



# News Release

## HQ U.S. ARMY EUROPE & 7<sup>TH</sup> ARMY

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June 26, 2007  
Release No. 200706-008

### Conference empowers NCOs from all over Europe and Eurasia

Story and photos by Sgt. Aimee Millham, U.S. Army, Europe Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Historically, armies in Eastern Europe, Africa and Afghanistan have relied heavily on their officers to make decisions even at the lowest tactical level. But with the asymmetrical face of warfare today, some nations are looking to empower their noncommissioned officers to make the immediate on-the-ground decisions that affect front-line Soldiers in battle.

“On this warfront, who is out on the convoys?” said Sgt. Maj. Mariusz Piwonski, sergeant major of Polish Land Forces. “It is the NCOs. They are the ones out there making the big decisions, the decisions that affect the lives of Soldiers.”

This and other topics were addressed at a three-day conference June 20 at Grafenwoehr, Germany, that brought together 30 sergeants major from across Europe and Eurasia to meet for the first-ever Conference of European Armies for NCOs.

In line with U.S. Army Europe’s commander’s intent of building tomorrow’s coalitions and leaders, the conference was designed to bring leaders from different armies together to exchange ideas, network and engage in open discussions regarding military matters, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Iuniasolua Savusa, USAREUR command sergeant major.

While each year land forces commanders and other top officers from across Europe and the U.S. Army gather in Heidelberg, Germany, for such a conference, the Grafenwoehr event was the first of its kind for NCOs.

“We cannot think that this war is all officer business,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Ripka, U.S. Joint Forces Command. “We’re going to end up executing the order anyway – might as well be involved in the decision-making process.”

Nations like Romania, where the second command sergeant major of the army is now serving, and Slovakia, which its sergeant major said has fully adopted the western NCO models, are mirroring the NCO corps structure of nations like the United States, Canada and Great Britain.

“They want the confidence we have in our NCO corps. To me that shows passion,” Savusa said. “Everyone here (at the conference), I believe, has that passion.”

Slovakia sent its army's sergeant major to the U.S. Army Sergeant Major Academy and has used the U.S. NCO structure as a foundation for its corps because it believes it is important for all coalition partners to follow the same standard, said Sgt. Maj. Richard Fabricius, sergeant major of Slovakian armed forces.

"It is important because when you have two platoons from two different nations going on the same raid, you can assume NCOs from both platoons will have a mutual grasp of what the NCOs' responsibility is," Fabricius said.

The conference included discussion panels, a tour of the Joint Multinational Training Command Warrior Leader Course facilities, and a demonstration of convoy live-fire training, where U.S. Soldiers reacted to an improvised explosive device and engaged pop-up targets.

"This conference is perfectly located at JMTC, USAREUR's jewel, where we send Soldiers from other nations through our NCO education system to enhance their commands," Savusa said.

The Conference of European Armies for NCOs will be an annual event slated to happen again in April 2008, according to conference organizers.

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**PHOTOS WITH CUTLINES (3):**



DSC 0275a: Sergeants major from nations throughout Europe and Eurasia observe convoy live-fire training at one of Grafenwoehr, Germany's training ranges during the Noncommissioned Officers Conference of European Armies June 20-22.



DSC 0326a: A group of Soldiers react to an improvised explosive device during convoy live-fire training at one of Grafenwoehr's training ranges, as 30 sergeants major from nations throughout Europe and Eurasia, there for the Noncommissioned Officers Conference of European Armies June 20-22, look on.



DSC 0149a: Sergeants major from nations throughout Europe and Eurasia observe a block of instruction at the Joint Multinational Training Command Warrior Leader Course, as part of a tour of Grafenwoehr's training facilities during the Noncommissioned Officers Conference of European Armies June 20-22.