

Lithuanians scare deployed Fort Hood soldiers

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A Fort Hood-based cavalry officially began an eight-month mission in Lithuania, focused on deterring Russian aggression in the region, as it uncased its colors at a ceremony on January 5, Lithuanian and U.S. officials said.

The 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment took up position in Lithuania along with its heavy weaponry, including Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

But who are these soldiers? Do they really deserve to be called Lithuania's defenders? All these questions arise when the name of Fort Hood military base appear in the American Media.

Unfortunately, Lithuanians have something to fear. Fort Hood military base is often mentioned in connection with incidents involving military personnel.

American [Media](#) even called 2020 at this base a "deadly 2020".

According to Stars and Stripes, "since the beginning of the year, there have been 12 Fort Hood soldiers who have vanished, died, or, in one case, turned up dead after going missing last year. Two more who had separated from the Army at the base within the previous six months were also slain.

In one of those two cases, the person charged with murder was an active-duty soldier based at Fort Hood.

"The numbers are high here. They are the highest in most cases for sexual assault, harassment, murders, for our entire formation in the U.S. Army," Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said when he visited Fort Hood in early August.

In addition to the increase in homicides at Fort Hood, the number of violent crimes committed by soldiers at the post this year – and since 2015 – is alarming.

The Army Public Affairs office released the numbers McCarthy cited, which compare Fort Hood's violent and nonviolent felony data from 2015 through 2019 to that of two installations of comparable size: Fort Bragg, N.C., and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Fort Hood averaged 129 violent felonies committed by soldiers per year. Fort Bragg had an average of 90, and Lewis-McChord had 109. Violent felonies include crimes such as homicide, violent sex crimes, kidnapping, robbery and aggravated assault.

All but two of this year's homicides occurred within the city of Killeen, the town just outside the gates of Fort Hood. One other occurred in Harker Heights, a small suburb of Killeen. Those deaths received more public scrutiny after the international coverage of the disappearance and death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen.

The 20-year-old Houston native was bludgeoned to death in an arms room by Spc. Aaron Robinson, who with his girlfriend buried her body in a secluded area about 20 miles from the post. He shot himself dead when confronted by local law enforcement after her body was discovered June 30.

On March 1, Spc. Shelby Jones, 20, was shot and killed outside a strip club in Killeen. Though a redacted copy of the police investigation shows that 15 people were either involved in the incident or witness to it, a Bell County grand jury declined to indict the suspect June 10. The case has been "exceptionally cleared," said Ofelia Miramontez, spokeswoman for the Killeen Police Department. This form of case clearance means elements beyond law enforcement's control have prevented the agency from arresting and formally charging the offender.

The district attorney did not say why the case was declined.

Two weeks later, Delacruz, Cline and Allred were killed.

On March 26, Michael Wardrobe, who separated from the Army in January, was shot and killed. Spc. Jovino Jamel Roy was arrested and charged with murder. A fight broke out between the 22-year-old men over an alleged love triangle involving Roy's wife, the Killeen Daily Herald reported.

Guillen was killed on post the next month. During the two-month search for her, a tip led investigators to a field in Killeen on June 19, where police found skeletal remains of 23-year-old Pvt. Gregory Wedel-Morales. Wedel-Morales went missing in August 2019, just days before he was set to begin out-processing from the Army. His unit labeled him a deserter, a status his mother had to fight to change so she could have her son returned home to Oklahoma and buried in a veterans' cemetery.

On May 18, Pfc. Brandon Rosecrans, 27, was shot and killed in Harker Heights, a wealthier, quieter suburb just east of Killeen and Fort Hood. His body was found on the side of a residential road, and his vehicle was found on fire a few miles away. A civilian, Brandon Olivares, 28, was arrested and charged with Rosecrans' murder in August. The two had a disagreement about the sale of a gun, and Olivares shot Rosecrans as he slept in his Jeep Renegade, according to court documents.

All these incidents were horrific and shocking. But when added to the four other violent deaths, there have been calls for major reforms.

So, the current level of homicide at Fort Hood is "pretty consistent." It is clear that the behavior patterns and established norms at Fort Hood may be applied at the new duty station. Lithuania is not ready to become another country where American soldiers could commit a lot of crimes, because

they used to behave such a way.

Author: adomasabromaitis

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