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**BAYERN, GERMANY**

**04.27.2025**

**Story by Lacey Justinger** 

**7th Army Training Command**  

LANDSBERG, Germany – U.S. Seventh Army units crossed the Lech River and liberated the Kaufering Concentration Camp complex on April 27, 1945.

Eighty years later, April 27, 2025, U.S. Army Soldiers wearing the historic 7th Army Training Command patch again walked the grounds of the Kaufering VII Memorial site.

"Your presence builds a living bridge to the past," said Gabriele Triebel, Kaufering Memorial Foundation president, in English, while addressing the U.S. troops and camp survivors' children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who sat amongst a mostly German-speaking crowd. "The memories and family stories you bring are precious testimonies – gifts – from the past that guide us and enrich us for the future."

Soldiers assigned to 7ATC's Joint Multinational Readiness Center served as the color guard during the anniversary ceremony held on Kaufering's historical site, the only location in Germany with original prisoner barracks still intact and preserved.

"It is my great honor, and incredibly humbling, to be here representing the U.S. military and our Allies in Europe," said Col. Christopher Kirkpatrick, JMRC commander. "Here today, 80 years to the day, we remember the bravery, sacrifice and heroism of everyday citizens during World War II, and how those continue to resonate with nations around the world who are committed to global peace and security."

Kirkpatrick explained to the crowd that the Seventh Army patch Soldiers wore while battling and liberating everyday people from oppression in 1945 is the same patch that could be seen on the left shoulders of himself, Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Donaldson and JMRC's 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment Soldiers who stood in formation during the ceremony.

"Seventh Army's divisions and battalions liberated the Dachau complex in the last week of April 1945, including more than 10 of the Kaufering subcamps on the 27th of April; 80 years ago," he said, adding that current 7ATC Soldiers carry that legacy.

"Time and time again, valiant men and women of all backgrounds, races and faiths unite to defend shared ideas – those of liberty, freedom, peace and human dignity. These values remain constant from generation to generation," he said.

"It is important to carry forward the legacy that freedom cannot be enjoyed unless free people are prepared to stand and defend it."

Kaufering complex was built in Sept. 1944 for forced labor, had about 23,000 prisoners, 95 percent of whom were Jewish, and was also the only mixed gender camp. Local citizens raised the funds to purchase and preserve the current memorial site that is one third the size of its original footprint.

"Eighty years ago, American troops passed these gates – where we are standing right now – finding the survivors, helping them and liberating these people," said Christopher Vila, secretary of Lagergemeinschaft Dachau der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V. (Association of Dachau Victims and their families), and member of the Kaufering Memorial – Gedenkstätte Lager VII executive committee.



Rene Manu's father was a Kaufering survivor, the only one from his Greek family who survived. In January 1945, he survived a death march to Kaufering camp I, and on April 27, 1945, he was liberated.

"Without the U.S. Army, my father would have died and I would not exist," he says, showing a cactus tattoo he has in honor of the U.S. Army 103rd Infantry "Cactus" Division. "All the time, I am thankful."

"To representatives of the U.S. Army, thank you for coming here today," said Talya Lador-Fresher, Consul General of the State of Israel for Southern Germany, "and even more so, thank you for coming here 80 years ago."

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