

TALON

Talon Inside



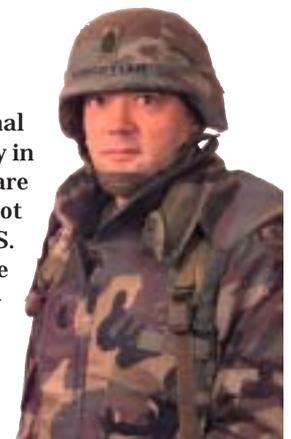
PSYOP In Bosnia 5 **Mine At The Market 8** **Range Opens 11**
Interacting with Bosnians **Brush fire at Arizona Market bares mine** **Camp Dobol - the place to shoot**

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



Stay focused! Be alert! Situational awareness! Keep your mind and body in the same place! All of these sayings are used to remind us that we are not inside a garrison in Europe or the U.S. We need to have constant vigilance on what we are doing here or someone will get hurt. Yet there are situations that happen everyday that show us we need to refocus our efforts on safety.

Let me point out a few things that I have either seen, or things that have been pointed out to me in just this last week. Has anyone seen joggers running down the road in the dark without a reflective belt or vest? How about the weapons clearing signs at all the clearing barrels – are all weapons being cleared properly? How about hearing that accidental discharge? Guards on guard post without magazines in their weapons. Did anyone notice people wearing jungle boots in the snow?

It is easy to say it's a leader problem or an NCO issue. We have all been told on live fire ranges that each of us are safety officers and that we can make corrections anytime we see a safety violation. We are carrying weapons with live rounds and each of us has a piece of the responsibility to watch out for each other. Leaders however, can not walk away from the fact that they ultimately are responsible and must ensure and enforce standards. Task Force Eagle is doing a great job, but we can be doing better. Be aware of your surroundings and remember, *"Today is the best day to be a soldier."*

On the Cover

Private First Class Miguel Ayon aims through the sights and down the long, slender barrell of his .50-caliber machine gun atop an armored Humvee. (Photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely)

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

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The firing range is now cleared

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

He quickly adjusts the aiming angle of his large .50-caliber crew-served machine gun that sits atop an armored Humvee like an eagle perched atop a leafless hickory that penetrates the pine green forest below. After the truck commander barks out his aiming points, the gunner responds, "Identified! — On the way!"

Southwest of Camp Bedrock, the stillness of the Swedish-controlled Velika-Ribnica Range is interrupted with a blast of lethal .50-caliber rounds. In an instant after leaving puffs of gunpowder smoke at the end of the long, slender barrel, the rounds strike the target 550 meters up-range — clouds of dust marking the impact behind the makeshift plywood target were the only indications of their successful hit.

"That's kind of a rush," Private First Class Miguel Ayon, a gunner with Eagle Troop, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, La., shouted to a fellow scout after completing the 120-round daytime qualification.

"That was cool. I want to do it again," said the 23-year-old Tucson, Ariz., native. "We should do this more often."

Ayon heard shouts of encouragement from Sergeant Benjamin Vincent, his truck commander. The 39-year-old Vincent enlisted in the Army only six years ago. He transferred to the 2-2 ACR two months prior to its deployment to Bosnia last summer. He spent his first six years in the Army with the elite 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Vincent echoed Ayon's sentiments concerning the weapons qualification "It's good training," he said. "This is the most productive thing we've done for our combat arms skills since we arrived in Bosnia," said Vincent, who primarily leads a platoon of soldiers on patrol.

Ayon and Vincent are among several soldiers from Camp Demi's Eagle and Ghost troops who qualified on either the .50-caliber machine gun, or the Mark-19 automatic grenade launcher. The Mark-19 also fired 40-millimeter rounds from the top of an armored Humvee.

According to Staff Sergeant Scottie Douglas, squadron master gunner responsible for range setup and safety, light cavalry scout gunners are required to qualify with the .50-cal and Mark-19 every six months. The Velike Range is the only location in the Tuzla Valley that offers ample space for the required deflection range of both crew-served weapons.

"I try to keep it as tactical as possible here," Douglas said. "But since we are in a peacekeeping mission, it is a challenge to sustain our tactical proficiency."

For many of those qualifying, Velike Range offered the first opportunity since Advanced Individual Training to fire the large-caliber weapons.

Douglas offered a tidbit of trivia. "Did you know the .50-cal was originally designed to be used as a sniper weapon? The effective kill range of a .50-cal is 5,700 meters, so it was used by snipers in Vietnam."

Today, the .50-caliber is used as an area suppression weapon, usually atop an armored Humvee or a Bradley tank, noted Douglas, an 18-year Army veteran from Dothan, Ala.

Meanwhile, Ayon reiterated that firing the .50-caliber ma-



Private First Class Miguel Ayon aims through the sights and down the long, slender barrell of his .50-caliber machine gun atop an armored humvee.

chine gun was a good change of pace since arriving in Bosnia in August 1997. "It lifts the morale of all the troops," said Ayon, a 1992 graduate of Desert View High School near Tucson.

As for the peacekeeping mission, Ayon has contrasting opinions. "For the children, it's great. We must provide a safe environment for the children. They are the future of this country. But for centuries the adults have learned to hate one another because of their religious backgrounds. It will be difficult to change their ways of thinking," reasoned Ayon as he cleaned up the many clasps and warm pieces of brass before starting the arduous task of cleaning carbon from the fired .50-caliber machine gun.

Turkish brigade lends a hand



Major Ahmet Koseler, (left) the G-5 of the Turkish Brigade, hands a Bosnian school girl a package of school supplies, interpreter Corporal Seyat Haziroglu looks on.

Story and photos by Specialist Nancy McMillan
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Major Ahmet Koseler, the civil affairs officer of the Turkish Brigade, is proud of the soldiers he commands. The officers, noncommissioned officers and enlisted all volunteer their time to provide aid to the survivors of war-torn Bosnia, besides fulfilling their military obligation and duties.

One such duty of the Turkish soldier is conducting checkpoints at various places along main thoroughfares. Small, orange-colored cones, flagmen, armed soldiers, a tank and an armored vehicle line both sides of the road. As motorized transport slows, the license plate of each gets checked against a list of stolen civilian and military vehicles. If no match is made, vehicles pass without hesitation.

The men in camouflage also perform guard duty in many areas around the base camp. Dressed in full "battle rattle," they stand firm in guard towers, base entrances and in front or inside buildings for hours at a time.

Their dedication does not stop there. The Turks also perform a duty from the heart — they lend their knowledge and manpower to improve the living conditions of displaced Bosnians. They also help repair and restore churches and schools.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, kids from schools,

orphanages, refugee camps and other displaced areas in the Turkish region of responsibility, are bused to the compound for three hours of interacting fun with the soldiers.

The children are treated to basketball, volleyball and Ping-Pong in the gymnasium. They are invited to sing and dance as the Turkish Band plays a variety of instrumental tunes. Learning about the tactical vehicles of the Turkish brigade seems to be a favorite of the children — along with a puppet show at a local theater.

Once a week, the Turkish soldiers, with members of the 1454th Transportation Company from Concord, N.C., and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, La., stationed at Guardian Base, travel throughout MND North performing puppet shows for the Bosnian children.

"The volunteer soldiers go to schools, the Tuzla hospital children's ward, orphanages and the Zone of Separation," said Major Charles Wheeler, a chaplain at Guardian base with the 353rd Civil Affairs Command.

"Forty-two children from all over are here today," said 1st Lieutenant Tayfun Turkoglu, Civil Affairs Plans officer in the Turkish Brigade located in Zenica, Bosnia. "Some have no mother, some do not have a father and some do not have a mother or father."

According to Turkoglu, the Turks started their humanitarian aid to the refugee children on Oct. 12, 1997.

"We distribute clothes and 15-kilogram food packs containing items such as oil, sugar, milk, butter and macaroni to refugee camps," said Turkoglu. "We delivered 500 of the food packs last month alone."

"Some of the items come from humanitarian aid agencies and residents of Turkey," Turkoglu said. "Officers, NCOs and enlisted also give part of their salaries to help," he said, "any amount they want."

According to one Turkish officer, the engineer soldiers have built and repaired roads and bridges on a volunteer basis. The engineers also installed underground piping donated from 15 different humanitarian organizations, at Putovici refugee camp. The camp is in an area high on a mountain that houses about 400 people, with approximately 200 children under the age of 18.

When asked about interacting with the children and helping the Bosnian people, one Turkish soldier replied, "I like it, it makes me feel good. We enjoy being out among the Bosnian people and having a good relationship with them."



A puppet show performed by the 1454th Transportation Company with the support of the Turkish Brigade. The puppets were just five of many to dance and sing in the Bosnian language.

PSYOP Co. interacts with Bosnians

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

The soldiers in the 318th Psychological Operations Company division from St. Louis, Mo., really draw a crowd wherever they go.

Children flock to them yelling, "Mupko! More Mupkos!"

Even though "Mupko" is an entertainment magazine designed to introduce young people to the Western way of life, it contains stories about European heroes, movie stars and rock stars. It also includes updates on the Dayton Peace Accords and asks the young readers for their opinions on democracy.

Although the adults enjoy this magazine almost as much as the children, an adult-oriented magazine called the Herald of Progress is more informative than "Mupko."

Herald of Progress is designed to support the objectives of the United States and highlight the different things being done in accordance with the Dayton Peace Accords, Freedom of Movement issues and general information concerning current events in their country.

Specialist Kenneth Mays, 21, of St. Louis, says, "Handing out magazines is a lot of fun and we really enjoy interacting with the kids here. The adults like being informed as to what is happening and how it affects them, and they look forward to receiving each of these issues."

"The magazines contain a lot of useful information that may not reach a lot of the people, but it is a useful tool in getting the information out to more of the people in the area," explained Mays.

Interacting with the local children is only one of the vital missions the PSYOP teams are tasked to perform.

"Our mission is to disseminate information. This job ranges

from handing out magazines to counterdrug missions," Mays said. "Product development teams support the objectives of other units."

Sergeant Terry Kinder, 30, also of the 318th PSYOP Company from St. Louis, added, "We have supported the Military Police during grave-site visits with loudspeakers and interpreters, crowd control, and we also help back up the local authorities," he said

Kinder said that the 318th prepares radio tapes with rock music and the top 40 European music to give to radio stations. These tapes include messages supporting the objectives of the United States, mine awareness and freedom of movement.

"We also coordinate with local teachers and EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) to give classes to the children on mine awareness," Kinder continues. "Our unit mission is made of many different factors," he said.

In their mission they get to interact with the local people. This enables them to serve as the eyes and ears of the commanders to see if the information given out is being understood and received by the general public. "In this way we can relay this information on to improve or change how the information is being received and disseminated," Kinder said.

The PSYOP teams are constantly busy with one mission after another. The work is hard at times, but very rewarding.

"The scenery is beautiful, and I really enjoy communicating with the local people. For the most part they are friendly and happy to see us. And the kids are wonderful. In these situations you can really see that we are definitely making a positive impact on the people here," Kinder said. "It makes my time here more fulfilling and rewarding knowing I am helping these people to improve their lives,"



Specialist Kenneth Mays with the 318th PSYOP Co. hands out magazines to local children during the ongoing peacekeeping mission Operation Joint Guard.

Norwegian amphibians land at Eagle Base Telemark company engages in Joint Resolve

Story & photos by Sergeant First Class Sherry L. Claus
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Like Vikings out of the past, 140 Norwegian soldiers in four amphibious vehicles entered the gates of Eagle Base on March 2, to participate in the five-day exercise — Joint Resolve Six. The “Viking ships” were SISU XA-180 amphibious vehicles mounted with .50 caliber weapons. Three Telemark Companies from Norway manned these military behemoths.

Joint Resolve is a recurring, monthly multinational exercise designed to plan, rehearse and execute operations to enhance security and stability within Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Captain Bill Reukauf is the Coalition Press Information Center (CPIC) representative and Officer in Charge of the Public Affairs elements in the Tactical Operations Center.

“One of the exercise’s goals is the quick deployment of forces to assist the Stabilization Forces commander and the rapid, but smooth integration of these forces within SFOR,” he explained. “Most operations with Joint Resolve Six are drills and exercises designed to show strength, cohesion, and cooperation between various countries operating in this theatre which

ultimately hone and polish the units’ skills.”

The three Telemark platoons began the five-day exercise by occupying Eagle Base and assuming security. The Quick Reaction Force (QRF) then received an alert that there was a civil disturbance at the East Gate. The QRF responded with three SISUs, blue lights flashing and the Norwegian flag snapping briskly. The first vehicle on the scene was rapidly reinforced with concertina wire upon approaching the gate.

As the lead vehicle moved into place near the road, the other SISUs assumed position to the rear and discharged their cargo of riot control teams. The “crack” of riot batons pounding on the shields in time with the marching of the men echoed ominously through the area as they moved into position.

The sergeant in charge used a bullhorn to announce to the gathering crowd that they must disperse immediately. When the civilians faded away into the darkness and the gate was once again secure, the QRF team disappeared into the hulls of the SISUs and moved out to await further missions.

This was just one of several Telemark QRF drills held



Norwegian Telemark Company platoon members prepare for ground movement to Slavonski Brod bridge to complete a Joint Resolve Six mission with their Air Assault team already in position there.

Eagle Base Six

throughout the base during Joint Resolve Six, said First Lieutenant Mike Armstrong, of HHC 2nd Battalion 6th Infantry Regiment, the Liaison Officer assigned to the Telemark Company.

There was also orientation to air-mobile operations which included a sling-load mission, and an air assault in conjunction with a ground movement of troops at the bridge at Slavonski Brod.

Joint Resolve Six was a success in several ways – especially if the comments by some members of the Telemark Company are any indication.

Sergeant Arne Bergsten, a 30-year-old Oslo native, was very pleased with the mission here. “This is beneficial training. We have been doing what we trained for in Norway for riots and civil disturbances,” he said. “It’s been a good break from our normal guard-type duties over here and we’ve gotten to meet all these people from other countries, too.”

Twenty-year-old Private Johnny Tennas, from Trondheim, Norway, agreed. “The training is very good,” said the heavy gunner/reserve driver. “We have seen some things we can improve on because of these missions.”

Private Yngve Fuglem, also from Trondheim, explained the differences in what his team normally does in Norway and what they have been doing in Sarajevo, where they are stationed while in Bosnia. “At home, we train more for infantry but here, we have been doing more guard/protection force type missions,” said the 22-year-old cannon man. “We have adjusted to this work well, though.”

As he climbed back on top of the SISU – which means “courageous and strong” – Fuglem repeated a phrase he overheard from an American soldier that really hit home for him and his fellow Telemark soldiers. “Peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers...but only soldiers can do it!”

The camouflaged amphibious vehicles pulled out of the “harbor” near Club 21 at Eagle Base. Weapons armed and flags waving, they headed to their next mission at Slavonski Brod to meet up with the portion of their team involved in the air assault at the bridge. Once the mission is complete, they will return at Sarajevo to continue their duties that only soldiers can do.



The Norwegian Telemark Quick Reaction Force team donned riot gear and left the safety of the SISU XA 180 vehicles to head to the mock civil disturbance at Eagle Base's East Gate.

Mine discovered at Arizona Market EOD at work in the communities

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

In the middle of the Zone of Separation lies a ray of hope known to Stabilization Force soldiers as the Arizona Market, due to its being situated on the Arizona transit route. The open-air market is a flurry of commerce and construction. Everywhere you look there are people from both the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republic of Serbia building new shops. There is a sense of community at the market.

The past of this area can't be forgotten, though, or completely escaped. This was made evident recently when a PMR-2A antipersonnel mine was found very near the market.

The market's rapid growth has made expansion necessary, so a grassy area was burned in order to clear brush in preparation for building. The burn revealed the hidden mine, however. The most horrible aspect of the incident is that before adults discovered the mine, children did. Adults noticed later, when a conspicuous gathering of rocks in the field showed where children had been throwing stones, attempting to detonate the mine.

Upon hearing of the mine from members of the Croatian Defense Council (HVO), 2nd Lieutenant Jonathon Burke, 24, Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion, made the decision to postpone a bunker destruction mission in order to investigate.

"They said that kids had been messing with the mine, so I knew we needed to check it out," the Custer, S.D. native, Burke said.

"I knew we had to call in (an explosive ordnance disposal team) when I saw it," said Burke. "The HVO said they couldn't defuse it because it was damaged."

The warm weather brings busy days for the joint Army/Navy EOD team at Camp McGovern. Farmers have already begun to prepare fields for planting, thereby exposing more mines and unexploded ordnance.

"We're doing five to nine of these things a day," said Aviation Ordnanceman First Class (EOD/AW) William Vandiver, 31, EOD Mobile Unit 2, Detachment 14. "But when they called it over the radio and said it was at the market, I knew that this was definitely an 'immediate.'"

"We would like to blow damaged mines in place, but (at the market) we would've run the risk of having a lot of people

injured." Vandiver secured the mine's firing pin in place, the combat engineers filled sandbags to place around it and a rope was tied to it. "At that point, we still couldn't be sure it wasn't booby-trapped underneath," Vandiver said.

A Swedish EOD team had also arrived on site and assisted the engineers in keeping civilians from the area. The Co. A combat engineers closed the road. Two interpreters used bullhorns to warn people away. Tension was high as the cord tied to the mine was pulled, dragging it up out of the ground. After waiting several minutes, Vandiver retrieved the mine, turning it over to the engineers to be destroyed along with the bunkers being demolished later in the day.

Vandiver calmly began putting his equipment back into the EOD team's Humvee. He noted that sometimes the job of ex-



EOD team members discuss mine removal techniques as the market teems with activity behind them. The barbed wire fence in the center of the photo was put in place moments after the decision was made to call EOD.

plosive ordnance disposal seems thankless. It looks easy, he said, when things go as planned. "The bad thing about this job is that when something goes wrong, it's always a bad situation," he added.

Burke, on the other hand, watched the Bosnians resume shopping in the market and said he's often told by the civilians that the work of SFOR troops is appreciated. He'd know it even if he weren't told. "Out here," he said, as children stood by watching the soldiers preparing to depart, "you know you're helping people."

American Red Cross lends a helping hand

Story by Specialist Nancy McMillan

196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Photos by Sergeant First Class Frank Casares

345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The American Red Cross is there! Where there is a military presence and communities and people in need, the staff of 1.58 million volunteers in 2,200 Red Cross chapters is there to help. There are 43 Red Cross Blood Services regions, 15 Tissue Services regions and 262 Services to the Armed Forces stations in all 50 states and around the world.

"The ARC's main mission in Bosnia is to provide emergency communication between service members, civilians stationed here and family members back home," said Cecilia B. Baize, Assistant Station Manager at the Eagle Base station.

Some of the services that the ARC provides are notifications of death, illnesses and childbirth. They also provide assistance with childcare, family problems, counseling and other issues.

Recent statistics, which date back to December 1995, indicate the ARC has delivered over 13,000 messages to military members and civilians serving in theater.

While performing that duty, the ARC also furnishes the soldiers with moral boosters.

"The office is open 24 hours a day providing coffee, cocoa, tea, cookies, candy, books and videos that may be checked out," said Baize, a Pensacola, Fla. native.

"The items are donated to us from individuals back home, churches, private organizations and other ARC offices in Europe and the U.S.," Baize said. "We get boxes of books, videos, snacks and toiletries on a daily basis."

Besides Eagle base, the goods are distributed to other base camps located throughout Bosnia and in Taszar, Hungary.

"We go on every convoy to places like Bedrock, Camp Colt, Camp McGovern, Blue Factory and the 'hills'," Baize said.

"We try to participate in whatever the base is doing," said Baize. "For example, here, we sponsor trivia night on Saturday evenings at 1930 and give away prizes to the winners."

The ARC team, called Team Nine or "T Pulse," consists of five members located at Eagle base and two in Taszar.

"Four of the members are prior military," Baize said. "One was Coast Guard, two were Army and one was Air Force."

"We come from different areas throughout the U.S. and Europe," said Baize, "and come together as a team in Falls Church, Va., the National Headquarters of the ARC."

While there for two days, the team is briefed on Bosnian-Herzegovina, training, duties and responsibilities. The briefings also include behavioral expectations, pay benefits and re-deployment; along with assuring personal affairs are in tact and getting identifications.

From Virginia, the ARC members move to Fort Benning, Ga., for one week. They are issued uniforms, LBE and receive military briefings about everything from their shot records to wearing the uniform, formations, 9-mm handguns and even eating in the mess hall.

"That's where we learned to be a soldier," said Baize. "It was fun for me, I really enjoyed it."

"We work eight or more hours a shift, seven days a week," said Baize. "The shift changes every two weeks the entire time we're here. Also, each of us will rotate with the team members in Taszar," she said.

As Red Cross members, the team abides by seven principles in successfully fulfilling their mission: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

"These principles are important because the Red Cross is worldwide," said Baize. "We go anywhere— anywhere there is military."

In short, according to an ARC motto, "We were with you then and we are with you now."



Private First Class Caprar Corneliv with RHHT 2 ACR (G-4) (left), receives a cup of coffee from Cecilia C. Baize (right), Assistant Station Manager of the American Red Cross.



Private First Class Harold B. Butler II with RHHT 2 ACR (left), listens to some of the services offered by the American Red Cross from Cecilia C. Baize, Assistant Station Manager.

Hill 722 site of major communications hub



Staff Sergeant Donald Wilson, a switch supervisor with Co. B, 141st Signal Battalion, 2nd Platoon, discusses a communications problem with other members of his unit stationed at Eagle Base.

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

Standing above the spires of Srebrenik's mosques, up a winding dirt road that leads past a medieval Turkish fortress, the antennae of the communication outpost at Hill 722 seem to mimic the woods around them. Every genus and specie of metallic tree stands in this virtual forest: satellite dishes, boxes on poles, shining arrow shapes, aluminum jutting everywhere upward and outward.

On the hillside, sheep graze in a meadow, sweet-smelling wood smoke pours from the ancient stone houses and fruit trees are already beginning to blossom, preparing to bear fruit.

But on top of the hill, private first class Shannon Woodrum, a node center operator with Company B, 141st Signal Battalion, 2nd Platoon, explained about nodes, trunks and networks (each with their own number), in very technical communications language.

Basically, the communications post is one of two major military communications hubs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Telephone calls, and other types of electronic media, are sent into the antennae and rerouted. "My job," said Woodrum, the 21-year-old, Bancroft, W. Va. native "is to make sure this all stays working like it's supposed to. We keep a constant flow of communication."

"We're AT&T on wheels," is how First Lieutenant Shawn Nighbert, the node center platoon leader, described it.

Nighbert, a 25-year-old self-proclaimed "Army brat" said he has probably spent as much time in Bosnia as he has anywhere. He went on to say that his last six months on Hill 722 have been a great experience. "It's absolutely gorgeous up here and we have a nice, tight, close-knit family atmosphere."

Troop L, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment rotates four platoons to the hill. Each platoon spends a week on the hill assisting with force protection.

Private First Class Mark Leavens, 21, Troop L, 3-2 ACR, said he likes the time on 722.

"I'm from Cedar Falls, Iowa, and it's flat out there. This is the first time I've seen hills this big," he said, looking out at the hillside from his place in the guard tower. "It's nice up here and we get to rest."

Private First Class Anthony Mangin, 20, 2nd platoon with Leavens, likes life on the hill for nearly the opposite reason. To Mangin, the hills around Srebrenik remind him of the land around his home in Augusta, Maine. "All I could think of coming up here was driving in the upper country. It's almost too much like home," he said.

Signal battalion's Specialist Samuel Elizondo, a 23-year-old from San Antonio, doesn't really echo the sentiments of either Leavens or Mangin. This is his second time in Bosnia, but even he had to admit, however, that there are worse places to be stationed. "I use the gym a lot and I guess it's really nice up here. And if we weren't here," Elizondo added, "communications would get all fouled up."

The soldiers of the 141st, 2nd Platoon, will be leaving Hill 722 soon. Nighbert, who'll be moving on to Tuzla to become the executive officer of Company C, said the advice he would pass on to the new node center platoon leader would be to try to maintain a close relationship with the troops. "As platoon leaders, we don't usually get to spend this much time side-by-side with the troops in garrison, I've enjoyed it."

Hill 722 has been home to many soldiers like those of the 2nd Platoon, 141st Sig. Bn. and Troop L, 3-2 ACR over the past few years and will continue to be so as the rotations continue.

New 'soldier friendly' firing range opens

Russians use range for familiarization fire

Story by First Lieutenant
Lillian Sydenstricker
Photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

With every shovel load of rocks thrown onto the walkway and every heavy sandbag tediously arranged in straight lines, the new Camp Dobol 25-meter range renovation project is nearly complete.

"I can't wait 'til it's finished," said Specialist Roderick Benson, 24, of St. Louis, Mo., as he aligned the sandbags. Benson and other members of 2nd Squad, 84th Engineer Company from Fort Polk, La., spent much of the day Thursday, March 5, putting the finishing touches on the range renovation project.

"This range will be more soldier-friendly now that we have constructed these stone walkways and firing lines," added Corporal Ronald Johnson, 31, of Slidell, La., as he tossed another shovel load of rocks onto the contrasting, white walkway.

Once open, the range will accommodate .9mm, M-16A2 assault rifle and M-60 machine gun fire. In fact, a group of Russian soldiers have already scheduled the range for weapons familiarization later this month.

"When we first got out here the range was muddy because the water could not drain off," said Staff Sergeant Juan Poncedeleon, 38, of Guanica, Puerto Rico. Poncedeleon is supervising the renovation construction project.

The engineers arrived in Bosnia last October as part of Operation Joint Guard, the ongoing peacekeeping mission in the Balkan region. The 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk is currently occupying Camp Dobol.

Meanwhile, the second squad of the assault and obstacle engineer platoon started the renovation project by creating a drainage system for the range, which is located in the lowest level at Camp Dobol.

Second, the range and its protective berms were raised. Gravel was laid for each firing lane and a walkway was created to provide easy access.

In addition to a new access road, the engineers placed new boxes to hold each of the eight targets upright. Finally, they gave the range tower a new coat of paint and designed a 15-foot practice rappelling tower.

"The overall mission was to improve and beautify the firing range at Camp Dobol," said First Lieutenant Daniel Beranek, the second squad platoon leader.

Furthermore, Poncedeleon's guidance at the new 25-meter range is just another rung in his lengthening ladder of improve-



Specialist Roderick Benson straightens the sandbagged edging to Camp Dobol's new 25-meter firing range walkway. Benson is an 84th Engineer Company general construction operator from Fort Polk, La.

ment projects in and around Camp Dobol. He has had a hand in projects on Hill 562 and the Camp Dobol bypass road.

"Poncedeleon and his squad does excellent work," said Beranek. "He understands his mission and his men require limited supervision."

The long, hard hours of labor that second squad put into the range beautification project will pay off March 12. That's the date the Russians will be at Camp Dobol to show off their small-arms weapons.

"Sometimes the work you put into a project does pay off down the line. When you have another country coming in to fire on your range, you feel proud to have accomplished something that benefits all nations," Poncedeleon concluded.

Doppler radar tracks targets



Corporal John Hilgert is assigned to Battery F, 144th Target Acquisition Battery. He performs his daily check on the Doppler radar dish at Camp Bedrock.

Story and photo by Sergeant Tim Fischer
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

While the Stabilization Force's (SFOR) soldiers carry out their daily peacekeeping missions in the Tuzla valley, many are unaware of the blanket of protection given to them by the Doppler Radar System located at Camp Bedrock, Bosnia.

Corporal John Hilgert, a 23-year-old Army National Guard member from San Antonio, Texas, is attached to Battery F, 144th Target Acquisition Battery (TAB) out of Los Angeles, Calif.

"I feel privileged that the regular Army has chosen the National Guard to participate in this real time mission here in Bosnia," said Hilgert. "I feel proud to be working side by side with the full time Army units here at Camp Bedrock."

The eleven-man 144th TAB unit has a 24-hour mission here in the Tuzla valley, using the target tracking radar system. Hilgert along with 10 other men are always monitoring the SFOR sector for any disturbances in the area. They can detect, locate, track and plot the trajectory of missiles, mortar rounds, artillery and also small arms fire. The radar system is a big security blanket covering not only the Americans, but also all of the Allied Forces here in this region.

"I feel good knowing I'm responsible for the entire Tuzla area when I am in the radar tower. We receive approximately 5 to 10 alarms in a week's time, and it is important to locate each and every one of them," says Hilbert.

The 144th TAB has the ability to acquire information within seconds, and then they determine the exact location and type of disturbance through use of the radar system. Once they document the appropriate information, they call it into their higher headquarters.

"We all have been trained as radar system operators. The radar itself has been working flawlessly since we have arrived at Camp Bedrock in December," said Hilgert.

Along with their duties as radar operators, the troops also perform daily maintenance on the system. This requires Hilgert to work around the radar panel itself. The dish radiates 46 thousand volts of static and high voltage electricity, so the members of 144th only work on the dish when it is turned off. Hilgert says that he and his soldiers can work safely outside a 50-meter radius of the dish.

When addressing his civilian life in the states, Hilgert said, "I don't feel so bad leaving my civilian job back in America because I feel my job is an important element in the over-all safety of the men and women here in the Task Force area of operation."

Thanks to Hilgert and the entire 144th TAB, the soldiers of SFOR can rest a little easier.