

# Paratroopers from several nations come together in Ukraine during Rapid Trident 2011

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By **U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs**



Photo credit **U.S. Army Europe**

*YAVORIV, Ukraine -- Paratroopers from (left to right) the U.S. Army, Canada, the United Kingdom, Belarus, Poland and Ukraine embrace for a photograph to commemorate an event they won't soon forget: Rapid Trident 2011.*

YAVORIV, Ukraine – Rapid Trident 2011 is about building lasting international partnerships and friendships, in addition to its military goals. To that end, Soldiers from all 13 nations at the exercise attended a dinner at the parade field here, July 30, for a night without training to get to know one another.

Rapid Trident 2011, the U.S. Army Europe-led, multi-national exercise being held at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center here, is a joint training and exercise program, designed to enhance interoperability among Ukraine, the U.S. and Partnership for Peace member nations.

"Today is one day to relax and enjoy the culture," said Kevin Volk, U.S. co-director of the exercise. "Not just coming to Ukraine to train but for the Soldiers to enjoy being here and give them a chance to rest and relax before we kick off the FTX next week."

"It's not just about the training," he said. "It's about building partnership capacity, it's about working together, it's about serving together in coalition operations. This dinner is symbolic of that."

After a show featuring a Ukrainian army band and traditional Ukrainian dancing, the grills were fired up and the nations attending Rapid Trident 2011 started their evening.

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"It was pretty cool getting to see the Ukrainian army band and dancers, seeing a little bit of their culture," said Pfc. Jack Nesmith, of Battle Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and a native of Atlanta, Ga. "The food was good and the company was even better."

That sentiment was echoed throughout the ranks of the Battle Co. paratroopers.

"It was nice to bring everyone together for once," said Vincent Phillips, also of Battle Co., and a native of Portage, Ind. "Everybody was out there and you have a person from pretty much each country there and even if you don't speak the same language you can hold up your drink and say cheers."

During the dinner, the U.S. paratroopers of Battle Co. presented the paratroopers of the United Kingdom's 2nd Parachute Regiment with their American jump wings they earned earlier in the week.

"It's very cool to earn these wings but they're a symbol of the total experience of exchanging wings with a brother paratrooper from another nation," said Staff Sgt. Scott Frazier, of Destined Co., 2nd Bn. 503rd Inf. Regt., and a native of Atlanta. "It's an incredible experience."

The next day was a cultural day, for the Soldiers to make their way into the neighboring city of L'viv to see the sights and get another taste of Ukrainian culture.

"None of us were expecting it, and we were grateful that we were given that time to experience the city and another nation," said Spc. Armando Rodriguez, of Battle Co., from Webster, Fla. "We walked around, checked out the sights. I can't believe I'm here."

"Not a lot of people can say they've been here," he added. "I've been here, I've jumped here, it's one of those things you can't describe, you have to be here living it."

"Coming from Bridgeport, Texas, I never thought I'd leave Bridgeport or Oklahoma because they're the only two states I've ever been to," said Jeffrey Rogers, of Battle Co. "Now I'm living in Italy, training in Germany and Ukraine, when I got to go out, I wanted to see as many sights as possible and I got to see everything so it was pretty nice."

"It was an eye-opening experience," Nesmith said.

The field training exercise continues until Aug. 5, giving the nations involved another week to live together, train together and learn more about their airborne brothers.

"I think it's a great idea," said Frazier. "The younger Soldier is going to learn so much from this. Even if he doesn't realize it now, he'll realize it when he's on the ground."

"A young Soldier here now, is going to be that leader on the ground later," he continued. "I've worked with foreign countries before but never have I had the pleasure of doing so as I have here."

"It really is a big deal," he added. "It's far bigger than I think anybody gave it credit for when we came here."