

Group travels to Australia for multinational training

By CAPT. EDWARD BROWN
158TH Infantry Brigade PA

When members of the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, California National Guard arrive in Afghanistan in a few months, they will join and support the Australian Defense Force in a variety of roles.

To prepare the 79th, Lt. Col. Christopher Kuhn, Commander of the 158th Infantry Brigade's 3rd Battalion, 315th Engineer Regiment, traveled from Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center to Townsville, Australia, to participate in and observe the Australians' mission rehearsal activity (MRA).

“This was the Australian Defense Force’s Mission Rehearsal Activity. This activity was the certifying activity for the Australians,” Kuhn said. He compared the training to an Army Combat Training Center rotation mission rehearsal exercise.

Explaining that the 79th IBCT will support with operational and planning roles, Kuhn said observing the Australian's MRA provided vital information to ensure his trainer/mentors properly prepared the unit for their deployment.

"The biggest part of this



Maj. Christopher Elson and Maj. Donald Hong of the 79th IBCT collaborate for Security Force Assistance Team operations during the Combined Team –Uruzgan mission rehearsal activity conducted at High Range Training Area in Townsville, Australia.

was teambuilding. My role was to observe the combined training with the Australians and then integrate the details of that training into the design of the mission rehearsal exercise that the 79th IBCT will conduct before deployment," said

Kuhn.

According to Kuhn, as a result of seeing the Australian MRA, his trainer/mentors can ensure the 79th IBCT's command post exercise in June will very closely replicate the actual operational environ-

ment of Afghanistan.

The 79th IBCT is slated to deploy to Afghanistan as part of the Combined Team – Uruzgan of International Security Assistance Force Regional Command-South. CT-U, the ISAF-led, multinational effort in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, is responsible for transitioning the security of Uruzgan Province to Afghan government forces and is com-

prised of troops from Australia, the U. S., Singapore, and the Slovak Republic.

The 79th IBCT will fill two critical functions in CT-U – as key planning and operations positions and as combat advisors to the Uruzgan Provincial Police Headquarters. The 184th Infantry Battalion, 79th IBCT will comprise the Security Force Advisor Assistance Team which will provide tactical and operational advisement to the Afghan National Police Forces in Uruzgan Province.

Leaders from the 79th IBCT and from the Australian Joint Task Force 633 conducted more than 30 separate coordination and planning events during the MRA with the actual units and personnel they will be working with in Afghanistan.

“The CTU leadership from the Australian Defense Force and the United States Army, California Army National Guard 79th IBCT met and trained in an environment that was designed to closely replicate the actual environment in Afghanistan,” said Kuhn.

“Both units learned helpful details of how the command will operate and even had the opportunity to meet face to face before their mutual arrival in theater. As a result, operations will be much more synchronized in theater, and the transition

from one coalition element to another is expected to be smoother, faster and more thorough. This level of coordination allows unprecedented unity of effort among the various international forces of the CTU."

Kuhn said he cannot overemphasize the value of the training in Australia.

"If we hadn't gone there, I think we would have lost so much as far as the understanding of the operational environment, the understanding of RC-East, and most importantly the understanding of how the Australians operate. I think anytime a U.S. force will have to work within a combined headquarters, we should do the same thing," said Kuhn regarding the prospect of future First Army trainer/mentor embedded multinational training missions.

First Army Division East mobilizes, trains, validates and deploys Reserve Component units to support overseas military operations. Trainer/mentors strive to ensure mobilization training remains relevant, realistic and reflects the most current conditions Soldiers will face in theater. First Army Division East directly supports the Chief of Staff of the Army's priority of providing trained, equipped and ready forces to win the current fight, while maintaining responsiveness for unforeseen contingencies.

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Photos courtesy of 158th Infantry Brigade Public Affairs
Above, Members of Combined Team-Uruzgan conduct Joint Multinational training at the High Range Training Area in Townsville, Australia. Below, The High Range Training Area is an Australian Joint Forces Training Site that functions similarly to U.S. Combat Training Centers.



Thank You!

