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U.S. MILITARY SUPPORTS MORE THAN TROOPS DURING EXERCISE IN REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

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VAZIANI TRAINING AREA, Republic of Georgia -- U.S. servicemembers spend a great amount of time training and working with coalition forces during deployments and exercises. But these exercises do more than just enhance participants' military skills -- they also help boost local economies.

More than 30 local vendors attended a conference hosted by two U.S. Soldiers from the 409th Contracting Support Brigade in Tbilisi, Georgia July 21 and 22, as part of exercise Immediate Response 2008.

Maj. James Conatser, the 409th's contracting officer team leader, and Maj. Todd Cundy, contracting management officer, put the conference together to teach attendees how to get registered with the Central Contractor Registry and how to look for future contracting opportunities with the U.S. government.



SPC CRYSTAL ABBOTT

Maj. James Conatser, contracting officer team leader for the 409th Contracting Support Brigade, answers questions from local business owners during the vendors' conference in Tbilisi, Georgia, July 22. The conference was a part of exercise Immediate Response 2008, an annual bilateral security cooperation exercise conducted between U.S. and its coalition partners.

“The purpose of the vendor conference was to try to gather information regarding supply and service capabilities within the country of Georgia,” said Conatser. “We explained the normal supplies and services that (the U.S. Army) requires when supporting training

exercises. These services can include local cell phone recharging units, non-tactical vehicles and interpreters.”

“It is important to identify the capabilities that can meet our contracting requirements,” added Cundy. “By registering with the CCR, local businesses will get the opportunity to compete. This can be a stepping stone for some of the smaller businesses.”

The vendors attending seemed a little wary of the system, but excited about the new opportunities the program could open up for them.

“I find this a little overwhelming, but I want to personally look at this as part of our company’s business strategy,” said Nino Ositashvili, a local business owner. “I think our government knows what will benefit our economy, so I feel, ‘Why not keep that opportunity here in our country with our friends?’”

Conatser said he is glad to have the opportunity to meet with the area business owners.

“The best part of this job is being able to provide solutions to complex problems,” said Conatser. “I really enjoy the interaction with the local population.”

Immediate Response is an annual bilateral security cooperation exercise conducted by the U.S. and its coalition partners.



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