

DANGER FORWARD

Issue No. IV

December 2022

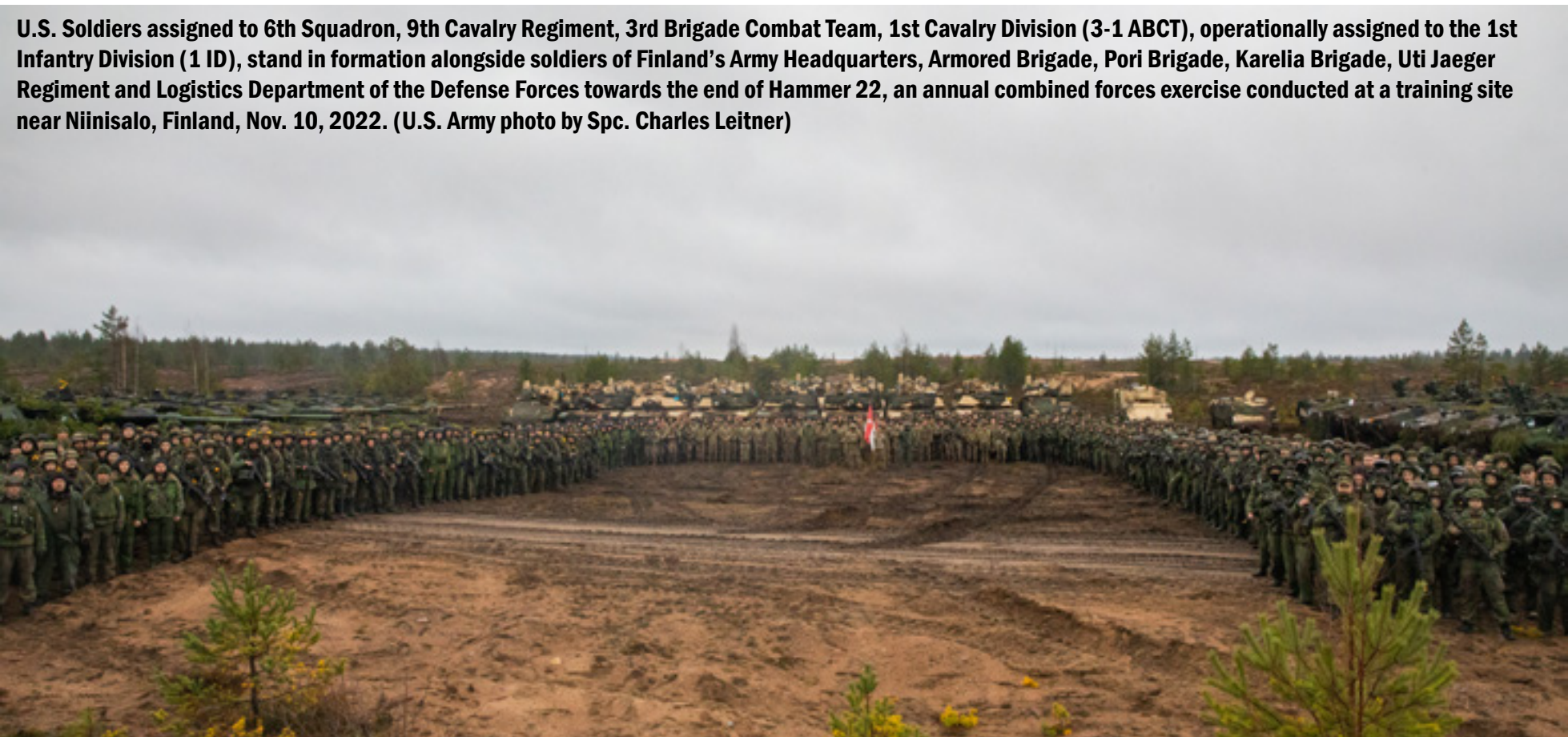
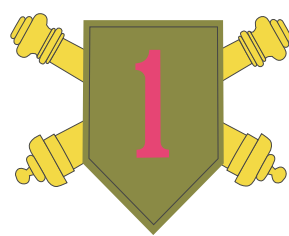


An Abrams M1A2 System Enhancement Package version 3 tank with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), hides in a snow covered wood during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise conducted by and alongside Finland's Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 9, 2022. The 3-1 ABCT is among other units under the 1 ID proudly working alongside allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Leitner)

Contents

Table of Contents	2
Foreward	3
Command Note	4
1-66 AR Tanks Roll Through Iron Wolf 22	5-11
3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team Host Arams Logistical Summit	12-17
Hammer Through the Fall: U.S. and Finnish Forces Conduct Combined Exercise	18- 25
Task Force Desert Knight Conducts Live-Fire Familiarization	25-33
101st Sustainment Brigade Attends Polish Independence Day Ceremony	34-37
Toy Story: 1st Inf. Div. Soldiers Donate to Local Polish Orphanage	38-44

Units Represented:



Foreword



ABOVE: U.S. Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division during The Battle of the Bulge. The 1st Infantry played a pivotal role in supporting U.S. forces in the effort to reverse a German led offensive in the Ardennes forest between 17 December 1944 to 28 January 1945. U.S. forces would break through the Siegfried line. Eventually, they would fight across the Ruhr, a region in Western Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia state, a move that would allow them to cross the Rhine and capture the city of Paderborn.

BELOW: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Peat and Spc. Noah Hughes, forward observers assigned to 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), directs artillery fire during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise conducted by and alongside Finland's Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 5, 2022. The 3-1 ABCT is among other units under the 1 ID proudly working alongside allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ellison Schuman)



Command Note



Dear Big Red One Soldiers, Families, and Friends,

As we approach the Holidays and the end of a tremendous year, Command Sergeant Major Mullinax and I wish to convey our pride in everything the Fighting First has accomplished in 2022!

From our Soldiers' accomplishments supporting our allies and partners in Europe, to the continued mission at Ft. Riley, the Big Red One's success this year is truly remarkable! And this success is not possible without the support of those who matter most, our friends, family and loved ones.

As we share the holidays and move into a New Year, take time to stay connected with your squads, your friends, and your family. Appreciate this special time with those you care about and be mindful of your own wellness and safety.

The holiday season is the second-deadliest time of year for Soldier mishaps. Only the summer months have more recorded fatalities annually. We need everyone to stay safe and care for one another this holiday season.

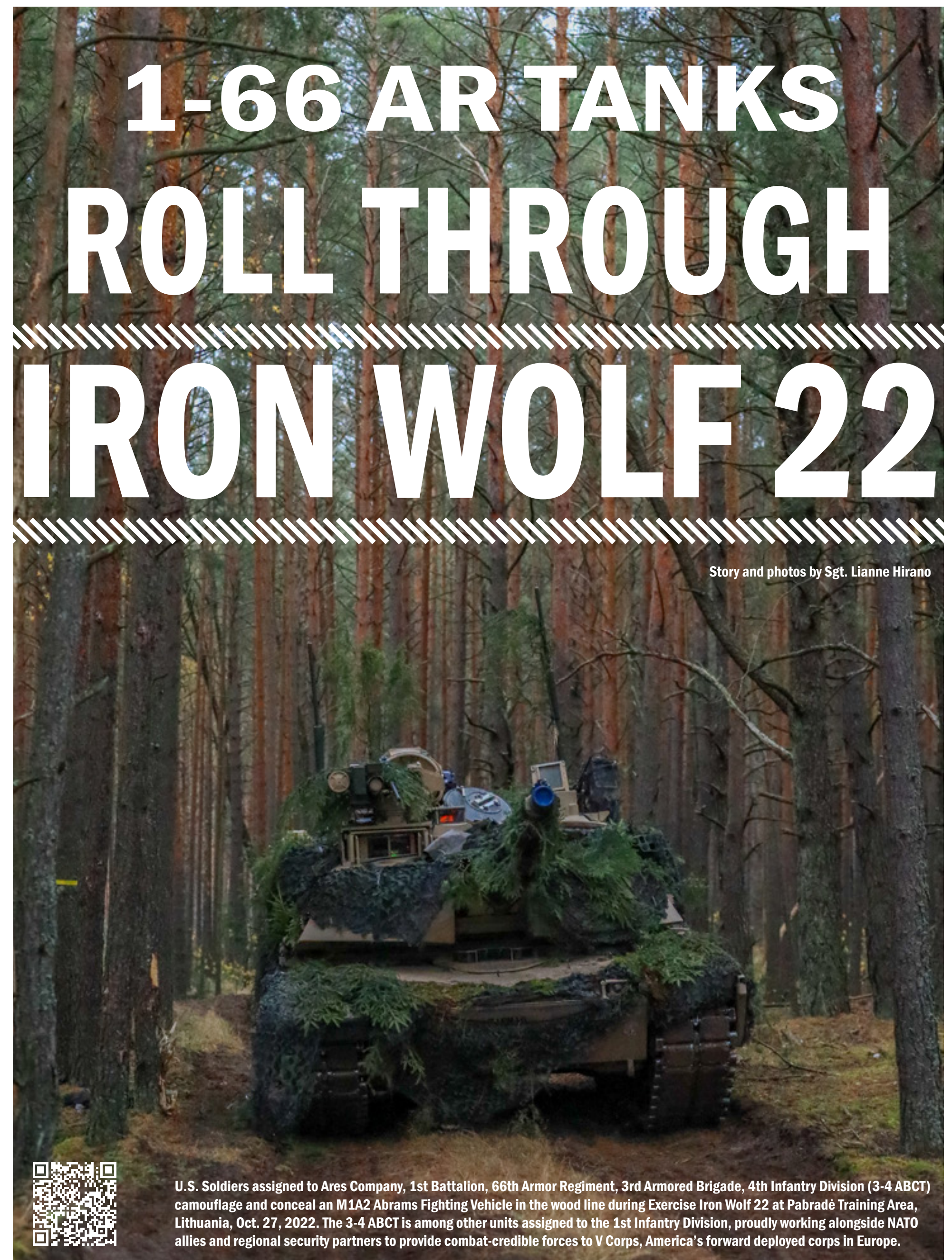
A safe, mishap-free holiday season begins well before Soldiers start their travels. Our engaged and dedicated leaders, even while away from their subordinates, can positively influence behavior. Check on your Soldiers, highlight their accomplishments this year, and ensure everyone in the Big Red One Family has a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Our best wishes to the Soldiers, Friends, and Families of the 1st Infantry Division! Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

DUTY FIRST!

CHRISTOPHER L. MULLINAX
Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army
Division Command Sergeant Major

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



Story and photos by Sgt. Lianne Hirano



U.S. Soldiers assigned to Ares Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) camouflage and conceal an M1A2 Abrams Fighting Vehicle in the wood line during Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 27, 2022. The 3-4 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.

PABRADE TRAINING CAMP, Lithuania – U.S. Soldiers assigned to Ares Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment (1-66 AR), 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) participated in Exercise Iron Wolf 22 alongside Nato Allies of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battlegroup Lithuania at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 23-28, 2022.

Hosted by the Lithuanian Armed Forces Iron Wolf Brigade, this large-scale military exercise operates in conjunction with U.S. and NATO allies, including Lithuania, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic. The exercise drills joint defense tasks that facilitate integrated deterrence along the eastern flank.

“Iron Wolf is a multinational exercise with participants from all across NATO,” said U.S. Army Capt. Mack Azbell, commander of Ares Company, 1-66 AR, 3-4 ABCT. “The

purpose is to validate and approve our interoperability, prove that we can fight together and that we are prepared for any eventuality in an uncertain world.”

During the exercise, Allied units would conduct the integration of assigned formations culminating into a ‘force-on-force’ operation that took place in multiple locations and terrains where units train to fight against each other.

“There are two groups here that are in a simulated combat, the eFP Battlegroup and their opposing forces are being played by the Lithuanian battalion with attachments from the United States, the Czech Republic, and the UK,” said Azbell. “So we are out here fighting each other, working on our standard operating procedures, battle drills and planning, preparing for the eventuality that we will have to fight together one day.”

Belgium Armed Forces soldiers fire Enhanced Forward Presence vehicles during a dynamic display during Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 26, 2022.



U.S. Army Spc. Christian R. Arrand, a tank loader assigned to Ares Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) prepares to engage the enemy during Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 23, 2022.

The facilitation of communication between elements of separate military organizations to ensure mutual understanding and unity of purpose and action is essential to maintaining synchronization and cohesion on the battlefield.

“The most exciting experience was being able to work with our NATO Allies and to see how the U.S. forces are also able to conduct operations alongside them and working with different Liaison Officers to be able to translate between the different nations,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Trey D. Wogan, platoon sergeant and tank commander assigned to Ares Company, 1-66 AR, 3-4 ABCT. “Just to be able to see what our Allies are capable of within their combat operations, how we can work with them and use our knowledge and their knowledge to put together to make a stronger alliance was a great learning experience.”

“Because we are NATO, we come to fight together and train together in order to be successful in a battle,” said Žūkas

NATO Allies learned invaluable skills and tactics from each other during the week long exercise, building interoperability and unity between Soldiers.

“As a first sergeant, the most educational part of this was seeing how the noncommissioned officer system worked for different armies,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Navarro, first sergeant of Ares Company 1-66 AR, 3-4 ABCT. “It opened up my eyes and my perspective about a few leadership changes that I want to implement in my formation to include more open communication with our lower echelon leaders.”



King Philippe of Belgium and Gitanas Nausėda, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, observe a dynamic display during Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 26, 2022.



A Belgium Armed Forces soldier conducts a security halt during a dynamic display during Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 25, 2022.



U.S. Army Capt. Mack Azbell, commander of Ares Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) stands alongside his Soldiers during the closing ceremony of Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 28, 2022.

“Our Lithuanian counterparts as well as our Czech and English counterparts facilitated and made a great effort to integrate the Americans and our forces into their planning process,” said Navarro

Engagement simulations and training enables the U.S. and NATO Allies critical problem-solving skills and tactical synchronization to quickly react, adapt and overcome challenges when transitioning from training to conflict.

“Our partnership with our NATO Allies has been great and the communication has been outstanding,” said Navarro. “Our Lithuanian counterparts as well as our Czech and English counterparts facilitated and made a great effort to integrate the Americans and our forces into their planning process.”

The Iron Wolf exercise is designed to evaluate the readiness to plan and conduct military operations of the Battlegroup together with one of the Brigade’s Lithuanian battalions.

“It was a good exercise, many lessons have been identified, which have to be turned into lessons learned,” said Lithuanian Lt. Col. Darius Žūkas, commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Algirdas Battalion. “Thank

you for your performance, good fight, good spirit, and good tactical decisions.”

Familiarization with Allied Nations’ tactics, assets, equipment and military doctrine fosters interoperability among U.S. and NATO partners.

“Because we are NATO, we come to fight together and train together in order to be successful in a battle,” said Žūkas.

Through critical exercises and engagements such as Iron Wolf, the U.S. Army and NATO Allies secure the framework for a strong deterrence and defense posture.

“It’s understood by our Soldiers, by our allies, by the Lithuanian people, by all NATO, that us being here is a very clear deterrent and I believe our purpose has been achieved,” said Azbell. “We’re going to continue to stay here and show that we are resolved to work together and if necessary, fight together.”



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Trey D. Wogan, a platoon sergeant and tank commander assigned to Ares Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) receives a coin from Lt. Col. Darius Žūkas, commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Algirdas Battalion during the closing ceremony of Exercise Iron Wolf 22 at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, Oct. 28, 2022.

3RD ARMORED BRIGADE COMBAT
TEAM HOST

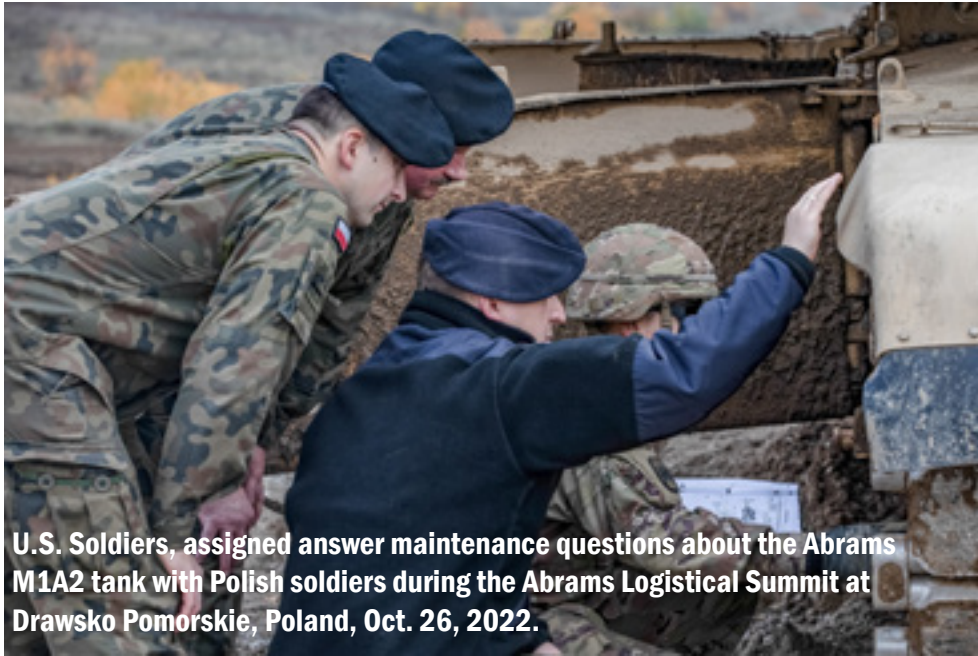
ABRAMS LOGISTICAL SUMMIT

Story and photos by Spc. Kevin Brown



Polish soldiers assigned to the 11th Armored Lubuska Cavalry Division gather around the recently removed Abrams M1A2 System Enhancement Package version 3 tank's power pack during the Abrams Logistical Summit at Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland, Oct. 27, 2022.





DRAWSKO POMORSKIE, Poland – The 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 ABCT) operationally aligned with 1st Infantry Division, hosted an Abrams Logistical Summit (ALS) for soldiers from the Polish Land Forces, Oct. 26 to 27, 2022.

The ALS introduced Polish Land Forces’ leaders to U.S. Army systems and procedures that support successful M1A2 Abrams main battle tank operations at the company and battalion level. Participating Polish soldiers learned sustainment and logistical support operations for the Abrams.

“The ALS is part two of the Abrams programs we started back in early May 2022, which started as a program to show the capabilities and some of the limitations of the Abrams through a live fire exercise and combined arms breach,” said Maj. Robert. C. Churchill, the operations officer assigned to 1st Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment, 3-4 ABCT. “What we are doing here at the Abrams Logistics Summit is discussing how to sustain an Abrams formation, its capabilities, limitations and everything logistics.”



14

On the first day of the ALS, soldiers of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment briefed Polish soldiers on the Abrams systems and answered questions on general maintenance and operations. Polish soldiers were able to use the Abrams alongside U.S. soldiers to get hands on guidance.

“There are a lot of interests and opportunities to share with our allies on how we work and operate the Abrams,” said Maj. Gretchen Gaskins, the Iron Brigade support operations officer, assigned to the 3-4 ABCT. “The more opportunities our Polish partners get to work with the Abrams, the more they get to find out its quirks and personality.”

“The purpose of this course wasn’t to teach you [Polish] how we [U.S.] do it, but to get you thinking about how to support your newly integrated weapon system,”

said Simmering

Day two of the ALS consisted of classroom instruction in which Polish soldiers learned about officer and non-commission officer development, crew management, training management, operational facilities and maintenance.

“The purpose of this course wasn’t to teach you [Polish] how we [U.S.] do it, but to get you thinking about how to support your newly integrated weapon system,” said Brig. Gen. Michael Simmering, 1st Infantry Division deputy commanding general of operations.

Day two ended with a live demonstration of how an Abrams tank platoon conducts tank vehicle recovery, a dedicated vehicle recovery and the removal of a Abrams tank power pack. During the tank vehicle recovery, soldiers hooked tow cables from one tank to another tank for towing. The second demonstration was a dedicated vehicle recovery. An M88A2 Hercules recovery vehicle towed a tank using a vehicle tow bar attached by Abrams crew members.

“Well, it’s all about building the partnership in regards to the NATO allies,”

said Churchill

For the last demonstration, soldiers utilized an M88A2 Hercules recovery vehicle to conduct a power pack removal of an Abrams. Soldiers removed the Abrams back deck, using the HERCULES, exposing the power pack. The crowd was allowed



to come forward and examine the method used in each demonstration. The sharing of the mechanical and technical operations of the Abrams and HERCULES with our Polish Allies increases interoperability.

In support of Poland’s purchase of M1A2 SEPv3 Main Battle Tanks, the U.S. Army’s 1st Infantry Division continues to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our Polish Allies through the Abrams partnership program to build the capabilities, tactics, sustainment and master gunner skills in the Polish Military.

This program complements the Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEOGCS)-led Tank Training Academy, which enables U.S. and Polish forces to increase interoperability in support of shared security objectives. The tank training academy, conducted in Poland, began in late July.

These efforts enable the Polish Land Forces to build operational capability as quickly as possible upon receipt of the tanks purchased through the Foreign Military Sales program.

“Well, it’s all about building the partnership in regards to the NATO allies,” said Churchill. “Doing this builds our allies and ensures our enduring partnership in Poland will continue and only get stronger.”



15



U.S. Soldiers assigned to 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT) operationally controlled by the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) and Polish soldiers assigned to the 11th Armored Lubuska Cavalry Division pose for a group photo during the Abrams Logistical Summit at Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland, Oct. 26, 2022. The 3-1 ABCT is proudly working alongside 1 ID, other NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe.



HAMMER THROUGH THE FALL

U.S. and Finnish Forces Conduct Combined Exercise

Story and photos by Spc. Charles Leitner

NIINISALO, Finland – U.S. Soldiers assigned to 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, participated in exercise Hammer 22, near Niinisalo, Finland, which occurred between Oct. 31 and Nov. 13, 2022. Hammer 22 is a two-week training operational exercise conducted alongside soldiers of Finland’s Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces.



An M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle assigned to 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), scouts ahead of an M1 Abrams tank during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise conducted by and alongside Finland’s Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 4, 2022.

This exercise was held as part of an ongoing effort by United States and Finnish military counterparts to train alongside one another and improve operational tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) between the two forces. Over the course of two weeks, combined forces performed numerous training scenarios that focused on international support procedures geared towards developing more cohesive joint fire operations.

“I know we have a team here we can fight alongside with,”

said Thomas

“This has been a huge learning opportunity for Fins,” said Col. Rainer Kuosmanen, commander of the Finnish Armored Brigade. “I suppose it has been for the [United States Army] as well.”

Over 4,000 Finnish soldiers including 2,500 Reserve soldiers and about 200 U.S. Soldiers from the 3-1 ABCT trained shoulder to shoulder operating numerous M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Abrams tanks throughout the duration of exercise Hammer 22. During a ceremony held at the end of the first week, Kuosmanen, alongside other officers of Finland’s Armored Brigade, presented traditional



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Levi Thompson shakes Finnish Armored Brigade Col. Rainer Kuosmanen's hand after presenting him with the cavalry unit's signature Stetson at a ceremony held during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 5, 2022.

Finnish knives to select U.S. Soldiers who excelled throughout the first week of the exercise.

“I am truly happy that the U.S. Army is a part of this exercise,” said Kuosmanen. “This is the main exercise to make sure our mechanized troops and our operational reserves are ready. Hopefully, during this week and next week you will see that Finland is ready to defend itself.”

Lt. Col. Levi Thomas, commander of the 6-9 Cavalry Regiment, gifted the cavalry unit's signature Stetson to members of Finland's Armored Brigade who performed alongside U.S. Soldiers in similar fashion.

“I am truly honored,” said Finnish Capt. Mikael Hanninen, leader of the Host Nation Support team, after he was awarded a Stetson. “We can and we will.”



Col. Rainer Kuosmanen, Finnish Armored Brigade commander, speaks to U.S. Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), at a ceremony held during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise conducted by and alongside Finland's Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 5, 2022.



A U.S. Soldier with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), guards an area along the road during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise conducted by and alongside Finland's Army Headquarters, Armored Brigade, Pori Brigade, Karelia Brigade, Uti Jaeger Regiment and Logistics Department of the Defense Forces, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 10, 2022.



U.S. and Finnish forces worked together through numerous field problems and conducted battle drills using the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System to create realistic situations that allow for each unit to learn from one another in real-time simulated combat scenarios.

Capt. Joseph M. Browne, a fire support officer with the 3-1 ABCT stated that U.S. Soldiers were attached to a Finnish battle group to learn TTPs and fight more fluidly as an armored cavalry troop.

In addition to multiple laps run through a simulated combat arena, forward observers with the 3-1 ABCT set up an observation point. While they gathered grid coordinates, Finnish tanker and mortar crews fired live ordnance at targets down range. Soldiers used this opportunity to train their Finnish counterparts to communicate more efficiently and effectively using common nomenclature used by the United States.

“The Finnish army is very professional,” said Browne. “There are a few things that they do differently, but we all understand the same language when it comes to fire support.”

U.S. Soldiers with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), patrol snow covered woods during Hammer 22 in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 9, 2022.

Finnish soldier rides a dirt bike during Hammer 22, an annual combined forces exercise, in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 4, 2022.



Throughout the exercise, inclement weather enveloped Soldiers in new environments. Between bouts of rain and snow, the flat dense wooded terrain introduced many Soldiers of the 3-1 ABCT to different methods of combat. While cavalry scouts engaged simulated enemy units in a constantly changing environment, Abrams and Bradley crew members worked to navigate the muddy trails that snaked through the pine trees and surrounding fens that were heavily mined with large mossy granite rocks.

“U.S. Soldiers are getting an awesome opportunity to train in an environment they’ve never trained in before,” said Browne. “Specifically for our troop, I think this is the first time these Soldiers have operated in a wood and muddy environment, we’re used to a sandy type of environment, so this is a brand-new concept for them. Overall, it presents a challenge for them to test their skills.”

“I am truly happy that the U.S. Army is a part of this exercise,”

said Kuosmanen

U.S. and Finnish soldiers left the exercise feeling more confident in their ability to operate more effectively alongside one another.

“I know we have a team here we can fight alongside with,” said Thomas.

A U.S. Soldier with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), fires blank rounds through an M240 machine gun during Hammer 22 in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 9, 2022.



A U.S. Soldier with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (3-1 ABCT), operationally assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), prepares to fire a simulated anti-tank round using an AT4 during Hammer 22 in Niinisalo, Finland, Nov. 9, 2022.



TASK FORCE DESERT KNIGHT

CONDUCTS LIVE-FIRE FAMILIARIZATION

Photo story by Sgt. John Schoebel



U.S. Army Spc. Shane Sutton, a CH-47 Chinook crew chief assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB), observes the terrain outside of the aircraft before landing during a live fire exercise at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022. The 1AD 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. Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB) wait to offload from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a live fire exercise at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.





A U.S. Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB), fires an M240H machine gun during a live fire exercise at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.



ABOVE: U.S. Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB) prepare a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to take off from a live fire range at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.

BELOW: U.S. Soldiers with 3rd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB) fly a UH-60 Black Hawk to a live fire range at Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.



ABOVE: A U.S. Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB), fires an M240H machine gun during a live fire exercise at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.

BELOW: A U.S. Soldier assigned to 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1AD CAB) runs back to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter after completing their M240B machine gun live-fire at Drawsko Pomorski, Poland, Oct. 18, 2022.



101st SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE ATTENDS POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONY

Photo story by Spc. Dayana Herrera



Task Force Hammer, 129th Division Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Division Sustainment Brigade, participate in Polish Independence Day Ceremony in Zagan, Poland, on November 11, 2022. The TF Hammer celebrates and honors the Polish Independence Day while fostering relationships with our NATO allies and partners.



ABOVE: Polish officers stand at attention during a speech made at a Polish Independence Day Ceremony in Zagan, Poland, on November 11, 2022.

BELOW: Polish soldiers stand in formation during a Polish Independence Day Ceremony in Zagan, Poland, on November 11, 2022.



**We were very proud to stand
shoulder to shoulder with our
NATO allies,”**

said Thornberg



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Richard N. Thornberg, commander of the 129th Division Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Division Sustainment Brigade, stands at parade rest in front of his unit during a Polish Independence Day Ceremony held in Zagan, Poland, on November 11, 2022. The TF Hammer celebrates and honors the Polish Independence Day while fostering relationships with our NATO allies and partners.

**“The Polish Independence Day
ceremony in Zagan was a great
opportunity for us to witness
Polish citizens and Soldiers
render honors to all who have
and will sacrifice in support of
their nation’s independence,”**

said Thornberg

TOY STORY

1st Inf. Div. Soldiers Donate to Local Polish Orphanage

Story and photos by Spc. Charles Leitner

U.S. Soldiers assigned to the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) on rotation in Europe, wrapped gifts donated for children living at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister in Bolesławiec, Poland on Dec. 1, 2022. The gifts were donated to children living at the orphanage by Soldiers assigned to the 1 ID who are working in communities of NATO allies and regional security partners while providing combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward deployed corps in Europe.

BOLESŁAWIEC, Poland – U.S. Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) on rotation in Europe collected and donated gifts to children at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, in Bolesławiec, Poland on Dec. 1, 2022.

In early October, the plan to conduct a toy drive came to fruition after U.S. Army Capt. Dennis Stene, a chaplain assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion (HHB), 1 ID, overheard U.S. Army Lt. Col. Rich West, chaplain also assigned to the 1 ID, on a phone call discussing orphanages in the area. Soon after this they constructed a plan alongside Mrs. Angela Melizia, the Red Cross lead and Sister Agnes, the head nun who runs the home, in order to allow Soldiers the opportunity to gather presents and give back during the holiday season.

“We are very happy to have you guys here,” said Marietta, the main caretaker at the orphanage. “They told us there were going to be guests today, but they didn’t tell us who.”

Since many Soldiers are away from their own families, Stene had a feeling many would jump at the

opportunity to donate gifts to children at the orphanage. “We put the word out and Soldiers from all over the unit here across the board were excited to give,” said Stene. “We can’t be with our own families at this time so it was really precious just to find ways to provide that same joy to other kids.”

To some degree, it would seem that Soldiers were too at the receiving end. Not with gifts in the physical sense, but with a present cloaked in invisible wrapping.

“In a unique way, I think the kids weren’t so much strangers to us, as we were to them because they started off as a name and an age on a piece of paper,” said Stene. “I imagine we were forming relationships with these kids before ever really meeting them.”

Stene recalls Soldiers trying to picture what the children were like and what they’d want to play with. Soldiers reflected on their own families and childhood experiences as they brainstormed gift ideas.

Inside the orphanage, painted in a framed picture hung on a wall near the entrance are the words “od serca dla serca,” a Polish phrase meaning





A boy, housed at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, poses for a picture after unwrapping a gift during an exchange held in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.

“That guy I just walked by I don’t know his story, but he and I might have a whole lot in common,” said Stene

threading on one teenager’s purple sweatshirt, read “we all start as strangers.”

After a brief and timid introduction, where both parties stood at opposing corners of the room, the groups merged.

“It’s such a joy to be here with you since our families are back home,” said Sgt. 1st Class Maggie Stokes, the enlisted aide to the commanding general, 1 ID.

Soon, pandemonium took hold as the children unwrapped puzzles, soccer balls and candy galore. There were Legos, small dinosaurs, nerf guns and more. Children peered through binoculars, tried on winter hats and as a pair of toddlers sent plastic golf balls screaming across the floor someone ducking shouted, “fore!”



ABOVE: U.S. Army Capt. Dennis Stene, chaplain of Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion (HHBN), 1st Infantry Division (1 ID), presents a bag of gifts to a teenager at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.



Children, housed at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, play with a miniature golf set during a gift exchange in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.

“Oh, no,” said Marietta, who has two children of her own, as she watched one child unwrap a gift that stood nearly two feet tall.

“Oh, yes,” said the young boy, smiling as he unwrapped a construction truck set.

Presents that were tightly wrapped in colorful paper were shaken before they were opened. Trash bags once filled with gifts to the point of bursting, were transmuted in a matter of minutes, bulging with discarded scraps of wrapping paper.

“It’s such a joy to be here with you since our families are back home,” said Stokes

“I remember wrapping that gift,” said Stokes at one point during the frenzy.

Today, the Orphanage of St. Joseph houses 22 children from the Bóbr River in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship which includes Bolesławiec and the surrounding area. Children staying at home are given the opportunity to stay past their 18th birthday should they find opportunities to work and pursue advanced education.



ABOVE: Eoylte, one of the first children to arrive at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, back in the early '90s, stands alongside Sister Jana, the head nun at the orphanage, and a girl holding a puzzle during a gift exchange in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.



A child living at the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, waits to open gifts during an exchange in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.



ABOVE: U.S. Army Cpl. Bennie Long, a battalion religious affairs noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) , packs a vehicle with gifts donated by Soldiers during a toy drive held in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.

BELOW: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Maggie Stokes, enlisted aide to the commanding general, 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) , carries gifts into the Dom Dziecka P.W. Sw. Jozefa Zgromadzenia Sióstr Elżbietanek, the Orphanage of St. Joseph of the Congregation of the Elizabethan Sister, in Bolesławiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.



“In a unique way,
I think the kids
weren’t so much
strangers to us, as
we were to them,”
said Stene

“For Soldiers to recognize someone in need and to exercise their own compassion to meet that need feels good, it raises our morale,” said Stene. “The turnout was great, even at the last minute people were asking to see if we had everything and if we had enough.”

Orphaned children are often removed from their parental home for various reasons including poverty, parental unemployment, neglect or abuse. A 2009 study conducted by international social workers suggested that in Poland there were 19,135 orphan children living in residential care institutions. During an interview conducted on a Polish Radio station in November, Barbara Socha, the deputy family and social policy minister, claimed there are approximately 20,000 children living under the care of

state institutions often referred to as orphanages.

“It’s always hard seeing new children,” said Eolyte, who was one of the first kids to arrive at the orphanage when it first opened in the early ‘90s. “But, this place is like a real home.”

Eoylte arrived at the home twenty years ago. At that time, nearly 40 children were being housed there. Today, Eoylte is married and has three children of her own.

She watched alongside Sister Jana, the nun who helped raise her, as 1st Inf. Div. Soldiers stepped over toys and around young children as they scrambled around the room sharing their toys with one another.

“I can’t imagine the emotional burden that some of these kids are bearing,” Stene said. “It’s clear that the people caring for them do love them, so I’m not saying they’re without love but I can imagine each and every one of those kids’ stories. I have no idea where they really came from or how they became orphaned.”

For Sister Jana, the joy of seeing these children return many years later with flowers in hand after they’ve left the orphanage and become successful is the greatest gift of all.

“I’m sure all of their stories are moving,” Stene said. “I think that in and of itself is a great reminder for all the people we interact with, like wait a minute, that guy I just walked by I don’t know his story, but he and I might have a whole lot in common.”

Though the words at times became lost in translation as they flowed between the Soldiers, the children and the interpreter who was present, surely it seems, the home grew for a short while. Those who arrived bearing a handful of gifts left understanding a more common language and the parallels existing between people.



U.S. Army Cpl. Bennie Long, a battalion religious affairs noncommissioned officer with the 1st Infantry Division (1 ID) , teaches children how to play a card game after a gift exchange in Bolestawiec, Poland, Dec. 1, 2022.

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

