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How USACE is helping provide aid and shelter for our NATO allies



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District Project Engineer McCabe Stanley checks progress on the exterior of one of several facilities being built as part of the ongoing Army Prepositioned Stock construction efforts in Powidz, Poland, March 17, 2022. The APS project involves the construction of a series of humidity-controlled warehouses and other associated facilities to allow for the storage and maintenance of military vehicles and equipment. It is the largest project in Poland being managed by Europe District's Northern Europe Area Office. (U.S. Army photo by Chris Gardner).

Mission Security

How USACE is helping provide aid and shelter for our NATO allies

By JoAnne Castagna





When Ivana Lowe's clients see her, they feel relaxed.

They can let go of their everyday worries. As an esthetician on Long Island, New York, her days are filled with giving massages, facials and pedicures that involve warm sudsy water, casual conversation or maybe a client nodding off. This was what she dreamed of when she left Poland as Ivana Zanio 30 years ago. The dream was always a better life.

Today, she wishes she could give her family living in Poland the same comfort. "Just like what Russia is doing to Ukraine they could do to Poland and all different European countries," Lowe says. "I talk to my family. They are scared right now."

Her family still lives in a small city in the northeast corner of the country. Russia's unwarranted aggression into Ukraine has been cause for concern, for other nearby countries—like Poland, a NATO member.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Europe District, is working on several missions in Poland in support of its NATO allies, which include housing, equipping and training US troops. These missions aim to deter and not escalate potential aggression and provide a sense of security for citizens of NATO countries.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Dan Fox, Europe District Senior Project Engineer James O'Riley, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commander Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon walk through the site of the ongoing Army Prepositioned Stock construction efforts in Powidz, Poland, March 17, 2022. The APS project involves the construction of a series of humidity-controlled warehouses and other associated facilities to allow for the storage and maintenance of military vehicles and equipment. It is the largest project in Poland being managed by Europe District's Northern Europe Area Office. (U.S. Army photo by Chris Gardner).

Housing US Soldiers

If US troops are sent to a NATO country to provide support, they need living areas. Europe District's Real Estate Office heads this effort, as well as many other real estate functions throughout Europe.

Anne Kosel, Europe District, Chief of Real Estate Division, says the office acquires, manages, releases and disposes of real estate interests like leases, licenses and international agreements for approximately 1,700 contract requirements in support of our partners in Europe.

When things did not look good for Ukraine and US troops deployed to Poland, Europe District's Real Estate Office had to act quickly. Ravi Ajodah, USACE, North Atlantic Division Chief of Interagency, International and Environmental Division, says the office worked with its Polish allies to lease land that is now being used to provide shelter for troops with the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command and the 82nd Airborne Division.

With additional troops recently deployed, including some to Poland, approximately 100,000 troops currently are stationed throughout Europe. It is the highest concentration of American forces in Europe since the end of World War II.

Roughly 12,000 of the US troops are there to train with Polish forces and assist with evacuees from Ukraine, many of whom arrived after Ukraine was invaded Feb. 24, 2022. "Ukraine evacuees in Poland are getting housing and work," Lowe says. "They've adopted Poland, the country, for themselves. With the U.S. helping Poland, they must feel protected. They feel like they have somebody behind them. They are thankful for that."

Equipped & Ready

If a NATO country is attacked, deployed US troops will need equipment quickly. USACE, in collaboration with Polish contractors, is constructing a combat-configured storage complex in Powidz, Poland, to store equipment for US troops.

Christopher Gardner, acting Public Affairs Chief, Europe District, says the complex is the first of its kind in Eastern Europe. "It will augment the handful of similar, older sites the Army operates in Western Europe in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy."

The project—primarily funded by NATO—is the largest NATO investment in the last 30 years. It will allow the rapid deployment of a full armor combat brigade wherever it may be needed. The complex will be operated by the US Army's 405th Army Field Support Brigade in partnership with local Polish forces.

Gardener says the overall storage facility will comprise roughly 650,000 square feet of humidity-controlled warehouse space, including a vehicle maintenance facility, several additional supporting facilities, and 58,000 square feet of earth-covered munitions storage. In addition, USACE constructed rail tracks and links to facilitate the movement of equipment to and from the site.

The complex also will store approximately 85 battle tanks, 190 armored combat vehicles, 35 artillery and four armored vehicle-launched bridges along with other supporting equipment. These storage complexes save critical time. If there wasn't a facility, moving this amount of equipment from the US to Poland could take from 45 to 60 days. With this new site in Poland the timeline is reduced to four to seven days to issue the equipment for operational employment.

Even in times when there is no conflict, these facilities are useful. The stored equipment can be drawn for use in training and exercises. The complex is expected to be completed late this winter or early spring and additional structures are expected to be added to it in the future, such as an airflight hangar.

In addition to this new complex, USACE has been modernizing the existing storage facilities that support readiness throughout Europe within western NATO countries since 2017.

Europe District Senior Project Engineer James O'Riley says that current events in Eastern Europe have punctuated the importance of projects like this storage



A Polish Army Leopard 2 tank is the first to cross the newly completed bridge over the River Kwisa at the Żagan Świętoszów Training Area in Poland during a ceremony there May 24, 2022. The bridge project is one of many training range improvements the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has delivered in Poland in partnership with the Polish Army, the U.S. Army's 7th Army Training Command and others. These projects improve readiness and interoperability of U.S., host nation and allied forces. (U.S. Army photo by Alfredo Barraza).



facility in Powidz and others in the region. “I’m quite proud of what we’re doing here. It helps build a safer world and build NATO’s presence and capabilities.”

This work is in addition to dozens of comparatively smaller construction projects USACE has completed at various bases in Poland in recent years. Gardner says the projects range from renovating and building new facilities at the Polish military base in Poznan—where the forward element of the US Army’s Fifth Corps, or V Corps, was recently moved—to working closely with Polish partners and the US Army’s 7th Army Training Command on improvements, and Polish training areas that benefit US, Polish and other partner forces that use the sites for regular training and international exercises.

The work is not just in support of soldiers. USACE personnel also have overseen design and construction of projects like runway improvements and administrative facilities at Poland’s Lask Air Base, which supports NATO air policing operations and is where US Air Force personnel regularly partner with Polish allies.

Training Soldiers

With equipment ready, troops will need training. USACE, Europe District is working in close coordination with Polish partners and the US Army’s 7th Army Training Command on the upgrading of several training ranges throughout Poland—including in Żagań and Drawsko Pomorskie—that are used by US troops, Polish, and other partners forces for regular training and international exercises.

Many of the current training grounds have not been updated in decades and USACE is getting them into shape for the 21st Century. “We’re doing everything from ground improvements to vehicle maintenance facilities to range towers and anything that facilitates training at these ranges,” says Israel Miller, Civilian Civil Engineer, USACE, Europe District, who has supported a variety of training range improvement projects at Polish military training ranges across the country over the past several years.



Soldiers prepare to cross the River Kwisa on tanks using the newly completed tank bridge in the Żagan Świętoszów Training Area in Poland as part of a ceremony on May 24, 2022, celebrating the bridge project's completion. The bridge project is one of many training range improvements the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has delivered in Poland in partnership with the Polish Army, the U.S. Army's 7th Army Training Command and others. These projects improve readiness and interoperability of U.S., host nation and allied forces. (U.S. Army photo by Alfredo Barraza).



Miller says the training ranges in Poland help our Polish allies maintain readiness and the ability to defend themselves and are important for joint training too where Polish forces, US forces and other allies train together.

Ajodah, who oversees the work being performed by the Europe District for NATO, says deterrence measures like all of the ones mentioned are important for several reasons the general public should understand. “First, they provide a stable world. It’s in our best economic, societal, and cultural interest. It’s nice to travel to Europe knowing that you’re going to be safe. Second, they help our NATO allies promote a sense of stability. Third, they prevent escalation.”

Ajodah says things can get out of hand pretty quickly. “If we are not careful, greater, more devastating conflicts can happen. Bringing military equipment into Europe and providing shelter for US troops is not done to get ready for war, it’s done to prevent war from happening. It’s not in our interest to have a long-drawn-out war that would only negatively impact citizens.”

Lastly, the forces are globally connected, whether it is the stuff they buy or where they travel. “Having the bad guys know the largest and strongest military of mankind is trying to keep the peace and be ready, that should be enough to stand down conflicts,” Ajodah says.

Lowe’s family in Poland may not know the exact details of these USACE missions supporting NATO, but they’re certainly feeling what the US wants them to feel—a sense of security. “My family in Poland is very grateful for what the United States is doing and that there are US troops on the ground just in case something happens. They feel protected.” **FC**

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