

FACE OF DEFENSE: CAPTAIN CROSSES COALITION CULTURES

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At left, U.S. Army Capt. Adam Proctor and Sgt. 1st Class Rob Morsinkhof of the Dutch Army look over regulations at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, on 26 April 2013. Proctor is deployed to Turkey with the Dutch military as a foreign exchange officer.

INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey – When he walks into the Dutch Patriot missile headquarters here, U.S. Army Capt. Adam Proctor greets his co-workers in their native language, with a friendly smile.

As the Dutch Patriot missile system tactical director, the U.S. soldier has been working with the Dutch for about two years.

"I'm in charge of tracking aircraft," he explained.

Sgt. Maj. Peter Meuisen of the 1st Netherlands Ballistic Missile Defense Task Force said there is good history of having U.S. service members embedded with their Dutch counterparts, and vice-versa. Sometimes, Dutch pilots will go to the United States and U.S. pilots will go to the Netherlands to fly for air force squadrons via exchange programs, he explained.

"When the opportunity to go work in the Netherlands came up, I jumped at it," Proctor said. "How many people get to do this?"

Learning the language has been the biggest challenge, the Army captain said. "But I've always wanted to learn Dutch," he added.

Having the Netherlands and U.S. come together in this unique way has had many benefits, Meuisen said. Both countries bring new ideas and a fresh perspective, he noted, and lessons learned from the partnership have made them a stronger team.

"It's great to learn from each other and see our differences," the Dutch soldier added. "We learn how to improve."

Although the way each side approaches the mission may vary, everyone does their part and pitches in, the U.S. and Dutch service members agreed. One side may be a stickler for time constraints, and the other may feel a more relaxed approach is most effective, but in the end, there is mutual respect and cooperation, Proctor said.

The Dutch are a tight-knit community, he added, and part of the respect he has for the Dutch soldiers comes from an appreciation of that.

"The closeness of the people is the best part," he said. "We get the work done and have a lot of fun. Seeing these differences has really opened my mind to think about what's really important in accomplishing the mission."

Being in Turkey undertaking the NATO Patriot mission and having a U.S. soldier working with the Dutch provides a great enhancement to the operation, Meuisen said.

"This mission is important," Proctor said. "It's an honor to be doing this right on the border with our NATO allies."

The partnership between the two nations is vital, Meuisen said, because much more is achieved through teamwork.

"When you exercise and deploy together, it's extremely helpful to understand how we both work," he explained. "When we are better prepared, we work better together."

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