



USAREUR Release

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U.S. Army Europe unit recognized as Army's 'top engineers'

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SCHWEINFURT, Germany – U.S. Army Europe's 42nd Clearance Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, was recognized as the top engineer unit in the Army at a ceremony here May 16.

The Itschner Award was presented to the unit by Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the unit's accomplishments in Afghanistan.

"I think it's a great award," said Bostick. "It really recognizes not only the leaders but the entire team, the Soldiers in that unit, the family members in that unit and their higher headquarters all worked together as a team so everybody is really proud of them."

Named in honor of Lt. Gen. Emerson C. Itschner, the award is presented annually to the most outstanding engineer company in Active Army. There is also an award to recognize the best Reserve Component engineer company.

Originally formed as the 2813th Engineer Petroleum Distribution Company, the 42nd Clearance Company, stationed in Bamberg, Germany, has served as USAREUR's sole route clearance unit since February 2010. Their mission is to find and destroy roadside bombs and other explosive hazards to allow friendly forces free access to roads to conduct their missions.

The unit conducted platoon-level training on route clearance supporting both the 172nd Infantry Brigade during their pre-deployment training as well as assisting the German infantry school to prepare a German infantry battalion for deployment.

Following months of training and learning to work with multinational forces, the unit deployed in February 2012 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



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The unit was assigned to Ghazni Province in Southeastern Afghanistan where the company was responsible for route clearance in support of three brigades, two U.S. and one Polish.

“The Sappers of the 42nd Clearance Company had the upper hand in that they had worked with NATO’s partners during their train up in Germany and utilized this experience to help establish a close relationship with each of the two (Polish) battalions,” said 1st Lt. David Brink, the executive officer for the 42nd Clearance Company. “This led to each of the Polish platoons conducting mission planning with the 42nd Clearance Company platoons and even combined arms rehearsals.”

The 42nd worked closely with their Polish partners on route-clearance missions with Polish forces providing security allowing the engineers to focus on finding explosive hazards. They conducted both mounted and foot patrols to ensure U.S., Polish and Afghan forces were able to conduct their missions.

By deployment’s end, the unit conducted more than 500 missions both in vehicles and on foot clearing more than 30,000 kilometers of roads and finding and disabling more than 150 explosive hazards.

In addition to their primary role of allowing units the freedom to maneuver, the 42nd was also tasked with mentoring forces from the Afghan National Army. They trained both an ANA route-clearance company and an ANA engineer company in the techniques of finding and clearing roadside bombs and other explosive hazards. They also helped them establish unit logistics and maintenance programs.

“Our Afghan Army Advising Team mentored and trained up a company of Afghan Army Engineers,” said Capt. William Murray, the unit’s commander during the deployment. “Within a six-month period, the Afghan army engineers found three times as many IEDs as they found the year prior.”

The unit placed a heavy emphasis on engaging the locals to earn their respect and trust. The 42nd’s leadership developed an Afghan civil outreach program that focused on empowering the local population to stop insurgent activity and roadside bombs.

“The program started off small but the Soldiers really ran with the idea and became very creative in working with the Afghan civilians,” said Murray. “In the end the program led to the turn in of over 20 insurgents and six tons of homemade explosives.”



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Throughout the deployment the Soldiers distinguished themselves not only as a unit, but as individuals as well. Soldiers from the 42nd earned a MacArthur Leadership Award, six Bronze Star Medals with V devices for valor and numerous other awards at the regional command level and below.

Following their return from Afghanistan in February 2013, they are now preparing for their next mission, a directed move to Fort Knox, Ky. as part of USAREUR's transformation.

“The 42nd Clearance Company brings a dedication to training and learning that is pretty unique in the Army,” said Murray. “We are excited for the next chapter of their rich history and look forward to the next opportunity to showcase what it means to be the Best Engineer Company in the Army.”

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About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia, building teams, assuring allies and deterring enemies. The relationships we build during more than 1,000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for U.S. actions such as in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya.

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