

# Opening Ceremony recognizes Patriot training between U.S., Poland

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HEIDELBERG, Germany -- An opening ceremony commemorating the first training rotation between U.S. Army Europe and Polish Armed Forces on the U.S. Patriot Missile System was held here, May 26.

In attendance were Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's Alpha Battery, 5th Battalion 7th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, their counterparts from the Polish Armed Forces, the Representational Battalion of the Polish Armed Forces, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Poland Lee Feinstein, Poland's Minister of Defense Bogdan Kilch, and USAREUR's Brig. Gen. Mark A. Bellini.

"We have a beautiful saying in the Polish language, 'we offer to our guests the very best that we have'. And it is in within this spirit that I welcome you to Polish soil," said Minister KILCH during his opening remarks at the ceremony. Monday, U.S. Soldiers unloaded the equipment shipped from their home station just outside of Kaiserslautern, Germany that would be used for the training here. Although no actual missiles were shipped, this is the first time a U.S. missile system has come to Poland for the new training program intended to familiarize Polish armed forces on the Patriot system and other air defense techniques.

"It's important not just because it is long anticipated, but important because of what we see here today - a battery of U.S. Soldiers working alongside their Polish counterparts on Polish soil cooperating as established allies," said Feinstein during his remarks at the ceremony.

The rotation of a Patriot battery for training was originally agreed on by the two nations in the August 2008 Declaration of Strategic Cooperation. The training is designed to provide mutual benefits for improving Polish defense capabilities while also helping develop the U.S. patriot crew members' proficiency.

"I'm ready to be more proficient at my job and do a lot of training," said Spc. Brooke Bandy, a launching station operator with A Battery, 5th Battalion. 7th ADA.

This type of mutual training helps to expand U.S. and Poland air and missile defense cooperation while strengthening the partnership between the U.S. and Poland.