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Tennessee National Guard Kicks Off Joint Bulgarian Exercise

SOFIA, Bulgaria – On June 11, approximately 70 Soldiers and Airmen from the Tennessee National Guard landed in Sofia, Bulgaria, to begin an international joint readiness exercise, Thracian Sentry 2023. More than 170 military personnel from the Bulgarian Armed Forces, the Hellenic Air Force in Greece, and the Tennessee Army and Air National Guard have partnered to develop and improve skills which include combat medical care, aircraft fire rescue, joint operations, logistics and sustainment, aeromedical evacuation, and weapons training.

Thracian Sentry 2023 highlights the 30-year-long partnership between the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and the Tennessee National Guard and commemorates many years of military cooperation. This exercise also allows Tennesseans to improve their readiness alongside their Bulgarian counterparts and to train combat-ready Soldiers and Airmen.

“Since 1993, the Tennessee National Guard and Bulgaria have been partners in the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program,” said Col. Jason Glass, Tennessee’s Assistant Adjutant General-Air. “For three decades, Tennessee and Bulgaria have worked to grow and develop together across a wide variety of military capabilities. This year’s Thracian Sentry 23 exercise will display a level of advanced security cooperation and partnership that will further strengthen the regional stability across Southeast Europe and the Black Sea.”

One of the more complex elements of the exercise is the use of the U.S. Air Force’s new doctrine called Agile Combat Employment. It focuses on redefining how the U.S. Air Force prepares, positions, and projects capabilities across the globe. This exercise allows Tennessee and Bulgaria the opportunity to practice ACE.

According to the U.S. Air Force, “ACE shifts operations from centralized physical infrastructures to a network of smaller, dispersed locations that can complicate adversary planning and provide more options for joint force commanders.” This new way of operating will increase the way commanders can attack adversary targets by coming from multiple locations and directions while better protecting U.S. and Allied forces.

Another method ACE will employ, and Thracian Sentry 23 will help develop, is the idea of Multi-Capable Airmen. The goal is to have Airmen who are trained in expeditionary skills that might normally fall outside their main area of training. This allows them to be more flexible and operate as part of an expeditionary team.

“Tennessee and Bulgaria are ready to employ this new doctrine through teamwork that has



developed over many years of friendship and cooperation,” said Glass. “There is nothing we can’t accomplish together.”

The name Thracian Sentry comes from the term Thrace which was used by the Ancient Greeks to describe the tribes and inhabitants of Southeast Europe that has now evolved into what is Bulgaria and some of the surrounding nations. Although several “Thracian” exercises take place in Bulgaria each year, the Tennessee National Guard is honored to initiate the newest exercise in the series, Thracian Sentry 23.

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Soldiers and Airmen from the Tennessee National Guard at Berry Field Air National Guard Base, July 10, prepare to fly to Bulgaria to begin Thracian Sentry 2023. (photo by Lt. Col. Marty Malone)



Soldiers and Airmen from the Tennessee National Guard fly to Bulgaria to kick off Thracian Sentry 2023.
(photo by Lt. Col. Marty Malone)

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