Volume 3, No. 30

Friday, July 25, 1997

THE TALON

Operation Joint Guard, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Serving the soldiers of Task Force Eagle

Building Bridges

See BRIDGES page 12

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Pfc. Lucien Frechette, a heavy equipment operator for 1st Platoon, Company A, 82nd Engineer Battalion, levels dirt near a recently completed Armored Vehicle Launch Bridge using a Small Equipment Excavator Truck.

Photo by Spc. Susanne Aspley

Did you know?

Armadillos are the only animal besides humans that get leprosy.

To escape the grip of a crocodile's jaws, push your thumbs into its eyeballs — it will let you go instantly.

If you toss a penny 10,000 times, it will not be heads 5,000 times, but more like 4,950. The heads picture weighs more, so it ends up on the bottom.

The glue on Israeli postage stamps is certified kosher.

Los Angeles' original name was "El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciuncula."

Only one person in two billion will live to be 116 or older.

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

The company that makes Ben and Jerry's ice cream sends the waste from making ice cream to local pig farmers to use as feed. Pigs love the stuff, except for one flavor: Mint Oreo.

Al Capone's business card said he was a used furniture dealer.

The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.

Wilma Flintstone's maiden name was Wilma Slaghoopal, and Betty Rubble's maiden name was Betty Jean McBricker.

A pregnant goldfish is called a twit.

111,111,111 x 111,111,111 = 12,345,678,987,654,321

The Ramses brand condom is named after the great pharaoh Ramses II who fathered over 160 children.

If NASA sent birds into space they would soon die; they need gravity to swallow.

Dueling is legal in Paraguay as long as both parties are registered blood donors.

Up Front -- Risk Management

In the aftermath of a fatal vehicle accident and in the wake of increased situation awareness, we all *must* start doing a better job assessing risks associated with our assigned missions/tasks. Risk management is a tool, a thinking process. It's an orderly way for commanders and other leaders to look at very complex situations and make appropriate decisions. It's also a tool soldiers themselves *can* and *must* take and apply to everything they do. In fact, the most important part of risk management is the actual execution of the mission. And that's where soldiers come in. Risk management gets people thinking about what can go wrong and what they can do about it. More to come in the next two columns. See you up front!

Command Sgt. Maj. S.L. Kaminski
1st Infantry Division (Forward)

Risk Management

We have spent the past several weeks talking about the benefits of a good safety program. Keeping soldiers healthy and fit to fight should be the primary focus of any good program. But there is another dimension that needs to be addressed as well. Risk management with respect to our military equipment is important as well.

An effective Bradley Fighting Vehicle crew does not happen overnight. You guys in the Bradleys train repeatedly in crew drills, gunnery tables, different tactical scenarios, etc. The team trains together with their vehicle until they are capable of reacting to any given situation. This increases the overall combat effectiveness of their unit. If any component of this three-man, one-machine team becomes inoperative, the whole unit suffers.

Consider the maintenance of the vehicle. Are all the checks and services being done on time and by the book? Think about the last time the vehicle was rail loaded. Was it done properly? Were all the safety devices in place? Think about the last time you and your crew put the Bradley through its paces on a "thunder" or "demon" run. Were any operational limitations exceeded? If we lose or damage the vehicle because of any of these factors, do we have an effective weapon system? The best crew in the world can't do much without a vehicle with which to work.

When planning your next mission, do not forget limitations. There are several sets of limitations to consider. The personal limitations of you and your crew must be accounted for. How well trained is the new guy? How hot is it today? What about the limitations of the vehicle? Can't think of any? How about the limitations of the environment considering the roads and bridges you will be traveling and the weight and width of the Bradley? Did you do a good map recon of the route using your unit's new hazards map? Do you know in what areas you should *anticipate* problems so you can be *prepared* for them? Remember, safety is not accidental. Failing to plan is the same as planning to fail.

Maj. Gary R. Spegal, 1st Infantry Division Safety Office

The Talon

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Read and pass along -- a Talon is a terrible thing to waste

"Unscared" of the dark

Photo by Spc. Susanne Aspley

Spc. Danny Sullivan, mechanized infantryman, 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force 1-41 sets up an antenna during a night patrol at Observation Point Egypt.

By Spc. Susanne Aspley
364th MPAD

CAMP DEMI — On the top of Observation Point Egypt, dusk quickly fades to black. A convoy from 1st Platoon, Company A, Task Force 1-41 pulls into place. Security guards are posted and within minutes an OE254 antenna is set up underneath the glow of a half moon. For the next six hours, the soldiers watch and wait.

"Peacekeeping is not a 9-5 job. Our night patrols maintain the SFOR (Stabilization Force) presence at all times," said 2nd Lt. John Harkins, 1st Plt. leader, Co. A.

Headlights from passing cars on the nearby road poke through the dark. "If someone were to do something illegal, it would more than likely be at night," said Spc. Danny Sullivan, 22, Shepherdsville, Ky. "We don't have a routine as to when we go out or when we change between day and night patrols, we just stay unpredictable."

Besides monitoring movement from the rocky hilltop, the unit also uses the vantage point as an opportune place to set up the OE254 antenna as a radio retransmission point in the mountains, said Cpl. Shane Hovey. This night, another team from Co. A is conducting a mounted patrol in the area and loss of contact could be dangerous. "With the antenna, they will have constant commo with Alpha Headquarters at Camp Demi," said the 24-year-old Maquoketa, Iowa native. "Communication is an important part of our force protection."

Suddenly, a car on the road pulls to the side and the soldiers freeze. The translator approaches the vehicle as the soldiers listen to the voices and observe quietly. And wait. After a short conversation, the translator says the people stopped because of a slight problem with their vehicle. The car pulls away and peace returns.

"I like doing night patrols better — it's cooler out and a change of pace. And I actually feel safer driving on these roads at night because there is less traffic," said Hovey.

According to Harkins, this midnight patrol is considered a light mission. The mechanized infantrymen of the 1st Armor Division also perform reconnaissance missions throughout the day. Compliance checkpoints and weapons storage site inspections are conducted throughout the rugged region surrounding Camp Demi.

Besides patrolling the region, the Fort Riley, Kan., soldiers also act as a liaison between the factions. This includes monitoring the factions as they weapons train. "But ensuring the compliance with the General Framework of Peace (GFAP) remains the backbone to our overall mission in Bosnia," said Harkins, a Desert Storm vet from Miami, Okla. "Hands down, we are the most disciplined unit in Task Force 1-41. And that has been verified by the battalion commander."

On this Saturday night, the conversations in the dark turned to misspelled tattoos. One particular private had gone to Budapest on pass recently and gotten a tattoo. The tattoo was supposed to read "unscarred," and look like a tattoo the lead singer for Pantera has. Unfortunately, the tattoo artist misspelled unscarred, and the private now has "unscared" tattooed across his stomach in three-inch-high letters. Fortunately, this tattoo fits the private even better than the intended tattoo would have -- the private, and his platoon, are definitely "unscared."

Info briefs

Proactive EO

An effective Equal Opportunity Program is one in which commanders take a positive, proactive approach. This includes posting EO policies stating your standards and expectations for leaders and soldiers, conducting dynamic EO training which involves the chain of command leading discussions, showing vigorous leadership support, and conducting unit assessments. The Equal Opportunity Program is only as good as the efforts and support of those commanders.

As the 1st Infantry Division (Forward) Equal Opportunity advisors, we are there to support and assist all commanders on all formal and informal equal opportunity complaints.

We can be reached at Building 16, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st ID (Fwd) or by phone at MSE 555-6969.

Sgt. 1st Class Darryle Burton
Sgt. 1st Class Michael Blue

U.S. soldier dies

A U.S. soldier died and another one was injured July 15 as the result of a vehicle accident North of Donjivakuf in the Multinational Division-Southwest area of operation.

Spc. Jeremy S. Brown, 22, was pronounced dead at 11:19 a.m. by British medical personnel at Sipovo medical hospital.

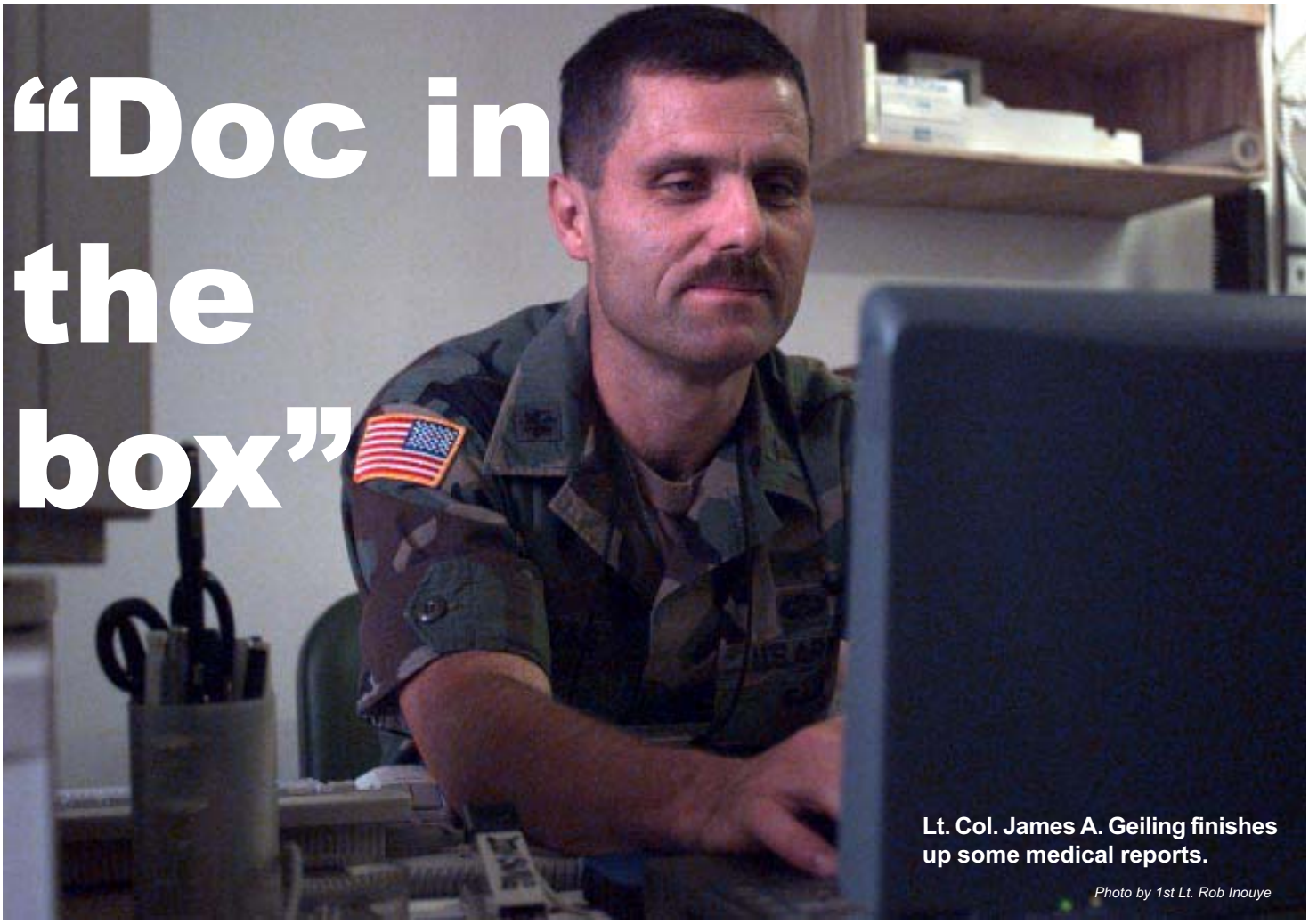
Spc. James S. Eastman suffered multiple injuries and received medical treatment at Sipovo hospital. Eastman was later evacuated by air to the 405th Combat Support Hospital for definitive care. Both soldiers are with the Allied Military Intelligence Battalion from Sarajevo and were enroute from Banja Luka to Sarajevo when the accident occurred.

In an unrelated incident, a U.S. soldier was injured Monday afternoon when a five-ton truck rolled off an embankment near Guardian Base.

TFE webpage

Check out the latest changes to the Task Force Eagle webpage and letters of encouragement from families and friends around the world at: www.1id.army.mil

"Doc in the box"



Lt. Col. James A. Geiling finishes up some medical reports.

Photo by 1st Lt. Rob Inouye

By Sgt. Steven Collins
129th MPAD

EAGLE BASE – Lt. Col. James A. Geiling is a doctor specializing in internal medicine, with a subspecialty in critical care. But that did not prepare him for a surprise he received one day.

"A farmer in the Demi area wanted us to help him determine if his cow had rabies and we agreed to help out," said Geiling, who departed Bosnia-Herzegovina this week after serving as surgeon for the 1st Infantry Division. "So we received the cow's head in a bag. It was definitely a unique experience. Turns out the cow had rabies."

Dealing with the head of a rabid cow was one of a few experiences Geiling will remember as he reports to his next duty station. Geiling left Bosnia-Herzegovina to join the staff at the Uniform Services University of the Health Services at Bethesda, Md., where he attended medical school.

Geiling, a 19-year veteran of the Army, has spent the better part of the last decade in Germany. Operation Joint Guard was his first deployment.

"It is somewhat like I expected, analogous to other operations. There has been much about the deployment that has been tedious and repetitious, but it is like any medical assignment, 90 percent boredom and 10 percent terror," said Geiling.

As division surgeon, Geiling was the principal medical advisor to the commanding general, a staff officer who oversaw all medical operations in the division. Geiling provided technical oversight to medical operations. He was also responsible for developing and implementing programs for preventative medicine, as well as overseeing mental health care, dental care, and optometric care.

Many of Geiling's duties as division surgeon did not relate to his skills as a doctor. The division surgeon must serve as a liaison between the 1st Infantry Division and higher corps assets, which support the division's mission.

Because he is a doctor, Geiling also provided personal service to some of his colleagues in the Task Force Eagle headquarters. Ailing soldiers would come to him looking for advice.

"I guess I was the local 'doc in the box'," said Geiling. "It seemed that everyone would come to me looking for a diagnosis or a cure to their aches and pains."

Operations like this peacekeeping mission offer military medical specialists a chance to get a glimpse of the future, said Geiling. Telemedicine -- the ability to use technology such as video teleconferencing, satellite technology and computer assets to help treat patients -- is a new technology being tested here.

"We've also been quite successful in our preventive medicine efforts," said Geiling. "Our record here has been excellent when you compare it to other peacekeeping operations. We are in excellent health as a whole and that is attributable to the actions that we've been working on."

Preventative medicine can be directed by the division surgeon but the responsibility lies on the front-line leaders and the individual. Pre-deployment briefings, however, have proven successful in making soldiers aware of the potential hazards of being in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"The only problems have been the recurring small problems that can't really be avoided," said Geiling. "In an operation like this, you see a constant fluctuation of people in key positions. Just as we get people to make the right calls and to know the system, they get replaced and things fall off the radar screen. But that is to be expected and it hasn't been a big problem. "

Perhaps the toughest aspect of being a medical specialist in the Army is the constant challenge of keeping skills from deteriorating.

"Medical folks think we're unique in losing critical skills but it's like any soldier who isn't being challenged. A gunner on a Bradley who is complacent will lose his skills as quickly as a medic who isn't challenged," said Geiling.

The rub comes in the how medical specialists practice those skills.

"We want to stay practiced but at the same time we want to avoid the very situations that would give us the practice we want. It's ironic," said Geiling.

Tracking rounds

By Staff Sgt. Jerry A. Weber
129th MPAD

GLAMOC, Bosnia-Herzegovina— The mission of peace is the basis of Operation Joint Guard. Ensuring the peace requires the Stabilization Force to monitor and prevent the factions from firing at each other. This mission is only possible if SFOR detects such incidents. For the first time, a mobile radar unit will be able to rotate throughout theater to perform this vital mission for SFOR.

Battery E, 101st Field Artillery (Target Acquisition Battery), 42nd Division, a National Guard unit from Rehoboth, Mass., sent a team here to certify their AN/TPQ-36 Fire Finding Radar System to ensure the effectiveness of the equipment.

The battery uses this radar to detect rounds, anything from small arms to rockets. Upon detection, the radar can predict impact area, tell what type of round was fired, and where the round was fired from instantly, said Sgt. 1st Class Carl R. Ulmer, radar platoon sergeant.

While members of the battery are located throughout the American sector, the radar equipment will rotate where needed and perform as a mobile radar unit.

"This is the first time that there will be a flex section here," said Ulmer. "We can respond to any radar need in theater."

A combined live-fire exercise with 1st Platoon, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery and 2nd Battery, Independent Russian Airborne Brigade here was the reason behind so many acquisitions. The exercise offered a chance for the section to track live Russian munitions.

To be ready for their mission, the flex section must ensure the radar equipment works properly. The exercise will allow for the unit to verify that the radar can track rounds and provide accurate information on hostile fire.

"We work with this equipment throughout the year and are very familiar with it," said Ulmer. "This mission allows us to ensure that it tracks the acquisitions properly. It can track up to six acquisitions at once, which is pretty good for 20-year-old technology."

"There have been more live rounds fired here than I've ever tracked before," said Spc. Brian P. Sherry, radar operator.

"This may be the first time this equipment has tracked Russian rounds," said Ulmer. "During Desert Storm equipment like this radar tracked several rounds that were made in Russia, but those rounds were fired by Iraqis. These rounds that we will be tracking during the exercise are unmodified Russian munitions straight from the factory, fired from Russian guns."

This training also allowed the radar section to conduct a new type of mission.

"About every third month we run a mission in a 'friendly fire mode.' During this mission we know where you are and we tell you where the rounds are going to land," Ulmer said. "The mission here in Glamoc is a 'hostile fire mission' where we track the rounds and report where the gun positions are for counter-fire purposes."

Processing this information quickly is the key to either mission. Excessive time will allow the firing party to vacate the area and setup in another area to fire again.

"From the time we receive the acquisition, we forward the information up to TPC (Target Processing Center) within five seconds and they determine if the acquisition is valid or not," said Staff Sgt. Barry Y. VanLaarhoven, radar section chief.

The addition of the flex section to the Bosnian theater is an added benefit to the peacekeeping role of SFOR and will help provide an extra presence which will deter any use of force by the factions.

Spc. Christopher M. Brady removes the end to a data cable while setting up the Fire Finder Radar System.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry A. Weber

Direct intervention

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Rice

y and photos by Matt J. Johnson
th MPAD

CAMP BEDROCK – Bosnian after Bosnian turns and stares in awe as the ominous beast passes by. Covered in protec tive armored scales from front to rear, the mighty brute ies itself with a certain pride and dignity, knowing it possesses strength for violent destruction but with the caring and compas- to help and protect these people — here to enforce peace and the isions of the Dayton Peace Accord.

More than 30 vehicles roll down the winding roads. Sometimes rcing peace requires more than patrols and a presence. Some- es, it calls for direct intervention.

Under provisions of the Dayton Peace Accord, the factions must most of their weapons, artillery, ammunition and other instru- ts of war stored at weapons storage sites, which are monitored strictly inventoried on a regular basis by Stabilization Forces.

Recently a 100 percent inventory of all the equipment in all the dings was taken, something that hadn't been done in a while.

As a result of a weapons storage site inspection, we found build- containing additional weapons and several discrepancies on task force inventory sheet. Because of these discrepancies, our sion was to confiscate a number of these weapons until a reso- on has been reached," said Capt. Ben Higgenbothan, Company nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry commander. "During the confisca- , we took away 180 7.62 mm rifles, several mortars, light ma- e guns and sniper rifles."

Taking away faction's military assets means the possibility of sions and confrontation, especially when doing so directly from faction's military compound. The keys to a successful operation planning and preparation – to be ready should things go awry.

The mission involved the entire company I had available. The t platoon and some of our MP (military police) platoons blocked n outer ring outside the site while my company conducted the al confiscation," Higgenbotham said. "In addition, the task force ted it as a task force mission, so we had additional assets such he support and headquarters platoons attached to us, as well as sk force command and control element."

n addition to having sufficient assets for the mission, the sol- s have been conducting extensive training and gaining experi- e while here in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

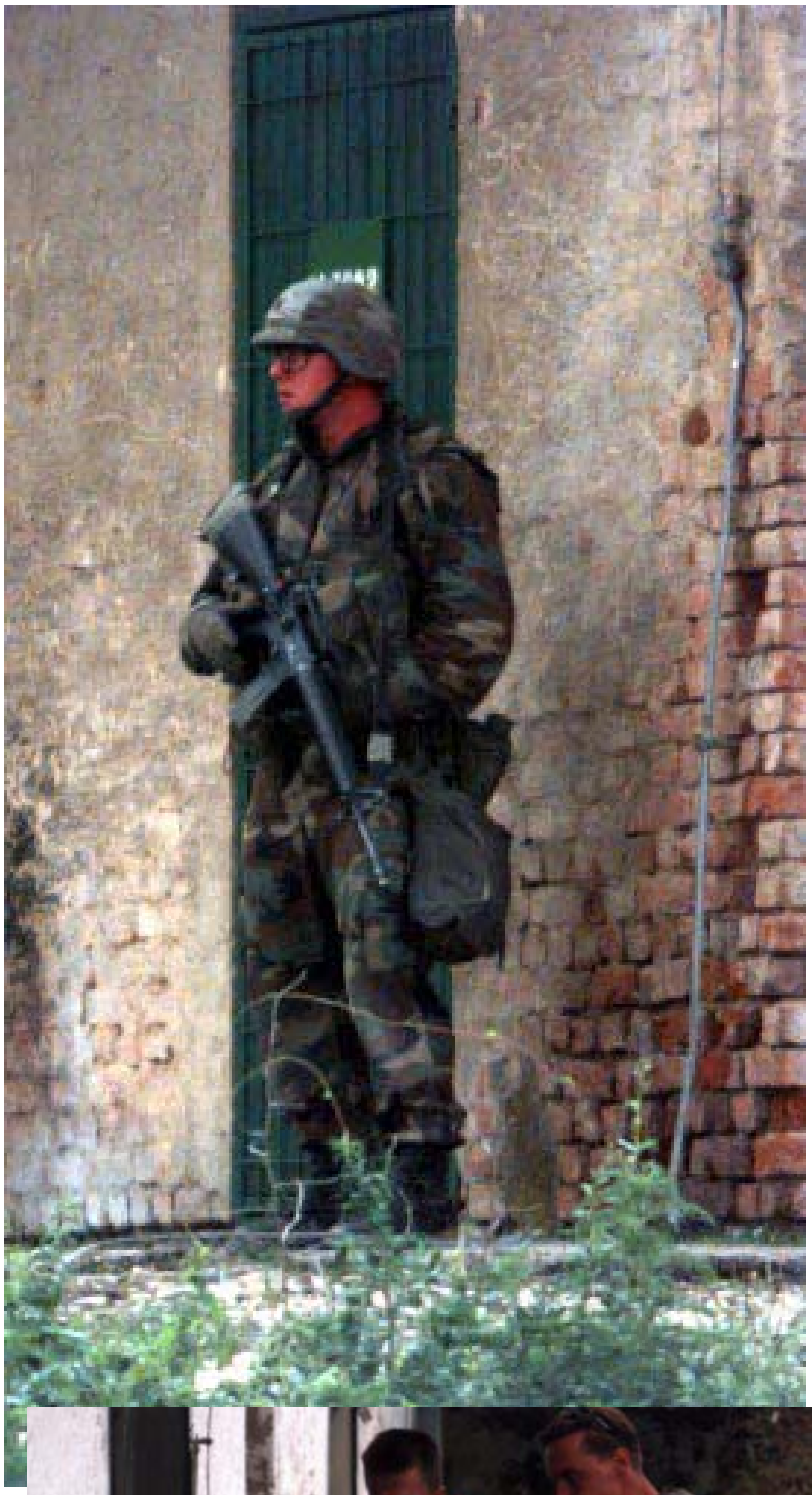
According to Cpl. Brian Rice, Bravo team leader the main thing stay focused on the mission and know your job.

As you're rolling up, you rehearse in your mind what you're going o. You rehearse in your mind the what ifs – what if this should pen, what if that should happen," Rice said. "You're rehearsing you're going to react to situations as they arise. You're grilling other, going over what you should do if a situation should arise."

Both the commander and the soldiers felt the mission went well.

Honestly, we rehearsed so much, we didn't have time to worry," said. "Everything went smoothly. It all came together."

"I couldn't have asked for it to go any better; the soldiers performed beyond my best expectations, but then again they always do," Higgenbotham said. "Everyone did exactly as we'd rehearsed, it was just a great success."



***Photos from top, clockwise,* Two soldiers from Task Force 2-2 pull security during the weapons confiscation mission... A TF 2-2 soldier opens the lock to one of the buildings at a weapons' storage site... Some of the 180 AK-style weapons confiscated during the mission... Sgt. Robert McCraw (left) and Cpl. Brian Rice, both of Company B, TF 2-2, inspect a crate of weapons.**

Family affair

By Staff Sgt. Vonny Rohloff
364th MPAD

Spc. Steven Acselrod, Company C. 61st Area Support Medical Battalion, takes the blood pressure of a patient.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Vonny Rohloff

Blue Factory -- Days of loneliness and tears of sadness fall on many families when a loved one goes off to war — or Bosnia-Herzegovina. The separation is lessened by family support groups who comfort one another back home as the deployed soldier works to accomplish the mission.

Not so for all. One mother and son in Bosnia-Herzegovina give new meaning to family support.

Maj. Barbara Acselrod; 43, a nurse, and her son Spc. Steven Acselrod, a 22-year-old combat medic, are serving together at Blue Factory in support of Operation Joint Guard.

Barbara is attached to the 405th Combat Support Hospital, but is deployed from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. Steve is with Company C, 61st Area Support Medical Battalion, 1st Medical Group from Fort Hood, Texas.

Steven arrived in country first and started duty on rotating shifts in the emergency room, in addition to duty as squad leader on an ambulance team. "I was pretty shocked when I found out my mom was coming here," he said. " But I knew the medical field within the Army is pretty small and sooner or later I'd be working with her."

Steven met his mother with a surprise salute when she arrived. "It was pretty wonderful," Barbara said. "I got off the plane and saw the soldier coming towards me. It was sort of like Christmas and a birthday all wrapped up into one."

The reunion came after a separation of nearly two years. "He's grown into a nice young man," Barbara said. "His commander has lots of positive things to say about him and his leadership ability."

The mother and son also share an officer-enlisted relationship. "Taking an order is kind of awkward; she is my mom too," Steven said. They do not work together directly, but do have some contact. One night while Steven was on duty in the ER, he had to get his mother from her CONNEX so she could set up the operating room for a late scheduled surgery. "My mom is not really in command of me, but likes it when I salute her," Steven said.

"At home there is no rank," Barbara said. Being enlisted once herself, she can empathize with her son. "I've already gone through some of the things he is going through." She and her husband, Randy, a radiation health physicist, met while both of them enlisted and served in the Navy at Camp Pendelton, Calif.

Maj. Barbara Acselrod, 405th Combat Support Hospital, selects supplies.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Vonny Rohloff

The family includes another son, Scott, 20, and his 19-month-old daughter, Brianne.

Mother and son try to spend some time together each day even though their schedules are different. "We at least try to eat dinner together every day," Steven said. They also talk and shop together at the post exchange. "It's good to see her and spend time with her. Even though it's in Bosnia — it's still good."

At first the other guys gave him a hard time about having a mom here. "But a lot of time people wish they had family members here too," he said. "I'm really lucky because sometimes it gets real depressing and the DSN (Defense Switching Network) telephone lines are down or we're waiting for letters. With my mom here all I have to do is walk 100 feet to her CONNEX and I can talk to her about certain things."

"This is my first time being deployed overseas," said Barbara. "Being here at least I knew there would be a friendly face. It is more pleasurable to be with a family member. I've been stationed separately and it is a lot lonelier."

While the mother is more experienced and skilled in the medical aspect of the military, the son is up to speed with basic soldier skills. He showed his mom how to get a high-sheen polish on her boots and helped her with common soldier tasks such as clearing and cleaning her weapon.

Barbara will leave before her son, but with mixed feelings. "I know when I leave there is danger out there, so leaving my son and not being able to watch out for him is kind of hard," she said. "On the other hand, he is a young man and needs to have his own adventures and time."

Getting to know you

Spc. Timothy V. McGhee, a PLL clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-77, inventories a shipment of recently delivered repair parts.

Photo by Spc. David Boe

By Spc. David Boe
364th MPAD

MCGOVERN BASE – Spc. Timothy V. McGhee is a psychic. Whenever he sees other people walking by, images of deadlined vehicles or parts come to mind. He'll stop the person, let him or her know that a certain part is in for their vehicle, then walk on. Actually, McGee's psychic ability is no more than just good memory – a memory stimulated by the his daily work with almost 200 vehicles and the people who operate them.

"I can pretty much tell you who drives what vehicle around here," said the Simmesport, La. native. "In the past three months I've come to know you all."

McGhee, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 1-77, is a material storage and handling specialist. While not exactly psychic sounding, it is nevertheless an important job that the 23-year-old has. Instead of a crystal ball or tarot cards, McGhee uses a dusty computer. His place of work isn't some dark tent at a circus, it's the PLL (Prescribed Load Listing) office at the McGovern Base motor pool. His clients are fellow soldiers who come to him each day to order parts or get their vehicles dispatched.

"I have 189 vehicles in my computer," said McGhee. "I do all the dispatching for all these vehicles, I order parts for deadlined vehicles, and make sure the services are updated. I do a lot of things actually."

McGhee isn't the only PLL clerk, but he does service the majority of that office's customers. Despite the large volume, it's a smooth operation -- but McGhee admits it wasn't always like that.

"When we first got down here in Bosnia, we were jumping out of our boots," said McGhee. "I wasn't used to having so many vehicles and having to dispatch them every day." Initially, McGhee was getting 20 to 30 vehicles a day to dispatch. Now, he said, that number is down to a comfortable 15 to 20. "At first it was hectic, but now everyone has gotten adjusted and it's slowed down a lot."

The most visible job that McGhee and his fellow PLL clerks perform is dispatching. More than just a bureaucratic paper shuffle, dispatching is a needed requirement for vehicle operation, said Pfc. Christopher J. Long, dispatcher for Company C, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry.

"Dispatching is needed so people take responsibility for their vehicles," said Long, a 23-year-old native of Scottsville, Ky. "If there was some kind of accident, at least we would know from the dispatch that the driver was licensed, knew how to drive it, or if there was a mechanical problem. Basically it allows us to track things easier."

While it is needed, dispatching is not one of the more popular activities among soldiers at McGovern. Some of the less colorful adjectives describing dispatching are, "difficult," "hassling" and "confusing."

It doesn't have to be that way, though, said Long. "If the vehicle's parts are put on as they come in -- when the operator has some free time -- then it doesn't take as long on dispatch day," he said. "If they don't have anything to put on or order that day, the mechanic comes up, sees everything is good, and it's a lot quicker for them, the operator, and for us."

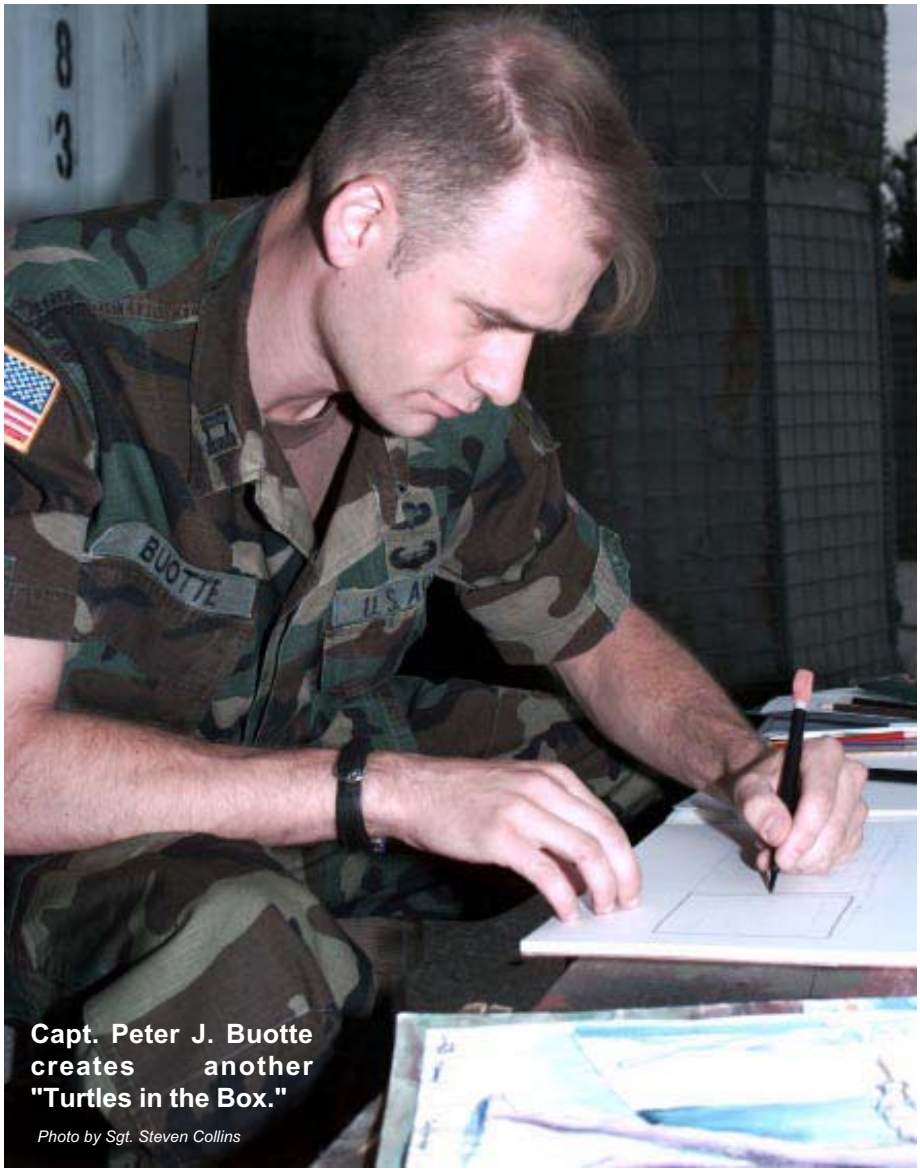
McGhee's co-worker, Spc. Nicolas B. Robinson, services the paperwork for his own unit, Company B, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor. This is the first time he has worked as a PLL clerk within his job, Robinson said. Prior to this he was a warehouse clerk, where he operated mainly forklifts. "I'm just learning this job. It's a whole lot different," he said. "Every day I'm learning something new."

Unlike McGhee, Robinson's vehicle load is relatively small – only 40 to 45 vehicles. He said, though, that the team – made up of PLL clerks from different companies – works together to get the job done. If the job doesn't get done vehicles don't get dispatched and thus, don't roll out the gate.

"I think we're important, but we don't get the appreciation," said Robinson. "We're the ones behind the curtain."

Muddy and Dusty

By Sgt. Steven Collins
129th MPAD



Capt. Peter J. Buotte creates another "Turtles in the Box."

Photo by Sgt. Steven Collins

EAGLE BASE – Muddy and Dusty have been in Bosnia-Herzegovina for what seems like an eternity. They have traveled endless miles in HMMWVs, trekked through knee-deep mudholes, suffered food poisoning in the chow hall, forgotten the taste of cold beer, worn their Kevlar helmets perhaps a bit too long. These two troops are a reflection of the thousands of American soldiers who have lived the Bosnian experience.

It seems only fitting that Muddy and Dusty, the chief characters in the cartoon *"Turtles in the Box,"* were born in the stressful early weeks of Capt. Peter J. Buotte's deployment here. Buotte created the cartoon (a regular feature of this publication) as an outlet – his chance to laugh at some of the rigors of being a soldier here.

"For the first two weeks of the deployment, it seemed that I was breathing without being able to exhale. This cartoon was my stress reliever," said Buotte, commander of the 943rd Replacement Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Fort Totten, N.Y. "Somewhere in (the cartoon) is a part of me. I don't know which part -- maybe the part that hasn't grown up yet."

Buotte is a unique soldier -- an officer with eight years of active duty experience, with tours in Haiti and South Korea. But he is also an artist -- a creator of cartoons, sculptures, paintings, murals, even music. Inside his energetic mind lies the seemingly contradictory passions of military leadership and artistic individuality.

"I consider myself an antenna," said Buotte. "I get these ideas and they arrive in the work I do. These ideas come from every direction. I'm simply creating order out of chaos. That's what military leadership is about."

"Turtles in the Box" is only the latest creation by Buotte, who has been creating works of art all his life. He studies art at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and just completed a semester of schooling before being deployed with his unit in March. Buotte is also one of a handful of Army artists, a group of talented individuals who document operations visually for historical purposes.

"I got a four-year ROTC scholarship to be an artist," he said. "I have always drawn -- since age five. I'm a scribbler, but a practiced scribbler. I scribble all the time."

Buotte's chief military occupation is as a personnel officer, having led postal units and now the replacement company at Eagle Base. But art is a passion and Buotte spends every minute when he's not on duty pursuing his passion.

"I probably sleep four hours a night," said Buotte. "I don't want to waste time sleeping. There's always so much to do."

It was his ability to "draw anywhere" that produced the sketches that eventually became *"Turtles in the Box."* From his observations of life at Eagle Base, Buotte jotted down humorous ideas, which turned into Dusty and Muddy and their adventures in Operation Joint Guard. The cartoons soon became the three-panel comics found in *"The Talon."*

"Initially I had volunteered to do drawings for the military history detachment," said Buotte. "It never occurred to me that these would become a cartoon. The drawings were intended to supplement the history books being compiled by military history detachment."

Inspiration for the humor in *'Turtles'* comes from everywhere, said Buotte. He reads newspapers, talks to other soldiers, uses his seemingly-boundless imagination. The ideas are instantaneous and each strip takes about two hours to sketch, ink and color.

The strips were originally in black-and-white, but Buotte has used both watercolors and colored pencils to add depth. He has created about 50 different "Turtles" strips and hopes to gather them all into a book soon. Fans can soon expect another character, Sandy, a female soldier and friend of Dusty and Muddy.

"I have included all kinds of real people in the strip – linguists, chaplains, cleaning ladies, Red Cross workers. Dusty and Muddy represent most of the soldiers here, so it is appropriate to add a female soldier on a regular basis," said Buotte.

And the name *"Turtles in the Box?"* It comes from the image French and British soldiers have of their American counterparts.

"In the past, with full 'battle rattle,' the French and British said American soldiers look like Ninja Turtles. I like that. So I dropped the 'Ninja' and kept the 'Turtles.' I've had to include more softcaps in the strip now that we can wear our softcaps. But I still like the image of the Kevlar helmets," said Buotte.

"It's not a gift until it's given," said Buotte about his talent. "One of my instructors at school said I have the potential to be an art leader instead of an art follower. That's what I want to be – an art leader."

World's easiest quiz

1) What state do the Kansas City Royals play in?

2) Which country makes Panama hats?

3)From which animal(s) do we get catgut?

4) In which month do Russians celebrate the October Revolution?

5) What is a camel hair brush made of?

6) The Canary Islands in the Pacific are named after what animal?

7) What was King George IV's first name?

8) What color is a purple finch?

9) What country do Chinese Gooseberries come from?

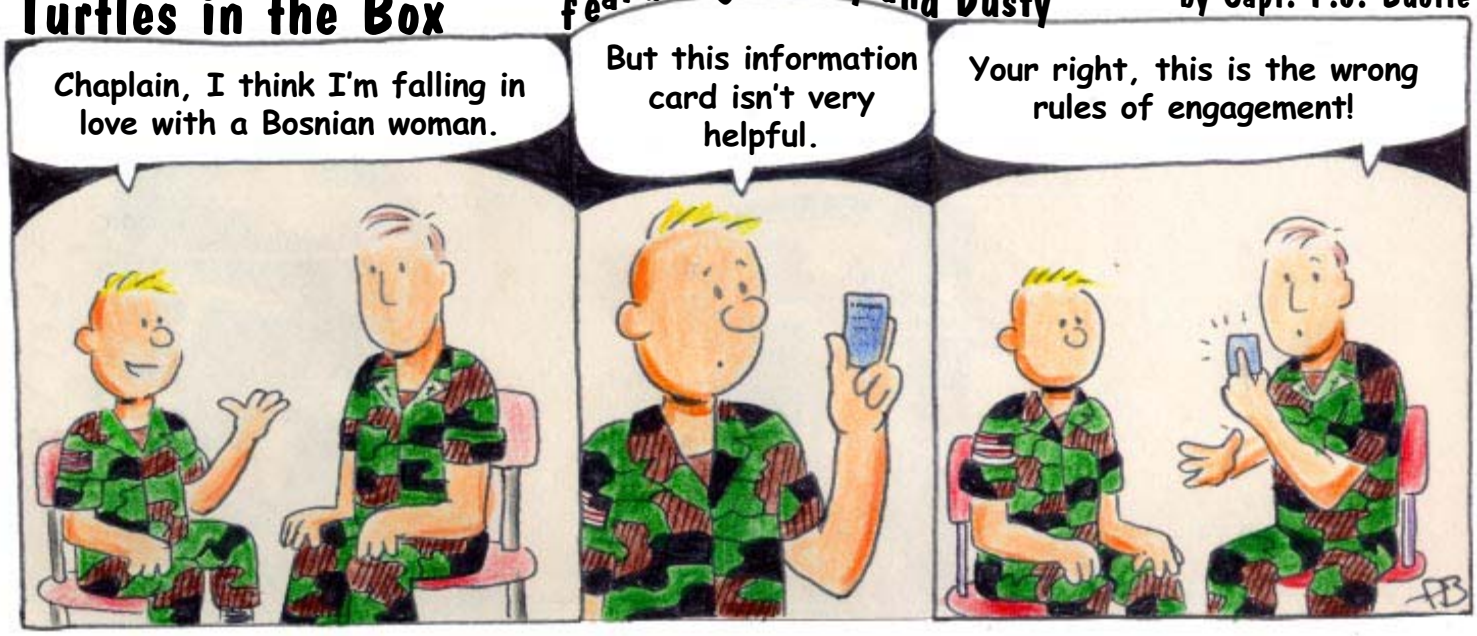
10) How long did the Thirty Years War last?

1) Missouri. 2) Ecuador. 3) From sheep and horses. 4) November. The Russian calender was 13 days behind ours. 5) Squirrel fur. 6) The Latin name was Insularia Canaria - Island of the Dogs. 7) Albert. When he came to the throne in 1936 he respected the wish of Queen Victoria that no future king should ever be called Albert. 8) Distinctly crimson. 9) New Zealand. 10) Thirty years of course. From 1618 to 1648.

Turtles in the Box

featuring Muddy and Dusty

by Capt. P.J. Buotte



BRIDGES

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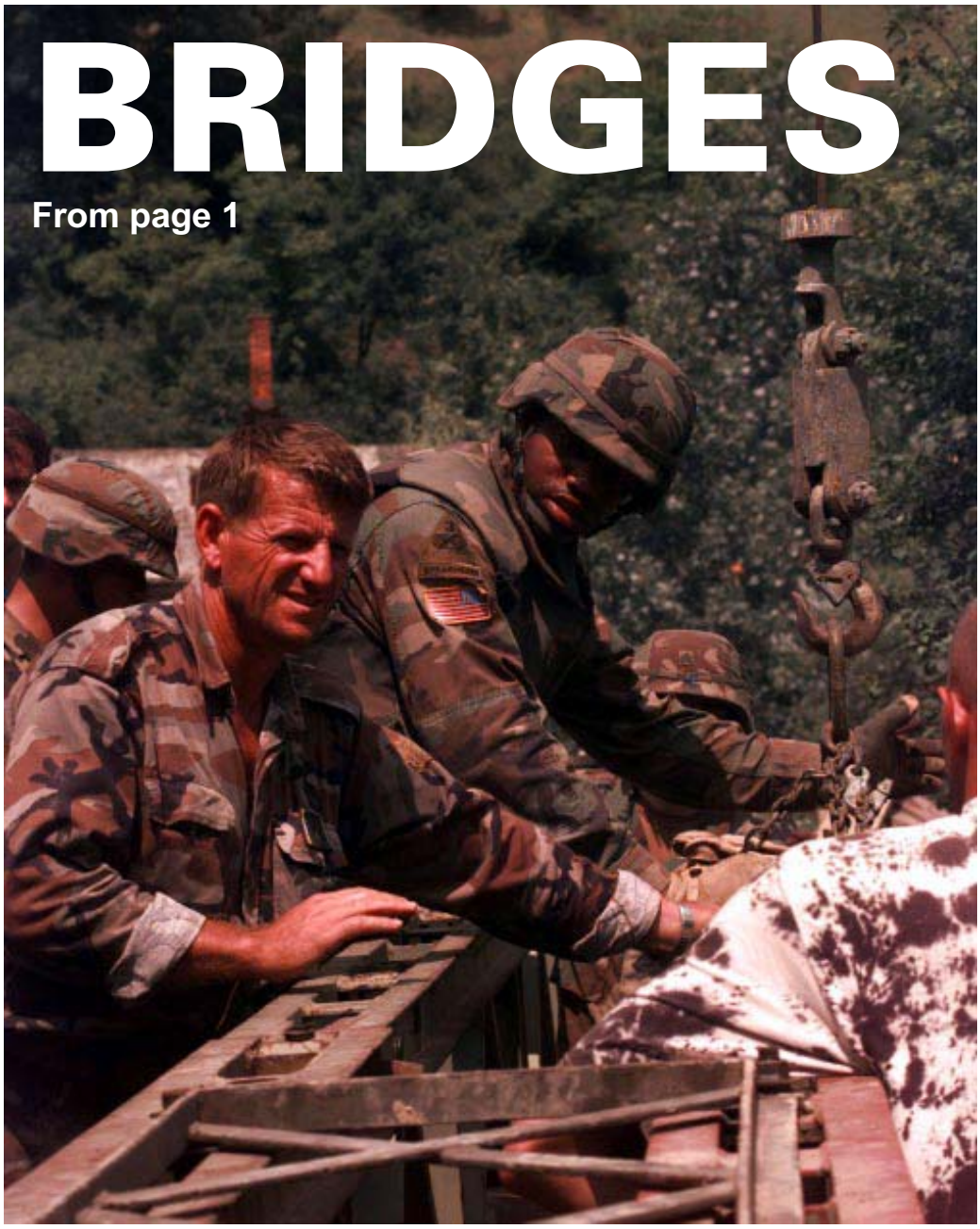

Sgt. Keldrick Moore, combat engineer, Company A, 82nd Engineer Battalion, assists Bosnian engineers installing side panels on an Armored Vehicle Launch Bridge.

By Spc. Susanne Aspley
364th MPAD

PREZOJ BANJ, Bosnia-Herzegovina – Most missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina depend on safe and quick movement. The Army runs on feet, tracks and wheels. Supporting constant mobility for the mechanized infantry of Task Force 1-41 is the primary mission of Company A, 82nd Engineer Battalion from Bamberg, Germany.

Working in cooperation with a team of engineers from 2nd Corps, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) army based in Tuzla, the multinational crew recently completed a major bridge project in the mountains several hours from Camp Dobol near Prezoj Banj. The original Bailey bridge installed by the BiH army didn't support the weight of the massive tanks, heavy machinery and armored vehicles, explained 2nd Lt. John Kane, 1st Platoon leader, so a AVLB (Armored Vehicle Launch Bridge) was laid down as a temporary fix until it could be properly reinforced.

Before construction began, Capt. Dan Koprowski, Co. A. commander, 82nd Eng. Bn., made his assessment. "When we are done, this bridge will be able to hold approximately 70 tons," Koprowski said. "Right now, I wouldn't drive my car over it."

"When we are done, this bridge will be able to hold approximately 70 tons. Right now, I wouldn't drive my car over it ."

— Capt. Dan Koprowski

The AVLB "is like a big erector set," said Koprowski. Simply put, the bridge is a monstrous piece of equipment that within minutes can be laid down over a gap, river or gully. The sole purpose of the bridge in combat is to throw it down to get the tanks and fighting vehicles across quickly. The launcher then drives over, turns around and lifts it back onto its armored body.

The BiH army didn't have assets to repair and upgrade the bridge. The bridge was crooked which took an entire day of labor to straighten. Covered with packed dirt, the Bailey next had to be dug out. Working side by side, the BiH Engineers and the American then started an assembly line, lifting out all the old rotted planks and replacing them with new ones. A second set of iron side panels were then bolted on as reinforcement.

The BiH engineers were very competent and the construction procedure was mutually understood, said Staff Sgt. Eric Daniels. "There is no language barrier when it comes to hard work."

Soldiers from Headquarters Company, TF 1-41 out of Fort Riley, Kan., and assets from the Engineer's Assault and Obstacle Platoon worked throughout the day with 1st Platoon. Sgt. 1st Class Stan Wilshire said he is proud of his troops, who make up the best engineer company in theater.

"This is a different type of mission for us," said Kane. "We added another set of side panels which doubles the bridge's strength. Normally we start from scratch and push the completed bridge across on rollers. But since it is already in place, we need to repair in place." In engineer-speak, it was upgrades from a single-single to a double-single. To the rest of the world, that means the bridge now has double side panels and is single story.

Several miles up the road on a treacherous overpass stands another major achievement. The engineers spent several days removing a USAREUR owned Bailey bridge, explained Sgt. Eric Bigness, and constructing a Mabey-Johnson Bridge belonging to NATO in its place. The bridge now spans a 90-foot-long gaping crack in the side of the mountain, sided by a sheer drop-off cliff.

Judging by the precise and professional work, the engineers excel in what they obviously love to do. When Kane was asked if the smiling and waving kids on the side of the road make his mission worth it, he answered "I don't know about that. At the end of the day, it just feels good to have built something."