difficult to find in heavily wooded areas.

“The terrain is completely different than throughout Bavaria, and I’m looking for something open,” Kaestner said, to replicate -- as much as possible -- what the soldiers will see in Afghanistan.



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