

**Maj. Gen. Pat White, 1st  
AD and Fort Bliss  
Commanding General**  
Fort Bliss, Texas



**This is Fort Bliss**  
Home of America's Armored  
Division

## 1st AD civil affairs works on real-world relationships

By Abigail Meyer, Fort Bliss Bugle Staff:

(El Paso, Texas, Jan 5, 2017) Military units train to stay ready for any mission they're given. The 1st Armored Division headquarters staff recently conducted a full-scale field exercise called Iron Forge 17.1 to test their command post capabilities here Dec. 3 through Dec. 7, 2016.

The U.S. has missions around the globe, and the role the U.S. military plays in each of those missions varies. On the ground, the military often works with other entities. In the spirit of training as they fight, the 1st Armored Division civil affairs team invited a nongovernmental organization, Spirit of America, and representatives from the U.S. State Department to participate in the exercise and simulate how they would work together on real-world missions.



*Christopher VanJohnson, center, project manager-Africa, Spirit of America, works with local nationals in Niger in 2015. Courtesy Photos.*

"Exercising our relationships, exercising how we would interact, how we would plan to do things here state-side is certainly beneficial for muscle memory for when we do deploy to different areas of the world," said Maj. Christopher Evans, 1st Armored Division civil affairs. "That really is primarily the relationship here in this type of exercise."

The Army interacts with many different intragovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Spirit of America, an Arlington, Virginia-based, privately-funded organization has worked with the U.S. in more than 40 countries.

"Our sole mission as an organization is to fill in the mission-critical gaps where government resources cannot be applied in order to get after specific effects on the battlefield," said Isaac Eagan, vice president-operations, Spirit of America. "So we provide some measure of humanitarian economic development and or nonlethal assistance in response to local needs that have been identified by deployed personnel."

The NGO works with the military to apply pinpoint assistance to achieve specific effects.



*From left, Brig. Gen. Frazer Lawrence, deputy commanding general-operations, 1st Armored Division and Fort Bliss, speaks with Isaac Eagan, vice president-operations, Spirit of America, and Christopher VanJohnson, project manager-Africa, Spirit of America, during exercise Iron Forge 17.1 here Dec. 5, 2016.*

"What's unique about this organization is the agility and flexibility of funding," Evans said. "A lot of times government organizations program funding for certain things for years out and budget for it and then contingency operations will often find us without the authority to spend money that we haven't budgeted for."

The U.S. has been involved in significant global missions for decades, and Evans said over the course of this time, they've learned that better integration, more coordination and collaboration early on often results in a more seamless approach to many of the problem sets. Iron Forge provided a time to exercise how that type of interaction works. This is the first time the division brought in an NGO such as Spirit of America to participate in an exercise.

"The idea here is that we talk with the division as they go through their initial planning to figure out if down the road there are ways that we can be mutually supportive in a global environment," Evans said. "That relationship piece has already been developed and in one another's thought processes so that troops as they go downrange have an additional tool in their toolkit."

Iron Forge 17.1 validated the division staff's function, ensuring they are ready for any future missions.



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