

U.S. Army Europe, European Command lead first Balkans senior NCO conference

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U.S. Army Europe Command Sgt. Maj. David S. Davenport (right) joins Command Sgt. Major of the Kosovo Security Forces Fetah Zejhullahu for a discussion with media representatives during the Regional Senior Noncommissioned Officer Conference for the Land Forces Senior NCO and Senior Enlisted Leader at the Hotel Adria in Pristina, Kosovo, Monday, Jan. 14. Davenport said this conference, a first for Kosovo, was designed to help develop NCOs while building networks and relationships to allow regional forces help each other better train, develop and prepare Soldiers for combat. (Photo by Sgt. Angela Parady)

PRISTINA, Kosovo - Senior noncommissioned officers from the Balkans region are meeting here this week with U.S. Army Europe and U.S. European Command senior enlisted leaders during the first Regional Senior NCO Conference for the Land Forces Senior NCO and Senior Enlisted Leader.

The two-day conference is the first of its kind to take place in Kosovo. U.S. Army Europe Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport Sr. said the conference was designed to help develop NCOs, as well as to provide a forum for networking, building relationships and sharing ideas about how to better train, develop and prepare Soldiers for combat roles and develop national NCO corps' based on NATO standards.

The conference covered topics on development from the International Senior Enlisted Seminar, the role of NCO academies, and NATO's role in NCO development, and offered recommendations to Kosovo Security Forces commander Lt. Gen. Kadri Kastrati and his staff on how to build and develop its NCO corps.

As the region works to develop and advance its military structure, Kosovo is looking to gain insight from the Americans, Slovenians, Albanians, Montenegrins and others to improve its security forces. The conference brought together senior enlisted leaders from all of the Balkan states, the U.S. Army Europe command sergeant major, the senior enlisted leader for U.S. European Command, and representatives from USAREUR's Joint Multinational Training Command.

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Kosovo has based the development of the Kosovo Security Force created in 2009 on U.S. doctrine, training and building forces similar to the U.S. Army. In addition, each year the nation reviews and develops ways to integrate NATO standards.

Davenport said conferences such as these build networks and relationships that have an impact long after the event.

"After you meet people here, you can pick up a phone and call another sergeant major or send them an e-mail," said Davenport. "You can share ideas, discuss what techniques worked, which ones that didn't. That communication strengthens the NCO corps tenfold."

U.S. European Command Senior Enlisted Leader Fleet Master Chief Roy M. Maddocks Jr. said the event will help to develop and train professional NCOs, share standards and strategies to do that.

"Whether you are working regionally or independently, you have to develop a standard. A strategy that holds common among the partners," Maddocks said.

Like Davenport, Maddocks said relationship building is a key outcome of professional forums, and creates bonds that help develop common goals and prepare key enlisted leaders for increasingly complex and challenging multinational missions.

"Once you have a common strategy, you can collaborate, cooperate on regional security issues," said Maddocks. "So we have common strategies, developed relationships. Just by building relationships at these conferences, when it becomes necessary to work together as a security force, it is not the first time you have worked with that country. You already have rapport."

Kosovo Security Force Command Sergeant Major Fetah Zejhullahu said the conference helps his senior leaders work on their relationships with regional armies from Slovenia to Albania, as well as with USAREUR, EUCOM and NATO's Kosovo Force.

As Kosovo has built and developed its military, Zejhullahu added, its leaders have looked for positive models to emulate and provide mentorship and assistance.

"We looked around to see how we wanted to base the structure, the ideology and the doctrine," he said. "A lot of the foreign military influence in the past had been negative, and we didn't want to continue that way."

"We are a small organization, but we want to be professional. Ready," he said.

Additional photos from the conference can be found in USAREUR's [Flickr photostream](#).

About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia and has unparalleled capability to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, if necessary, win decisively. The relationships we build during more than 1000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for multinational contingency operations around the world, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance global security.