

DANGER FORWARD

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U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Stuckey, an infantryman assigned to Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) throws a smoke grenade during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

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U.S. Army Soldiers with Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) prepare to assault opposing forces during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

Foreword



ABOVE: “Into the Jaws of Death” - American invaders spring from the ramp of a Coast Guard-manned landing barge to wade those last perilous yards to the beach of Normandy. Enemy fire will cut some of them down. Their ‘taxi’ will pull itself off the sands and dash back to a Coast Guard manned transport for more passengers. (Photo by Chief Photographer’s Mate, CPHoM, Robert F. Sargent)

BELOW: From left, U.S. Army Command Sgt Maj. Yves Pamphil, command sergeant major of the Headquarters Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, and U.S. Army Maj. Gen. John V. Meyer III, commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division observe the shores of Omaha Beach at the 1st Infantry Division Monument in Colleville-Sur-Mer, France, June 5, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Marimar Rivera Medina)



Command Note



Dear Big Red One Soldiers, Families and Friends,

We thank you all for continuing to support the Big Red One and our forward deployed forces as we answer the Nation's call, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies and partners to provide peace and defend the values of our country.

We recently took time to reflect and observe Veterans Day, a recognition of military service and the anniversary of the armistice that ended the fighting along the Western Front in World War I on November 11, 1918. Veterans Day is the time we remember all those who have served – past and present.

As Command Sergeant Major Mullinax and I travel around Europe, we are frequently asked why we are here. We're here because we volunteered to serve. Every one of our Big Red One Soldiers raised their right hand and took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. That's why we are here...because of a duty to service. Each of us volunteered to serve and answer the call to deploy to Eastern Europe to defend freedom, assure our Allies, and deter aggression. That's why we are here.

When reflecting upon why we are deployed to Europe, I invite you to consider two vitally important locations here in Europe. The first location, Auschwitz, is home to one of the worst tragedies in history, where more than one million people were killed. Auschwitz is a symbolic reminder of what happens when nations do not defend humanity. The second location, Normandy, is home to one of the most heroic military actions in history and a tremendous part of the Big Red One's legacy. The manicured cemeteries where heroes rest, marked with militarily precise headstones, represent the commitment of a generation of veterans who stood up and defended humanity.

When you reflect upon these locations, you should remember that you are part of a proud legacy. You are a member of the Fighting First! The actions of the 1st Infantry Division's brave men and women helped to liberate a continent and save a people. You are now a part of this tremendous legacy and you should be proud to wear the same patch that stormed the beaches on June 6, 1944.

This month we say, thank you. Thank you for being a part of the Big Red One Family and continuing to serve our great nation and defend freedom. It is an honor to serve with you all.

DUTY FIRST!

**CHRISTOPHER L. MULLINAX
Command Sergeant Major,
Division Command Sergeant Major**

**JOHN V. MEYER, III
U.S. Army Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding**

THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

Story by Spc. Charles Leitner

OŚWIĘCIM, Poland – It is difficult to grasp the terrible scale of the method used by the Nazi regime to eliminate 1.1 million people between May 1940 and January 1945 on the grounds at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

How can someone comprehend such a number? How do you measure this amount of human suffering? How do you measure such calculated evil crafted by human hands?

Today, the site, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979, rests in memorial to those who were detained and killed there. It measures the tragedy that was the Holocaust in bundles of hair now preserved in a large glass case approximately 30 feet long, 6 feet wide and 12 feet high. It measures the fate of these millions in a pile of glasses, all mashed together in a wiry mass of bent frames and cracked lenses.

U.S. Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division traveled to the museum and memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau throughout the month of September, 2022, to better understand the history of the site, the need to remember the atrocities committed there and the result of inaction.





A visitor stands in front of the infamous “death wall” at the memorial and museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim, Poland, Sept. 16, 2022. In the courtyard between blocks 10 and 11, thousands of men and women were forced to strip before being executed here by firing squad. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)



It is difficult to imagine being separated from a child or family member knowing that it was more than likely they would not survive, said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Clark, first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division.

During a curated tour, Soldiers walked in silence past more glass cases. In one, a mountain of shoes appears to rest just as they had been left when their owners untied and removed them after disembarking from the train that forcibly shuttled people into the camp. In another display sat people's luggage, emblazoned with white paint to identify the owner amassed in a pile that rises to the ceiling. German officers gave people deported to Auschwitz the order to make identifying marks on their belongings to trick them into believing they'd be reunited with their loved ones.

"Showing up, I didn't know what to expect," said Clark. "You read about Auschwitz in history books, but going in person and seeing the devastation and the turmoil that people went through there was a very grim yet eye opening experience."

For many who have visited the site, including Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division, it is difficult to grasp the magnitude with which such inhumanity was performed.

"You can't wrap your head around the concept as a whole," said Staff Sgt. Philip Borgmann, the training room non-commissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. "It's too evil. In the room where the baggage was I saw a little tiny display case. There were homemade toys and a jumper that a mother made for her child."

Perhaps it is best to try and comprehend the history of Auschwitz through the people who lived through it. Those people who were guilty only of existing.

A U.S. Soldier assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, walks through the memorial and museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim, Poland, Sept. 16, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)



“Showing up, I didn’t know what to expect,”

said Clark

“In less than ten minutes all the fit men had been collected together in a group,” writes Primo Levi in his book “If This is A Man,” remembering the experience of arriving at Auschwitz on a cold night in February 1944. Levi was imprisoned in one of the camps at Auschwitz for 11 months before it was liberated on January 27, 1945. He died many years later in his home in Turin, Italy on April 11, 1987. “What happened to the others, to the women, to the children, to the old men, we could establish neither then nor later: the night swallowed them up, purely and simply.”

In his book, Levi recounts how when he arrived at the camp he and the hundreds who arrived alongside him were immediately stripped of their humanity.

“Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand,” Levi writes. “They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains.”

“This is hell. Today, in our times, hell must be like this. A huge, empty room: we are tired, standing on our feet, with a tap which drops while we cannot drink the water, and we wait for something which will certainly be terrible, and nothing happens and nothing continues to happen. What can one think about? One cannot think anymore it is like being already dead. Someone sits down on the ground. The time passes drop by drop.”

Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division who toured Auschwitz-Birkenau stepped over the same ground that Levi and millions of others walked upon. They went through the first camp as their tour guide paused periodically to discuss the history scratched into the walls of the gas chamber or contained within the bricks of the “death wall” located between blocks number 10 and 11.

“Terror was the most important Nazi tool,” said the groups tour guide.

Often prisoners were instilled with the belief that the only way out was through the chimney of the crematorium. This belief was remembered by people lucky enough to have survived the horrors of the Holocaust, many of whom would recite the belief out loud even years after the camp’s liberation, said the tour guide.

“We got an in person view of history,” said Borgmann. “History that’s often easier to forget than to actually think about.”

The buildings in the museum and memorial are left standing in much the same way as they were found during the camp’s liberation in 1945. The red brick has weathered over the years in a place that feels like a living monument vehemently protected so that generations to come can visit those hallowed grounds where so many drew their final breaths.

“The reason why they haven’t changed things is because it is about directly confronting the reality,” said Borgmann.



U.S. Army Spc. Grayson Powell, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, stands in the gas chamber at the memorial and museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim, Poland, Sept. 16, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

In total it is believed that over the course of the Second World War, 960,000 Jews, 74,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma & Sinti, 15,000 Soviet POWs as well as 15,000 Byelorussians, Russians, Ukrainians, Czechs, Yugoslavs, French, Germans and Austrians were killed inside the Auschwitz camp complex.

Items that were found during the liberation of the camp included approximately 837,000 women's garments, 370,000 men's suits, 44,000 pairs of shoes and 7,000 kg (about 15,432 lbs) of human hair believed to have belonged to over 140,000 people. In the three main camps and the 500 sub camps connected to Auschwitz, 7,000 prisoners were found still alive when the camp was liberated. Among them were discovered around 600 corpses.

While introducing Levi's first book, Howard Jacobson, a Booker Prize-winning writer and journalist, writes the following;

"The danger, as time goes by, is that we will tire of hearing about the Holocaust, grow not only weary but disbelieving, and that out of fatigue and ignorance more than cynicism, we will belittle and by stages finally deny – actively or by default – the horror of the exterminations camps and the witness, by then so many fading memories, of those who experienced them. The obligation to remember is inscribed on every Holocaust memorial, but even the words 'Never Forget' become irksome eventually."

"In a terrible dream which he discovers he shares with fellow inmates," Jacobson continues in his introduction, "Levi is back home telling people of his experiences, but they are 'completely indifferent... speak confusedly of other things among themselves, as if I was not there.' Here is the dread to end dreads – 'the ever-repeated scene of the un-listened to story.'"



U.S. Army Sgt. Opal Mitchell, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, listens to the museum tour guide at the memorial and museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim, Poland, Sept. 16, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

As they walked through the cobbled streets, now eroded from the masses that had once passed through the camp, 1st Infantry Division Soldiers were able to better understand the plight of those who came through the gates of Auschwitz. In doing so, they were reminded of a part of history as it was.

They toured the halls of the museum and viewed display cases filled with people's personal belongings and the expended gas canisters that were used to slay millions. They walked up and down the staircases that had been shaved down and molded from all the feet that ascended and descended them in droves numerous times on a daily basis. They walked through the dungeons in the basements of the block houses that housed people in overly cramped quarters and where the business of mass murder was conducted.

"Any U.S. Soldier in Europe should see it," said Borgmann. "They need to see it."



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Roy Riley, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, looks through a window while on a tour at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim, Poland, Sept. 16, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

CUTTHROAT COMPANY

1-66 AR

Train to Fight in Lithuania

Story by Sgt. Lianne Hirano



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) maneuver the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle to engage enemy targets during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)





U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) maneuver the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)



PABRADE TRAINING CAMP, Lithuania – U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment (1-66 AR), 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) conducted situational training exercises (STX) with M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and dismounted infantry for a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, from Oct. 13-15, 2022.

The training, conducted by 1-66 AR, was part of a company workup designed to prepare the unit for battalion command combat operations.

“We took them from individual level, buddy level, teams, squad and crew qualifications,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Paul G. Lockhart, commander of 1-66 AR. “This platoon live-fire is the highest level of training that I can certify as a battalion commander and to see them put all those pieces together and execute it almost flawlessly was a very rewarding experience for me.”



U.S. Army Soldiers with Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) don gas masks during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

For the past several decades, the U.S. Army has been fighting non-conventional warfare and equipping and training to fight counter-insurgency. Currently, the Army is training for combat against larger scale conventional fighting forces.

“Over the course of the last 20 plus years, we have been fighting a counter-insurgency battle and now we’re shifting our focus back to large scale combat operations,” said Lockhart. We’re getting back to the basics so if we have to fight a near peer threat or competitor, we have the ability to do that.”

The STX training was conducted over several months and culminated into a final live-fire exercise that tested Soldiers’ skills on an individual basis through platoon levels of certification.

“The infantry company and platoons have gone through numerous iterations of training over the course of the last 90 to 120 days starting from individual qualification all the way to this platoon collective training event,” said U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Jason R. Mortensen, command sergeant major of 1-66 AR. “It’s time for them to now incorporate all the training they have done to execute a tactical scenario, both dismounted and mounted operations, which will get them through their platoon level certifications to conduct combat operations.”

Being a part of the NATO mission in Lithuania, 1-66 AR has also participated in multinational combat training exercises with U.S. Allies over the last seven months, building and strengthening the interoperability and cohesion of the NATO fighting force.

“Cutthroat Company just got back from Exercise Silver Arrow in Latvia where they employed interoperability and shared tactics, techniques and procedures,” said Lockhart. “That has really shown as they move out here and execute their platoon live-fires because they’ve taken what they’ve learned from the U.S. force as well as our Allied partners and

“Remember where you are. Right now today. Be cognizant of what is going on in the world right now,”

said Mortensen

incorporated that into this live-fire.”

The training conducted by 1-66 AR showcases the Army’s ability and capacity to defend their NATO Allies should situations warrant such a response.

“Cutthroat Company has trained very hard to get where they are today to get to this culminating exercise,” Mortensen said. “A lot of very good work by all leaders and Soldiers showing that this company is truly a lethal and proficient company and today they demonstrated their lethality and proficiencies.”



U.S. Army Soldiers with Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) clear a trench during a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

Mortensen earnestly addressed Cutthroat Company before the final training exercise, reminding them of the gravity of the world's events and their role and readiness to respond should it be required.

“Remember where you are. Right now today. Be cognizant of what is going on in the world right now,” said Mortensen. “If the commander gives an order to occupy defense operations, today is the closest we’re going to get to train you in getting you ready for that order.”





U.S. Army M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle assigned to Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) prepares for a platoon live-fire exercise at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 13, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

SCREAMING EAGLES LAND



U.S. Army Maj. Todd Castles, executive officer of the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade, stands at parade rest at the helm of the unit during a ceremonial uncasing of their flag, streamers and colors following the unit's arrival to the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Grafenwöhr, Germany, Oct. 6, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

IN EUROPE ONCE AGAIN

Story by Spc. Charles Leitner



GRAFENWÖHR, Germany – After 77 years, U.S. Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division touched down on European soil in a continued effort to assist the U.S. Army’s V Corps and the 1st Infantry Division in supporting Operation Atlantic Resolve and NATO’s eastern flank. To illustrate the event, Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade performed a ceremonial uncasing of the unit’s flag, streamers and colors soon after arriving at the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Grafenwöhr, Germany, Oct. 6, 2022.

Often at arm’s length, Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division and 101st Airborne Division performed successive bounds in support of one another during many key engagements throughout America’s modern military history.

“It is said that the very soul of a unit is symbolized in the colors under which it fights,” said U.S. Army Col. Amy Downing, commander of the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade. “These colors and streamers before you record the glories of those of the past and stand guardian over those who serve in the present, inspiring us all as we march into the future.”



U.S. Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade stand at attention during a ceremonial uncasing of their flag, streamers and colors following the unit's arrival to the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Grafenwöhr, Germany, Oct. 6, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

During the Allied invasion of Normandy, each unit conducted quintessential tasks that ultimately led to the breach of the Atlantic Wall and the start of the end of Nazi Germany's occupation of Europe. As Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division charged the beachhead at Omaha, paratroopers with the 101st Airborne Division dropped by the thousands behind enemy lines, disrupted communication lines and destroyed numerous artillery batteries aimed at the beaches of the Utah sector. These actions relieved the southern flank and allowed units to push further inland.

The pair would continue bounding through Normandy and the rest of France, ultimately converging in and around the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944 and 1945 after which they effectively campaigned through the Rhineland and the rest of Germany up until the final days of the war.

"The reputation of the 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Infantry Division are known around the world for its professionalism, discipline and commitment to excellence," said Downing. "Generation after generation, the Soldiers of these two storied divisions represent the very best of our Army and have demonstrated complete commitment to supporting combat operations, anywhere, anytime."

The two divisions would continue to circumnavigate one another at par-

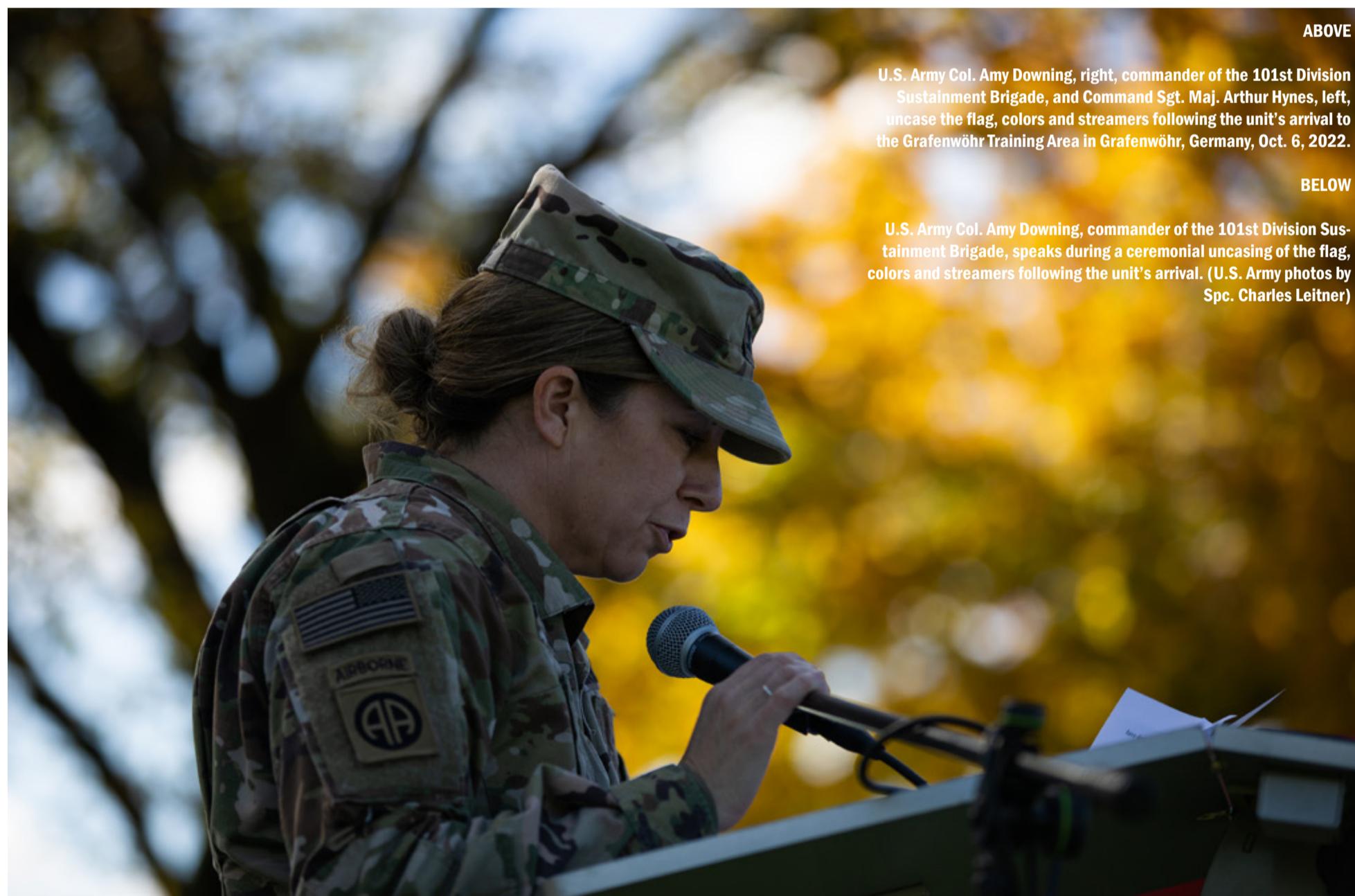
"Together, we will continue the rich traditions, preserving and adding to our history and lineage," said Downing

ticular points in history. They would play pivotal roles in the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive of 1968. Years later, both would assist efforts during the Liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

"The 101st hasn't been back to Europe since the end of World War II," said 2nd Lt. Patrick Tabor, the adjutant for the brigade commander. "Now we're back aligned underneath the 1st Infantry Division. It's a very unique opportunity."

In Europe once more, these Soldiers of the 101st Airborne are again working with those of the 1st Infantry Division in part of the ongoing efforts of Operation Atlantic Resolve.

"Together, we will continue the rich traditions, preserving and adding to our history and lineage," said Downing.



ABOVE

U.S. Army Col. Amy Downing, right, commander of the 101st Division Sustainment Brigade, and Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Hynes, left, uncasing the flag, colors and streamers following the unit's arrival to the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Grafenwöhr, Germany, Oct. 6, 2022.

BELOW

U.S. Army Col. Amy Downing, commander of the 101st Division Sustainment Brigade, speaks during a ceremonial uncasing of the flag, colors and streamers following the unit's arrival. (U.S. Army photos by Spc. Charles Leitner)

Silver Arrow 2022 Closes with a BANG!

Story by Sgt. Lianne Hirano

CAMP ADAZI, Latvia -- Multinational visitors from NATO visited the closing event for a live-fire demonstration of Exercise Silver Arrow, Sept. 29, 2022.

During this two-week long exercise, Silver Arrow brought 17 NATO allied armed forces units with over 4000 military personnel and 1000 vehicles together to develop relationships and capitalize allied and partner nation capabilities.



A NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group vehicle fires a mortar round as part of a live-fire demonstration at the closing event for Exercise Silver Arrow 2022 at Camp Adazi, Latvia, Sept. 29, 2022. Multiple NATO allies are proudly working alongside 1st Infantry Division and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)



“The multinational NATO Exercise Silver Arrow is a training event every fall that allows the alliance to work through increasing our combat readiness as well as the interoperability between all the nations within our great alliance,” said Army Col. Richard J. Ikena Jr., 1st Infantry Division Artillery commander. “This is another great training event here in Latvia with the Latvian Mechanized Brigade and the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group (eFP BG).”

The final day of Silver Arrow 2022 consisted of NATO eFP battle group vehicles reacting to direct and indirect fire and breaching to showcase combat capabilities and readiness for defense and deterrence. The event also allowed distinguished visitors, such as U.S. Ambassador to Latvia, John Carwile, the chance to participate in the live-fire demonstration.

“This live-fire exercise was a great testament to the commitment of the unity of NATO,” said Carwile. “The United States’ presence here and our commitment to NATO, Latvia security and Baltic security is an impressive show of force.”

Silver Arrow being conducted in Europe demonstrates a strong U.S. commitment to the collective security of NATO and dedication to enduring peace and stability in the region.

“This training event was part of the Latvian overall national exercise of NAMEJS,” said Ikena. “This has been another great demonstration of the commitment and relationships and the enhancement of interoperability between all the forces here in Latvia during Exercise Silver Arrow.”

Silver Arrow 2022 is a long-planned exercise in line with NATO’s role as a defensive Alliance for more than 70 years, protecting one billion people in allied territory.

“The idea that NATO and United States forces can project power and force around the world sends a strong message of our resolve, not only in times of conflict, but also in times of peace,” said Carwile.



“This has been another great demonstration of the commitment and relationships and the enhancement of interoperability,”

said Ikena





A NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group vehicle provides direct fire as part of a live-fire demonstration at the closing event for Exercise Silver Arrow 2022 at Camp Adazi, Latvia, Sept. 29, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)



U.S. Ambassador to Latvia, John Carwile, observes the Silver Arrow 2022 exercise live-fire demonstration closing event at Camp Adazi, Latvia, Sept. 29, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano)

WARHORSE

Battalion take over Battlegroup Poland

Story by Staff Sgt. Matthew Foster

BEMOWO PISKIE, Poland – NATO enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battlegroup Poland held a transfer of authority ceremony from the outgoing U.S. Army 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment (1-185 IR) to the incoming 1st Cavalry Division, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (3-8 CAV) on Oct. 4, 2022.

The “Hand Over, Take Over” ceremony celebrated the accomplishments and achievements of the outgoing 1-185th IR while preparing for the incoming 3-8 CAV. The ceremony enforces NATO and the multinational military presence in Northeastern Europe.

Military service members in uniform from over twenty allied Nations serve, train and exercise together, representing a strong expression of the NATO Alliance in interoperability and solidarity.

“The American Soldiers I brought with me are an extension of the United States Army,” said U.S. Army National Guard Lt. Col. Trevor M. Phillips, outgoing commander of Battlegroup Poland, 1-185th IR. “We proudly accepted our roles and set out to secure our sector, remained a multinational task force prepared to avert conflicts and did not deter from our perspective to continue to support NATO’s overall message, which is the perseverance of peace.”

The U.S. is providing Soldiers from the 3-8 CAV in Poland to reinforce the framework of nations for NATO’s eFP. Their mission is to train with other nations to demonstrate the alliance’s determination and ability to act as one in response to any aggression against its members.

“We are ready to stand side-by-side with our combat ready NATO allies,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Sean M. Castilla, incoming commander of Battlegroup Poland, commander of 3-8 CAV (Warhorse Team). “We are ever mindful of the gravity of our mission here and its importance to NATO and the defense of our allies.”





U.S. Army Soldiers with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (3-8 CAV) and 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment along with soldiers from the Romanian Army “Transylvanian Gepards” Battery, British Army “Black Dragons” Troop, and Croatian Army from “Archer” Battery present honors while conducting a “pass and review” during a Hand Over, Take Over ceremony in Bemowo Piskie, Poland, Oct. 4, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Foster)



U.S. Army Soldiers with 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (3-8 CAV) and 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment along with soldiers from the Romanian Army “Transylvanian Gepards” Battery, British Army “Black Dragons” Troop, Polish Armed Forces 15th Mechanized Infantry Brigade and Croatian Army from “Archer” Battery stand in formation during a Hand Over, Take Over ceremony in Bemowo Piskie, Poland, Oct. 4, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Foster)

Soldiers in Battlegroup Poland enhance interoperability, build combat readiness and forge bonds with each other through training and exercises. The U.S. is prepared, equipped and committed to the NATO Alliance and their allies. When called, Soldiers in the battle group would ensure the collective defense of Poland.

“It is critical that not just the United States, but all NATO countries continue to work and train side-by-side with each other to maintain stability and increase lethality against future threats,” said Phillips.

The Battlegroup consists of U.S. Army Soldiers from 3-8 CAV, and soldiers from Croatia, Romania, and the U.K. that contribute to and strengthen NATO alliance’s deterrence and defense posture in northeast Poland.

“No nation can confront today’s challenges alone. Our presence, as leaders and subordinates of the Battlegroup, ensured our commitment to security not just to Poland, but throughout Europe,” said Phillips.

The ceremony brought together multiple dignitaries and key leaders from the U.S. Army and NATO chains of command, standing together in support of the mission and alliance.

“Over the next few months, we will train closely with one another and build common purpose, shared understanding and kinship with our brothers and sisters in arms here,” said Castilla.

The ceremony was brought to a close with a pass-in review involving Soldiers from all contingents of Battlegroup Poland, as they marched under a large NATO banner.

“The Warhorse Battalion is of a proud lineage, and I cannot think of a better opportunity to write the next chapter in our history than to do so with our NATO allies, demonstrating the strength of the trans-Atlantic bond,” said Castilla.

Castilla concluded the ceremony by addressing the attendees and the combined NATO forces standing in formation before him.

“We intend to put our country’s ironclad commitment to our NATO Allies on display as we train together,” said Castilla. “We are truly stronger together.”

“No nation can confront today’s challenges alone. Our presence, as leaders and subordinates of the Battlegroup, ensured our commitment to security not just to Poland, but throughout Europe,”

said Phillips



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Sean M. Castilla, left, incoming commander of Battlegroup Poland and commander of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (3-8 CAV), converses with U.S. Army National Guard Lt. Col. Trevor M. Phillips, outgoing commander of Battlegroup Poland and commander of the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment during a Hand Over, Take Over ceremony in Bemowo Piskie, Poland, Oct. 4, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Foster)



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (3-8 CAV) and 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment along with soldiers from the Romanian Army "Transylvanian Gepards" Battery, British Army "Black Dragons" Troop, Polish Armed Forces 15th Mechanized Infantry Brigade, and Croatian Army from "Archer" Battery stand in formation during a Hand Over, Take Over ceremony in Bemowo Piskie, Poland, Oct. 4, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Foster)



U.S. Soldiers assigned to 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1 CAB) fly a AH-64 Apache during a live fire training exercise, Torun, Poland, Oct. 7, 2022. The 1 CAB is among other units assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, proudly working alongside NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. John Schoebel)

1ST CAB FLY HIGH DURING OPERATION STEEL EAGLE

Photo story by Sgt. John Schoebel





U.S. Soldiers assigned to 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1 CAB) fly a AH-64 Apache during a live fire training exercise, Torun, Poland, Oct. 7, 2022. The 1 CAB is among other units assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, proudly working alongside NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. John Schoebel)

A U.S. artillery round impacts a target from the 2nd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), during a live fire training exercise at Torun, Poland, Oct. 7, 2022. The (3-1 ABCT) is among other units assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, proudly working alongside NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. John Schoebel)





U.S. Army Pfc. Fatima Rodriguez, a radio transmission operator assigned to 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, (3-1 ABCT), monitors communications during an artillery live fire exercise at Torun, Poland, Oct. 7, 2022. The 3-1 ABCT is among other units assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, proudly working alongside NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. John Schoebel)



French veterans participate as flag bearers during a 1st ID Signal Monument ceremony at St. Laurent Sur Mer, France, June 5, 2022. The ceremony honored the Soldiers from the 29th and 1st Infantry Divisions who landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ellison Schuman)

THE STEWARDS

BIG RED ONE CHAPLAIN ON GRIT, GIVING & FINDING PURPOSE ON DEPLOYMENT

Story by Spc. Charles Leitner

BOLESŁAWIEC, Poland – Within many military members resides a driving sense of giving. Whether it's sacrificing time away from family or physically offering themselves in selfless service, Soldiers often carry a mantle emblazoned with the fiber of fortitude.

In the coming months, U.S. Army LT. Col. Rich West, 1st Infantry Division chaplain, encourages service members to use the opportunities presented during the holiday season to reflect on themselves and their military experience.

In 2001, while working as a civilian pastor, West recalls witnessing the events of Sept. 11. At the time, West was busy planting a church in Arizona. A former enlisted Marine, West observed from a distance as the towers fell. At this moment, he remembers wrestling with two observable fates.





U.S. Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, run a play during a Thanksgiving Day flag football game while on deployment in Tikrit, Iraq, on Nov. 26, 2009. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Shantelle Campbell)

“I think it is hugely significant that we are here. I think our presence has had a very positive and mitigating effect.”

said West

On one hand, rested the compelling opportunity to re-enlist and join the fight head on as a rifleman. On the other, a calling to place his future at the helm of a more pastoral approach.

“I didn’t want to be on the sidelines,” said West. “There was enough of the Marine in me still that watching everything unfold from the news wasn’t going to be ok. Supporting as a pastor from the local church wasn’t going to be enough.”

So in 2004, with the support of his denomination, West decided to join the U.S. Army as a chaplain. A privilege, he acknowledges, which allows him to support those who serve.

Over the next 19 years, West settled into his chosen path. Before traveling to Poland in support of the 1st Infantry Division, West embarked upon two deployments to Iraq. In time, he found that deployments often become the arena in which Soldiers can test their grit and resilience.

“All deployments are inherently stressful,” said West. “You could be deployed to the beaches of the Bahamas and that’s going to have challenges. Soldiers are going to be out of kilter just by virtue of the fact that they are

away from their loved ones.”

Throughout the holiday season, especially during the month of November, there are several opportunities to pause and reflect upon certain moments of history. Armistice Day, commemorating the end of the First World War, coincides with Veterans Day.

“As we go into the holiday season, it’s a great time for service members to be asking themselves what these holidays are about and to figure out the real meaning of them,” said West.

Of course, Thanksgiving Day holds these moments too.

“I love football, I love turkey, I love family and I love friends, but we lose the meaning of it if that’s all we participate in,” said West. “We only get half of the equation right.”

Especially during the holiday season, when the strain of being away from home tends to compound and contract, West often finds there exists a natural tendency within people to focus themselves on the harder and darker aspects of life.

“We have to retrain ourselves to see the good, to find the good and to hunt the good stuff,” said West. “There’s always something to be grateful for. There’s always a silver lining in the cloud. We just have to train ourselves to see it.”

To encourage a more positive outlook, West notes the importance of the U.S. Army’s presence in Europe and the Big Red One’s current mission to support NATO partners and allies.

“I think it is hugely significant that we are here,” he said. “I think our presence has had a very positive and mitigating effect.”

West notes there are benefits of being able to walk away with the understanding that through service, purpose and meaning can be brought into people's lives.

“There should be a sense that we, as a family, are participating in something that's bigger than ourselves, bigger than our family and bigger than our Army. That is something to be grateful for.”

According to West, every Soldier is doing that. To see the grand spectrum of service and action Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division have made trips to two significant historical locations since arriving in Europe. In addition to the present mission of the day, trips to the beaches of Normandy and the camps at Auschwitz serve to remind Soldiers of the magnitude of U.S. involvement in the world and to appreciate their own decisions to enlist in the armed forces.

“If we look at these sacrifices in positive terms, that we are making these sacrifices for the greater good, for our constitution, for our country and for Europe,” said West. “Knowing that, helps us to feel good about the sacrifices we are making. We are stewards of the gift of freedom. Each generation has to take up that mantle and steward that which we have received.”



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Rich West, the 1st Infantry Division chaplain, speaks with Soldiers during the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade's uncasing ceremony soon after arriving to the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Grafenwöhr, Germany, Oct. 6, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)