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U.S. ARMY EUROPE SOLDIERS VITAL TO COMBINED EXERCISES WITH POLISH FORCES

By Spc. Jerry Wilson

7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command Public Affairs Office

WEDRZYN TRAINING AREA, Poland -- Three hundred U.S. Army Europe Soldiers from Germany and Italy traveled to Poland recently to help train their Army National Guard counterparts from Illinois and Polish Land Forces during exercise Immediate Response 07.



SPC JERRY WILSON

Deputy exercise director Lt. Col. Sean Mulcahey (left) coordinates with U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Warren L. McCray, a joint terminal attack controller (center), and Polish Capt. Armin Piatkowski for close-air support provided by F-16 fighter jets from Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany during the U.S.-Polish exercise Immediate Response 07/Bagram II, at the Wendrzyń Training Area in Poland Sept. 13.

Immediate Response 07 is a USAREUR exercise conducted in conjunction with a Polish-led exercise called Bagram II.

USAREUR plays a big part in the U.S. European Command Theater Security Cooperation program by engaging with multinational partners in numerous exercises such as Immediate Response and Bagram II.

During the Polish exercises, Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard's Task Force 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry and Airmen from the

169th Expeditionary Air Support Squadron of the Illinois Air National Guard trained shoulder to shoulder with their partners from the Polish Land Forces in preparation for their deployment in Afghanistan later this year.

“We are here to build on our experiences working together 'downrange' and during previous exercises,” said deputy exercise director Lt. Col. Sean Mulcahey of USAREUR's operations division.

Mulcahey explained the central purpose of the exercises was to improve interoperability between the forces. This will be crucial when they touch down in Afghanistan, where Polish and U.S. forces will be working side by side and in combined operations.

“Currently in Afghanistan we have a Polish battalion with a U.S. company and a U.S. battalion with a Polish company,” he said. “So what we are trying to do here is build on those lessons learned and improve our ability to work together, because that is how we are fighting now and that is how we will continue to fight.”

Mulcahey said this teamwork is vital for success in the global war on terror.

“We don't conduct any operations these days unilaterally,” Mulcahey said. “We fight in coalitions, and it is extremely important that all partners understand how we operate and our tactics, techniques and procedures, as well as basic communication.”

Units working with USAREUR during Immediate Response include elements of V Corps, the 208th Finance Battalion, the 7th Army Reserve Command and some battalion staff officers from the Illinois National Guard.

Mulcahey said both the Illinois the Polish forces have proven tactically proficient.

“They are approaching this exercise from a continuous improvement standpoint,” Mulcahey said. “They are learning lessons and quickly implementing solutions to the lessons that they learned.”

Mulcahey said the USAREUR staff has been a key part of making the exercise a success.

“The USAREUR staff has done an outstanding job of planning and executing this exercise on top of all the other missions in Europe,” he said. “Pulling this off has been quite an achievement for all USAREUR units involved.

Polish Land Forces officials said they are quite happy with the outcome of both Immediate Response 07 and Bagram II.

Brig Gen. Jerzy Biziewski, commander of the Polish 1st Armor Brigade, said this interaction between the coalition partners is extremely important.

“I see this kind of working together as a continuation of the ties between the U.S. and Poland,” he said. “We have had a very good relationship for a long time and our Soldiers trust the U.S. Soldiers.”

“It is this human factor of trust that makes this interaction between the forces so vital.”



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