

Personal Experience Paper, King of Battle

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“King of Battle”

“UNCLASSIFIED”

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German Field Artillery

German Army Liaison Staff

United States Army Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill

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Abstract

My personal experience paper will give you a brief review about the German Army Liaison Organization in the United States. It will outline the changes I noted at the United States Army Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill from the perspective of a German Redleg during my time there. The goal is to describe the personal experience I made during my 4 years in Oklahoma.

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Dedication

I dedicate this essay to all Field Artillerymen which I had the opportunity to serve with during the 4 years in Fort Sill. Those who answered their call of duty and gave their lives in the Global War on Terrorism will always be foremost. It is in honor of my two friends US Army COL Richard G. Cardillo and Marine Corps SgtMaj Walther Neil O' Connell which are serving in Baghdad and Fallujah right now.



SGM Gnoerich

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At the beginning I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself. I am born on February 8, 1962 in Bad Koenig, a small town in Hesse, Germany. I joined the German Army on July 1, 1982. After Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training in Wetzlar I arrived at my first permanent duty station in Stadtallendorf, Hesse. I became a Fire Direction Soldier of 3rd Battery, Armored Artillery Battalion 145. The Battery had six self-propelled howitzers 155 mm, M 109 A3G. In the six years I spent there, I grew in the ranks from a Fire Direction Soldier to a Fire Direction Sergeant. The branch ordered me 1988 to report to our Field Artillery School in Idar – Oberstein, Rhineland - Palatinate to work as an instructor for future Fire Direction Sergeants in a three-month course of our Noncommissioned Officer Education System. During my time in Idar – Oberstein I became a Sergeant First Class. The Field Artillery Branch selected me to become a professional soldier. The German Armed Forces enlist soldiers other than the United States Army. After the promotion to sergeant, you have to make up your mind. We have two career choices, serve as a longer-service volunteer, with a maximum of up to 15 years of service, or apply to become a professional/ lifetime soldier. As a professional noncommissioned officer, you have to serve 34 years. My last day in the German Army will be February 29, 2016. After the Reunification of Germany, I volunteered for an assignment in the east of Germany. When I got the orders to report to the Armored Artillery Battalion 395 in Erfurt, Thuringia, I had to look on a map to find the capital of Thuringia. Most of the soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers, came from the Army of the former German Democratic Republic. At the night of reunification, October 3, 1990 our armed forces gained -at least temporarily 22.000 soldiers. The main missions were to train, select, and integrate the ones who stay in the armed forces to our standards

and to help the soldiers who decided to leave to find their role outside the military. I have spent five years in Erfurt. I worked as the Battalion Fire Direction Sergeant and as platoon leader of second platoon 2nd Battery. I met my wife Sabine there. She is a native of Erfurt and studied then in Dresden, Saxony to become a teacher. As part of her study, she spent a year in Kaluga, Russia to become familiar with the Russian language. In the year 1996, I had again to report to our Field Artillery School to become an instructor in our Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course. Sabine and I married in 1997. Our sons Till (1997) and Luis (1999) were born during my second tour in Idar – Oberstein.

The Field Artillery Branch selected me to become the Sergeant Major of the German Army Liaison Staff in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The selection for the assignment in the United States honored us. Sabine, our two and four-year old boys, and I arrived in Lawton, Oklahoma on July 5, 2001.

In the early 70's the United States and Germany agreed on an Army Exchange program. The result is the German Army Liaison Organization.



The main idea was to get a better understanding about how to train and fight together. Then there was still East and West Germany and the battlefield for a possible war between the Communists and the “Free World” would be most likely Central Europe and

Germany. The cold war is long history, but the exchange program still exists. The German Army Liaison Organization consists of 12 staffs, a main liaison staff, five exchange Officers and, one Exchange Noncommissioned Officer. The main staff is at the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command in Fort Monroe, Virginia. The 12 staffs are at the center of each branch.

As they where:

United States Army Combined Arms Center in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

United States Army Combined Arms Support Command, Fort Lee, Virginia

United States Army Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill, Fort Sill, Oklahoma

United States Army Armor Center, Fort Knox, Kentucky

United States Armor Intelligence Center and School, Fort Huachuca, Arizona

United States Army Aviation Center, Fort Rucker, Alabama

United States Army Signal Center, Fort Gordon, Georgia

United States Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

United States Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia

United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Fort Bliss, Texas

United States Marine Corps Base Quantico, Quantico, Virginia

United States Army XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, North Carolina

All these “units” are two men teams, a Lieutenant Colonel and a Sergeant Major.

The organization also has an exchange officer in West Point, Redstone Arsenal, Fort Monmouth, Fort Bragg and, Fort Polk. The instructor at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy is also a member of the organization.

The German Army Liaison Staff has its rooms in Snow Hall, the main building of the Field Artillery School. He is also under supervision of the Field Artillery School. The 30th Field Artillery Regiment and his three Battalions support the Field Artillery School. The Fort Sill Noncommissioned Officers Academy and the Field Artillery Training Center also belong to the Field Artillery School. The United States III Armored Corps Field Artillery called Fort Sill their home too. During my first two months, I worked myself through the different organizations of the installation. After I was familiar with the units on post I went through the in briefings at some of the units and directorates. I was up in the Gunnery Department for briefings on September 11. We were standing in the directors office in front of the TV when the second airplane hit the Twin Towers. We were shocked but nobody realized what happened at that moment and the outcomes. Questions were dominating the next few dates. Soon everybody started to talk about war and there was a slight shift in the way the soldiers trained and maintained their equipment. Troops started to train up the way they have been used to from previous operations. I will never forget the conversation hold during a Primary Leadership Course Dining Out. I was sharing the table with a few of the Battalion and Brigade Sergeant's Major from Fort Sill. One off the fellow Sergeant's Major mentioned whenever he went on Temporary Duty outside the United Sates he felt unsafe and as soon he touched ground in the United States he felt safe. That feeling is gone he said. I did not realize it that evening but later on I figured out that he had expressed in his few words the feeling of a whole nation. Because the Field Artillery School belongs to the Training and Doctrine Command and its mission does not change in wartime, the main activities for deployment were to see at the III Armored Corps Artillery units in Fort Sill. Six

Battalions left Fort Sill to support the Global War on Terrorism in Iraq. One of these units out of Fort Sill was the Battalion, which fired the first Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) in Iraq. The redlegs from Fort Sill did an excellent job to support their troops on the ground with fire, accurate in time and on target. At the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, it looked like the Air Force would take over the responsibilities of the Field Artillery as the provider of Fire Support for the ground forces. But after a few days of bad weather, there was no doubt who is the only reliable provider of Fires and Effects at anytime, any place right in time on target. On a modern battlefield with no distinct borders, threats that are 6400 miles around you, and an enemy who is not even wearing an uniform, the art of war changed. It was immediately obvious the United States Marine Corps idea -Rifle Men First- became vital for every soldier in Iraq. Field Artillery Soldiers were always able to defend themselves and protect their firing positions. Maintaining checkpoints, the search of houses, and the fight against insurgents was not on their job description until the beginning of the Operation in Iraq. At the end of the first rotation, our troops came home. I will always remember the ceremonies conducted in the "Hero's Hangar." Whenever an airplane arrived the local radio stations were broadcasting the arrival. Family members and the people of Lawton went to the airport to welcome their soldiers out of the distance. Along the streets people were gathering and showing the national colors and welcome signs. While soldiers were turning in their weapons and getting ready to be released, the people started to come to the hangar. After the warriors were done with administration they got in formation and marched into the "Hero's Hangar" to conduct one last formation. Many times I was standing on the bleachers when the Commanding Officer gave the command "Fall Out"

and the soldiers had the chance to hug their loved one's the first time after so many months of separation. I will never forget the pictures of reunification and the patriotic country songs which were played in the background.

The leadership of Fort Sill immediately started to carry out the new needs to every level of training conducted at the home of the Field Artillery or elsewhere. Basic Training now Basic Combat Training was almost newly remodeled. Young soldiers in their first weeks started to fire live rounds with different weapons and conducted house clearing training in new built training areas. Today they have their M 16 with them almost from the very first day of training until they leave. The United States Army Noncommissioned Officers Academy reacted also without hesitation to new training needs. Instructors with combat experience came to teach at the different classes whenever possible. By the end of my tour in Fort Sill, there was not one member of the cadre or staff without that knowledge. The Primary Leadership Development Course, now Warriors Leaders Course, taught young Noncommissioned Officers how to react in case of an ambush, to recognize improved explosive devices, and how to perform a medical evacuation. During one of the Basic Noncommissioned Officers Graduations, I counted the combat stripes on every single soldiers sleeve which crossed the stage, the number of months in theater which I ended with was sky-high. During one of the Primary Leadership Course Dining Out, I asked all the young Sergeants with combat experience to stand up, more, then 80% of them got up from their chairs. These young "rough diamonds" are a great source of experience and I wish the Army would be able to smoothen them for a bright future. In some of the parking lots at Fort Sill, you could see checkpoints set up for training. Units of III Armored Corps Artillery used them for force protection training before their next

rotation to Iraq. But not only in training has the Field Artillery become different. The noncentric warfare against an enemy who is hiding between innocent people needs different ammunition lethal for him and precise enough to be safe for the innocent. The organizations responsible for development and future integration of new equipment and ammunition started immediately to satisfy the demand of the customers in theater. Every Field Artilleryman became a Rifle Man first, able to fulfill every mission in theater. With the new training, also a new spirit came to the Redlegs. A branch that always had the benefit of a long range and the security of distance to the enemy changed her face. Soldiers of the Field Artillery now started to grow up to be foot soldiers, fighters, and warriors.

Field Artillery Business is alike in the most armed forces of the world. It takes a lot of firepower to fire a 155 mm round of 40 a distance of kilometers and more. To do so you have to take account of weather, material, physics, and a lot more given factors most accurately. These factors are identical for all of us Redlegs. The Commanding General once said that as a Redleg you have to have engraved the crossed cannons in your heart. I always had that, but after the 4 years in Fort Sill, the color of the brass cannons is much shinier than before. Because of the men and women in Oklahoma, I learned to honor my branch and the job we do more than ever. I admire the incredible spirit and the knowledge of these warriors. I was able to spend some time with the finest men and women in uniform I ever met and I have no doubt that some of these relationships will last a lifetime.