



## SOE AROUND THE WORLD - GERMANY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE



*U.S. and Polish Special Operations Forces Soldiers move across a field to their objective as a Lithuanian Mi-17 helicopter hovers above during a casualty evacuation exercise rehearsal held Oct. 14 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. The training, coordinated by U.S. Special Operations Command, allows U.S. and partner-nation SOF soldiers the opportunity to train together and share tactics, techniques and procedures prior to deploying in support of International Security Assistance Force missions in Afghanistan.*

# Unique training links SOF, conventional, allied nation forces

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Donald Sparks  
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

Coordination and synchronization between conventional and Special Operations Forces is crucial on the modern battlefield since both share integral roles within an area of responsibility – whether it involves intelligence gathering or conducting combat operations.

Add the element of Allied and partner nation forces, and the joint-coalition battle space picture can become more complex as all forces must understand the

capabilities each brings to the operational environment.

Recognizing the strategic impact of training all of these forces to seamlessly integrate on the battlefield, U.S. Special Operations Command coordinated a training opportunity at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, throughout the month of October to allow SOF and conventional—both U.S. and Allied—forces to work together.

According to Chris Cobb, lead planner for SOCOM's SOF Planning Response Cell, the training event was part of an annual brigade-level mission rehearsal exercise

hosted by JMRC to prepare conventional force units assigned to the U.S. European Command area of operations for deployment to Afghanistan.

“SOF involvement in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and [International Security Assistance Force – Afghanistan] is quite significant, so the integration of Special Operations Forces with the conventional forces is a top priority,” Cobb said.

Just as important, Cobb emphasized having a multinational focus during this rotation helped facilitate partner nation SOF involvement – something SOCOM is actively working to engage.

The training event included coordination between U.S. forces assigned to 1st and 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), the 170th Separate Infantry Brigade and allied forces from Lithuania, Czech Republic and Poland.

The SPRC coordinated with U.S. Special Operations Command Europe to determine which Allied nation participation to request; then it engaged with the U.S. Embassy in Poland’s Office of Defense Cooperation to coordinate participation from the Polish 1st Special Forces Regiment.

“The SPRC helped develop training events, script storylines for use during the exercise, and coordinate many of the logistical functions associated with U.S. and Polish SOF participation in the rotation,” Cobb said.

As part of a training rehearsal prior to the actual exercise, U.S. and Polish SOF units teamed together to form combined operational detachments. The detachments were dropped into a “hostile” area by a Lithuanian Mi-17 helicopter to rescue casualties from a simulated downed aircraft as Czech Mi-24s flew overhead to provide supporting fire.

The SOF elements secured the site, assessed and provided medical assistance for the injured crew members, then provided hasty exfil of all personnel onboard the Mi-17 – all while taking enemy fire. During the actual exercise, the Special Forces command element coordinated with conventional forces to provide Quick Reaction Force assistance.



***U.S. and Polish Special Operations Forces Soldiers infiltrate to a hot landing zone from a Lithuanian Mi-17 helicopter as part of a casualty evacuation exercise rehearsal held Oct. 14 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.***

According to the 3rd SFG (A) team leader, the event provided a venue for both habitual training and establishment of a working relationship with his Polish counterparts.

“We were able to communicate ‘best tactics’ and develop situational awareness with each other,” the team leader said. “In a situation like today’s scenario, we got the opportunity to train for one of the many missions that Special Forces are uniquely capable of conducting.”

After the rehearsal was complete, Cobb expressed why SOCOM continues to search for opportunities to train SOF units in various joint command and coalition environments.

“Conducting coordinated training events such as this offers an opportunity to share tactics, techniques and procedures and, equally as important, to develop the sort of personal relationships that will provide lasting benefits between the forces,” Cobb said. “The multinational footprint for offensive operations in Afghanistan is well-established. SOCOM is keen to develop any opportunities for partner nation engagement at training events, both within the United States and overseas.”