Welcome to the 56th F. A. Command (Pershing)
Plotting Pershing on the map

The 56th Field Artillery Command is a unit with a unique mission. It is the only command-sized Pershing missile unit in the world. As such, it is a vital link in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) chain of defense.

The command is composed of three Pershing Missile battalions, one infantry battalion, one support battalion, one signal battalion, one aviation company and a Headquarters and Headquarters battery, which includes a chemical decontamination platoon. The command also controls its own Non-Commissioned Officer Academy.

More than 5,000 soldiers make up the command and are stationed on six kasernes (posts) and two remote sites scattered throughout Southern Germany.

Where are we?

The six battalions in the command are stationed at three primary locations:

- Command Headquarters; HHC, Alpha and Delta companies of 38th Signal Battalion; and 2nd Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment are located in Schwäbisch Gmünd.
- 4th Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment; Charlie Company, 38th Signal Bn.; Alpha Company 55th Support Battalion; and Charlie Company 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry are located in Heilbronn/Neckarsulm.
- 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment; HHF, Alpha and Bravo companies 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment and Headquarters 55th Support Battalion are located in Neu-Ulm.

The companies of 2/4 Infantry provide security for each of the Pershing battalions and are stationed throughout the Command area – Schwäbisch Gmünd, Heilbronn and Neu-Ulm.

What to expect

A tour with the 56th Field Artillery Command is as challenging and demanding as it is personally rewarding. Because of its vital mission, a high level of performance is required from each soldier. The hours can be long as the work tough. However, it is this selfless dedication to mission accomplishment that keeps the command in an ever-ready status.

Field duty is often a companion to the Pershing soldier. The entire command participates in annual fall and spring field problems. In addition, each battalion must go through a Tactical Evaluation (Tac-Eval). Batteries frequent the field throughout the year to participate in Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Programs (ARTEPs).
Pershing keeps Soviet Bear at bay

For years the Russian Bear stalked the borders of Western Europe. It was huge, bold and aggressive, for behind it were the assembled armies of the USSR and its satellites. In numbers and firepower it seemed almost invincible; it appeared poised aggressively — challenging the western world.

In 1986, however, the Soviets were again seated at the bargaining table. Some of the bluster was gone. Many senior officials in the US and Europe credited the change to the fact that the 56th Field Artillery Command (Pershing) with a dual mission and chain of command. In peacetime, the 56th FA Command (Pershing) is manned and maintained by soldiers with a safe and efficient work environment and will aid the Command in maintaining the vast amounts of new equipment already received and on the way.

In addition to maintaining equipment, the Command is interested in maintaining its people, as well. Quality time with the family, as part of an overall morale maintenance program, receives heavy command emphasis. Located in one of the most beautiful areas of Germany, the Command and its soldiers enjoy the four seasons and their accompanying recreational opportunities.

Another aspect of the Command’s maintenance of its people, is the history of success experienced by non commissioned and commissioned officers with service in the command. Pershing soldiers enjoy a high rate of selection for promotions, commands, and advanced military schooling.

It is this high quality of leadership, backed by highly disciplined and trained young Pershing soldiers that makes the Command a force to be reckoned with. History may someday note that potential aggressors had superior numbers of troops and equipment poised on or near the borders of our European allies, but was held in check because he dared not risk the consequences of an attack. The unfriendly force knew that Pershing soldiers were combat ready and could put one or more long-range missiles into flight within minutes. They knew also that these same units could perform their jobs with such proficiency that the accuracy and effect of the strike would be devastating — Pershing and the 56th Field Artillery Command are indeed Peacemakers.

For years the Russian Bear stalked the borders of Western Europe. It was huge, bold and aggressive, for behind it were the assembled armies of the USSR and its satellites. In numbers and firepower it seemed almost invincible; it appeared poised aggressively — challenging the western world.

In 1986, however, the Soviets were again seated at the bargaining table. Some of the bluster was gone. Many senior officials in the US and Europe credited the change to the fact that the 56th Field Artillery Command (Pershing) with a dual mission and chain of command. In peacetime, the 56th FA Command (Pershing) is manned and maintained by soldiers with a safe and efficient work environment and will aid the Command in maintaining the vast amounts of new equipment already received and on the way.

In addition to maintaining equipment, the Command is interested in maintaining its people, as well. Quality time with the family, as part of an overall morale maintenance program, receives heavy command emphasis. Located in one of the most beautiful areas of Germany, the Command and its soldiers enjoy the four seasons and their accompanying recreational opportunities.

Another aspect of the Command’s maintenance of its people, is the history of success experienced by non commissioned and commissioned officers with service in the command. Pershing soldiers enjoy a high rate of selection for promotions, commands, and advanced military schooling.

It is this high quality of leadership, backed by highly disciplined and trained young Pershing soldiers that makes the Command a force to be reckoned with. History may someday note that potential aggressors had superior numbers of troops and equipment poised on or near the borders of our European allies, but was held in check because he dared not risk the consequences of an attack. The unfriendly force knew that Pershing soldiers were combat ready and could put one or more long-range missiles into flight within minutes. They knew also that these same units could perform their jobs with such proficiency that the accuracy and effect of the strike would be devastating — Pershing and the 56th Field Artillery Command are indeed Peacemakers.

For years the Russian Bear stalked the borders of Western Europe. It was huge, bold and aggressive, for behind it were the assembled armies of the USSR and its satellites. In numbers and firepower it seemed almost invincible; it appeared poised aggressively — challenging the western world.

In 1986, however, the Soviets were again seated at the bargaining table. Some of the bluster was gone. Many senior officials in the US and Europe credited the change to the fact that the 56th Field Artillery Command (Pershing) with a dual mission and chain of command. In peacetime, the 56th FA Command (Pershing) is manned and maintained by soldiers with a safe and efficient work environment and will aid the Command in maintaining the vast amounts of new equipment already received and on the way.

In addition to maintaining equipment, the Command is interested in maintaining its people, as well. Quality time with the family, as part of an overall morale maintenance program, receives heavy command emphasis. Located in one of the most beautiful areas of Germany, the Command and its soldiers enjoy the four seasons and their accompanying recreational opportunities.

Another aspect of the Command’s maintenance of its people, is the history of success experienced by non commissioned and commissioned officers with service in the command. Pershing soldiers enjoy a high rate of selection for promotions, commands, and advanced military schooling.

It is this high quality of leadership, backed by highly disciplined and trained young Pershing soldiers that makes the Command a force to be reckoned with. History may someday note that potential aggressors had superior numbers of troops and equipment poised on or near the borders of our European allies, but was held in check because he dared not risk the consequences of an attack. The unfriendly force knew that Pershing soldiers were combat ready and could put one or more long-range missiles into flight within minutes. They knew also that these same units could perform their jobs with such proficiency that the accuracy and effect of the strike would be devastating — Pershing and the 56th Field Artillery Command are indeed Peacemakers.
Training is key to combat readiness and receives high priority from the chain of command. A Pershing Platoon can expect to train 75 days a year in the field.

Keeping drivers safety conscious and able to drive their vehicles in all weather and conditions plays an important role in quick reaction and readiness.

Special training, like helicopter rappelling, help add a "little spice" to the already rigorous Pershing training schedule.
The 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment has special training in rear area combat and provides external security for the Command. Here, they dismount during from a transport vehicle during "Operation Web Foot".

The soldier spraying this Pershing vehicle is part of the Command’s Decontamination Platoon in Schwäbisch Gmünd. The platoon provides NBC support for all the Command’s units.

Training to Win

If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war. George Washington

Combat readiness, in its complete form, is a central theme comprised of four separate pieces. Training, discipline, maintenance and having fun are the four pieces, which when properly fitted combine to form a perfect picture of combat-ready soldiers.

Training, which is the first piece of the combat readiness puzzle, is sub-divided into individual and unit training. These subdivisions are further broken down into smaller, more detailed units, which give soldiers and their leaders more specific guidance in the quest for combat readiness.

In individual training, there is MOS training, weapons qualification, a German Language survival course called “Headstart” and several professional development courses for NCO’s and officers.

Unit training focuses on training to accomplish the mission. Tactical evaluations, Army Readiness Training Programs and convoys are elements used in training units to be at the peak of readiness at all times.

An intensive training program is conducted through which missile skills are maintained. All elements of the Command participate in numerous Field Training Exercises and a variety of Command Post Exercises. A Pershing Platoon can expect 75 days in the field.

Every member of the 56th Field Artillery Command is a piece of the combat readiness puzzle. Every piece has its’ place. When training is equally mixed with the other three ideals in the creation of combat readiness, the end result is a combat ready soldier, battery, command and Army that is capable of defending the world against the evil forces that threaten our way of life.

Medics rush to unload a simulated casualty during their annual Skillex. During the weeklong exercise, medics receive a refresher course in basic combat medical skills.

A soldier zeroes in with his weapon. Range qualifications with the M16A1, M60 and M203 and other skill qualification testing round out the Command’s complete training program.
56th practices practical philosophy

Ever ready to move, shoot, communicate

The soldier’s breath billowed visibly through the crisp autumn air as he checked the oil level of his vehicle. He was performing Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services, a "PMCS", familiar to most soldiers of 56th Field Artillery Command.

Keeping equipment operational is important. Keeping combat ready is what maintenance is all about. But readiness also involves people. And, so maintaining people is as important as keeping our vehicles running and our weapons ready to fire. The Army needs to keep good soldiers. That’s why re-enlistment is so important.

Soldiers need to have high morale in order to work together efficiently. In order to have high morale, the soldiers need to feel that their hard work and devotion to duty are appreciated. That’s why it’s important to ensure that deserving soldiers receive awards.

In 1986, from January to September, the soldiers of the command received over four thousand awards, including Army Achievement and Army Commendation Medals, as well as the High Performance and other incentive awards. The leadership of the 56th FA Command recognizes that soldiers need to grow professionally. As they gain experience, they are promoted to give them the chance to use it. Also, promotions help provide the necessary leadership that a command of 56th FA Command’s importance should have.

In order to have high morale, the soldier needs to feel that the Army cares about what’s important to him or her, such as his or her family and spiritual health. The soldier needs to feel that the Army and the command wants a whole, healthy soldier to help accomplish its mission. This command has a variety of programs designed to aid the family and spiritual growth of the soldier. Also, Pershing soldiers feel that they have equal opportunities to advance and improve. Each unit in the command has an equal opportunity representative.

All of these things are part of what keeps the command combat ready. Maintenance of the soldier, as well as the vehicle, weapon or tent is what makes the Army an effective deterrent to war.

As General George Washington said, "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace."
maintaining consistently nutritious and well-balanced meals for troops in garrison and in the field has earned these cooks awards from Brig. Gen. Raymond E. Haddock. It's their reward for long hours and devotion to duty. As the rank of Sergeant (upper right) is pinned on the collar of this soldier, he may be thinking of the extra money, but more probably he is pondering the increased responsibility that will be his as a newly promoted non-commissioned officer. Two soldiers of the command (below right), "raise their right hands" and repeat the words that will keep them in an Army that needs their experience and skills.
Discipline. The ability to stay in control of yourself and hang in when the going gets tough. This is the third component of combat readiness and is necessary for prompt, trustworthy actions in stressful situations.

Gen. John Vessey, Jr., the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., once said, "... Trust can be built only with discipline - organizational discipline that comes from such things as drill and ceremony as well as the self-discipline that comes from the ability to stand out there at attention or at ease, with the sweat running down your nose and the fly in your ear, and be able to stand at attention. Because in battle you'll have to do things that are a lot harder than that."

Soldiers of the 56th Command have found it necessary to demonstrate their discipline on many occasions as the command faced intense political pressures and the publicity which developed as a result of the NATO decision to field the Pershing II missile system in Europe. Despite overwhelming support by the German government and a majority of the German people, Pershing units at times have been the center of attention.

During 1985, they faced major demonstrations which drew more than 35,000 people to Command installations to protest the stationing of the missile. In order to provide adequate security, soldiers were required to provide an extra measure of dedication, stamina and discipline. Pershing soldiers have always acted professionally, and their control has earned the admiration of the German people and their leaders.

For the soldiers of the Command, discipline is enhanced through an aggressive physical training program which ensures that they maintain a high degree of physical and mental readiness. The goal of the Army PT program is to motivate soldiers to incorporate fitness into their lifestyles. Within the 56th Command, this goal has been met with many soldiers making the time to train for individual competition in VII Corps, USA-REUR and All Army-level events, a testimony to their mental and physical toughness.

Units meeting the Fit-To-Fight criteria are awarded the Fit-To-Fight guidon and must re-earn it every six months. Command soldiers also demonstrate their tenacity and preserve unit cohesion in the extra-curricular activities in which they choose to participate.

Batteries in the command regularly take part in events that push their soldiers to the limits of endurance and challenge them to keep going when they feel ready to give in. One such event is the Hohenstaufen Military Run - a yearly military triathlon which requires the soldier to fire an M16, fire a German pistol and run 25 kilometers wearing combat boots and 16-pound-rucksack.

Another event is the Annual Schweizerischer Two-Day March in which the participants are required to march across 60 kilometers of mountainous Swiss countryside. All that is done in the command is directed towards achieving combat readiness. Chief among the principles of readiness is discipline, because "in battle you'll have to do things a lot harder..."
Command soldiers show their spirit on day one of an annual two-day Swiss march (left). Despite blisters and sore muscles, Command soldiers completed the grueling, 60-kilometer event. A 56th Command soldier from the Heilbronn community makes a hasty change from biking shoes to running shoes during the VII Corps Triathlon (below left). The mental and physical toughness required to complete the triathlon characterizes the spirit of the Pershing soldier. That toughness is maintained by an aggressive, controlled physical training program (below).

Pershing units stand ready during a Pass in Review. Individual discipline leads to organizational discipline, just as individual combat readiness contributes to a unit's combat readiness.
A ski weekend at a resort may be just the thing to lighten the pressures of the heavy Army work load. Soldiers from the command often travel to Garmisch and other European resorts to catch the best of the ski season.

You got to have FUN!

The 56th Field Artillery Command believes that part of being a soldier – a combat ready soldier – is allowing yourself some time to sit back and relax. Taking the time to let off some steam after a hard day, week, or month, helps you to cope with the everyday pressures of your job, and makes you a more efficient and productive soldier.

Here in the Command, emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for the soldiers stationed with Pershing units to have fun. "Having Fun," therefore, is one of the four principles of Combat Readiness.

Winter

What better time and place to take advantage of excellent skiing conditions? Many slopes are within an hour's drive and the Alps are only a train-ride away. Don't miss out on sleigh-rides, tobogganing and ice-skating during this festive season.

Christmas doesn't have to be spent alone at the barracks, or outside in the cold, however. There is a popular Command program that allows a soldier to spend the holidays with a German family, which is happy to share their hearth and take in a hungry and homesick soldier.

Fasching, a German holiday celebrated every year early in February and until Lent is marked by numerous parties and parades winding through cities, and spreading good cheer and confetti on the crowds of people lining the roads.

Spring

Spring brings renewed interest in nature and a one of the favorite ways for Germans to commune with nature is through volks-marching, or "people's walk". A volksmarch can cover short or long distances, and usually a medal is awarded to the participants who finish the march.

Of course, a soldier can always find ways to unwind and have fun on post. At the Recreation Center he can make use of tools, materials and work space for arts and crafts. He can sign out musical instruments and reserve photo labs, visit game rooms or play billiards. Rec Centers are also a soldiers contact for upcoming special events and activities happening throughout Germany. Rec Centers can help you get tickets to concerts by your favorite bands and special rates which include a bus ride the night of the show.

The commands' athletes soar to new heights when given the chance to excel in sports programs and special events, like the Annual Command Olympics.

Summer

During the Summer months a good way of cooling down is by visiting the public swimming areas called Schwimmbads, where there are lifeguards on duty. Visiting one of Germany's many beautiful lakes to picnic or do some smooth sailing is a great way to get away for a weekend, after checking to make sure the lake is designated safe and is a non-restricted area.

Bowling alleys, and the enlisted and officers clubs are places where family and friends can get together at the end of the day. After hours, some exercise at the gym will work out the kinks in tense muscles.

All year long the command offers superb sports programs for those who are interested in basketball, softball, football, or volleyball. At the end of each sports season, battalion teams within the command compete to see which of them is the best.

During Fasching (above) it's not uncommon to see Germans and Americans alike "clowning around". Fasching is after all a time to celebrate and have a good time. Organization Days (right) are more than a fun day off, they're a chance to meet with other soldiers within the Battalion, and their families. Soldiers find that friendly rivalries bring them closer together.
Soldiers of the command share good times and adventures, proving that cohesion and old fashioned teamwork really can help them get through those turbulent times.

From time to time soldiers can take part in the adventures of rappelling or river rafting. Partnership events, where soldiers from the American Army can get together with their German counterparts for training and competition, is another opportunity for fun, which is both enjoyable and rewarding. Meeting the German people and getting to know a little about their country through groups like Kontakts, a German/American fellowship program, is one way of making your stay here a more rewarding experience.

Locally there are memorable sites that speak for the grandeur and rich German history. The 56th Field Artillery Command encourages its' soldiers to get out and explore all that Germany has to offer.

Fall

Perhaps the most famous of all of Germany's celebrations is the October Fest in Munich. The October Fest is one of the grandest festivals of the year, entertaining hundreds of thousands of visitors to Germany. Smaller fest are enjoyed by residents of almost every small and large town at about the same time throughout the harvest season.

During the harvest months, German farmers are more than willing to take on a hired hand for a week, thanks to the command sponsored Farm Help Program. Both farmer and soldier gain from the learning experience and exchange of culture, while working side by side.

There's plenty to do in Germany, and even more to do in all of Europe. This command encourages its' soldiers to explore all the possibilities for having fun here. Whether the choice is travel, a challenger or adventure, or just rest and relaxation, it's a possibility when stationed with the 56th Field Artillery Command.

German/American fests (right), promote good relations, and allow soldiers to spend quality time with their families. Amusement rides, carnival games and live musical entertainment make for enjoyable, fun-filled days in Germany.