

OPERATION SABER JUNCTION

This year's Saber Junction was the most multinational and complex exercise U.S. Army Europe has conducted in 20 years.

Using host-nation security forces, unified-action partners and extended maneuver-rights areas added realism to the scenario. "What that did was replicate the complexities that are found in the current operations we conduct in Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as what our future operations will be as military forces from around the globe continue to reduce, re-man and restructure," said MAJ Andy Watson, 2nd Cavalry Regiment's regimental operations officer. "The writing is on the wall: as conflicts become more encompassing, you're going to see more multinational and multi-governmental operations occurring where unified-action partners, host-nation security forces and multinational forces and allies are going to have to work together towards common or similar goals.

"Getting to see the effects of conducting a large-scale maneuver operation across terrain that is a mix of rural and urban, and how you have to plan for and adapt to the uncontrollable variables of a host-nation population, was a major benefit of the exercise," said Watson, an Armor officer who has deployed five times to Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. "[This] infused [into the scenario] a series of dynamic situations we had to deal with, to include adapting operations to deal with road construction or heavy flow of traffic, [and] taking into account the effect that the positioning of our forces would have on local nationals and how it would impact their daily life.

"It provided [2nd Cavalry Regiment] an outstanding opportunity to validate the previous year's worth of training as we came out of reset and conducted a significant amount of training, everything from the fire-team level all the way up to squadron," Watson said. "We found that Saber Junction [decisive-action training environment rotation] was a great opportunity for us to validate the way we've trained and what we've trained on, and to ensure we are building the competencies and confidence throughout our formation, necessary to be ready to execute any mission or operations we are assigned."

