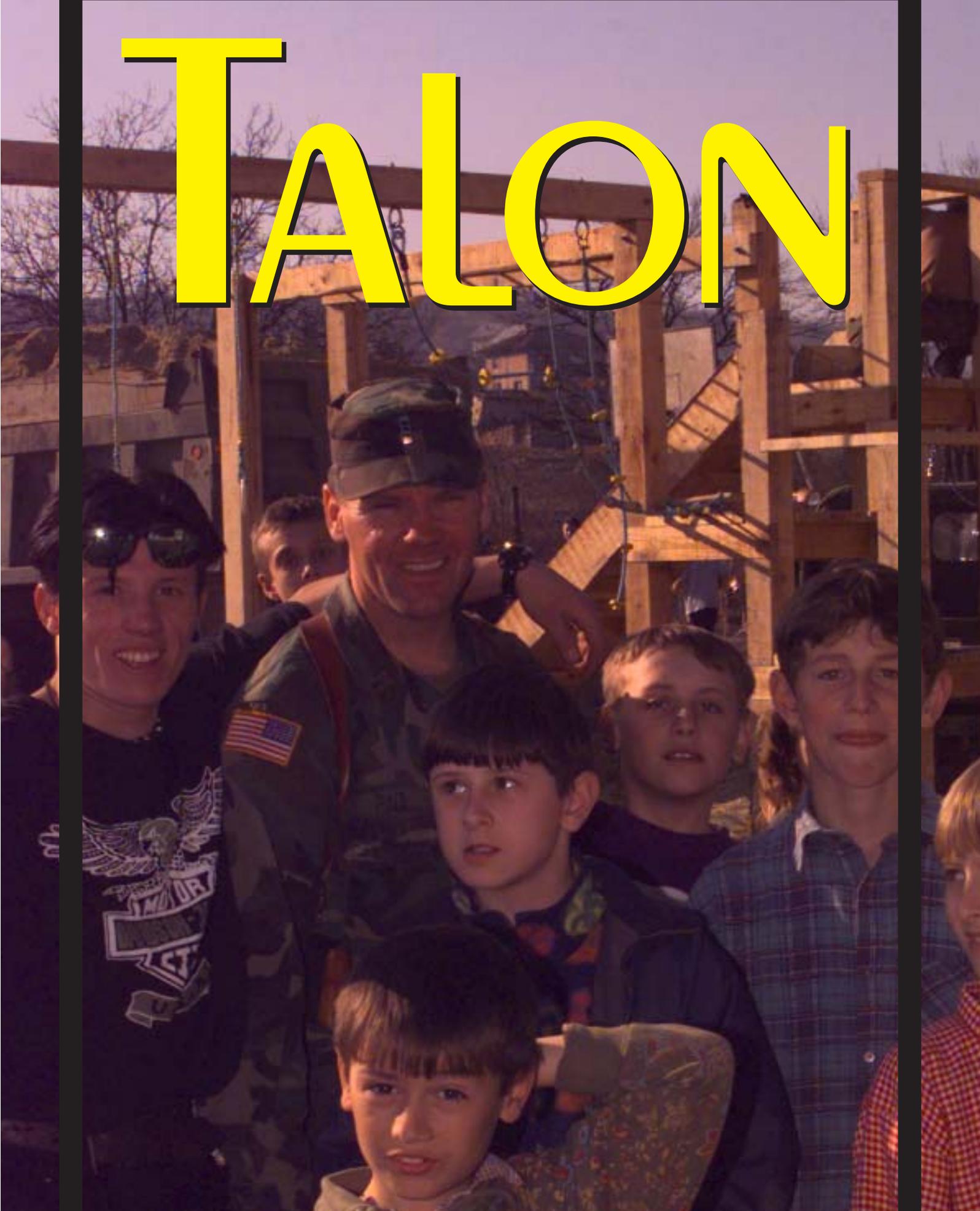


TALON



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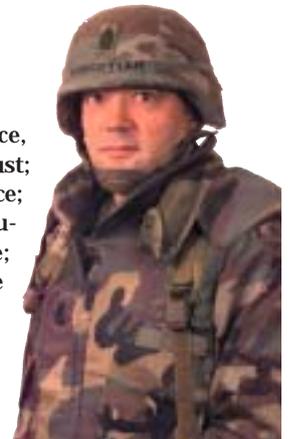
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By Command Sergeant Major
Carl E. Christian
Task Force Eagle CSM



Trust, to place complete confidence, to depend; **Faith**, to have complete trust; **Confidence**, to have trust and reliance; **Belief**, the act of assenting intellectually to something purposed as true; to have trust and confidence. These are more than words. These are ideals that we build our entire philosophy of chain of command and support channels on. We have all heard leaders say these words many times. I use them myself. At times I am not sure that everyone has the same meaning of these words, leaders or subordinates. I feel that sometimes we forget the meaning of these words and that they work in every direction within our ranks; up, down and sideways, regardless of service.

It is a difficult time to be in the military. We are trying to mold the force for the military of the future; whatever it will look like and how big it will be. We are reshaping doctrine and how we will fight. Our leaders are trying to see how long we will have troops here or in the Persian Gulf or in any other number of places. Right now many troops are asking when will they go home? **Trust, Faith, Confidence, and Belief.**

Now more than ever in our time in the military we must use and live these words. **Trust** that your commanders will get information to you in a timely and accurate manner. Have **Faith** that the chain of command has nothing to gain from keeping that information from you. Demonstrate **Confidence** in your chain of command and support channels by using them to solve problems. Establish a **Belief** that we are a team and that we all gain from practicing these values. And finally, remember, **"TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO BE A SOLDIER!"**

On the Cover

Chief Warrant Officer Franklin W. Paul Jr., is surrounded by Tinja Primary School children in front of the newly constructed playground.

The Task Force Eagle Web site is located at www.tfeagle.army.mil

The Task Force Eagle web site will offer breaking news as it happens on its new web site. Messages to Task Force Eagle soldiers as well as information for soldiers is available. The Talon On-line is updated every Saturday. Webmaster: Sgt. Robert R. Ramon. Or contact us at: The Public Affairs Office, Eagle Base, Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina APO, AE 09789, Telephone MSE 551-5230, Sprint 762-5233.

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Farmers market sells peace

Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs trade together



Second Lieutenant Ken Zurcher walks through Virginia Market in the village of Kalesija, just three kilometers from Camp Dobol.

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

He maneuvers through a crowd of nearly 2,000 Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats. Three years ago this sight likely would have been accompanied by ferocious fighting between the three former warring factions.

However, Second Lieutenant Ken Zurcher, a 23-year-old Army reservist from Lenexa, Kans., moves freely on this cool, gray Sunday afternoon in February. His job is to monitor just how many people visit Virginia Market, which is located near the Bosnian village of Kalesija.

"These people need to learn how to live among one another and cooperate with one another," said Zurcher, a Civil Affairs team leader at Camp Dobol – a pivotal military link in the peacekeeping chain of Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 600-troop base camp is located just three kilometers east of Virginia Market – a farmers market that features up to 160 vendors each Sunday. The market is located within the four kilometer-wide Zone of Separation and just a few meters from the Inter-Entity Boundary Line.

The IEBL separates the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska – two regions born from civil conflict. Zurcher and other peacekeepers from the Stabilization Force have been trying to entice the former warring factions to accept one another since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995.

"This will definitely be an ongoing process. But I think it can be accomplished," said an optimistic Zurcher as he counted the more than 400 automobiles that lined the market's congested access streets.

"You can tell some of these cars are from the Republika Srpska and some belong to the Federation of Bosnia and a few are even owned by Croats," added Zurcher, who arrived in Bosnia in December and is scheduled to re-deploy to the U.S. by mid-August.

The vehicles are identifiable via small, colored emblems on their license plates. A red shield featuring four yellow Cs represent Serb autos; a blue shield with yellow lettering designates a Federation of Bosnia vehicle; while a red and white shield is attached to a Croat license plate.

Virginia Market opened in June 1997, with the help of USAID Community Infrastructure and Reconstruction Projects (CIRP) funds. According to Zurcher, at least 50 percent of the grant is used for labor, and the remainder is used for materials to lay infrastructure – water and sewer lines, roads and electrical services. Local laborers do all the work.

Zurcher reasoned, "The only way you're going to get this country up and running again is force its citizenry to work together. They have to do the work; we can't do the work for them."

Meanwhile, the 1996 University of Kansas graduate is intent on learning the Serbo-Croatian language during his six-month deployment in Bosnia. "I took two years of Russian while in college," said Zurcher. "The languages are somewhat similar. I find myself able to pick up some of the conversations."

For example, he understood what Mina Kopic of Simin Han, a village near Tuzla, was telling Army interpreter Dragomir Stojkovic, 28, of Belgrade.

"She wants to move back into her house, but refugees are now occupying her residence," said Zurcher. "The refugees have invited her back into her old neighborhood, but she is still too afraid to return."

In the meantime, Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats are learning how to live together again with the help of projects like Virginia Market.

At another corner of the market, vendors offer American Levi's bluejeans for 20 deutsche marks. Livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats are either purchased or swapped for other goods.

When Zurcher returns to Lenexa and his full-time civilian job with Deluxe Financial Services this fall, he will not only have a better understanding of Operation Joint Guard; he will understand the unique ingredients to the recipe of peace throughout the war-torn Balkan region.

"I hope to contribute to this mission as much as I can. But at the same time I hope to benefit from this deployment. We've come a long way, but there's much to be done," he said before disappearing in the frenzy of the Bosnian market.

Delivering 'world' to Bosnian schools



Major James Beesley and St. Save school director Radosav Peric display one of the 30 world maps that Beesley delivered to the largest school in the Balkans. Named after the first Serb teacher, St. Save has an enrollment of 3,500 students in grades 1-8.

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Teaching apparently comes natural for U.S. Army Reserve Major James Beesley, who hand-delivered 30 world maps to the largest school in the Balkan region Zvornik Monday, Feb. 16.

Keeping a promise he had made last fall during a puppet show at primary school St. Save, Beesley and several other members of the Army Materiel Command from Camp Guardian gave the world maps and several Bosnian road maps to a grateful Radosav Peric, the school's director.

"Teachers now draw their own maps on a piece of paper and carry it from class to class," the 49-year-old Peric explained via Army contract interpreter Dragomir Stajkovic, 28, of Belgrade. "These maps will be very useful."

That's not surprising for Beesley, who when not wearing Army green teaches fifth-grade social studies for the Galena Park Independent School District near Houston, Texas, where he and his wife, Mary, reside. The Beesleys have five sons.

"These world maps are critical to teaching geography and world history. As a teacher, it was very troubling for me when Mr. Peric told me the school needed these maps," said the 38-year-old Beesley, who is nearing the end of his six-month deployment in Operation Joint Guard.

St. Save, named after the first teacher in Serb history, towers above the Drina River — the border of Bosnia's Republika Srpska region and Serbia. More than 3,500 students in first through eighth grade attend St. Save.

Peric, who taught for 27 years at St. Save before being named director in 1993, is proud of the school's rich history.

"St. Save is the most important person in Serb history. It's fitting that the largest school in the Balkans is named after him. He believed as I do — children are our most important resources. The best job you can get is working with children. It is very rewarding," he said.

Apparently, the entire teaching staff at St. Save agrees. They haven't received a paycheck since 1996 and have only staged one strike in the last two years. When asked how many teachers quit after the paychecks stopped rolling in, Peric quickly responded, "Not most of them; all of them stayed. But it has been difficult for us all."

Meanwhile, Beesley acquired the maps from Marvin Greely, president of Prism Information in Houston. Greely is a retired infantry major. St. Save will be sending Mr. Greely a certificate of appreciation, assured Peric.

"I tried to get one per classroom, but that was a tall order," Beesley reasoned, considering the 123 classrooms in the school.

"I hope these maps are the first of many items we'll be supplying to this school."

Peric quickly quipped, "We need chalk!"

Eagle postal service x-rays mail

Story and photo by Sergeant First Class Sherry L. Claus
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Neither rain nor hail nor sleet nor snow...but maybe an x-ray machine or a drug-sniffing dog just might keep the mail from being delivered!

That is exactly what happens if a service member tries to send or receive alcoholic beverages, drugs or bombs through the 90th Postal Company mail system here at Tuzla Main.

"Most people either don't know or forget that the Air Force is x-raying all the outgoing mail and they are unaware of the power of our particular machine," according to Army Reserve First Lieutenant David G. Putnam, the 29 year old commander of the postal unit.

Air Force Reserve Sergeant Onassis D. Burress, a postal clerk from the 15th Air Base Wing out of Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, mans the x-ray machine daily. Burress enjoys working closely with the Army in what he calls "...a postal symbiotic bond".

Burress sees the x-ray process as a "...moral standing keeper of General Order One. If you're a good troop, you shouldn't be doing this (mailing contraband) in the first place."

Normally wearing a boyish smile, Putnam's brow furrows as he says, "There is no division of ranks in this smuggling-type operation, either. We've seen O-5s and O-6s all the way down to Private E-1s trying to get away with this."

Each and every article of outgoing mail from the Bosnia-Herzegovina region passes through Burress's hands onto the conveyer belt to roll through the huge silver box with the magic eyes.

Not only does the facility use seeing-eye machines but they also use dogs. The specially trained drug and bomb-sniffing dogs come by every day to check the mail.

Since alcohol is prohibited in this theatre, the illegal liquid exports are usually either brought back here from leave or pass or bought locally from civilians.

Various means of unsuccessfully disguising the alcohol in the past include rolling the bottles in clothing or towels, stuffing them inside boots and packing them in boxes inside of boxes.

Perhaps the most ingenious – but still unsuccessful – method was when someone packed several empty liquor bottles. "Apparently thinking we (the folks operating the x-ray

machine) would see the bottles were empty and just let the box pass," says Burress, cracking a grin. "This particular troop was just a shade brighter than most. He put the liquor from the bottles inside a 'camel-back' type container normally used by hikers or bicyclists to carry water."

The CID arrived, checked the box, and this particularly sharp scheme literally went down the drain.

Whenever the machine shows any items out of the ordinary, the operator can use the zoom capabilities to get a closer look. If the contents of the package still seem unusual, the CID is called in.

If illegal substances are found, the service member attempting to mail them faces an Article 15 under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The same procedures hold true for incoming mail as well!

Of course not everyone can be as slick as the "camel-back" guy. Someone once tried to mail a poorly packaged bottle of local liquor. The bottle broke and the homemade brew, which,



Air Force Sergeant Onassis Burress checks the x-ray screen for contraband as a package passes through the machine.

according to Putnam, "...smelled just like Wild Turkey..." leaked out and the "fowl" smell permeated the entire x-ray area. The CID readily agreed there was probable cause for opening that package.

But, as Putnam, a Seattle native, says, "Why risk an Article 15 and possibly even your career on a bottle of scotch you'll never get to drink?"

Building community ties with a playground Seabees and soldiers make a wish come true

Story by Sergeant First Class Sherry L. Claus,
photos by Sergeant Timothy M. Fischer
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Luckily enough for about 1,050 children in the small town of Tinja (pronounced Teenya), just north of Tuzla, 33 soldiers and four Seabees from Camp Comanche had not only hammers but also saws, shovels, enthusiasm and a little off duty time.

These 37 U.S. soldiers descended upon the desolate area behind the Tinja Primary School with huge wooden beams, giant bolts, cargo nets, and tons of sand.

What once was a 50 foot long dirt patch by the makeshift basketball court, was turned into a child's dream come true, as the men in camouflage waved their magic tools and created a massive piece of playground equipment.

Was this a "Make-a-Wish Foundation" grant? Well, almost but not quite.

Back in the fall of 1997, Dorte Jensen, a Danish student doing her field work as an International Social Worker was working for the organization Boz Fam (Bosnian Families) in Tinja. She alerted Civil Affairs about a dream she wished to have fulfilled for "her kids" in Tinja.

After working closely with the families in this small town, most of whom are refugees from Srebrenica, Jensen saw the need for something more permanent to leave behind for the children there.

"Dorte is a very strong, very dedicated lady who did a lot of work on the side for the folks of Tinja," said Chief Warrant Officer Franklin W. Paul, Jr., the OH-58D Kiowa pilot who designed the project. "She truly loves these kids and wanted to do something really special for them."

Civil affairs at Comanche is overseen by a hard-charger type by the name of Master Sergeant J.K. Prier, a former rodeo champion from Sundance, Wyo. When Prier met with Jensen, he got more than just a little excited about the possibilities for "his boys."

Prier knew this would be a great morale builder for the soldiers at Comanche – a welcome break from their normal, slightly impersonal duties. "Not your usual donation of clothing or crayons," he said, "This is a combat unit – these guys are pilots, mechanics, repairmen, etc. They are off-duty soldiers volunteering their time and effort to help these kids; Just an awesome bunch of folks!"

In November, Paul and several other pilots began laying the groundwork for this unusual "mission first." They asked for volunteers. If this playground was to get off the ground, they would need lots of warm bodies willing to give up their off duty hours.

So many troops wanted in on the project that Paul and Chief Warrant Officer Jaime M. Brown, Jr., another OH-58D pilot, decided to rotate crews so more people could partici-

pate. This was no small feat in itself due to the stringent shifts these folks work.

Paul, a 39-year old dynamo, said he really put his single year of high school drafting to the test on this project. Never before had he tackled any woodworking project on such a grand scale.

With the actual site in his mind's eye, Paul was walking around the 4th Squadron Operations tent one night when he spied the inspiration for his project – the wooden platform for the heater fuel tank. Paul said he suddenly envisioned a large, beamed construction with several platforms at various levels for the children to climb.

Now, Paul began putting it all on paper, measuring, con-



Chief Warrant Officers (from left to right) Franklin W. Paul, Jr. and Jaime M. Brown, Jr. tighten bolts on the giant jungle gym at Tinja Primary School.

verting feet to meters, shifting this here and that there, as he went along.

Donations began filtering in from several areas. The Danish government sent 3600 Deutsche Marks, cargo nets and ropes came from the Norwegian army and of course, the man power coming from Comanche.

Lumber and other necessary items were ordered locally but bolts needed to secure the structure could not be obtained in Bosnia.

Once again, good old American ingenuity came through. Brown, a 31-year old Poughkeepsie, New York native, contacted his wife back in the U.S. and she had the bolts here in about a week.

"The magnitude of this project didn't really hit me until the wood arrived," Paul said, his eyes growing wide. "I looked at the wood, then at Jaime (Brown), and said 'This thing is going to be HUGE!'."

After that things just started falling into place. With a lot of



Tinja Primary School children try out the slide constructed by Comanche volunteers.

help from more volunteers from all over Comanche, the wood was measured, cut and marked and readied for actual construction.

Another crew went out to the site to mark areas and dig post holes for the structure. As usual, whenever the Humvees arrived, the Tinja children were close behind.

On this particular day, Paul said, a little boy of about three or four-years-old kept walking around, "like a wizened old man, hands behind his back, as he surveyed the progress. He would look into each hole we'd dug and shake his head, frowning."

The interpreter accompanying the crew asked young Zeeo, the "assistant inspector," as Paul called him, if he thought it was going to work. The sandy-blond head snapped up, the blue eyes stared straight up at the man, and the small chin raised as an emphatic "NYET!" came from his pursed lips.

As the trucks and Humvees rolled through the streets of Tinja, the cries rang out as children began their own special escort to the school.

Excitement reigned supreme throughout the six hours of brawn, sweat and cheers it took to put the final touches to a Danish student's dream-come-true.

Under the watchful eyes of the school's principal, the superintendent of teachers and the "assistant inspector," Zeeo, the massive beams were raised, slide put into place, swings, ropes, ladders and cargo nets were hung.

As the last bolt was tightened, the crowd of onlookers had grown to include townspeople of all ages — from the baby in diapers to the group of elderly men in their caps and sweaters.

The moment of truth had arrived – would Zeeo be proven correct? Paul stood perched at the top of the slide. The air crackled with anticipation. The crowd grew silent.

WHOOSH! Down came Paul, followed by Brown and then the children, one after another! Swings were swinging, ropes were climbed and bars were maneuvered. Little Zeeo was wrong, It worked, it really worked!

"This is the most fun I ever had getting a blister," Brown said, his blue eyes sparkling and his dimples growing even deeper.

Paul summed up the feelings of the cumulative crews when he said, "One thing common around the world is kids. Unfortunately, these kids have seen, heard, and experienced things that took their childhood away. If they can put their past aside for awhile and be a kid again because of this playground, then it's all been worth it!"

Dorte Jensen should be proud. Although she is now back home in Denmark, her vision has become a reality and "her kids" have a lasting memory of her and 37 American troops in their town forever. Ultimately, luck had nothing to do with this project...it was built purely from love.



Chief Warrant Officer Franklin W. Paul, Jr., secures the rope ladder to the monkey bars on the new playground equipment at Tinja Primary School.

SFOR crosses tributaries to Sava

Story and photo by Sergeant Terry L. Welch
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

While crossings over the Sava River have been made passable both by Stabilization Force's protection of the Brcko Bridge and the construction of a floating bridge at the town of Doboj, many roads along the tributaries that feed the Sava are impassable. A number of mortar and artillery-stricken bridges, many which were ancient to begin with, still remain in rural Bosnia. This forces the Bosnian people to choose inconvenient, alternate routes of travel, or risk crossing the crumbling structures.

As part of efforts to assist in Bosnia's peaceful reconstruction, a number of these bridges have been tagged by SFOR to be rebuilt. The first stage of the rebuilding involves the laying of a temporary metal bridge over the unsafe stone bridges.

Recently, the Romanian Engineering Battalion based at Zenica was tasked by SFOR's engineering branch with placing a temporary bridge over a decaying, shell-damaged bridge on the Arizona route.

The Romanians began the task of putting the bridge in place recently and the bridge was ready for traffic in four days.

Major Florin Olteanu, Romanian liaison officer to the engineering branch at SFOR headquarters, said the battalion was proud of the speed in which they had constructed the bridge. The bridge is known as a Mabey Johnson Bridge after the British company that produces them. "I don't know how long it will stay," Olteanu said, "but this was launched on Saturday. Here it is Wednesday, and we're on a bridge."

As the battalion was putting the finishing touches on the asphalt ramps onto the aluminum structure, British Colonel Ian Tait, the chief of operations and plans for SFOR's engineering branch arrived to inspect the bridge. After addressing the battalion, looking the bridge over carefully and trading engineering ideas with the Romanian engineers commanding officer, Colonel Nicu Dumitru, Tait said that the bridge looked good and SFOR's engineers had better get used to putting them together. "We're probably going to have to build a number of these in the future," he told Dumitru.

Tait was then given the honor of dedicating the bridge and unveiling a small plaque that said the bridge was the Nicolae Titulescu Bridge.

Major Sorim Stamate, public affairs officer for the Romanian engineers, said that the Romanians named the bridge after one of Romania's most popular political leaders and a former U.N. chairman. He said the battalion would not have given the bridge that name if they weren't proud the work they had done. "(Titulescu) was Romania's Foreign Affairs Minister between World War I and World War II, and the chairman of the U.N. between 1930 and 1932," Stamate said. "He was a champion fighting for peace in Europe, especially in the Balkan area."

According to Olteanu, the bridge needed to be completed soon, due to its planned use in an upcoming SFOR exercise.

"This is very important because at the end of March, Exercise Dynamic Response will take place and Arizona will be used, so this road needs to support fluid traffic," he said. "Everyone in the battalion knows what they're doing is important."



British Colonel Tait unveils the plaque which dedicated the Titulescu Bridge, while Romanian Colonel Nicu Dumitru looks on.

Put the LOGPAC pedal to the metal

LOGPAC keeps on rolling to base camps



Corporal Alvester D. Wigfall of the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, La., heads the LOGPAC convoy at Camp Dobol.

Story and photo by
Sergeant Oreta Spencer
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

If you thought the Wild West days of the Pony Express were long gone, look again. With just a few modern improvements, the pony express has been transformed into a convoy of Humvees and 5-ton vehicles. Only the name has changed to LOGPAC, short for Logistical Package.

Although the name and the mode of travel may have changed, the mission remains the same. The LOGPAC is responsible for transporting documents; equipment, supplies and personnel from base camp to base camp — a vital mission during Operation Joint Guard.

Corporal Alvester D. Wigfall of the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, La., is the LOGPAC convoy commander at Camp Dobol. "We run the LOGPAC on a regular basis — Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays — but we are ready for duty seven days a week," said the

23 year old from Charleston, S.C.

"If it needs to be transported, the LOGPAC is the one to contact. I work with a great team. With teamwork and cooperation, we can handle any job that comes our way," said a confident Wigfall.

Driving from base camp to base camp doesn't sound very challenging — until you see the roads in Bosnia. The roads are narrow and are pitted with potholes everywhere.

"The most challenging part of driving here is the traffic encountered on the road," Wigfall explains. He said there is a diversity of vehicles sharing the roads to include cars, bicycles and horse-drawn wagons. Adding to the challenge, pedestrians share the same narrow roadways.

Wigfall added that he had witnessed quite a few accidents that resulted in cars being thrown in the side ditch. Driving with extreme caution and alertness is essential in

avoiding accidents.

In addition to the routine LOGPAC duty, the team performs other missions, Wigfall said. The mission he found most interesting was when he went with Civil Affairs to help deliver stoves, blankets, towels and other supplies to a place high in the mountains. It was difficult to imagine that not only did people live here, but that their houses had been totally destroyed "These families appreciated all that was given to them. Now the kids wave and smile every time we pass through here. This makes each day here worthwhile. The job of keeping the peace in Bosnia is not easy, but it is very rewarding," said Wigfall.

He summed it all in just a few words, "There are too many kids around here to leave (Bosnia). Our presence keeps the adults from fighting, we are helping to brighten their future, and hopefully we lessen the painful past."

Chaplain boosts soldiers morale

Story and photo by Specialist James E. Baker
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

In short, rapid steps Ch (Maj.) Bonita L. Davis, a chaplain at Eagle Base – Tuzla, makes her morning rounds to visit the various observation posts around the perimeter of Camp McGovern. In a temporary role as a substitute for McGovern Chaplain (Capt.) Alexander Brown who is on leave, Davis has an immediate impact.

The African American female chaplain converses not only with the troops but also with the translators. She greets them with a warm, infectious smile that solicits people to open up and be themselves around her. The dual role as U.S. Army officer and a minister of God is a unique one for a unique person.

“There are not many black female chaplains in the service; however, the issue of my gender and race has never been an issue to the Army. To be an Army chaplain one must meet the specific requirements of their denomination and the military,” said Davis.

Davis said that she was called to the ministry during her senior year of the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass., but she did not alter her life that much. “I was going to be an Army officer any way, so I merely adjusted to what God had intended for me to do,” said Davis.

She spent 10 years on active duty including service in the

Persian Gulf War. Then, she did postdoctoral work in ethics at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta and resumed her military career in the U.S. Army Reserve at the 1207th U.S. Army Hospital at Fort Benning, Ga.

When a call came out for chaplains for the Bosnian Theater, Davis responded by volunteering for her current assignment that has provided her opportunities and challenges since her October, 1997 deployment.

Eagle Base’s approximately 2,000 service members representing all the military services, require considerable administration and coordination to reach them, said Davis. She is a special staff officer responsible for religious programming, working with service members, counseling and visiting the soldiers.

“I have found this position to be both rewarding and challenging because of the range of endeavors that I undertake, which makes my work for the Lord enjoyable,” said Davis.

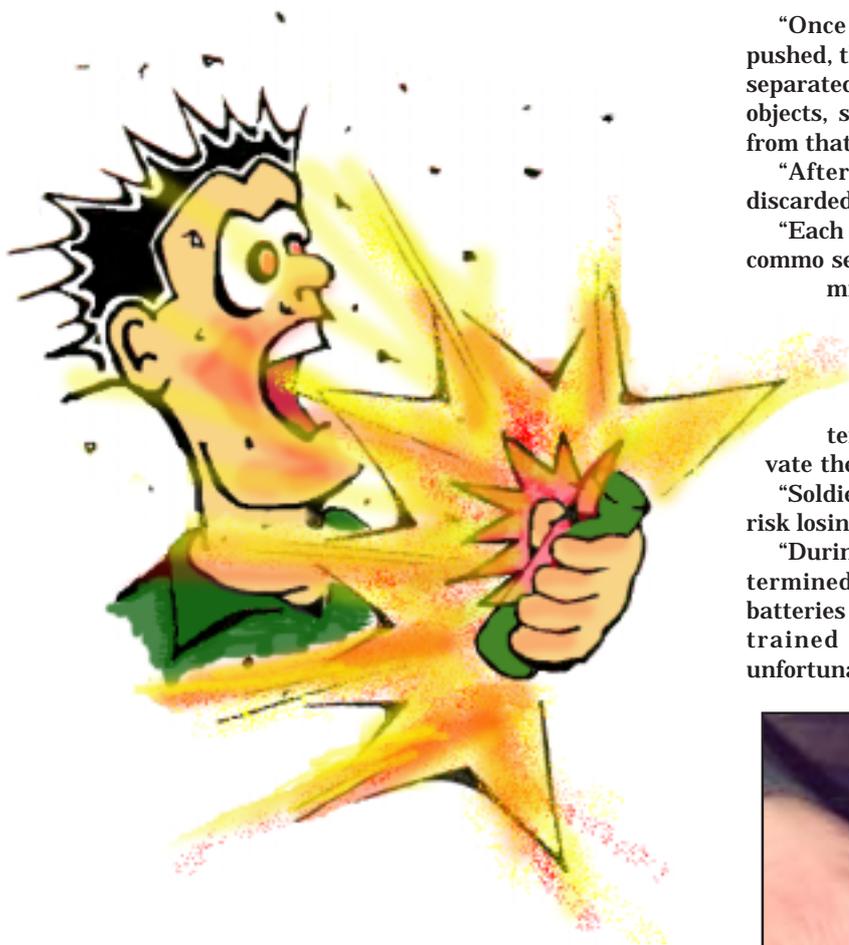
She continues to be accessible and is determined to go where the troops are as they go about their daily duties. It is not uncommon to see her walking down the gun line or speaking with guards at their observation posts. The sewn on rank on her battle dress uniform indicates that she’s a major, but all know Davis as chaplain.

“Are we motivated today? Sound off, then! Hooah!” Davis says to a group of infantry soldiers, who appreciate her walking figuratively in their footsteps to understand them.



Chaplain Bonita L. Davis, a Decatur, Georgia resident, of Eagle Base - Tuzla, visits with Camp McGovern soldiers during a break in training.

Soldiers hurt in battery explosions



“Once the CDD (Complete Discharge Devise) button is pushed, the battery is placed in a secure, well-ventilated area, separated approximately two inches from other batteries or objects, said Jennings. “It is not to be handled or disturbed from that point for at least five days,” he said.

“After the battery is completely discharged, it can be discarded,” said Helfrich.

“Each unit should have a communications representative or commo section,” said Staff Sergeant Darrell Adams, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 141st Signal Battalion, electronic maintenance shop.” Soldiers need to turn the batteries in to their own commo representative, not the commo section itself.”

Helfrich agreed, “Soldiers need to give the batteries to the proper people and not attempt to deactivate them themselves.”

“Soldiers who are not qualified to discharge batteries may risk losing their hands or eyesight,” said Jennings.

“During the investigation of the injured soldiers, it was determined that the cause of the accidents was due to the batteries exploding,” said Jennings. “The individuals were not trained to discharge the battery in their care, but unfortunately, attempted to.”



The BA 5800/U battery must be replaced by designated personnel only, to avoid personal injury.

Story by Specialist Nancy McMillan
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.
Photo by Sergeant Robert R. Ramon
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.
Illustration by Major Jay Jennings
Task Force Eagle Safety Office

In the past six months, two U.S. soldiers at Task Force Eagle have suffered severe injuries while improperly handling Precision Lightweight Global Positioning System Receiver (PLGR) batteries.

“The BA 5800/U battery is approximately four to five inches long and has a life-span of 24 hours,” according to Major Jay Jennings, Task Force Eagle safety officer. “An alternate to the BA 5800 is a standard AA battery insert which only last about four hours.”

“The PLGR has a gage on it that indicates the level of voltage left in it,” said Pete Helfrich, equipment specialist in electronic aviation. “Once the battery is depleted of energy, it must be discharged of the gaseous substance called lithium sulfur dioxide, before being discarded.”

“Only designated personnel from the communications section are authorized to activate the discharge mechanism,” according to Helfrich.

“There is a button on the battery covered by a piece of cellophane, that when depressed, sets the discharge process in motion,” said Jennings.

Bridging the road to peace



Specialist Brandon Collado, A Co., 16th Eng. Bn., operates a backhoe during the removal of Hesco Bastions at the mouth of the Brcko Bridge. Collado said he hopes that the sight of the bridge without fortifications will make Brcko's citizens happier.

Story and photo by Sergeant Terry L. Welch
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It's easy to see the Brcko Bridge as a symbol. Reaching across the Sava River on the northern edge of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the bridge connects the Serb-controlled, but still-disputed, town of Brcko to the country of Croatia. Two sections of the bridge that were destroyed by mortar fire during the war were patched temporarily by IFOR engineers, much like the Croatian-Muslim Federation and the Serbians were reconnected in talks by the U.N. Both ends have guardposts, ensuring that travelers crossing the bridge are checked out of one country before crossing the bridge and being checked into another, ostensibly creating a "no man's land" on the bridge's span.

The bridge seems a homage to the country's delicate peace and yet a remembrance of the war's lingering effects.

IFOR fortifications at either entrance of the Brcko Bridge were another reminder of both the war's effects and the help given to the country by troops from around the world. That is until February 12, when Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion, removed them.

Captain Erik Stor, the company commander, remembers when the fortifications were put in place two years ago, as do a number of his troops. Back then, the soldiers that now make up the 16th Engineer Battalion, were in the 23rd Engineer Battalion, before it was reflagged. "These bricks and rubble came from a house over there that the mayor of Brcko wanted torn down," he said, pointing across the street to where a dirt lot now rests.

One type of fortification the combat engineers put in place in 1996 are Hesco Bastions, which are basically wire mesh canister barricades with a strong, cloth lining filled with rocks, bricks and dirt. The barricades were the

first things to go as Company A began the fortification removal. To tear them out, a backhoe pulls the wire up, leaving the rubble behind to be removed by a front-end loader.

Specialist Brandon Collado was operating the backhoe the day that the barriers were taken out and said he didn't see his job as anything special. "It's just my job to give the bridge back to the Bosnians," Collado said.

Other barriers that had to be removed included hundreds of yards of concertina wire and tetrahedrons, which are metal beams welded together in a shape similar to a child's jack. Tetrahedrons are designed to slow or halt the advance of attacking vehicles.

Specialist John "Doc" Gonzales, Company A's medic, said that he felt the removal of fortifications from the bridge might "allow people to get into that right frame of mind...and begin to put the war behind them."

He squinted at the piles of brick and concertina wire waiting to be hauled away. "They don't need these reminders of the war around while they're trying to overcome their differences," he said.

Stor agreed. "We built these things two years ago, when things were much worse. They want this out of here because this is almost like 'Checkpoint Charlie' for these guys," he said, referring to the infamous Berlin Wall gate connecting East and West Berlin.

As Navy Seabees based at Camp Bedrock began the final cleanup of the rubble, Collado climbed back onto the backhoe to begin the drive back to Camp McGovern. He noted something not usually taken into account during military operations, the aesthetic value gained by removing the barriers. "This bridge will at least look nicer without this stuff," he said. "Hopefully, the Bosnians will be happier without it, too."