

Capel departs U.S. Army Europe for one last combat tour

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HEIDELBERG, Germany -- After serving only 18 months as the U.S. Army Europe senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel has left Europe to do what he says loves best: serve with Soldiers on the field of battle.

Capel has assumed his new position as the command senior enlisted advisor for the International Security Assistance Force and U.S Forces – Afghanistan.

Capel joined the USAREUR team in August 2010 after having served as the 18th Airborne Corps command sergeant major. Capel had just redeployed from Afghanistan when he was assigned to USAREUR.

For the career infantryman, serving in Europe has been something of a novelty, after having served nearly his entire 34-year career at Fort Bragg, N.C.

“I have served in Germany before, but I was working with the Air Force, so this assignment has been unique for me,” the North Carolina native explained.

During his tenure at USAREUR, Capel was instrumental in helping to build the capacity of several of USAREUR’s European partner nations, particularly those working toward building professional noncommissioned officer corps.

“Visiting all of these countries and meeting with my counterparts, as well as the senior officers and Soldiers, has been an incredible experience,” Capel said. “Not just visiting seeing their programs and training, but seeing how USAREUR Soldiers are training with these other countries’ Soldiers. By training with partners, we learn from each other and we learn to work as part of a coalition. It’s a win-win situation, and U.S. Army Europe knows how to take advantage of that incredible opportunity.”

Capel spent the majority of his tour here traveling to visit Soldiers at various commands throughout the Army in Europe. He quickly developed the reputation of being a Soldier’s Soldier.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Capel is an unbelievable NCO leader, and he has been a tremendous asset to the Soldiers and the mission of USAREUR. He has helped me bring Army Values back into the forefront of our culture here,” said USAREUR commanding general Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling.

“His effort to bring an understanding of what it means to be a part of a profession of arms to our Soldiers and to our allies has been significant. He’s been a tremendous senior enlisted advisor to me and a mentor to all the command sergeants major of this command. We’ll miss him, but we all know he’ll do great things as Gen. [John] Allen’s [command sergeant major] at ISAF.”

This deployment marks Capel’s fourth combat tour in Afghanistan, in addition to one deployment to Iraq.