

409th CSB provides contracting support across Europe

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By Rachel Clark, 409th CSB

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Two Ukraine soldiers (left) discuss the military contracting mission with Sgt. 1st Class Fred Warren, 170th Brigade Combat Team, and Capt. Kelley Smith, 649th Contingency Contracting Team contracting specialist. Smith and members of the 649th CCT were in Ukraine in support of Rapid Trident 2012, a Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise conducted July 16-28.

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany -- With a geographic footprint spanning across 104 countries, the 409th Contracting Support Brigade in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is the Expeditionary Contracting Command's support link on the European and African continents.

"One of the biggest challenges for contracting officers is providing support to some challenging logistical requirements," said Col. William J. Bailey, commander, 409th CSB, and the principal assistant responsible for contracting -- Europe.

"This is true while providing sustainment contracting services in our garrison environment or contingency contracting in a deployed environment," he said. "Whether we are contracting for mules to cross the mountains of Afghanistan, camels in the Middle East or trains, planes and cars in Europe, we have to do so in a fashion that will ensure we meet our customer's requirements and enable them to accomplish their mission on time."

The 409th consists of one battalion and nine contingency contracting teams spread across Germany who provide support to 15 Army installations.

In Ukraine, Capt. Kelley Smith, 649th Contingency Contracting Team, Kaiserslautern, was part of the support team for the Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise Rapid Trident 2012. The exercise included 1,394 people from 16 nations. A total of 156 U.S. participants worked alongside exercise partners training on international security assistance force-focused peacekeeping tasks in field training and command post exercises.

Synchronizing multiple exercise funding sources provided challenges to established contracting planning timelines, Smith said. The mission was successfully executed and served as an example for complex expeditionary contracting operations.

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In Belgium, Roland Becker, a contracting specialist in the Regional Contracting Office Benelux, supported the 68th World War II D-Day commemoration by writing contracts for food, generators, light stands, latrines, and fencing for the event that supported more than 200 military members on temporary duty in Normandy, France.

"My first big event was the 60th anniversary commemoration of the Normandy landing in 2004," said Becker, who has been in contracting for 10 years. "The goal was to be able to support 1,000 Soldiers" during the historic event.

Anita McLain, contracting officer, Theater Contracting Center, Kaiserslautern, works on a component of a total maintenance contract for the area. This large-scale contract, which awarded more than \$400 million in services, covers everything from grounds maintenance, equipment maintenance and repair, as well as construction projects for the various bases.

McLain said it can be a challenge on both ends as none of the three on-site military personnel are contingency contract specialists.

"What they lack in knowledge, they make up for in the willingness to cooperate and support," McLain said of the Soldiers who work in conjunction with contracting specialists assigned as reachback operations. "They have to deal with the language barriers while interfacing with the contractors on the existing contracts and they do all the leg work when gathering the information necessary to submit the packages for new requirements."

In Latvia supporting Saber Strike 2012, contracting officers Maj. Paul Tomcik and Staff Sgt. John Manurs from the 606th Senior Contingency Contracting Team, Kaiserslautern, work multiple contracts for fuel, life support areas, rental vehicles, bus transportation, and material and handling equipment.

"Support to exercises such as Saber Strike provides contingency contracting officers the opportunity to work in a dynamic environment where we can offer contracting solutions from cradle-to-grave in a short span of time," Tomcik said. "This exercise allows us to leverage the contracting assets from Latvian and Estonian defense forces as well as the U.S. embassies in Latvia and Estonia to provide our customer with the necessary support to conduct the exercise successfully."

Meanwhile in Cameroon, another team from the 606th SCCT worked through challenges normally associated with developing contracts in Africa.

"This exercise brought plenty of challenges but we were able to meet them head on and accomplish the mission on time and under budget," said Maj. Mark Corn, 606th SCCT, of African Endeavor 2012 in Douala, Cameroon.

"We had continuous support from the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde', the host nation, and reachback with the 903rd Contingency Contracting Battalion. Overall, more than 200 coalition and African partners were able to test the interoperability of their communications equipment and receive valuable training during the exercise."

Sgt. 1st Class Cathleen Stadler-Frazier, 409th CSB operations and plans noncommissioned officer, who recently returned from a deployment in Djibouti, Africa, said the key to getting the job done is teaching the locals how the Army does business.

"While deployed to countries like Djibouti, where resources are limited, we educated vendors of small businesses how to do business with the government," Stadler-Frazier said.

Whether it's supporting exercises including Saber Strike 2012, African Endeavor 2012, Rapid Trident 12, or providing theater sustainment, Command Sgt. Maj. Bentura Fernandez, 409th CSB command sergeant major, said the 409th CSB plans and executes efficient, effective and agile contracting support for U.S. Army Europe,

"Not a day goes by where a 409th Soldier isn't deployed providing contracting service to the Army," Bailey added. "The 409th CSB is going to be ready to provide contracting support anytime, anywhere."

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