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Left, a Pond Academy instructor, far left, and two security guard trainees take aim at a 25-meter target at the academy's underground shooting range at the Pond Academy complex in Freigericht-Bernbach. Trainees undergo three-and-a-half weeks of training to become certified security officers for Army installations in Germany. Below, Pond Academy trainees practice a scenario of taking down a driver suspected of having an explosive device in his vehicle during a situational training exercise at the academy in Jan. 24. The 1,900 square meter complex was built in 2004 but Pond guards have been working security for U.S. forces since 1983.

Pond guards train to protect U.S. forces in Germany

By Sgt. Fabian Ortega
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Chances are if you live or work on U.S. military installation in Germany you have come across Pond security guards.

They have been around since 1983 when former U.S. service member Daniel Pond established his security company of just 12 employees.

"Daniel Pond saw a need for a personalized security company and filled that need," said Lori Pond, managing director of the Pond Academy.

"Mr. Pond and many of his managers and employees are former Soldiers, and a Soldier is always a Soldier even after they leave the military. Because of this, it is almost like providing protection for our own family," she said.

Pond Securities has since expanded and has built an academy to train the security officers for U.S. installations in Germany.

The Pond Academy, built in 2004, houses security trainees who eat, sleep and train there for three-and-a-half weeks while they attend the program that certifies them as security guards.

The director of the academy said there were two reasons for building the training facility.

"It's a place to train our se-

curity officers in the method and procedures that they must know and allows for better control on the quality and type of training our security officers receive," she said.

At the academy trainees learn everything from German law enforcement procedures to marksmanship, and also receive specialized training required by U.S. Army Europe.

The staff is made up of current and former security guards from the company.

The program's structure produces well-rounded security officers, said Manfred G. Weirling, the Pond Academy chief of staff.

"There are strict German and U.S. government contractual requirements that dictate the amount of training that each security officer must successfully accomplish," he said.

The 1,900 square-meter complex in Freigericht-Bernbach contains living-quarters, two dining areas, classrooms, an auditorium and underground shooting range.

Future security guards who attend the academy can expect to find that being a security officer with Pond means business, said Weirling.

"When they come (to the academy) some of the trainees have piercings or wild hair styles," he said. "When

they graduate and become security officers, they are completely different."

The trainees' grooming is not the only thing that changes. During their time at the academy, trainees eat a steady diet of healthy foods prepared by a caterer. This, plus a regular physical training regimen, helps some trainees drop a pant size or two.

"Our security officers must be mentally and physically prepared to fulfill every task they are given," Weirling said.

After graduation, guards fresh out of the academy are paired with experienced partners for some on-the-job-training.

After the follow-on training at their site, the security guards officially become members of their team.

Nicole Gruenbein, who's been with Pond Security three years, likes to think the job provides a sense of fulfillment.

"A smile from customers at the gate is what makes our job rewarding," she said.

Experienced officers like Gruenbein often return to the academy for additional managerial or special skill-training.

The training helps security guards stay up-to-date with always-changing security concerns in their communi-



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ties, she explained.

"The classroom-training teaches more in-depth law, communications, health and environment and the usage of safety and security techniques," Gruenbein said.

Dogan Kok, a Pond security guard in Heidelberg for 12 years, said he has developed many friendships

with Baden-Württemberg military community over the years.

"After 12 years, the Army has become my family," he said. "The community has given me so much."

With installations in Baden-Württemberg closing down, Kok said it will be difficult to see them go.