

709th Military Police Battalion Conducts 360-Degree, COP Live-Fire Training

By Ms. Stefanie Kastner

There is a bitter-cold silence amid the snow-covered trees and icy air of the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Grafenwoehr, Germany. Seemingly out of nowhere, that silence is broken by the sound of grenade launchers and M4 rifles fired by Soldiers who are training on a 360-degree, combat outpost (COP) live-fire training facility.

With the large number of ranges at the Grafenwoehr Training Area and the ability to adapt those ranges to meet the needs of various training units, the Joint Multinational Training Command provides the resources necessary for units to conduct one-stop quality training. In particular, the COP live-fire facility offers a training environment that allows units to incorporate all elements of their arsenals (weaponry, vehicles, communication equipment) into a pertinent training scenario with the appropriate digital interfaces to meet their needs. The Grafenwoehr Training Area COP live-fire facility is the first of its kind anywhere in the military.

“COP live fire differs from regular training in that it has a 360-degree [firing] capability. A unit can fire in any direction,” said an officer with Grafenwoehr Training Area Range Operations. “We take advantage of this by surrounding the entire COP with targets. This allows leaders the opportunity to practice fire discipline, fire distribution, and defensive priorities of work—to name a few—and Soldiers to practice target acquisition and fire control.”

With conditions and sounds simulating actual combat, Soldiers of the 709th Military Police Battalion, Hanau, Germany, conducted COP live-fire training using several combat scenarios that they might face during their upcoming deployment. One of the training scenarios was based on a real-life incident in which 300 members of the Taliban attacked International Security Assistance Force troops, killing 8 Americans and wounding 22.

During enactment of the scenarios, Soldiers performed tactical movements while team leaders relayed critical needs (more ammunition, additional firepower) to platoon leaders. According to a platoon leader with the 709th, “In this type of situation, the platoon leaders do not engage in combat—they coordinate the entire operation.” One of the points emphasized during the exercise was the direct line of communication between Soldiers and platoon leaders.

The Soldiers who were positioned at all four corners of the training area perimeter in the guard towers were the

most important aspect of the entire exercise. They ensured that individual team movements were restricted to assigned sectors and that the entire training area was covered.

Some team members were designated as Afghan National Police role players. This allowed Soldiers to practice foreign communication skills and learn to work with foreign nationals—just as they will be expected to do during deployment. “Having role players pose as the Afghan National Police helps the team get used to the idea of having a language barrier between themselves and some of the team members,” said a platoon leader with the 709th. “It is like playing a basketball game with someone who has never played before—you have to communicate things to them in ways that they will understand.”

By replicating the operational environment and offering tactical training opportunities to units, the Joint Multinational Training Command provides commanders and staffs with a world-class capability to conduct individual and crew live-fire qualification and company-team training exercises.

At the time this article was written, Ms. Kastner was a summer intern with the Public Affairs Office, 7th U.S. Army Joint Multinational Training Command, Grafenwoehr.



U.S. Soldiers playing the role of Afghan National Police during the live-fire exercise.