



Lt. Col. Todd A. Buchs (left), 222nd BSB commander, discusses rescue operations with Hans Kuhn (center), 222nd BSB fire chief, as an emergency responder listens at the command post across from Champion Village during the exercise.

# Emergency response

*'Hazardous spill' tests ability of Americans, Germans to react during Baumholder exercise*

Story and photos by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

A tanker truck carrying hazardous materials careens out of control, crashing through a guardrail and rolling down an embankment where it explodes. Its hazardous cargo spills into Baumholder's Champion Village housing area.

That was the scenario challenging teams of U.S. and German firemen and medical technicians during the 222nd Base Support Battalion's mass casualty exercise Oct. 25.

An exercise of this magnitude had not been held at Baumholder in more than 20 years, said Hans Kuhn, 222nd BSB fire chief. The chief, who has worked for the U.S. military for 33 years, said the last exercise that even came close was held at the Winterhauch Storage Site near the Nahbollenbach Depot. "But we didn't have nearly as many simulated casualties as this time," he said.

About 35 "injured people" and 20 Champion Village residents had to be evacuated to safety after the staged accident.

The latest exercise involved more than 22 local fire departments and tested the ability of American and German emergency response agencies to handle a situation involving numerous casualties, fire, hazardous materials, traffic and crowd control.

Everything from fielding a hazardous material response team to establishing a command post was tested. "We had a lot of good things going on. There was a lot of stuff that didn't work that had to work. With such a big exercise there is always something, but I mean, the results overall were good, perfect," said Kuhn.

Kuhn's analysis of the exercise was mirrored by Maj. Brad Bourn, 222nd BSB S-3. "Overall I think it was a great success.

**"We have to learn from these scenarios what we can do better in the future."**

Hopefully a lot of the community got to see the response and they went away with a good feeling about their safety and security," Bourn said.

The joint operation lasted about four hours during which time all aspects of the responding agencies were put to the test. German police assisted by rerouting traffic away from the exercise location and maintaining security. Many residents of Champion Village volunteered to be "victims" during the exercise.

Also participating were members of the local Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, Directorate of Public Works, Boy Scouts and several other community members who stepped up to assist.

"Some folks even volunteered to let us put dummies in their balconies to be used as casualties. In general the residents were pretty receptive of the exercise," said Bourn.

"Our BSB fire department was excellent," said Kuhn. "There was a small problem with communication and with alerting the city fire department, but it was an experience that we have to learn from."

The exercise drew 270 firefighters, 59 emergency medical technicians and five emergency doctors from the surrounding communities. Their equipment included 50 fire trucks and 15 ambulances.

"We had some good results, and I thank everyone for their assistance — the volunteers, DPW, the casualties, everybody," said Kuhn. The chief explained that all of the members of the response teams were volunteers.

"It was a good exercise and we gained a lot of experience from it," said Kuhn. "It's good that we all got to work together and were on one sheet of music — the Red Cross, police, Military Police — everybody who was involved. We have to learn from these scenarios what we can do better in the future."



Firefighters respond to the emergency scenario in Baumholder's Champion Village housing area during the exercise.



German firefighters use the "jaws of life" to help free a person trapped in a vehicle while medical responders assist a second victim in the vehicle.



Soldiers attempt to identify a "victim" of the explosion before he is transported to a nearby hospital for treatment. Photo left: Firefighters douse a tanker with foam to prevent further damage and contamination of the surrounding area.