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CONTACT: Col. James Reed

OFFICE: 615.313.0662

james.a.reed72.mil@army.mil

Tennessee National Guard Prepares for Joint Bulgarian Exercise

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – From June 12-30, the Tennessee National Guard is conducting an international joint readiness exercise, named Thracian Sentry 2023, throughout the nation of Bulgaria. More than 170 military personnel from the Bulgarian Armed Forces, the Hellenic Air Force in Greece, and the Tennessee Army and Air National Guard will focus on developing and improving skills which include combat medical care, aircraft fire rescue, joint operations, logistics and sustainment, aeromedical evacuation, and weapons training.

The exercise allows Tennesseans to improve their readiness alongside their Bulgarian counterparts and to train combat-ready Soldiers and Airmen. It will also serve to highlight their decades-long partnership and to commemorate many years of military cooperation.

“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 the past 30 years, Tennessee and Bulgaria have worked together 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 will allow 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.

“Tennessee and Bulgaria and ready to employ this new doctrine through teamwork 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.

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An Air National Guard KC-135 Stratotanker from the 134th Air Refueling Wing refuels a South Carolina Air National Guard F-16 Fighting Falcon while military officials from Bulgarian watch from onboard. (Photo courtesy of the Tennessee National Guard)



An Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster from the 164th Airlift Wing offloads Tennessee Army National Guard Soldiers in Bulgaria as part of a multinational exercise. (Photo courtesy of the Tennessee National Guard)

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