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Tennessee National Guard partners with Bulgarian military to perform command and control

GORNA MALINA, Bulgaria – On June 14, members of the Tennessee National Guard partnered with the Bulgarian Military’s Joint Forces Command to perform command and control of Soldiers, Airmen, equipment, and aircraft for Thracian Sentry 23.

In a remote facility in the hills of Bulgaria, members of the two military organizations collaborated to form an operations center to control and lead the ongoing exercise. Staff included service members representing personnel, logistics, communications, operations, weather, and intelligence as they provide real-time data to key leaders.

“It’s called the state partnership program, and that is what we want to be, a great partner,” said Col Jay Jackson, Director of Staff, Tennessee Air National Guard. “We want to be a state National Guard that the Bulgarian military can rely on, and vice versa. We want to be a training partner and friend in time of peace that is just a phone call away in time of emergency.”

The Tennesseans working in the operations center are members of the state’s Joint Adaptive Battle staff who recently worked events like hurricane response, the COVID-19 pandemic, tornadoes, and flooding.

“Tennessee and Bulgaria are two professional organizations with differing organizational skills,” said Jackson. “Everyone here is learning varying techniques that we will both be able to take back to our home units and make our militaries better.”

Throughout the exercise, the staffs learned from one another while providing quality, timely, and effective data to military leaders. The information included weather tracking, troop movement, plans, local flooding, and aircraft movement. Also highlighted were online collaboration tools that could be used for future exercises and real time emergencies.

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.

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Col. Hristo Hristov of the Ministry of Defense's Joint Force Command conducts and interview with a local media outlet on June 14, outside Sofia, Bulgaria. (photo by Lt. Col. Marlin Malone)



Colonels Anton Gachev, Hristo Hristov, and Jay Jackson are briefed during a commander's update regarding Thracian Sentry 23 on June 14, outside Sofia, Bulgaria. (photo by Lt. Col. Marlin

Malone)



Col. Jay Jackson of the Tennessee Air National Guard conducts and interview with a local media outlet on June 14, outside Sofia, Bulgaria. (photo by Lt. Col. Marlin Malone)



Members of the Tennessee National Guard and Joint Force Command of the Bulgarian Military pose for a photo on June 14, outside Sofia, Bulgaria. (photo by Lt. Col. Marlin Malone)

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