

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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RELEASE #2007-12-19-02

Dec. 19, 2007

### U.S. ARMY EUROPE SOLDIERS HELP TRAIN POLISH TROOPS FOR DEPLOYMENT TO IRAQ

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**DRAWSKO POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland** -- Poland has deployed troops to serve with the U.S.-led multinational coalition in Iraq since 2003. Since 2004 Polish forces have prepared for that support of Operation Iraqi Freedom by training alongside U.S. Soldiers in a series of exercises here known as Stable Guardian.

The most recent iteration of Stable Guardian, conducted Dec. 6 – 14, readied the Polish army's 12th Mechanized Division for its planned deployment to the Diwaniyah province of Iraq in the spring as the headquarters element of Multi-National Division - Central South.



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The first portion of the exercise here focused on operations center procedures and overcoming language barriers. American and Polish Soldiers

interacted during video teleconferences and briefings, and worked together creating operations orders and planning the movement and employment of large units.

Polish troops secure a landing zone to allow a medical evacuation helicopter to land as part of a cordon-and-search training scenario during exercise Stable Guardian at the Drawsko Pomorski Training Area in Poland Dec. 13. Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery who took part in the exercise designed to train Polish forces for an upcoming deployment to Iraq provided perimeter security for the scenario.

The exercise's command center was the hub of a command post exercise focused on finding solutions to problems presented by hundreds of simulated events based on the real experiences of coalition forces in Iraq. To make that happen, U.S. Army Europe and Polish army teams that would normally work autonomously were forced to combine their efforts and hammer out courses of action.

As the CPX portion of Stable Guardian wrapped up and command cell operations slowed, the focal point of the exercise shifted to field maneuvers and a live-fire exercise. Polish and American Soldiers were tasked with conducting cordon-and-search and patrol missions in situations closely simulating conditions in Diwaniyah province.

USAREUR's 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery, an Idar-Oberstein, Germany-based unit that is part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, trained with Polish forces in the exercise. Capt. Andre Sessoms, commander of the battalion's Battery C, said his Soldiers enjoyed working closely with their Polish comrades-in-arms.

"It was a little slow going in the beginning, but things are really picking up and both sets of Soldiers are starting to get excited," Sessoms said during the exercise.

The captain noted that language is one of the more difficult hurdles for Soldiers to overcome in multinational operations, but added that the combined forces for Stable Guardian used the shared language of soldiering to clear that hurdle.

"We are all evolving together. Some of the Polish guys have never been 'downrange,' and some of my guys have never been 'downrange,' so it's great to get them some of the knowledge from people who have been," Sessoms said.

Prior to tackling Stable Guardian's culminating live-fire exercise the combined forces had an opportunity to try out each other's weapons on a cold, rainy Tuesday morning when a biting wind cut across the firing ranges here, stinging ears and stiffening trigger fingers. Sgt. Nelson Garrett of the 1-94th noted that the weather was rotten, but the troops were in their element.

"It's cold out here, but this is the stuff every Army guy dreams about -- shootin' guns," said Garrett. "The (Polish assault rifle) is a great weapon, and I am thrilled to be getting to use one today."

"I judge today's cooperation to be very good," said 2nd Class Private Kamil Misik of the Polish 2nd Mechanized Division. "Today we are on the range and we learn to shoot American weapons, and they do the same with ours. (The American Soldiers) have given us great knowledge and experience which we will need in our deployment to Iraq."

Wednesday brought more wind and rain, but the troops didn't seem to notice as they were heavily engaged, training on patrol mission scenarios and cordon-and-search techniques. The groups meshed their techniques and experiences into a fluid process.

Concrete buildings and vast fields presented the perfect simulation of terrain for the training, and medical evacuation procedures enhanced its realism, Sessoms said as he observed the joint forces setting up security and searching a building. “We even have some Soldiers dressed as Iraqi police and as insurgents, just so everyone knows what their role is during the real thing,” he added.



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Polish troops man a checkpoint as a group of their comrades and Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery role-play as a group of rioters during a training scenario for exercise Stable Guardian at the Drawsko Pomorski Training Area in Poland Dec. 14.

Later the combined troops trained on reacting to ambushes in vehicles and on foot. Pop-up targets added an unexpected twist of realism for some Soldiers, and, combined with smoke grenades and live firing, made for some fantastic joint training, said Garrett.

The training may have seemed long and cold to some, but Soldiers from both armies seemed aware that the time spent here could save lives on the battlefield.

“My wife told me to stay here (and train) so I am more prepared for when I go to Iraq,” said 1st Lt. Michal Wilczyński of the Polish 12th Mechanized Division. He spoke over a clamor of gunfire that rang through the foggy air and would continue into the night.

While the lieutenant admitted he is anxious to begin his tour in Iraq and return safely to his family, he said working with USAREUR troops during Stable Guardian has helped fulfill some of his wife’s hopes.

“I am really looking forward to the exercise finish; not because we go home, (but because) we will be working even better together than we are today,” he said.

“From start to finish,” Sessoms said, “I can see how far we have come in communicating and working together to accomplish the most difficult missions across language barriers and procedural boundaries.”

