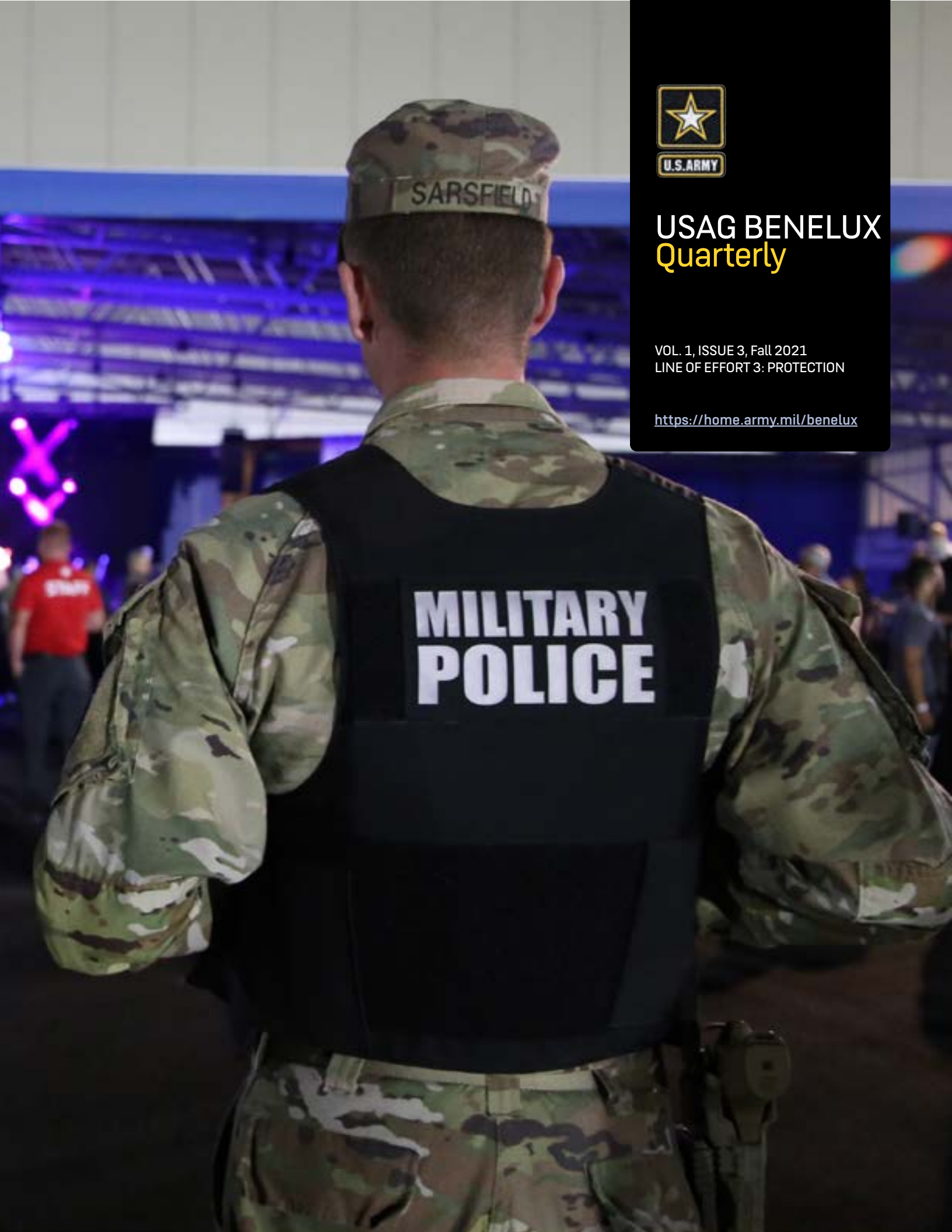




USAG BENELUX Quarterly

VOL. 1, ISSUE 3, Fall 2021
LINE OF EFFORT 3: PROTECTION

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USAG Benelux Quarterly

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Line of Effort 3: Protection



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TOP, OPPOSITE PAGE: Cédric Reygaerts, fire inspector with the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Directorate of Emergency Services, hands out pencils to visiting Belgian schoolchildren Oct. 16, 2021 at Chièvres Air Base. (U.S. Army photo by Libby Weiler, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

BOTTOM, OPPOSITE PAGE: A military working dog sits at rest with a military police working dog handler Sept. 24, 2021 at Chièvres Air Base. Military police from every location in U.S. Army Garrison Benelux’s three host nation countries came to work the protection plan for the Chièvres Air Fest Sept. 25. (U.S. Army photo by Bryan Gatchell, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

Military police Soldiers stationed at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux – Brussels stand at rest following physical training at Sterrebeek Annex June 14, 2021. (U.S. Army photo by Bryan Gatchell, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



A note on this publication, on protection

By the editorial staff

This publication is the third in a series of quarterly online magazines scheduled to be produced by the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Public Affairs staff, compiled from new and existing stories.

Each online quarterly will focus on one of the garrison's major lines of effort in accomplishing its mission and vision. Those lines of effort are 1) People, 2) Infrastructure, 3) Protection, 4) Services and 5) Operationalizing the Garrison. All four quarterlies (and stories concerning operationalizing the garrison) will be compiled into one physical publication at the end of the cycle.

This publication's focus is on protection.

Protection has been a watchword at USAG Benelux. Its proponent organization, the Directorate of Emergency Services, has military police Soldiers stationed across the garrison, at its Chièvres Air Base and Brus-

sels communities in Belgium, in the tri-border community, and at Army Prepositioned Stock Site Dülmen in northern Germany.

But protection also incorporates fire prevention, medical first response, and, in times of crisis or exercises, coordination of all garrison teams and its major stakeholders.

One such crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, required a full-scale and long-term garrison response. One, a manhunt in the tri-border region, lasted more than a month.

The garrison's protection efforts, however, have extended beyond emergency response. It has been incorporated into community events such as the Chièvres Air Fest in September as well as local commemorations. Protection aided a proud community tradition at APS-2 Zutendaal in the Limburg region of Belgium.

We hope you enjoy a few of these stories dedicated to protection.

MPs collaborate with host nation first responders for air fest

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

CHIÈVRES, Belgium – The crowd of the Chièvres Air Fest this year at one point late in the evening exceeded 15,000 visitors, not including the host of workers and volunteers on hand.

The Directorate of Emergency Services – allied with their host nation counterparts – had poised to take on the monumental task of ensuring the security of the fest.

In addition to the typical contingent of military police Soldiers from Chièvres Air Base, other garrison MPs from the Brussels community, from Brunssum, the Netherlands, and from Army Prepositioned Stock Site Dülmen, Germany, formed a sizeable team to assist with the busy fest.

"We wanted to have the maximum manpower for this size of event," said Staff Sgt.

Christopher Locklin, operations noncommissioned officer in charge for the Directorate of Emergency Services. "We just wanted to maximize our law enforcement strength and show the presence of law enforcement, but in a friendly capacity."

Locklin, a native of Corona, California, is a 7-year, 6-month veteran of the Army, and has served at Fort Riley, Kansas and in Turkey. He said the capacity of the event (or the crowd size versus the installation size) exceeded anything else he had experienced in his career.

The garrison's military police team did not stand alone. Joining them to keep the fest secure were members of the SHAPE Federal Police from Mons, Belgium, as well as other host nation police. The SHAPE Federal Police, who also helped DES plan the event's security, brought with them a special

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Several military police Soldiers pause for a photo at an elevated platform during the Chièvres Air Fest Sept. 25, 2021 at Hangar 2 at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium. (U.S. Army photo by Libby Weiler, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

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reaction team and an explosive ordinance disposal team.

Together, the police force oversaw inner security, outer security, event security and parking.

Locklin credited the SHAPE Federal Police team not only with the aspect of security but with providing a practical, deft touch with the attendees, most of whom were from the host nation and many of whom did not speak English.

"This is the first time that I've done a joint community event," said Locklin, who has been at USAG Benelux for 3 years, 6 months. "So our community partners, they fit in where there were some lapses. They were tremendous in that aspect where they were still able to be useful in a law enforcement capacity, but they were (also) able to translate because a lot of local nationals don't speak English."

In his time at Chièvres, Locklin has served as a desk sergeant, and frequently relied on the authority and expertise of the

SHAPE Federal Police. He said having them on hand directly at the fest was a comfort in case of any incident.

Police were not the only first responders on hand during the event either. The DES fire prevention team was there, as were the Chièvres firefighters, who brought with them their engines and water tanker. Medical personnel were also available, including from the SHAPE Healthcare Facility and emergency medical technicians from U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden.

One team in particular Locklin singled out for their good work during the event: the contracted gate guards.

"The gate guards we should give a little bit more credit," he said. "All the people that came to the air fest had to go through them first, and they were the first people that a lot of local nationals or even Americans or NATO ID cardholders had to go through."

Locklin said of the crowds that they were curious more than anything else, wanting most to take photos and start conversations.

USAG Benelux provides aid during international manhunt

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

ZAVENTEM, Belgium – In May 2021, a fugitive who stole weaponry from the military barracks at Leopoldsborg, a town in Belgian Limburg, and made threats against the Belgian government and military and against the life of a prominent Belgian virologist.

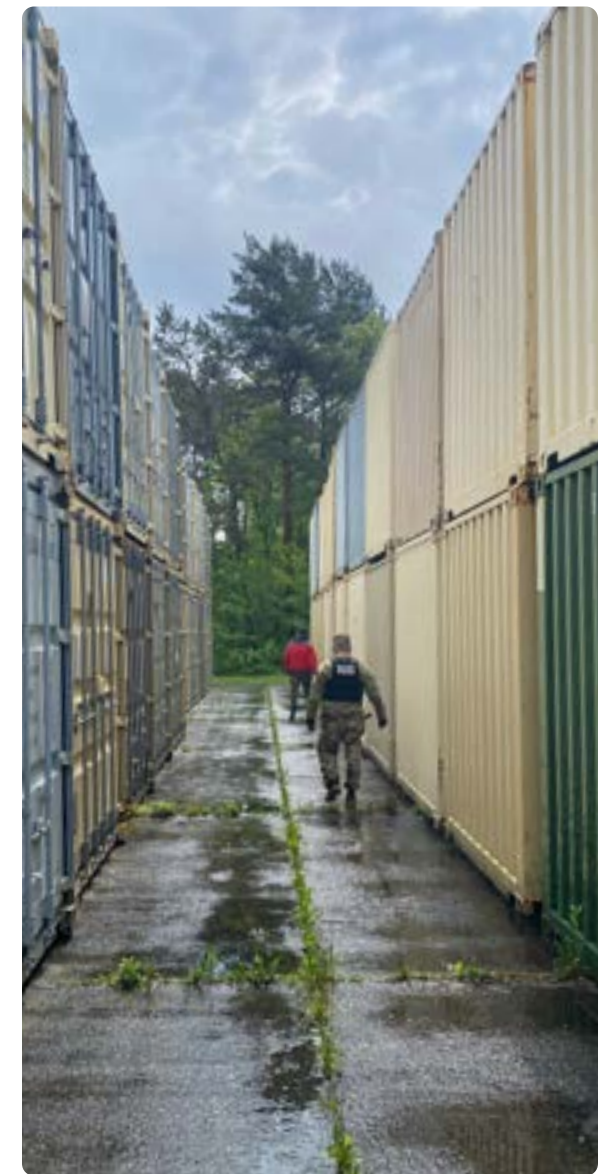
When the booby-trapped vehicle of the fugitive Jürgen Conings was found near Hoge Kempen National Park near the border of the Netherlands, the police and military of several countries, including military police from U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, coordinated on the manhunt.

The Belgian army and the police forces of the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg conducted a search of the national park. The garrison was on alert as the garrison's Army Prepositioned Stock (APS-2) Site Zutendaal was close to where the Belgian federal police discovered Conings' vehicle.

"In response to that, we proactively wanted to do a search of our base to ensure the security of the personnel, the contractors, that work there," said Maj. Denard Honeysuckle, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux – Brussels provost marshal. "It was critical to us to secure the fence line and ensure none of our facilities were providing any sort of safe harbor for the suspect."

The garrison reached out to the federal police to ask for support in clearing APS-2 Zutendaal, said Honeysuckle. Coincidentally, the federal police were also seeking a base of operations in the area. The federal police and the garrison provided mutual support to one another. The garrison was able to ensure the security of the base, and the federal police had a place to coordinate the more-than-monthlong manhunt.

A week after APS-2 Zutendaal was secured, garrison personnel discovered a breach in the fence line, prompting a hasty search by garrison military police. Personnel from across the garrison, from Chièvres Air Base and Brussels in Belgium, from



U.S. Soldiers and local national police clear a Conex area at Army Prepositioned Stock (APS-2) Site Zutendaal, Belgium during an international manhunt May 2021. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Denard Honeysuckle, USAG Benelux Directorate of Emergency Services)

Brunssum in the Netherlands and from APS-2 Dülmen in northern Germany, conducted a new search of the stock site.

Ultimately, Conings' body was found near where his vehicle was found one month later, and his death was ruled suicide by gunshot.

Since the end of the search, Honeysuckle expressed pride in the garrison Soldiers, who were "able to turn it on and go toward the risk." He also saw fruitfulness in collaborating with host nation law enforcement.

"Relationships have to be exercised and nurtured," said Honeysuckle. "So when you build a team of teams, you take two teams, put them under shared stresses and you get a shared victory."



Members of the SHAPE Federal Police stand beside one of their vehicles at the Chièvres Air Fest. (U.S. Army photo by Jessica Abbas, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



Col. Kathy Spangler, left, then commander of the SHAPE Healthcare Facility and Brussels Army Health Clinic, receives a COVID-19 vaccination Jan. 8, 2021 at the SHAPE clinic at Mons, Belgium. (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

Benelux community reflects on COVID-19 one year later

Story by Jessica Abbas,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUNSSUM, Netherlands – It has been more than a year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

At the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, we continue to navigate the changes wrought across four countries, our own and three host nations, sometimes with little forewarning.

With lockdowns, teleworking, curfews, closures, stop movements and learning that

switches back and forth onto and off of remote status, we all feel the stress that seems unending.

As public affairs professionals we observe, document, and help tell the stories of our garrison; typically we are not part of the narrative. The pandemic, however, has left no one untouched in some way, including this writer, with loved ones who have fallen ill (sometimes severely), lost jobs, endured isolation, moved to remote learning and pondered when life will return to normal.

And still, our Families, our friends, our communities get up and continue on.

It is through the lens of adapting and shifting from what was once considered the norm to something new, we were curious to explore the ways some in our communities are coping, surviving and what positives we can hope to glean through these exceptional times.

Our workforce, its heart, its resilience

"This too shall pass ... eventually," said Thomas Joyce, deputy garrison manager. "But for different people, it's been very, very difficult, with challenges, physical health, mental health, spiritual, the lack of socialization, when we're naturally social beings.

"Early on, we were just trying to figure out how do we telework, how do we close things up," Joyce continued. "How do you lock things up, how do you lock it down? Then, there's a little light at the tunnel although we suspected a second wave."

Joyce explained how the garrison and mission partners worked quickly to set up several task forces in the early days of the pandemic. Championing the teams' efforts, Joyce talked about initiatives created to address the spread of the virus, provide resources to keep the community engaged via online forums, work through the new requirements and demands for international shipments and the arduous process to disentangle the many difficulties facing service members, civilians and their Family members during in-and-out-processing.

"Couple of things I've seen now that we've been into this a little over 12 months is the resilience of the work force," he said. "Things opened up some in June and in July, you could once again cross borders which continued into September and October, before November brought the second wave and things tightened up again. And yet the workforce remain resilient.

"We've seen so many positives," Joyce continued. "If something doesn't work it's not bringing them down, they just keep working through that, they're so motivated and optimistic."

This resilience and optimism is a theme echoed by Robert Carter, then interim director, chief supply and services division, Logistics Readiness Center (LRC) Benelux, 405th Army Field Support Brigade.

"We have 91 people in this LRC and it's amazing to me that with COVID, we've not been shut down," he said. "Some duties have evolved but the team has answered the call. They execute and never once say that's not my job, it's phenomenal and humbling for me."

Carter outlined in detail the extensive work and volume demands that quickly faced teams across the garrison as a result of the pandemic, including Task Force Logistics.

"We're tenant units, but the garrison treats us like we're Family; because of that relationship when there were or are issues, we're able to explain what's going on," said Carter. "In the beginning the supply pipelines couldn't support us, our force structure. Leadership was a big driving force in getting everyone around the table and getting ourselves into a posture for the long haul.

"What I've learned in my time here and this last year of the pandemic, my property book office, central receiving point, supply and services division they always take it to the next level, it always comes out to be this phenomenal effort!" continued Carter. "I use to say I don't understand how this LRC has been fortunate enough to have the people it has, fortunate enough to have the quality of people and the workforce it has. I tell them now I understand why you are all here, at this time, at this place. It is because of this mission and I really believe it in my heart."

Our services, adapting to meet our communities' needs

"One positive, this has forced us to get creative, which is a really good place to be," said Eryn Pope, programming and events specialist, Family and Morale Welfare and Recreation (FMWR). "It has spurred a lot of

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good ideas and things we will continue doing, even without COVID."

Early on, FMWR programs leveraged the virtual world, introducing online initiatives through Task Force Cabin Fever, programming created to help alleviate the harmful effects of imposed isolation.

"We've had so much interaction with the community", said Pope, "which has helped to shift the organization's focus."

Pope further explained a lot of times you can be moving so fast doing what's always been done, according to schedule, with no time to stop, regroup and look at the intention – reimagining from an intentional view point allowed room for questions.

"Is this program still serving the purpose intended?" Pope said. "As a result, we've been revamping a lot of stuff which we think will be very helpful for the community."

Reflecting on the broader human perspective, Pope shared part of a conversation she recently had with her father, whom she identifies as a very positive man.

"This is a chance to really take a hard look at your Family, yourself, your society," she said. "People are saying we need to change things and these things are now at the surface. Yes, it hurts; yes, it's painful; yes, it's scary; but it's in the light now. For all of us, COVID has brought things to the light."

Pace of change

At the Commissary and similar essential needs facilities, the pandemic did not slow things down. Instead it changed the way they do business, many times at a heightened pace.

Highlighting the trends recognized globally, Darlene Coaxum, store director for the Brunssum Commissary shared how people are cooking more at home, seeking out new inspiration. And they've seen an increase in requests for different items.

The commissary has answered this call providing ideas and recipes co-located with the products to make the dish or meal.

"Shopping is traditionally a Family af-

fair," said Coaxum. "And yet, the community has very been supportive following the one person per household rule and limits on items purchased for highly sought after products."

Coaxum went on to explain that while some products have been affected, they continue to work diligently through other sourcing channels, including implementation of new vendor relationships and engagement with local suppliers.

"The challenges we've faced have brought our team closer together as we worked the front lines keeping the store safe and well stocked," said Coaxum.

Our people, means to cope

Loneliness and isolation from the year can exponentially compound for the single Soldier. Staff Sgt. Christian Ballard, physical security for the garrison's military police at the Brunssum site, has found ways to combat and overcome the situation.

"The restrictions and stay-home orders gave me time to learn" said Ballard.

Assigned to the garrison for almost two years, he experienced Europe pre-COVID. Acknowledging the challenges he remains enthusiastic. With the stop movements, curfews and lack of travel opportunities, Ballard took his extra time online.

"There's lots of things you can do, learn another language, play games if you're a gamer, go to college," he said.

Ballard had other interests in investing and took to online video tutorials.

"Before COVID, I had things like a (Thrift Savings Plan) and a Roth (individual retirement account), but now I've learned how to invest," he said. "Sure, I've stayed connected with people and friends online, but I'm also using my knowledge gained to invest, grow. And now, I'm using earnings gained from investments, to make more money!"

Deliberations on how to do business

"With COVID restrictions and the lockdowns, it forces you to engage a lot more



Sgt. John Seely, Directorate of Emergency Services, wipes down a door handle during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Courtesy photo)

with your Family; everyone is not off on their own, doing different things," said Margo Gardea, chief of Plans, Analysis and Integration Office (PAIO). "We started to talk a lot more, and we're enjoying the simple pleasures of life through new hobbies like bike rides and exploring more locally – things we would not have done before."

When shifting focus to the impact on Gardea's work life, she underlined the lessons.

"We've all come to realize how telework is a viable option where before it was a hard no. And we've learned to be more deliberate with work, with our communication, you can't just pop by someone's office so it's been a good exercise in being deliberate."

Gardea spoke of the challenges with technology, software and connectivity in the beginning while also referring to the benefits of the era we live in.

"Imagine if this would have happened before the streaming and technology footprint the world has now!" she said.

She also noted the favorable position working for the Army has provided her and her Family.

"I think the Army has really helped us, by giving us the tools to better operate in our roles," said Gardea. "We're fortunate to be over here, have jobs, access to healthcare and things to do. We feel very fortunate and grateful for what we have."

Our children, what they're learning, what they're teaching us

"I'm most impressed with the children, what they have to go through is unprecedented, but they are resilient," said Byron Wiley, Family Advocacy Program (FAP) manager.

Wiley referred to how children these days have grown up immersed in technology, and one of the biggest challenges he's witnessed is rather that of adults and parents learning to negotiate various new mediums.

"We are building the plane as we fly it, and the kids are showing us how!"

When Families moved to remote learning, they had to think differently, Wiley said. If a parent is teleworking, their children were also tele-learning, and that can cause conflict.

Do Families have the technology?

Does everyone have enough space?

How do Families balance things if they have multiple children?

"We were/are quickly learning to survive these new norms," Wiley said. "Parents and children are being creative setting up virtual play dates and virtual movie watching sessions when we cannot connect in person."

But Wiley also noted for those struggling, "getting help can still have a stigma attached to it."

"We (FAP) are not just here for the bad stuff," Wiley said. "We are here to arm the community with tools for their tool box and while we have a response component, we are very much a prevention program."

Wiley shared there is a mailbox for people to sign up for classes offered by FAP and they are looking at putting together support groups for parents and children to share best

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practices. Help can also be sought through the behavior health teams at the respective military treatment facilities across the garrison.

"FAP is a symbiotic relationship, and you are not alone," he said. "We want people to come out and let us know what your struggle is. The more types of situations we hear about, the more creative we can become, to help you."

Different means of learning, different means of socializing

The resilience children are gaining is evident in student Morgan Kosbab, daughter of Margo Gardea. Last spring, when the first lockdowns were implemented, Morgan was an eighth grade student at AFNORTH International School.

"Most of the technology was straight forward and user friendly," said Morgan. "We were given tutorials at the very beginning so you'd know what to do, and there was tech help available as well."

Morgan went on to say how she enjoyed the flexibility remote school offered, allowing you to take breaks, set your own pace and even eat during your class time.

"It's been helpful," said Morgan. "It's more independent, you have to pace yourself and learn to work on your own. It's sort of the same way it will be with college."

This positive experience helped shape Morgan's decision to remain remote for her high school freshman year, she welcomed the change and hopes to continue remote next year as well.

"I've never been a super social person, so when I'm craving connection I can call someone or invite someone over," said Morgan. "Obviously that might be different for someone else but I haven't missed it on my end. I've been able to engage when needed and on the scale I prefer."

Children adapting to a different world

Carly Brashear, school liaison specialist, 470th Air Base Squadron, NATO Air Base

Geilenkirchen, serves the tri-border region and helps augment support for Benelux Soldiers and Families in the area. She shared her observations from multiple changes over the last year.

"At an orientation for AFNORTH students transitioning from virtual back to brick and mortar, I watched a sixth grader raise her hand saying her classes weren't populated into the system yet," Brashear said. "The way the student understood the technology pieces, approached it with maturity and diagnosed the situation, was really impressive to me."

Brashear highlighted several conversations with parents of young children.

"They're telling their parents when they need a break or if they can press on to the next task. They know when their assignments are due, what can wait a few days and what needs immediate attention. Even kids as young as 6 or 7!"

How this generation of children will be better prepared for our digital world has impressed Brashear:

"I wish I would have learned these skills at such an early age."

The changed world

Craving interaction to counterbalance the digital world, Thom Eaton, director, Child and Youth Services, FMWR, and school liaison officer appreciates how children and adults are adapting.

"Pre-COVID, kids would come to the center and spend a lot of time in front of the computers, gaming, on social media with their peers," said Eaton. "Now, after online or remote learning they come here and all they want to do is go outside."

"Kids will walk in, grab a skateboard, pair of roller skates or a bicycle and just go; it's like a ghost town in the building," continued Eaton. "They're doing things to exercise their bodies versus hand-eye coordination – that's a big thing and is fantastic!"

Eaton went on to share the changes he's witnessed are countless.

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"When I'm watching the world, I see Families together, the parks, heides and nature spaces are being utilized," he said. "People are getting better at playing musical instruments and cooking together, they are reconnecting with friends and loved ones although be it virtually. The pet shelters are practically empty and we're shifting our focus to purposeful things."

Eaton wondered out loud, as time passes and studies are done if this time in society dealing with the pandemic, will spur a renaissance of sorts.

"It is unleashing a lot of people's creati-

ty and I think what we're going to see in years to come is this time allowed a lot of people to learn, focus or hone in on skills that they hadn't worked on previously."

Further help

If you are struggling, there is help.

Whether you engage with your leadership, Family Advocacy Programs, Military Family Life consultants, behavioral health, military treatment facilities, chaplains and faith based services or a battle buddy, you are not alone.

US military police train on Belgian weapons with Belgian MPs



Top: Warrant Officer Dominique Verbeke, left, assistant of training and operations officer and weapons instructor with the Belgian Army, scores the marksmanship of one of U.S. Army Garrison Benelux's military police Soldiers June 17, 2021 at Peutie Military Complex in Vilvoorde, Belgium. The MPs were learning how to fire the firearms the Belgian military typically uses, including the FN P90 personal defense weapon and the FN Five-seven semiautomatic pistol.



Bottom left: Military police Soldiers from U.S. Army Garrison Benelux – Brussels fire FN Five-seven semiautomatic pistols at an indoor range.



Bottom right: Staff Sgt. Devon Bowman, foreground, military police Soldier at USAG Benelux – Brussels, fires an FN P90 at a Belgian military complex.

(Photos by Bryan Gatchell, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

Hound, horse, rider take 50th anniversary 'slipjacht' to APS-2 Zutendaal

Story and photos by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

ZUTENDAAL, Belgium – The quiet of a Sunday afternoon broke Oct. 31, 2021 at Army Prepositioned Stock (APS-2) Site Zutendaal as a host of horses, riders, carriages, English hunting hounds, cyclists and vehicles emerged from the forest and crowded the Army-operated airstrip.

The event was part of the 50th anniversary of the town of Wiemesmeer's "slipjacht" or "drag hunt," a hunt where riders in hunting caps and velveteen equestrian helmets, hunting coats, jodhpurs and riding boots took a team of hounds to track an artificial scent trail.

The Sint-Hubertus Comité (Saint Hubertus Committee), the Sint-Hubertus Slipjacht Vereniging (Saint Hubertus Slipjacht Association) and the Gezellen Van Sint-Hubertus Jachthoornvereniging (Companies of Saint Hubertus Hunting Horn Association) organize the event annually in the Belgian Limburg town. No event took place in 2020 in accord with COVID-19 prevention measures.

Even though the hunters and their hounds form the heart of the event, hundreds more took part as spectators, following by bike, by jeep, by double-decker bus, by horse-drawn carriage and even by double-decker horse-drawn carriage. The entourage cheered, took photos and videos, and enjoyed each other's camaraderie after many miles following the dogs and riders through the towns of Wiemesmeer and Zutendaal and environs. Several members of the party in hunting regalia played a call-and-response on the circular natural horn.

The portion at APS-2 Zutendaal was just one part of the hunt and the day's events. The day began with breakfast at the town's sports hall and a blessing at the Sint-Jozef church. After the blessing, the crowd gathered at a park across from the church where food and drinks were sold, and there the



Bjorn van Vlerken, master of the hunt, runs with English hunting hounds alongside the airstrip at Army Prepositioned Stock (APS-2) Site Zutendaal Oct. 31, 2021 near the Belgian Limburg towns of Wiemesmeer and Zutendaal. Van Vlerken led the towns' 50th anniversary "slipjacht" (Dutch for "drag hunt") in honor of Saint Hubertus, the patron saint of hunters.

Teams of horses draw carriages along the airstrip at APS-2 Zutendaal.



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crowd watched the opening ceremony. After that the hunt began, and the hounds tracked a scent trail made by dragging an artificial scent bag along a predesignated path.

Bjorn van Vlerken, the master of the hunt, explained that hunting with hounds began when much of the forests in the area were owned by the aristocratic class, who transferred ownership of the land to the Flemish community. Hunting of roe deer continued until hunting live quarry with hounds was outlawed. After that, the drag hunt began as a means to continue hunting while complying with the law.

"It's a very traditional sport we're trying to do," said van Vlerken. "It all comes from the old days when they had the folks in England dress up like that. And we try to carry on that tradition."

After going through the town and the

areas around, the party entered APS-2 Zutendaal via King's Gate, so named for when King Albert II of Belgium used the gate when the site was operated by the Belgian Ministry of Defense. The Belgian nature and forestry service (Agentschap Natuur en Bos) ushered the group on post, and the cyclists, carriages and other vehicles took the road from the gate to the airstrip. The pack of hounds bayed and ran along the scent trail, accompanied by their hunters on horseback, running parallel to the airstrip, both horse and hound bounding through the grass and mud.

The garrison provided coordination with the forestry service, security for the on-post portion of the hunt, and several garrison leaders took part, riding along on carriages to follow the hunting party.

"It is historical precedent that they would come onto base, and that's where it would allow all the other people to gather to watch the



Top: A team of six horses pull a double-decker carriage along the airstrip at Army Prepositioned Stock (APS-2) Site Zutendaal.



Bottom left: Hundreds of cyclist spectators ride onto the airstrip near the Belgian Limburg town of Zutendaal.



Bottom right: A cyclist greets one of the APS-2 Zutendaal security guards.

dogs work and the horses work as a final part of the activity," said Steven Campfield, garrison site manager for APS-2 Zutendaal.

The runway serves as the wide-open venue for the crowd to see the hunting party work. There were even obstacles set up alongside the runway for the horses and riders to optionally jump as they passed.

Once the hunters and hounds passed, the crowd climbed back aboard bicycles and carriages to leave the Army prepositioned stock site. As evening grew and clouds thickened, rain began to drop on the large assembly, and they made their way back into town for the final event of the evening, a simulated kill. During that final event, the master of the hunt suspended the cow entrails from a tripod fashioned from logs, which the dogs then attacked.

Van Vlerken said his group hunts weekly from October to March.

"We also have very low profile days where we meet at a pub or a bar somewhere and use fifteen horses and three cars," said van Vlerken. "We're a private livery, a small private pack of hounds, so we don't really take it to the big public. The hunt – the day at Zutendaal – is an exception of course."

The slipjacht is part of a two-week program of festivities, which finished at the church Nov. 3 (Saint Hubertus' feast day) at the church at Zutendaal. Saint Hubertus, the patron saint of hunters, was the first bishop of the Walloon town Liège.

"We are always very grateful people allow us on their lands to do our hobby, which it is and our sport and our tradition," said van Vlerken. "We try to do this as correctly and as traditional as we possibly can. We're just a small group and very grateful that we can come to Zutendaal once a year, and people have us there."

US, Belgian Soldiers become allies in life

By Jessica Abbas,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUNSSUM, Netherlands – At the confluence of the Belgian, Dutch and German borders different peoples, cultures and nations converge daily. This is a region where NATO allies live, play and work, alongside one another and where long-lasting relationships are forged.

One such recent example can be found between newlyweds, Sgt. Jenna Gabaldón, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, and Sgt. Laure Delbrouck, Belgian Defense.

How it all started

"It sounds cliché" said Gabaldón, physical security sergeant at the Brunssum site, "but from a young age I wanted to be a police officer. I always really wanted to do it."

"I have relatives who are in law enforcement and I remember going to a graduation one time and thinking, wow that's so cool!"

Gabaldón's aspirations did not wain as she grew up. She joined the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) as a sophomore in high school, serving in the program for three years and quickly realized she could combine her dreams of working in law enforcement with military service.

"I signed up as a junior under delayed enlistment and left for Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) a month after graduation."

Following One Station Unit Training (OSUT) at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Gabaldón PCS'd to Fort Drum, New York and served in a line unit for two years before joining a detachment as a game warden.

"I was one of the first females in the Army to take the course and get it (the certification), I loved it!" While the duties of game warden are not unheard of for the Army, an official course for the Enlisted Record Brief (ERB) at that time was new.

"I worked in partnership with the New



Sgt. Laure Delbrouck, left, Belgian Defense, and Sgt. Jenna Gabaldón, right, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, pose for a photo. (Courtesy photo)

York State Department of Environmental Conservation, which is the organization for their game wardens. It was my favorite job in the whole world, and I was the non-commissioned officer in charge for a year before coming here."

Gabaldón arrived in the Benelux September 2019, and soon after met the person who would become her wife.

Delbrouck like Gabaldón was also drawn to her own career early in life. It was this and other commonalities which helped build the relationship between the two women.

"I knew about the army from a very, very young age because I was in the Cub Scouts and then the Scouts. Some of my scout leaders were in a light infantry battalion in the town I grew up in Spa, Belgium. Those scout leaders would tell us stories of some of the things they did in the army which was pretty great."

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Delbrouck (Courtesy photo)

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Delbrouck explained that Belgian scout programs offer both gender segregated and integrated options differing from typical U.S. scout programs.

"I was a part of the integrated scouts," she said. "We had camps, did physical training, push-ups and obstacle courses in the woods. We'd salute the flag, sing the national anthems as we raised the flag and had uniform rules, which kind of set me up for this life."

"I originally wanted to join the U.S. Marines when I was a kid," continued Delbrouck who shared her avid love of military films, "but I was very attached to my home country so instead I joined the Belgian Defense straight out of high school."

Delbrouck started airborne jumps at the age of 17. As one of the first females in the course she earned bravo level qualifications. Her path as a junior officer candidate led to attendance at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels, a Belgian equivalent to West Point.

However, a year into the program Delbrouck felt conflicted and sought change.

"Mainly due to the fact that there is a lot of desk work (on the officer career path) and I'm not meant for desk work. I could do it, but I wanted to be more hands on, in the woods, crawling in the mud with the other

Soldiers."

Delbrouck was granted a transfer to Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) School which led to her current career in Communication and Information Systems (CIS), more commonly known as signals. She is stationed about an hour and a half away from Gabaldón in Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium.

Their story together

"When we first met, I made a lame joke about us both in the military," said Delbrouck, "but it was funny," said Gabaldón.

Their initial banter turned into a friendship that quickly advanced, "because when you know, you know," said Gabaldón.

"We are so able to bond being in the military, I think that's what brought us close initially," said Gabaldón. "And I appreciated her perspective. She's open-minded, lots of commonalities made getting to know one another more interesting."

Their whirlwind courtship led to marriage in November 2020, but travel restrictions wrought by the pandemic meant they couldn't go to Belgium or the U.S. for a ceremony. The two instead married via a double proxy, which was only possible through the state of Montana. The next day, Delbrouck went on a four-month deployment.

They faced some challenges early into

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their marriage unique to their situation.

Delbrouck's records were all in French and needed to be translated to English for U.S. systems to offer spouse/dependent services. Their respective ops tempos and schedules, work locations and service commitments, mean half of their time married is spent physically separated. And COVID travel restrictions with border closures have also impacted the newlyweds.

Plans are in the works for a future wedding celebration that includes members of both families.

Gabaldón and Delbrouck have leaned into their support systems with weekly visits to Delbrouck's family in Belgium (when restrictions have allowed travel) and video chats with Gabaldón's family back in the U.S.

And as their relationship grows they are conscious in carving out time together, enjoying each other's cultures, and learning more about one another, each day.

"I'm working on my French, it's kind of rough," said Gabaldón, "and she really wants to go to the U.S."

Having never been to America, Delbrouck was initially in awe of the garrison's commissary.

"I've never seen anything like it, I know we had something like that when Belgians were working in Germany, but it only lasted until the late 90s."

"But in reality I don't think we have huge differences on the big things like family traditions," said Gabaldón.

"Obviously there are some things we don't have in Europe like Thanksgiving or Black Friday," said Delbrouck, "but if there's one thing I've learned about Americans you guys are super welcoming. everyone has been really nice."

Open and optimistic for the future

"I think all in all especially between Soldiers we have a lot more in common than we have differences," said Delbrouck, "the humor is the same, the experiences are extremely similar be it basic, deployments or



Sgt. Jenna Gabaldón (Courtesy photo)

da- to-day military life."

That said they still encounter people with "old school" opinions who find it hard to accept someone different. Both agree more change is still needed, yet they remain optimistic.

"I see a whole new generation of Soldiers, and I think because there is a definite shift in mentality they are more accepting," said Delbrouck. "They don't conform to binary, they are looking beyond whatever people might say about them and seeing it actually doesn't matter that much."

When asked what's next for them personally and professionally, the couple was candid.

Gabaldón has served for five years and recently reenlisted extending her time here in the Benelux another two years. Delbrouck has served for seven years and is on an open contract. Both are excited for the prospect of eventually moving back to the U.S.

"People put a lot of emphasis on things saying they have to be this way, or that way, to fit into a box, and boxes are great but ultimately you can't fit everyone into the same box," said Delbrouck. "So if someone feels comfortable by all means they can keep it (the box), but if someone wants to change it, who is anyone to prevent them from being themselves and being comfortable within themselves."

Commissary takes part in functional exercise at Brunssum

Story and photos by Jessica Abbas,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

BRUNSSUM, Netherlands – U.S. Army Garrison Benelux personnel and more community members performed a functional exercise May 4, 2021 as part of a series occurring across the garrison throughout the year.

In addition to the engaged stakeholders such as U.S. Army military police and U.S. Army emergency management personnel, Brunssum commissary personnel also played an active role.

"We're fortunate a lot of safety and security scenarios are not as frequent in real-life over here versus in the states, but we still need to be prepared," said William Constance, store manager.

This exercise, a simulated stabbing event evolving from a verbal disagreement, commenced shortly after 9 a.m. between two would-be customers.

Commissary employees immediately notified the garrison's military police of the altercation, gave a detailed description of the suspect and alerted staff to the exercise via intercom.

MPs, on scene within minutes, engaged with staff members for further details and swept the facility to locate and apprehend the attacker.

Services and access to the area were temporarily impacted as a result of the training.

"Now, I think following this exercise, we need to look at more in-depth training for our team," said Darlene Coaxum, store director.

Coaxum went on to explain they have a code system for different real-world scenarios and they regularly conduct safety and security briefings as a part of personnel trainings. Nevertheless, the exercise highlighted areas where improvements are needed.

Coaxum and Constance also identified changes and enhancements to the facility that could help to further ensure safety for personnel and customers, in case of future real-world incidents.

"You never know what can happen and it's good to get prepared and be prepared," said Coaxum.

As the exercise concluded, initial feedback amongst participants was shared in an open forum.



Participants in a functional exercise at Brunssum commissary see crime.

"I think it's in our mindset that we want to get to the threat quickly and not have any other incidents happen, and that's when people tend to move too fast," said Sgt. Eian Adcock. "That's where mistakes can be made."

"It is hard to slow yourself down," said John Hopper, USAG Benelux emergency manager.

Hopper explained to participants, when clearing a building, they want to keep moving but at the same time they have to force themselves to slow down, fully assess the situation, and move appropriately through the scene. He stressed the importance in asking questions, so as to not miss any important details.

Closing out the training event Staff Sgt. Sergio Lopez, provost sergeant at the Brunssum site, commended the efforts of all participants and praised the communication he observed.

"It's one big exercise but with multiple little parts everybody plays that makes it successful, even though you might have a

small role, it leads into the bigger role," said Lopez. "And this is why we train, to learn and improve."



Participants in a functional exercise at the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux – Brunssum commissary seek the perpetrator of a crime.

Hope for best, prepare for worst

Courtesy story

BRUNSSUM, Netherlands – Emergencies can happen any time and any place and be as large as a major storm that sweeps over several countries or can be as small as a kitchen fire.

Ensure that you and your loved ones know what to do when the unfortunate strikes, and you will be better able to cope and recover.

Preparing in advance could keep an emergency from becoming a disaster for you and your Family. Take these simple steps to prepare:

Get a Kit – Consider the basics of survival and also special needs.

- Assemble emergency supplies in your home, car and workplace.
- Be ready in case you must evacuate quickly.
- Prepare for your pets survival too.

Make a Plan – Consider the range of possibilities and places you might be.

- Plan reactions to various emergencies.
- Plan how your Family can stay in touch.
- Practice your plan.
- Plan for your pets too.

Be Informed – Knowing what to do can make all the difference when seconds count.

- Know what emergencies are most likely to affect you and your Family.
- Know the local emergency warning system in your area and what action to take in case there is an emergency.

Much more information is available on what to do during and after an emergency, which you can find out at www.ready.gov.



LUNCH PAIL



Name: Josie Belanger

Position: Family member and volunteer with Army Community Services at Chièvres Air Base.

Accomplishments: Josie has hosted "virtual tours" of Chièvres Air Base for newcomers on the ACS Facebook page, providing positive energy, positive spirit and a smile, said Col. James Yastrzemsky, garrison commander.



Courtesy photo of a thunderstorm by Paulina Cwik, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Sgt. Isaac Mayfield performs first aid in the medical lanes during the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Best Warrior Competition. Mayfield earned the title "NCO of the Year." (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel)



APS-2 Dülmen MPs win during USAG Benelux Best Warrior

Story by Bryan Gatchell,
USAG Benelux Public Affairs

CHIÈVRES, Belgium – After a week competing against their garrison peers, two U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Soldiers from Army Prepositioned Stock Site (APS-2) Dülmen in Germany earned the titles of Soldier and non-commissioned officer of the year during the garrison's Best Warrior Competition Jan. 28, 2021 at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium.

Spc. Hunter Tinsley, member of the Directorate of Emergency Services' military police, earned the title of "Soldier of the Year," Sgt. Isaac Mayfield, team lead for DES at APS-2 Dülmen, earned "NCO of the Year," and both moved on to compete at the Installation Management Command – Europe level.

Mayfield felt the competition was not just a contest of physical strength and mental

agility but of will and determination.

"This competition is supposed to be taxing on you," said Mayfield. "It's called 'the Best Warrior' for a reason. It's definitely something you have to come in mentally and physically tough for. And if you have any doubts in your mind about it, then you're automatically just going to fail."

Soldiers and noncommissioned officers took part in the competition based on whether they were the Soldiers or noncommissioned officers of their month and their quarter for their location in the garrison. Beside the two winners from APS-Dülmen, competitors hailed from Chièvres Air Base and Brussels Site in Belgium and Brunssum Site and JFC Brunssum in the Netherlands. Most of the competitors were from the military police of the Directorate of Emergency Services, and one was a religious affairs specialist who works at JFC Brunssum.



Spc. Hunter Tinsley, member of the Directorate of Emergency Services' military police, photographed here taking the written portion of the garrison Best Warrior Competition, earned the title of "Soldier of the Year." Tinsley went on to earn runner-up at the IMCOM-Europe level competition. (U.S. Army photo by Julie Piron)

"They definitely strove hard to show us that 'They do work, and they deliver,'" said USAG Benelux Command Sgt. Maj. Katrina Herzfeld. "I am honored to have Sergeant Mayfield and Specialist Tinsley represent the Benelux in March."

Herzfeld said Best Warrior is important for a variety of reasons.

"It tests our Soldiers and NCOs on their physical strength, mental agility, endurance, courage, tactical skills, military knowledge and, most importantly, their heart," said Herzfeld. "Across the Benelux, on any given day, a Soldier and/or NCO is preparing to compete. They are studying and working out. All in the hopes of becoming the USAG Benelux Best Warrior. This competition not only encouraged the professional growth of these eight but all Soldiers assigned to USAG Benelux. It creates a sense of esprit de corps within the unit as the sites root for their representatives."

And although the different sites of the garrison may have rooted for their own, the competition gave its contestants the opportunities to know each other better.

"I've made a couple new friends here

since the start of the competition," said Sgt. Michael Sanabria, an investigator and desk sergeant at the Brunssum Site and a native of Brookville, Pennsylvania. "It's nice to see how everyone's doing at their respective locations – just kind of talk and share our experiences. I think it's been a really good team-building experience during our downtime."

"It's definitely good to come together," said Staff Sgt. Devon Bowman, a desk sergeant and squad leader at Brussels Site and native of Columbus, Georgia. "There are a couple of NCOs I haven't seen since I went to (advanced operations course) over a year ago. So it's good to venture out."

Pfc. Joseph Prest, the religious affairs specialist at JFC Brunssum, whose hometown is Carbondale, Illinois, appreciated how much he got to interact with his fellow Soldiers.

"It's nice to learn from them, model from them, and pick their brain," said Prest.

The four-day competition included warrior tasks and drills; a foot march; land navigation; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear lanes; a written essay; weapons draw; boards; and more. During one event, competitors had to assemble a disassembled weapon. During another event, competitors had to perform a modified Murphy challenge, in which they ran, did pushups, pullups, air squats and ran more.

"The Murphy was pretty challenging," said Bowman. "It was a long day we already had with the ruck march and multiple Combat Lifesaving lanes. It made it more stressful on the body."

Two other Soldiers felt the Murphy challenge to be the toughest part of the competition. A few said it was the medical lane. Others said the board on the final day of competition was the most difficult. Spc. Arnando Smith, a mid-shift patrol for DES at Chièvres Air Base, whose hometown is Atlanta, cited the board among the other stressors of the competition.

"It's the mental strain, the lack of sleep, getting ready for the board and going amongst people who severely outrank you,"

said Smith. "You really realize what you don't know, and it pushes you to do better."

"It kind of put me in the perspective of where I was physically, mentally as well," said Spc. Adonis Singletary, an investigator with DES at the Brussels Site, whose hometown is Seaside, California. "It really challenged me to think outside the box and to think on the fly."

Tinsley, a native of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, took part at the next level of the competition. He also appreciated how the contest served to assess him as a Soldier.

"I just need to go to a gym more, do more physical stuff, running, rucking, studying up more Army knowledge," he said of the forthcoming competition. "Since it's a bigger event, I need to also study up more on weapons."

The IMCOM-E Best Warrior Competition, which took place at the end of February and beginning of March at USAG Ansbach in Germany, pitted both Tinsley and Mayfield against the best Soldiers and NCOs of the other six Army garrisons in Europe. Mayfield, a native of Platte City, Missouri, felt competing against his fellow Soldiers at this garrison was difficult, and will seek to improve before the next iteration of competition.

"My peers are very knowledgeable and well-rounded," he said. "There's a lot I can improve on and then definitely get my physical fitness back where it needs to be."

Neither Mayfield nor Tinsley won the IMCOM-Europe competition, but Tinsley earned

the status of runner-up.

Others in the garrison competition, though they may not have won, still found the competition valuable.

"I pushed myself to see what I was capable of," said Sgt. Christopher Arcia, a desk sergeant and noncommissioned officer in charge of desk sergeants at Chièvres Air Base. "I didn't really think I was actually ever going to be able to compete in a Best Warrior competition. This was my first Best Warrior Competition. I'm glad I did it, and I'd like to do it again and see if I could win next time.

"If you don't make it, it's okay," continued Arcia, who is a native of Santa Clarita, California. "Just keep on pushing through. Failure only makes you stronger."

Herzfeld said the competitors exemplified the Warrior Ethos of "I will always place the mission first; I will never accept defeat; I will never quit, and I will never leave a fallen comrade."

"I am proud of all my competitors," said Herzfeld. "They were pushed to what they thought were their limits and kept going past that point. No one gave up. They encouraged one another and grew together as a team."

"Stay motivated," said Singletary. "There's a lot of times when you're going to face obstacles. There's a lot of times you'll have to do things you don't want to do, but once you're there, you might as well do the best you can."

Sgt. Michael Sanabria, an investigator and desk sergeant, performs during the medical lanes of the Best Warrior Competition. (U.S. Army photo by Christophe Morel)



Members of the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Directorate of Emergency Services perform color guard duties during a 103rd anniversary Armistice Day commemoration Nov. 11, 2021 at Chièvres, Belgium. (U.S. Army photo by Marie-Lise Baneton, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)



FRONT AND BACK: Two military police Soldiers with USAG Benelux Directorate of Emergency Services survey the crowd at the BJ Scott concert toward the conclusion of the Chièvres Air Base Sept. 25, 2021 at Hangar 2 at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium. (U.S. Army photo by Libby Weiler, USAG Benelux Public Affairs)

