Fort Drum Press Release

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Fort Drum garrison commander hosts Italian delegation on installation tour

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (April 26, 2022) -- The history of the 10th Mountain Division in Italy during World War II is well-documented and celebrated at Fort Drum. The relationships forged in conflict have continued to flourish here and abroad over the past several decades.

Col. James Zacchino Jr., Fort Drum garrison commander, was honored to welcome a delegation of Italian officials and guests April 25 for their first tour of the installation.

The visiting contingent included town mayors from Vicenza, whose residents include hundreds of American service members assigned to U.S. Army Garrison Italy. Zacchino previously was stationed in Italy before taking command of the Fort Drum garrison.

“It is always a privilege to host distinguished visitors and offer a glimpse into what makes Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division vital to the U.S Army and this nation,” he said. “From my time overseas, I know the tremendous impact the U.S. Army Garrison Italy has on its neighboring communities. It is quite similar to our own efforts to strengthen bonds and partnerships in the North Country.”

In addition to hundreds of service members and their families, Department of Defense civilians and retirees, the USAG Italy community includes Italian military personnel and civilian employees. USAG Italy supports a wide range of units and organizations, including the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force-Africa, the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and the 21st Theater Sustainment Command-Italy.

A tour of Fort Drum included Monument Park; various Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities; Mountain Community Homes housing areas and LeRay Mansion.

The group stopped at the air traffic control tower at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, located near the Darby Rapid Redeployment Facility, which is named after Brig. Gen. William O. Darby, the assistant commander of the 10th Mountain Division during WWII. Camp Darby, one of the major military communities in Italy, also honors the senior leader who was killed in Torbole on April 30, 1945.

Anna Ciccotti, USAG Italy community and media relations officer, said that this was the first trip to the U.S. for most of the delegation.

“They are very close to the military community in Vicenza, and this visit basically gives them an appreciation of what an Army garrison looks like in the United States,” she said. “We have a unique opportunity here because the garrison commander has strong ties with the community of Vicenza, so we were able to make this special visit to Fort Drum.”

The tour ended at the Prisoner of War (POW) Cemetery where Zacchino joined three mayors in placing a wreath at the gravesite of Rino Carlutti, an Italian POW who died on Oct. 17, 1944, from injuries sustained in a car accident. The POW Cemetery is the smallest of the 40 Army cemeteries in the U.S. It contains the remains of one Italian and six German soldiers who were housed at Pine Camp (now Fort Drum).

The Fort Drum Cultural Resources Program provides oversight and administrative support for the cemetery, while the Directorate of Public Works is responsible for grounds maintenance.

“When you think about it, the respect and diligence shown at this one small part of our installation really illustrates what our garrison workforce does throughout Fort Drum every day to support Soldiers, family members and civilians,” Zacchino said. “We were honored today to show our guests a little bit of that, and I was grateful for all the wonderful conversations we shared during the tour.”

Ciccotti said that the visit was particularly meaningful for the delegation since it coincided with Italy’s Liberation Day. This is a national holiday that commemorates the end of Nazi occupation during WWII and celebrates the victory of Italy’s resistance movement to oppose the fascist regime.

“Being here today, we are able to show our appreciation for the Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division who helped liberate Italy,” Ciccotti said.

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Photo Caption: Col. James Zacchino Jr., Fort Drum garrison commander, welcomed Italian officials and guests April 25 on their first tour of a U.S. Army installation. The delegation included three town mayors, who placed a wreath near the grave of an Italian soldier buried at the Fort Drum Prisoner of War Cemetery. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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