

Seventh Army OCs bring doctrinal knowledge to the field

Nov. 8, 2013

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DRAWSKO POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland--Observer-controllers from the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command provide guidance to American and allied troops during the training portion of Exercise Steadfast Jazz here Nov. 2. The U.S. Army is supporting Steadfast Jazz 13 with participation from the 173d IBCT(A), one of U.S. Army Europe's forward-based combat brigades and the 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the U.S.-based ground force contribution to NATO Response Force 2014. Collectively, these forces represent the reinvigoration of U.S. participation in the NRF and the enduring U.S. commitment to NATO, Europe, and regional stability and prosperity. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Alexander Jansen/54th Engineer Bn.)

DRAWSKO-POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland -- U.S. Soldiers from the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command travelled to Poland to provide observer-controller support to the U.S. Army Europe forces participating in exercise Steadfast Jazz 2013 Nov. 2 through 9.

Then team made up of maneuver specialists, engineers and a logistician, including augmentees from the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, were on-hand to provide coaching to paratroopers from the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), as well as to NATO allies during the exercise.

The exercise trained and tested the NATO Response Force, a highly- ready and technologically-advanced multinational force of land, air, maritime and Special Forces. It is essential in maintaining and enhancing the ability of forces from allies and partner nations to work together.

"The OCs are here helping us to evaluate our tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting our mission and supporting our multinational operations," said Maj. Nathan Williams, the operations officer for a squadron in the 173rd.

The Germany-based JMTC are no strangers to multinational training. NATO allies train there routinely, with much of the training focusing on the integration and interoperability.

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"The majority of the training we do involves multinational forces," said Master Sgt. Solomon King, a combat engineer and an OC from the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, part of the JMTC.

The JMTC is the Army's only unified training command. It's mission not only includes the training of NATO allies and other partners, playing an active role in military-to-military interaction, and participating and providing training support to numerous land component training exercises like Steadfast Jazz across the European continent.

"This is a great opportunity for the OC team to experience multinational training outside JMTC - it allows them to see how other countries operate on similar missions and extends the relationship that we are trying to increase with our NATO allies," said Williams.

The OC team has been working with U.S. Soldiers during individual and unit-level training, but also has provided assistance and guidance during joint training such as the construction of fighting positions, route clearance and barrier building.

"We've been doing some pretty intensive training with our partners," said King. "Partnership training is the reason we all came here and we've been working well together."

Not only observing U.S. training, the OC team observed partner-nation interaction during combined missions as well.

"The procedures of each of the NATO countries are different," said King. "We are observing what they are doing - and then syncing what our two nations are doing and seeing what we can learn from one another."

King and his team arrived prior to the formal start of the exercise to observe U.S. training before the paratroopers began partnership training with the exercise's other participants.

"Our mission here is giving the engineers guidance on doctrinal engineering," said King. "For the past 10 years our engineers have been focused on counter-insurgency operations like route clearance. We are here to help them brush up on mobility, counter-mobility and survivability skill sets such as obstacle emplacement, timber cutting, and demolition calculating. It's important they are prepared for any situation they may need to operate in in the future."

173rd's leadership have recognized the need for these embedded OCs.

The OCs "are giving us crucial feedback and more importantly, providing coaching from a different perspective," said Williams.

A firm grounding of institutional knowledge, mission-related training and years of experience is what the 7th Army's OCs provide to the units who request their skills.

"Whatever the mission is, we are observers, coaches and trainers," said Williams. "As OCs we are here to mentor - we aren't going to give them the answer, but we will help them find the solution. At the end of the day, whether I was able to influence 10 things or or one thing - just knowing that I gave my all was the reward in itself."

Learn more about Steadfast Jazz on the [exercise microsite](#), or view more photos on [Flickr](#).

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