Saber Strike 2012 "ENDEX"

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TAPA, Estonia—Months of planning, coordination and hard work draws to a successful conclusion as participants of the command post exercise portion of Saber Strike 2012 conclude the simulated combat operations.

From humble beginnings at the initial planning conference in September 2011 through today, military representatives from the eight partner nations including the United States and Estonia have been assembling the pieces of what has become the Saber Strike 2012 command post exercise.

Saber Strike is an annual training event that rotates throughout the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. This year’s exercise included a tactical field training and command post exercise that involved more than 2,000 personnel from the U.S. Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Pennsylvania National Guard, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, the 4th U.S. Marine Division, the 127th Wing of the Michigan Air National Guard, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian armed forces, with contingents from Canada, Finland, France and the United Kingdom. The exercise, led by U.S. Army Europe, is designed to enhance joint and combined interoperability between the U.S. Army and partner nations, and will help prepare participants to operate successfully in a joint, multinational, interagency, integrated environment.

The command post exercise featured an Estonian brigade operating in the field with multinational liaison officers from the United Kingdom, France, Latvia, Lithuania and the United States and coordinating with a higher headquarters division element composed primarily of Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers and Airmen as well as representatives from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Estonian Army.

"[This exercise] has provided additional challenges to my headquarters and brigade commanders, but I am quite satisfied that they have been up to the challenge," said Col. Indrek Sirel, Estonian Land Forces Commander. "I had several key objectives going into this exercise. The first is the ability of our brigade to be able to fight for our national security and operate in an international coalition, and the second is training. Through the training we have accomplished here we have been able to build or improve our existing skills and knowledge for the brigade headquarters and commanders as a whole. Sustaining, polishing, and improving of our capabilities to improve our overall capacity.”

The Pennsylvania National Guard has a long partnership throughout the Baltic States, specifically with their State Partner, Lithuania, who is scheduled to be the host for Saber Strike 2013.

"Our experience in Saber Strike 2012 has been exceptional," said Col. Wilbur E. Wolf III, Pennsylvania National Guard. "We had the opportunity to form, train, and deploy an operational headquarters from the Pennsylvania National Guard augmented with numerous joint and multinational partners, and, most importantly, we had the opportunity to work closely with our host nation of Estonia. This partnership and coalition, I believe, has contributed immeasurably to the readiness and ‘smart defense’ preparedness of the Baltic region.”

Throughout this two week exercise, members of the command post exercise have participated in a number of classroom training sessions. At these sessions, the Estonian ground force demonstrated their planning initiatives. Similarly, the U.S. military representatives shared their knowledge on the integrated utilization of close air support, air assault, artillery and higher headquarters structure and coordination procedures.

"I am very pleased that the command post exercise has been a full-spectrum warfare scenario," said Col. Sirel. "This is something that has been a common request from all of the land forces commanders of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as well as other European commanders.”

Saber Strike 2012 formally ends June 22, 2012. “Even though the exercise is almost over, the relationships we have formed during this two week opportunity will benefit us well into the future as allies and partner nations,” said Brig. Gen. Timothy Hilty, Pennsylvania National Guard. "We have all worked hard and the team has greatly exceeded any and all expectations, but most importantly we have shared knowledge and learned how to operate as a coalition of multinational partners. This knowledge will only enhance our effectiveness in future operations.”

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