

U.S. Europe World Affairs Newsletter October 2021

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Special Edition, Interview with U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson (Series-4)

Special Edition, Interview with the U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson (Series-4) conducted by Editor in Chief

Sir, it is a great honor to have you with us in this interview. Thank you for accepting the invitation.

Q: 1 Defender Europe 2021 has reached its final phase.

- **Please provide us a brief overview of the goals achieved and the challenges overcome during this exercise?**

The U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson: Yes, U.S. forces are in the process of redeploying to the United States as [DEFENDER-Europe 21](#) activities across Europe come to a close.

DEFENDER-Europe is an annual large-scale [U.S. Army Europe and Africa-led](#), multinational, joint exercise designed to build strategic and operational readiness and interoperability between U.S., NATO allies and partners.

U.S., NATO allies and partners worked together throughout DEFENDER-Europe 21 to build readiness, enhance interoperability, and strengthen relationships. More than 28,000 multinational forces from 26 nations conducted nearly simultaneous operations across more than 30 training areas in a dozen countries.

“Interoperability is key to alliance readiness. DEFENDER-Europe 21 is evidence of the ironclad U.S. commitment to NATO, is a prime example of our collective capabilities, and demonstrates that NATO allies and partners are stronger together,” said Gen. Christopher Cavoli, U.S. Army Europe and Africa commanding general.

DEFENDER-Europe 21 concluded with the redeployment of U.S.-based forces and equipment. Strategic readiness includes the ability of the U.S. military to dynamically project force and set the theater by mobilizing and deploying forces, sustaining them in a crisis and redeploying them when their mission is complete. U.S. service members will now clear the training areas, return repositioned stocks, move to ports and return to home stations.

The large-scale movement of troops and equipment for these exercises involve extensive support from each of the twelve host nations.

“We owe a great thanks to the host nations, their citizens and governments, and the participating units for their hard work and steadfast support throughout the exercise, said Cavoli. “This was an extremely complex exercise with activity going on across the theater at many different locations almost simultaneously. The coordination and cooperation required for DEFENDER demonstrate our allies ally and partner commitment to European military readiness and interoperability. And, to the various units throughout DoD that made DEFENDER successful, thank you for your participation and dedication to mission success.”

Throughout the exercise, U.S. forces demonstrated their ability to successfully train in a COVID environment. Critical to this success was the detailed planning, and the strict COVID prevention and mitigation strategy implemented by U.S. and participating nations. As the U.S. military members redeploy, they will continue to follow host nation requirements, as they did when entering Europe and during training.

DEFENDER-Europe 21 encompassed several linked exercises. Linked exercises shared coordinated mission command, mutual sustainment and a mission partner environment. Exercises linked to DEFENDER-Europe 21 included Immediate Response, Swift Response, Saber Guardian and a Command Post Exercise.

Q: 2 The area of responsibility of U.S. Army Europe and Africa covers also the African continent encompassing 54 countries. The African Land Forces Summit (ALFS), inaugurated in Washington DC in 2010, has been an important annual event since with the U.S. military officials’ participation. This year the ALFS was held on May 19th and virtually-hosted by the U.S. Army.

- **Could you speak about the overall theme of this year’s summit?**
- **And how can this event assist the U.S. Army Europe and Africa to develop stronger partnerships with African nations’ armed forces?**

The U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson: The 9th annual African Land Forces Summit, held virtually May 19, was themed “Maintaining security in a degraded environment.” The summit highlighted COVID-19-related challenges within the operational environment and encouraged dialogue to address military pandemic responses, as well as the pandemic’s effects on current and future operations.

Following opening remarks from the Southern European Task Force – Africa commander, Maj. Gen. Andrew M. Rohling, the attendees, including 35 African land forces commanders, participated in one of four regionally-focused sessions on a virtual platform.

Each session opened with recorded speeches from Gen. James C. McConville, the U.S. Army chief of staff; Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, the U.S. Africa Command commander; and Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, U.S. Army Europe and Africa commanding general. Session participants then engaged in moderated discussion, which included prepared remarks from land forces leaders from the region, on topics related to the event theme.

In their remarks, McConville, Townsend, Cavoli and Rohling each emphasized that while the global pandemic has impacted the way ahead for operations, it has not diminished the U.S. Army’s commitment to supporting its African partners in ensuring peace and stability on the continent and throughout the world.

Q: 3 NATO’s annual Exercise Steadfast Defender 2021 began on May 12 and will continue until June 22, with component maritime, land, and rapid reaction dimensions.

- **How do you see the participation of the U.S. Army Europe and Africa in this exercise, and the associated benefits for the strong U.S-NATO relations?**

The U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson: For seven decades, the bond between Europe and North America has made [NATO](#) the strongest alliance in history. This bond guarantees our prosperity and security, and allows us to live our lives in freedom.

Like every year, a number of multinational exercises took place in Central and Eastern Europe this Spring. For reasons of efficiency, interoperability and costs, some of these have linked scenarios.

Steadfast Defender was a new series of [NATO](#) exercises focused on the transatlantic reinforcement of Europe and demonstrated NATO's ability to respond rapidly to the full spectrum of threats. As part of Steadfast Defender, NATO troops participated in the DEFENDER-Europe 21 Command Post Exercise in Germany this May. The Command Post Exercise, included approximately 1,500 personnel from U.S. Army Europe and Africa, including V Corps, and NATO's recently established Multinational Corps Southeast in Romania. The command post exercise demonstrated U.S. capacity to conduct division-level offensive operations in a multinational environment. This computer-assisted exercise simulated a response-based scenario related to declaration of NATO's Article V.

Q: 4 What other exercises are planned in the second part of this year?

The U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson: U.S. Army Europe and Africa provides ready, combat-credible land forces to deter, and, if necessary, defeat aggression from any potential adversary in Europe and Africa. One way that U.S. Army Europe and Africa achieves this is through our exercise program, which builds readiness, enhances interoperability and strengthens relationships by providing a joint, multinational environment to prepare allies and partners to train as they fight.

A few exercises that U.S. Army Europe and Africa is scheduled to participate in later this year include:

-Agile Spirit, Georgia: Agile Spirit 2021 is a joint, multinational exercise co-led by the Georgian Defense Forces and U.S. Army Europe and Africa. The brigade-level exercise will incorporate a command post exercise, field training and joint multinational live fires.

-Justified Accord 21, Kenya: Southern European Task Force – Africa, alongside other participants, will conduct a Command Post Exercise.

-Rapid Trident 21, Ukraine: Rapid Trident 21 is the final training phase, or culminating event, of an intense and realistic annual training exercise to prepare Ukrainian Land Force units for the challenges of real world situations and deployments.

Q: 5 In each interview we focus on the importance of one special U.S-European military partnership. This time our subject matter is Denmark.

In early June the U.S. Army National Guard's 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team arrived in Denmark to begin its rotational deployment to Europe in support of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. The U.S. Army Europe and Africa announced: "...The operation reflects the ability of U.S. and Danish military forces to execute a complex logistics and transportation equipment movement on this scale."

- **Could you give your views on the enduring partnership between the U.S. Army Europe and Africa and the Danish Armed-Forces?**

The U.S. Army Europe and Africa Spokesperson: The Kingdom of Denmark and the United States have a long and close relationship. U.S. and Danish forces exercise regularly together in Europe and operate together daily across the continent.

As you mentioned, earlier this month more than 300 pieces of equipment from U.S. Army National Guard's 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team was off-loaded at the Esbjerg, Denmark, port. This was the first time the U.S. Army and the Danish Ministry of Defense have used the Esbjerg port for an operation of this kind. The unit is currently deployed to Europe in support of [NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence](#).

The U.S. and [Denmark](#) also continue to cooperate to maintain the Arctic as a secure and stable region where nations work cooperatively to address challenges along existing structures and institutions. This line of effort will focus on further cooperation on domain awareness, communication, the testing of new technologies, and the exchange of experiences from operating in the Arctic.

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NATO's Support in the evacuation and relocation of Afghans

By NATO Military Official September 2021

NATO is supporting the evacuation and relocation of Afghans. Elements of the [NATO Response Force \(NRF\)](#), commanded by Admiral Robert P. Burke (US Navy), are leading the operation and providing care, security, processing and accommodation for the Afghan evacuees.

The NRF has robust command and control capability, ideal for a mission of this size and complexity. It provides collective defence and a rapid military response in times of crisis, but it can also perform peace-support operations, provide protection to critical infrastructure, and support disaster relief. The NRF is regularly exercised, for instance during exercise Steadfast Defender 21 earlier this year, exercise Noble Jump 19 and exercise Trident Juncture 18.

The core element of the NRF in this operation is the Joint Logistics Support Group Naples (JLSG) that forms Task Force Noble.

More than 20 Allied nations are contributing, providing transportation aircraft, construction equipment, ambulances, medical teams, civil affairs teams and security personnel.

Around 300 NRF troops are deployed in temporary locations hosting Afghan evacuees. We are working closely with Poland and institutions in Kosovo, who have agreed to temporarily host the evacuees. There are also hundreds of NATO personnel supporting the operation from our commands and headquarters. For instance, [NATO's Allied Air Command](#), based in Ramstein, Germany, has been critical to this effort, providing transportation aircraft and crews.

We are committed to ensure a safe and compassionate transfer of the Afghan evacuees, through a series of temporary locations and on to resettlement. It is a huge effort, and Allies and partners are coming together to make it happen as quickly as possible. At this point, it is too soon to know how long the operation will take.

Additional: [NATO Staffs work together to help Afghan refugees in Spain](#)

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Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit

By: U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Eric Stuepfert, KFOR Regional
Command – East Chaplain

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit

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Command – East Chaplain.**

The trees are beginning to turn. It's one of the most beautiful times of the year, even for the locals. Just weeks ago, the rolling mountains stood tall, covered in green as far as your eyes could see. As a Vermont Green Mountain Boy, you'd think I'd be used to this by now. The difference this year, is that I'm not in Vermont. The 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) is currently deployed to Kosovo on a NATO peacekeeping mission named Kosovo Force or **KFOR**.



As a Chaplain, I have had the great pleasure of meeting many of the religious leaders throughout Regional Command East and have been able to observe many of the religious traditions and customs found within Kosovo. I have visited historic sites that I read about as a child, and have seen the magnificent architecture of churches and mosques throughout the Balkans. Recently I had the privilege of speaking at the Kosovo Center for Peace in Pristina.

In the speech, I stressed the words found in America's Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."^[1]

Kosovo has a long history, and much of that history influences today. Like Americans, the people of Kosovo are deeply influenced by their ethnic and religious heritages. Like Americans, one generation informs the next generation about the past, both the challenges and the successes. As I travel around and interact with Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbians, I see and hear this firsthand. I have also seen the principles and values of America's Declaration expressed. For a people with so much history, it gives me hope to hear the ideas of liberty and respect being communicated around the dinner tables. The belief that all men and women are created equal by their Creator and therefore have certain rights that transcend ethnic, religious, and historical boundaries is foundational to the respect that the people of Kosovo desire and deserve, both from the international community and with one another. The more that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness can be on the hearts and minds of the people of Kosovo, the more the challenges of the past can be overcome through mutual respect and cooperation.

In the future, a Kosovar may stand on top of one of their mountains that are covered in green trees. While gazing around at the beautiful landscape God has given them, they may think that they too are in Vermont, like I myself do. But this won't be because of the mountains rising through the morning clouds or the green lush trees, but because of the freedoms they enjoy. May God bless them as they strive for liberty, and may God help the United States be an example to Kosovars and others throughout the world, as we live out the principles and values found in our Declaration.

[1] <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Additional: [An exclusive interview with MAJ. Sam K. Otto, Spokesperson of the Public Affairs, U.S. Army KFOR Regional Command East.](#)

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Operation Allies Refuge



[Follow the news: Operation Allies Refuge: Ramstein transforms into major evacuation hub](#)

[USEUCOM Continues to Support Operation Allies Refuge](#)

Acknowledgments: Image 1: U.S. Army Maj. Eric Stuepfert, Chaplain of Regional Command – East KFOR29, and Imam Labintot S. Maliqi, Executive Director – Kosovo Center for Peace, lead a prayer luncheon on Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. October 5th 2021 ©KFOR Regional Command East/KFOR Regional Command East Religious Support Team. Image 2: A U.S. Air Force Airman plays the ukulele for children from Afghanistan during Operation Allies Refuge at Ramstein Air Base, August. 24, 2021. ©U.S. Air Force/ Lt. Col. William Powell.

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