

# Bradley Maintenance NCO Goes the Extra Mile

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It's not often that a staff sergeant serves as the logistics lead during a deployment, but that is exactly what Staff Sgt. Christopher Nemier, a 1st Cavalry Division Soldier, did in Lithuania during Operation Atlantic Resolve.

While on deployment in Rukla, Lithuania, Nemier, a Bradley fighting vehicle maintenance supervisor attached to B Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, created the standard operating procedures for logistics operations within the country and helped the Lithuanian military develop a maintenance program, all while training and mentoring his Soldiers in the motor pool.

“He had to run and plan all of the logistics for everything we did in that country as far as maintaining supplies for the training missions – ammunition and fuel, allocating maintenance support and getting parts. He would take care of all of that later in the day, and during the workday he would be with all the rest of us in the motor pool,” said Sgt. Jordan Gassie, who was Nemier’s shop foreman in Lithuania. “He had three Soldiers, some brand new to the Army, and he made time to train them, as well as the vehicle operators, up to his own high standards.”



Upon his return from deployment in December 2014, Nemier was recognized by Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, vice chief of staff of the Army, for the work he did with the Lithuanians and for excelling in mission command.

“I told Gen. Allyn that the success of any leader is because of the Soldiers he commands,” Nemier said. “Was I successful? Yes. Did I go above and beyond the aspects of my duty position? Yes. Because my other NCOs allotted me that time. They went above and beyond as well. I even had PFCs stepping up, because they saw what I was doing and knew why I was doing it.”

## New place, new SOPs

Atlantic Resolve, led by U.S Army Europe, is a combined arms exercise taking place throughout Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to enhance multinational interoperability, strengthen relationships among allied militaries, contribute to regional stability and demonstrate the United States’ commitment to NATO.

Nemier’s unit was the first to bring Bradleys into Lithuania, and as such, faced numerous challenges. One of those challenges was moving vehicles and equipment on Baltic trains, which are a different size than what the Soldiers are used to. Nemier worked with Lithuanian logistics officers and the Corps of Engineers from USAREUR to determine the best method for loading and unloading the vehicles, and the maintenance and logistics SOPs he put in place have paved the way for continued mission success. The division has adapted them for American Soldiers to use in Latvia, Estonia and Poland. Because Atlantic Resolve is an ongoing operation, units are still utilizing those SOPs – adding to them and adapting them as needed – long after Nemier’s departure.



“Normally I would place an officer as the leader of a forward logistics element, but with Nemier’s experience and his wealth of knowledge, he was the easy choice to make,” said Cpt. Jeremy Hunter, commander of J Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, which is Nemier’s unit at Fort Hood. “Staff Sgt. Nemier had a lot more experience than the lieutenants I considered, and he had proved that he could not only lead the Soldiers in there but think critically and creatively to solve any of the issues that would come up in a theater that really hasn’t been developed. Lithuania has a smaller army, and I knew he would work closely with his Lithuanian counterparts to really accomplish the goal – to ensure them that the United States is with them, but also to deter the Russian aggression at that point. I had full confidence that he could take a team that we created, lead them and really take that mission and accomplish it without me having to give him direct guidance every day.”

Hunter said he values NCOs, such as Nemier, who show initiative.

“A good NCO will take the mission provided, find the shortfalls within that mission and point them out,” Hunter said. “What makes Nemier stand above the rest is that not only does he point out those shortfalls, but he comes up with solutions and presents them as well to other leaders.”

### **Working with Lithuanians**

The Lithuanian military is very new, Nemier explained. The country didn’t join the European Union until 2004. Its soldiers are in a vulnerable situation and hungry for information.

Some of the daily procedures and common precautions performed by U.S. Soldiers are not even considered in the Baltic countries, he said. For example, the Lithuanians were not prepared to deal with the environmental impact of moving equipment and using it in the field. If a humvee started leaking oil, for example, they would just let it leak. But when Nemier’s unit began showing them the proper way to dispose of the waste, they were eager to learn. Nemier and his team dug up the contaminated soil and showed the Lithuanian soldiers how to build drip pans from boxes and plastic liners. Nemier guided them in creating a hazardous material SOP based on European Union and NATO standards, and that same month, the country passed an inspection for the first time since joining the EU.



Nemier met with members of the Lithuanian Department of Defense, sharing what he could to strengthen the army.

“We were humble when we went in, and they responded very well, because they could see we wanted to set them up for success,” Nemier said. “They still hit me up on email with

mechanical questions. It's a friendship. It really is."

Nemier also struck up a friendship with the Lithuanian motor sergeant who shared the motor pool with his team. Through broken English and Google Translate, they worked well together and still keep in touch.

The language barrier made everything more difficult, Nemier said, but it taught them patience.

"It forced us to be patient," he said. "I would teach something on a Bradley, and I would have to go over it 10 times. I had to adjust my leadership style and, as an NCO, you have to be flexible like that. One leadership style is not going to work for 'Joe A' and 'Joe B.' We struggled for the first couple of weeks, but we figured it out. I think it really made us better leaders."

### **Working with Soldiers**

Nemier said he always knew patience was an important trait in a good NCO, but working with foreign soldiers really drove the point home. Now, he strives to have even more patience with his Soldiers at Fort Hood.

"Patience is so important," Nemier said.

"NCOs need to figure out what the problem is before jumping to conclusions or freaking out. Find out what the problem is and try to come up with solutions. ... I don't scream and yell. I'll do the 4857 – the counseling form and the paperwork – that is without a doubt, and they will be held accountable for their actions. But, especially a young Soldier who has never experienced anything this major before, I want to show him or her that though they are



just a small pebble in a pond, they can create a ripple and affect the entire shoreline. You lose a Brad, you lose a wingman. You lose a flanking position. You lose an infantry squad. So what they do here in the motor pool is important. I want to help young Soldiers see that they can affect the entire pond."

Helping Soldiers understand the importance of their work and how they fit into the big picture is a huge motivator, Nemier said.

"If I tell Joe to go over there and fix that Bradley, he is going to go over there and fix that Bradley," he said. "But he doesn't know why. ... Because it's broken? But, if I say, 'Hey, you need to go over and fix that Bradley because we are getting ready to go shoot gunnery, and we want the Bradleys to be ready to go for the infantry guys so they don't get hurt while they are rolling out to the ranges,' I've just motivated that Soldier. He now knows what his work is affecting in the near future."

Gassie said he appreciated Nemier's honesty and the time he took to explain each task to his Soldiers.

"Across the board, he is fair and straightforward, whether you are a subordinate, a peer or a superior. He will give you a straight answer," Gassie said. "And when he describes a maintenance task or a Soldier skill, it's never 'Do this because I say so.' Even if he is turning a wrench on something himself, he is explaining to everyone the exact purpose of what he is doing, the reason why he is doing it, the system it is part of, how it works, why you do it in a particular order. ... He makes everything into a lesson to help the Soldiers learn to make informed decisions on their own."

Hunter said a good NCO is one who, like Nemier – now attending the Senior Leader course at Fort Lee, Virginia – always strives to better himself and remains dedicated to every aspect of his Soldiers' development.

"Staff Sgt. Nemier has continually pushed himself to learn more and more within his MOS and has also taken time to teach his Soldiers – some of them brand new out of basic training and Advanced Individual Training – so they can also become experts in their field. Above that, he is continually taking the time to develop them into complete Soldiers – really showing them how to succeed, not only in the Army, but in life as well."