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Joint Multinational Readiness Center team takes Hohenfels training area to Fort Bragg

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HOHENFELS, Germany -- The Joint Multinational Readiness Center's Operations Group is taking on the largest mission and most complex road trip in its history.



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

The Instrumentation Training Analysis Computer Simulations and Support team from U.S. Army Europe's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany sets up the Expeditionary Instrumentation System to train Soldiers of the 172nd Infantry Brigade at a German army training center in Hammelburg. With modifications to match the local terrain, the same system is currently being used for the first time outside Europe, to train Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade at Fort Bragg, N.C.

traveled to the U.S. this month to train Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade at Fort Bragg, N.C.

About 600 members of the JMRC are participating in the monthlong mission, said Maj. Andrew Tackaberry, Ops Group operations planning officer.

For the first time, the Ops Group, as it is known here, joined by two company-sized elements and a battalion headquarters from the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry and operators and analysts from

the Instrumentation Training Analysis Computer Simulations and Support team,

The unusual JMRC rotation is testing the JRMC's exportable training capability, Tackaberry said.

"We are taking the JMRC and our Expeditionary Instrumentation System and its capabilities to Fort Bragg," said Maj. Brad Eungard, the Ops Group's logistics officer. "We're making the Fort Bragg training area a Hohenfels (training area) box."

While the Ops Group's observer/controllers, trainers, opposing forces and civilian role-players, analysts and technicians usually train units bound for peacekeeping missions or combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, as the Army's rapid reaction force, the 82nd's 2nd Brigade is always on alert for missions worldwide and cannot leave Fort Bragg to train, he said.

Moving more than 600 people and the JRMC's EIS put the group's logistics section to the test, Eungard said.

"So now, instead of just sending a team, we are taking this headquarters, which is a first," he said. "We are taking all of our analysts to Fort Bragg and doing everything there." Five Humvees, six shelters, six 20-foot-long containers and 22 smaller containers called ISU 90s were shipped to the States by sea in December, Eungard said. In mid-February, 12 more ISU 90s were flown by Air Force C-17 from Ramstein Air Base.

The computers, generator, tents and other major pieces of equipment were packed in December, he said. The equipment was inspected in Hohenfels in early January to ensure it met U.S. Department of Agriculture standards for cleanliness, and radios were checked to meet U.S. frequency specifications. Some equipment had to be modified to use American 110-volt power rather than the German 220-volt standard.

By mid-January the gear was ready to be hauled by truck to the German port of Bremerhaven.

All that is just a small portion of the equipment the Ops Group will use on the mission, Eungard said.

The Army's Forces Command rounded up another 130 Humvees for the JMRC observer/controllers and several civilian vehicles for the opposing forces. All the Germany-based participants in the mission, including civilian employees and contractors, are using Fort Bragg's dining facilities and barracks, he said. The group's maintenance team is using local service bays to keep its fleet on the road.

The Fort Bragg contracting office provided help with making arrangements and contracts, Eungard said.

While the bulk of the EIS travels by sea, the first human elements of the mission left for the States Feb. 16 via commercial charter flights.

The team arrived at Fort Bragg Feb. 23 and is setting up and testing the systems so training can begin March 2.

When it does hit the road for training sites in Germany or Bulgaria, the EIS, opposing forces and ITACCS technicians travel with only enough equipment to train a battalion-sized unit, Eungard said.



Moving so much equipment and so many people usually involves a brigade-level logistics section backed up by a support battalion and its resources, the major added. The Ops Group and its logistics section, with support from U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels logisticians, tackled the assignment during unit several unit training rotations and holiday leave, he said.

While the amount of equipment is not enormous, Eungard said, the biggest challenge for the mission was that the contingent -- the full Ops Group headquarters and the majority of the ITACSS team -- had not deployed before en masse.

“This is the first time we will be doing a brigade-sized unit solely with the Expeditionary Instrumentation System,” said Daniel Hoeh, ITACSS director. “We have used it to train battalions as a subset of the main instrumentation system.”

The system tracks Soldier and vehicle movement throughout the training area, records “hits and misses” and collects radio communications among Soldiers, the leaders and units. Video equipment monitors the action. All this information is then compiled by the ITACSS team and given to the observer/controllers and others, who use it to prepare and conduct after-action reviews with the units that participated in the training.

The entire equipment package will fill a “small parking lot, about 100 feet by about 100 feet,” Hoeh said, and includes three containers filled with instruments used for tracking vehicles, monitoring radio traffic and collecting and storing video information, as well as three containers that serve as work space for the team’s analysts.

The team also shipped five Humvee-mounted microwave antenna towers that serve as radio signal relay stations. Additionally, because of the terrain and tall trees in the training area, contractors erected one 120-foot and five 106-foot-tall temporary towers that are about the same height as the permanent masts that support the system in Hohenfels, Hoeh said.

ITACCS sent about 45 U.S. government employees. They’ll be joined by another 45 Raytheon Corporation contractor employees.

The EIS system traveling to Fort Bragg was set up in August at the German Army training area in Hammelburg, Germany for the 172nd Infantry Brigade’s pre-deployment training. Similar versions of the systems have also been used in Schweinfurt and Bulgaria during other training exercises.

“This will be the first time we have taken this system out of Europe,” Hoeh said. It took about 4,000 hours to get the system cleaned, packed and ready for shipment to the United States, Hoeh said.

“We’ll work with the observer/controllers to collect the information and provide AARs (after-action reviews) to the training unit: same job, different location; same instrumentation system, different hardware; same software running on different computers,” he said.

“This mission to Bragg will give us and the Army a chance to see what it takes for this type of mission to become routine,” he said.

Observers from Army Training and Doctrine Command’s combat training center directorate and the Army’s National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., will evaluate the exercise for its “efficiencies and effectiveness,” Hoeh said, so the Army can consider establishing ITACSS systems at its other training centers.

Comparing the Fort Bragg assignment to this month’s training exercise at Hohenfels to prepare units participating in Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo, Hoeh called the mission a reversal of roles for his team. Instead of bringing units to Hohenfels to train in austere conditions, the trainers will travel to the training site, establish their operations centers under field conditions and live as their customers do, sleeping in open-bay barracks and eating in garrison dining facilities.

“We are going to do what they just did. They [came] over here to train to go to Kosovo. We are going over there to help a unit train for its missions,” he said. “It is not going to be a relaxing time. I hope it is a learning event for the training unit, for JRMC and for the Army.”

The OPS group, OPFOR and ITACCS teams are expected to begin returning to Germany in late March, he said.

“This is the first undertaking for a unit this large for the Joint Multination Readiness Center,” Hoeh said. “We want to do it well. We are going there to train one of the elite brigades and we want to provide them with a good training event.”

