

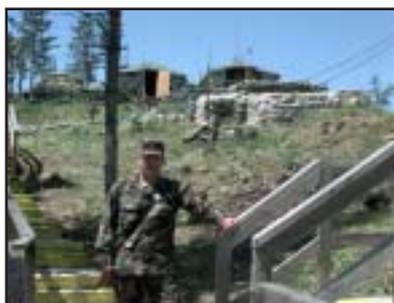
"Guns Silent"



# TALON

# Talon

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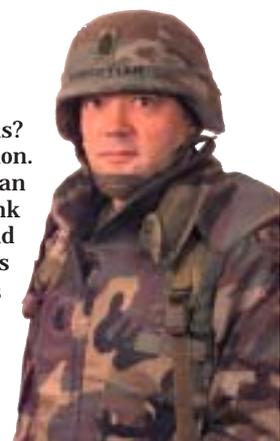
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**By Command Sergeant Major  
Carl E. Christian**  
*Task Force Eagle CSM*



Do you know where your head is? That may sound like a stupid question. But, it will sound no more stupid than if your First Sergeant asks you to think where you last saw your weapon and ammunition. Of course he'll ask this before, during, and as the unit is dumping duffel bags and searching all its areas of responsibility. Or are you going to be the one who will swear that your weapon was cleared and you have no idea how that round got chambered before you pulled the trigger. Another clearing barrel bites the dust.

Everyone says, "that'll never happen to me." Yet every time the task force changes over, this type of event occurs and we all ask ourselves why. The answer is really pretty simple — TRAINING, or lack of it. I have watched soldiers go through the clearing procedures perfect and I have watched some who act as if the M16 rifle was an elective class when they went through basic training and they chose knitting instead. Soldiers will get up and leave their weapons in the dining facility or in the latrine and never miss it.

When you question soldiers, you will find out that the soldiers who do things correctly all the time, are the ones who have their noncommissioned officers and officers stress training, and where soldiers act as a team and rehearse the training together.

I will give you the three "Cs" of training that will make everyone a successful soldier and leader; CHECK, double-CHECK and re-CHECK. CHECK each other for accountability of your weapon and ammo so often that you ask your self that question in your sleep. Double-CHECK the weapons clearing sign that is right by the clearing barrel. And re-CHECK each other, as any good team would do. Practice the three "Cs" and also remember that... "TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO BE A SOLDIER."

### On the Cover

**M109A5 Howitzer waits near the berm at Camp McGovern to return to Giessen, Germany. (Photo by Sergeant Terry L. Welch, 345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

### The Task Force Eagle Web site is located at [www.tfeagle.army.mil](http://www.tfeagle.army.mil)

The Task Force Eagle web site offers breaking news and photos on its web site. The Web site provides information concerning the Turk, Russian, and NORDPOL Brigade assigned to Task Force Eagle, as well as U.S. soldiers stationed in Bosnia. The Talon On-line is updated every Saturday.

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# U.S. Russian Engineer Day builds foundation for joint missions

Story by Sergeant Gary Hicks

Photo by Petty Officer Jerimiah Porter  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The Seabees of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion-133 and the 16th Engineer Company hosted their Russian counterparts at Camp Bedrock, on June 2, to display the tools of the engineering trade. The Seabees set up static displays at their Camp Pebbles, located just a few hundred meters from Bedrock, consisting mostly of weapons and heavy equipment for the Russians to view.

"We had several pieces of heavy equipment setup such as a grader, bulldozer and a 5-ton truck, all with operators standing by to answer any questions that the Russians had," explained Equipment Operator Third class Deanna Marie Foster, 22, from Raytown, Mo., a member of NMCB-133 (Kanroos).

Foster was chosen to familiarize and explain various weapons used by the Seabees in a tactical environment, because she recently passed the Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist Board.

The Russian soldiers were like kids in a candy store, the candy being heavy equipment. They went from display to

display, asking many questions about the equipment such as how it is used and its capabilities.

"They were in awe with the engineering equipment that we have, but were even more impressed with the way of life of American troops," said Petty Officer Third Class Dmitry Sokol, 26, a Ukraine native.

"They said their equipment was different than ours, but wouldn't say which was better. I got the feeling that they liked ours best," said Sokol.

Sokol immigrated to Albany, N.Y. with his parents seven years ago and has been serving in the Navy for the past two years as an electronic analyst.

However, today he volunteered his knowledge of Russian to help overcome the language barrier.

"All of the Russian soldiers I talked to feel that the exercise was a very helpful exchange of experience and helps us get to know each other better," said Sokol. "They also expressed that they look forward to more coalition training in the future."

Events like the U.S. Russian Engineer Day continue to forge a solid foundation for future joint missions in Bosnia.



Russian soldiers look on as a Navy Seabee demonstrates the capabilities of a bulldozer.

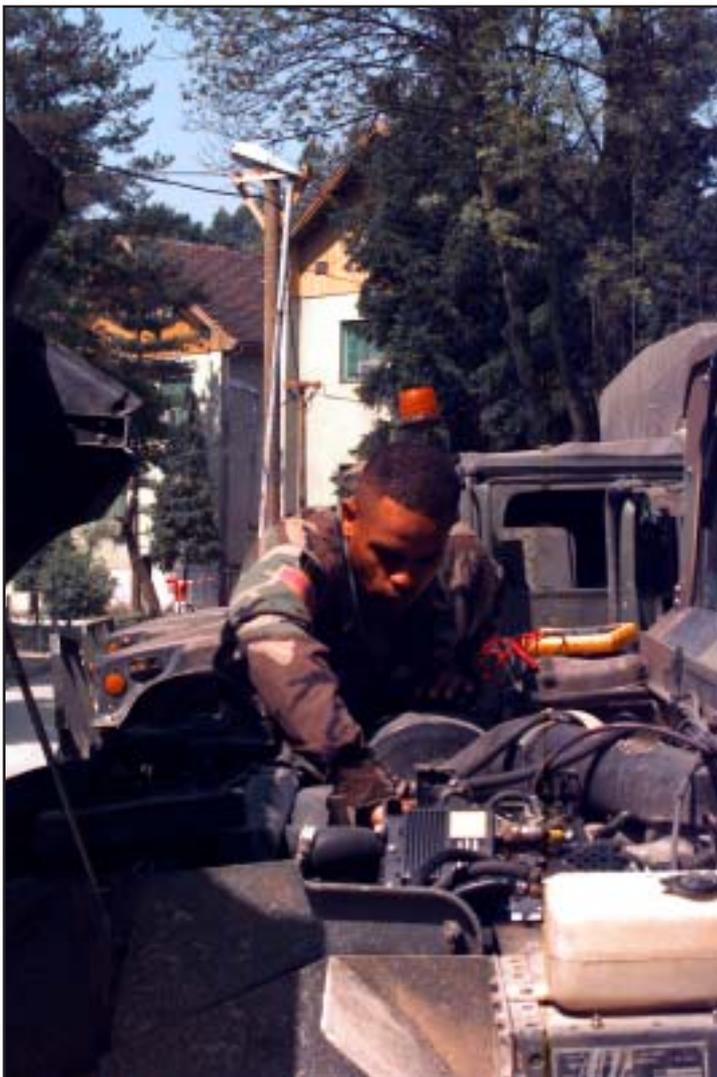
# 'Guns Silent' DIVARTY leaves Bosnia

Story and photo by First Lieutenant Anmarie Daneker  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**T**hat low, distant rumble that sounds like thunder from a storm brewing in the Tuzla Valley is not thunder. It's the sound of the 1st Armored Division Artillery (Forward) redeploying back to Germany and Fort Polk, La., after a 10-month mission in Bosnia.

On June 15, 1998, the U.S. cannon artillery assigned to Task Force Eagle will lower their tubes in silence as they conclude their mission within Multinational Division-North [MND (N)], Bosnia-Herzegovina

"Every soldier in the DIVARTY has stepped up and accomplished this mission with success," said Major William B. Miracle, the executive officer, who hails from Kingston, Mich.



Specialist Derek E. Silkert, 1st Armored Division, Division Artillery, prepares a Humvee for redeployment.

Indeed they have. The headquarters is located at Eagle Base but there are various batteries spread out over MND (N). The mission of the DIVARTY was to provide fire support and radar coverage for all of MND (N) as well as maintain information folders on all storage weapons sites, Miracle said.

This was the second rotation for the DIVARTY and the record for the unit is exemplary. Several drivers logged over 15,000 accident-free miles and one soldier, Staff Sergeant Antonio Valentin, a gun section chief at Camp McGovern, was named Task Force Eagle NCO of the Quarter. All gun crews were certified at a live-fire exercise at Glamoc. DIVARTY soldiers had the chance to not only work alongside multinational soldiers but become an actual part of the foreign units for certain missions, including foot patrols.

Colonel Mark T. Kimmitt, Division Artillery commander, said that the U.S. artillerymen that have served in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be extremely proud of their contribution to this peace process.

Kimmitt said that the division made its ominous presence felt by the self-propelled and towed howitzers rolling through the countryside and the impressive capabilities of the firefinder radar units.

"The massive firepower demonstrations conducted at the Glamoc live-fire range by the entire fire support team, have served as fair warning to any belligerent force that question the capabilities of SFOR forces," said Kimmitt.

Personal improvement was also one of the DIVARTY commander's directives and soldiers eagerly met the challenge.

"The soldiers continued to execute a very high level of training to include 85 percent pass on Common Task Training, 100 percent pass on the APFT, as well as college, correspondence and leadership courses," said Miracle. While the unit was deployed, the overall APFT average went up and soldiers took over 50 hours of college courses. Many soldiers throughout the division received well-deserved promotions.

For Specialist Derek E. Silkert, a light vehicle mechanic from Dayton, Ohio, the deployment was a challenge because he had just arrived into the unit right before it left Germany.

"Coming here was a challenge, but everything fell into place," he said. "I learned how to adapt and go with the mission."

Kemitt said that the retirement of U.S. artillery signifies a major victory in the progress of peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and attests to the professionalism and competence American artillerymen have demonstrated while serving as partners for peace.

"The retirement of U.S. artillery from Bosnia is another historical step in the success of bringing peace and progress to the region," said Kimmitt.

Overall, the soldiers of the 1st Armored Division, Division Artillery are proud of their accomplishments during their time in Bosnia. After the third of July, there will be something special missing in this region, and a low rumble heard off in the distance might just be thunder.

# Mount Vis rises to new heights as training area for soldiers

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

**F**ox Troop, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (2/2 ACR), from Fort Polk, La., performs two-week rotations on top of Mount Vis providing the security element for the site to ensure the other critical units here are safe.

The soldiers of Fox Troop have found a way to use the mountain as a training aid to maintain their war fighting skills.

"We are able to use the mountain's high altitude to do basic training on terrain features," said First Lieutenant Lorenzo Rios, 27, of Wapato, Wash.

The valley below makes an excellent sand table to aid in the training, he also noted.

"We do grass drills on how you would maneuver through the valley. You have the entire Tuzla valley to work and be creative with," continued Rios.

Rios, a Scout Platoon Leader, stresses the importance of ensuring soldiers stay proficient in their warfighting skills.

"We have trained the soldiers on the Rules of Engagement and how to conduct peacekeeping operations because that is the mission at hand," he said.

He also stated that even though they have a peacekeeping mission, "We must never forget what our true job is as warfighters."

While stationed at Mount Vis, the soldiers are able to utilize the relaxing atmosphere to spend quality time on college courses and studying when they are not training.

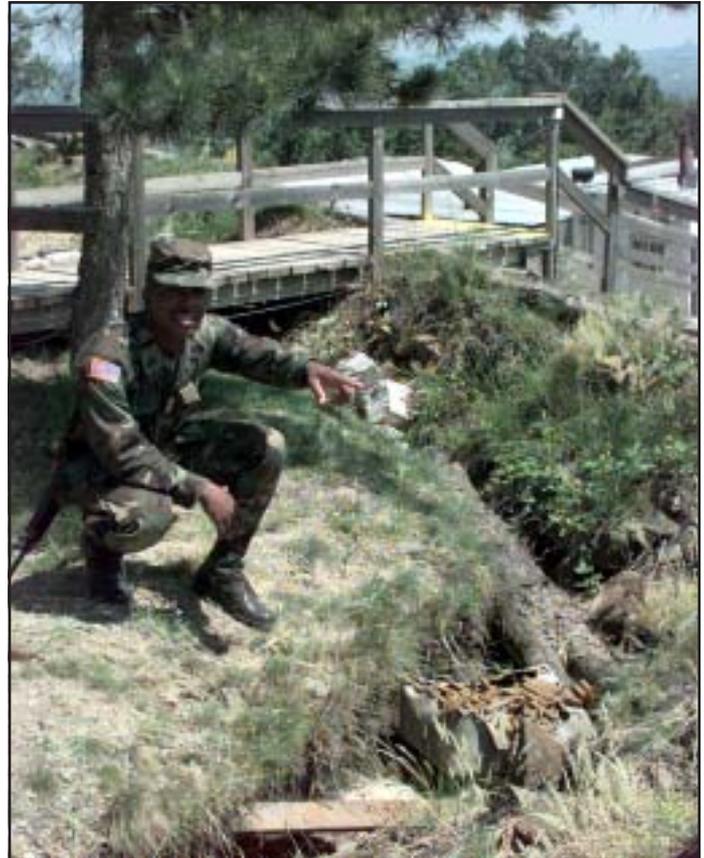
"We are away from the distractions of the main camp up here and that allows us to focus more on training and classes," commented Private First Class John M. Parkinson, Jr., 19, of Anaheim, Calif.

The soldiers on Mount Vis must make regular trips back down to Camp Dobil for the necessities – laundry, mail and shopping at the Post Exchange.

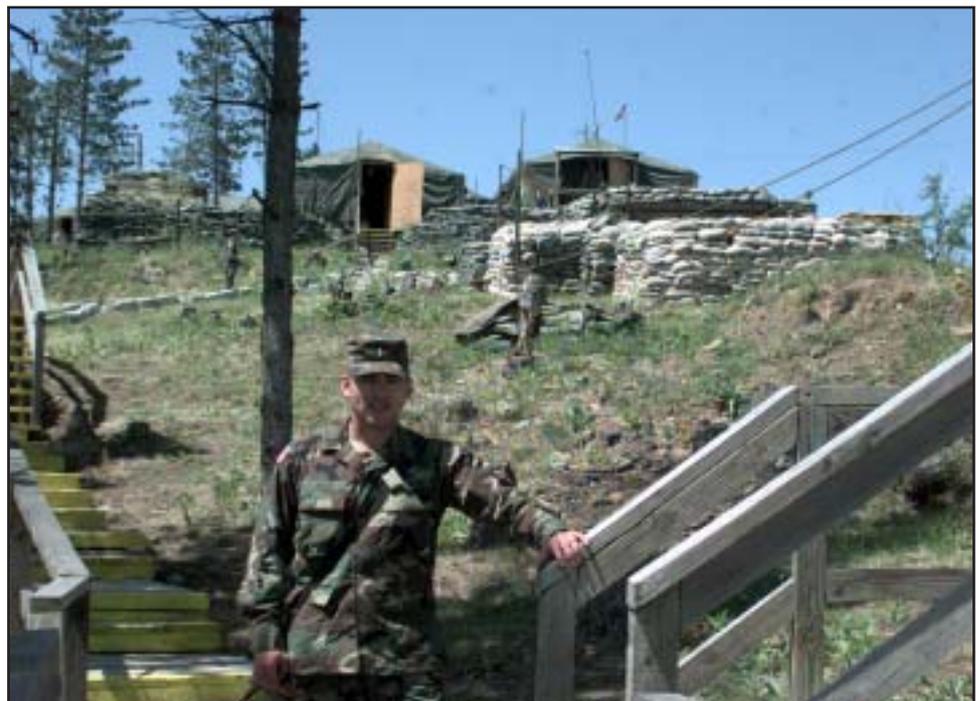
"Even though we are limited in recreational activities here, the training and classes we do, makes the two weeks go by quickly, so it's not too bad," Parkinson added.

"We excel as peacekeepers. When the peacekeeping no longer works, the training performed at Mount Vis ensures those warfighting skills are kept sharp," concluded Rios.

Mount Vis is more than just a vital location to keep communications flowing smoothly from base camp to base camp. Fox Troop has proved it to be the best topographical training aid in the Army.



Sergeant First Class Byron C. Sylvester points out some of the unique features located on top of Mount Vis.



First Lieutenant Lorenzo Rios on Mount Vis.

# K (Killer) Troop leaves Camp

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

As they crossed the Sava River on August 20, 1997, the soldiers of Killer (K) Troop, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (3/2 ACR) became the first unit of 2nd ACR to enter Bosnia. Cruising through Brcko and its surrounding communities, they didn't know at the time that it was here – at Camp McGovern – that they would spend nearly ten months before returning home to Fort Polk, La.

It was no picnic. "We've had probably the highest operational tempo that most soldiers will see in their careers," said First Lieutenant Kelly Dickerson, executive officer of Killer Troop and a native of Blacksburg, Va. "Of the eight sections we have, we've constantly had seven sections doing something besides force protection, which encompassed the last available section we'd have."

That operational tempo is drawing to a close for K

Troop now. They have begun to pack their belongings and equipment and vehicles in readiness for their return home, marking the beginning of the end of 3rd Squadron's mission in Bosnia.

While leaving is a joyful thought for the soldiers of K Troop, it involves a lot of preparation. "In order to leave, everything has to be cleaned and checked by the Military Police in charge of Customs," San Diego native Sergeant First Class Michael Lyons said, as he took a break from the loading process. Soldiers as thick as ants crawled over milvans – some cleaning, some packing, some counting.

Corporal Michael Johnson, squinting in the summer sun, said the work just didn't seem hard because of its purpose. "Other than sunburns, it's easy because we know we're going home," the Goose Creek, S.C., indigene said.

As they head home, Johnson said that the members of Killer Troop would be able to see the good they've done, by keeping the peace in the 3/2 sector of MND (N). Pointing vaguely to the north of McGovern, he said the North of



Specialist Jeremy Swilling, K Troop, 3/2 ACR, sorts through boxes to be packed in preparation of his unit's return to the United States.



Private First Class Jason Rudd, K Troop, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, lays out rows of M-60 machine guns for inventory and inspection as the troop prepares to redeploy to the United States.

# McGovern for Fort Polk, La.

Operation Joint Guard can be seen by looking over the concertina wire toward Dizdarsusa, Rijeka and Omerbegovaca. "You see all those roofs? They're blaze orange and hard to miss," he said. "If you look at the pictures we took when we got here and there wasn't a single roof up. Now, ten months later, you've got whole communities with roofs and electricity and wells."

According to Dickerson, the soldiers are quick to point out to the Bosnians who thank them for their help, that they weren't the ones who did the work to rebuild the cities around McGovern. The soldiers simply say, "Don't thank me, you're making it happen. I'm just assisting."

The tour here has been good for K Troop as well. "We've grown as a team here," Johnson said. "You have to live with people 24 hours a day. You get to know their weaknesses, their strengths. It's like being married to them almost."

There have been a number of opportunities for the soldiers to get some experience in their jobs as well, according to Dickerson. He uses two privates first class mechanics as

examples. They came to the unit brand new, and they've done more maintenance at their level – and above their level – than most soldiers get in a five to seven year career as a mechanic."

This is not only K Troop's story, however, M, I, L, and Headquarters troops have matched K Troop's long hours and hard work and will be following them out of Bosnia soon. "We will all be home by the Fourth of July," said Major Herb True, 3rd Squadron executive officer, who hails from Lindale, Texas.

Dickerson said that he and the soldiers have learned not only teamwork skills, but have also learned a lot about themselves during this deployment. "Killer troop has proven to me once again the American soldier has got heart," he said. "I would look at these guys coming in at 3 o'clock in the morning from a patrol and they're just as dedicated to the mission as they were on day one. The heart of the American soldier is something that will always give us the advantage. Training is one thing, equipment another, but without that soldier, you can't do anything."



First Lieutenant Kelly Dickerson (far end of row), K Troop, 3/2 ACR, inspects a row of night vision sights with Private First Class Justin Gonzales.



Staff Sergeant Ivan Skelly, K Troop, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, scrubs a tent prior to shipment back to the United States.

# Serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina — it's a family thing

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

**W**hen First Lieutenant Timothy Todd Bruce called home from Camp Colt on Mother's Day to Covington, Ga., his mother informed him that on Father's Day, he wouldn't have to make a long distance call to speak with his dad. "I called home and my mom said, 'Sit down, I've got something to tell you,'" remembers Bruce, who is assigned to Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment (2/3 FA), which is based in Giessen, Germany. She said, "Your father's gone to Bosnia to work with the U.N. police."

As that call was being made, Officer Timothy Edwin Bruce, a 25-year-veteran of the Covington Police Department was on his second day in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was preparing to take his final two-week orientation course, which would complete his qualifications to become a monitor for the International Police Task Force (IPTF).

The IPTF is an organization of police officers from around the world that was established by Annex 11 of the Dayton Peace Accords to advise and train the local Bosnian law enforcement personnel, as well as monitor and inspect their activities and facilities.

Bruce said he had been considering the position for some time when he heard that one of his friends from Georgia had already been in Bosnia-Herzegovina for eight months. "When I found out about that," he says, "I really started to find out more about what the mission over here was all about and thought it would be great to be part of that."

After finishing his course and receiving his orders, Bruce was assigned to Lopare, approximately 30 miles from Camp Colt. They do have an opportunity to meet at Camp McGovern sometimes, though. The camp, on the northern border of Bosnia-Herzegovina is right on the International Entity Boundary Line that separates the states of Republika Srpska from the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Seeing them together, their connection is evident. They both speak with soft southern drawls and smile at each other with slanted grins. They're both tall, lanky men of few words.

Talking together over coffee in a makeshift café at McGovern,

they discussed the job that they're both working at from different angles, helping to put a country back together. As a fire direction officer for an artillery battery, Bruce's job is basically to prepare for the worst case scenario, a renewal of fighting in Bosnia. He said until he got here, he had little concept of the mission. "Before I came, I didn't understand why anyone was in Bosnia, but now that I'm here, I can understand what's going on and the impact the U.S. is having."

"We're both here to try to help these people put a country back together," Officer Bruce added, and who, as a Marine served in Vietnam, knows something about countries falling apart.

Having spent a short time in the military before becoming a police officer, he was very supportive of his son when he wanted to join the reserves in high school. "I had to sign for him to join



First Lieutenant Timothy Todd Bruce (left), 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Battery, chats with his father, Officer Timothy Edwin Bruce, a monitor with the UN's International Police Task Force who works in Lopare.

the military. He was 17," Bruce said. His son later received a commission through the ROTC.

While it might be impossible for the Bruces to spend Father's Day together, the two will share something that few fathers and sons get to share, a perspective on the history of the troubled Balkan region. "We'll always have this to talk about," the younger Bruce said. "(My dad's) been here. He understands what's going on. He can relate to it."

Bruce will be heading back to Giessen at the beginning of July. His father's contract with the IPTF expires in May 1999.

# 1st Cavalry Division recons railhead



The staff members of the 1st Cav take notes while Captain Ritter (center with hard hat), briefs them on the procedures for shipping vehicles and equipment at the Lukavac loading dock.

Story and photo by Sergeant First Class Frank Casares  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The scouts from the 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) have arrived and are carrying on reconnaissance missions throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, will conduct a relief in place of the 1st Armored Division (1AD) on Oct. 7.

America's "First Team," has been sending representatives from their different sections to gather information in order to make their transition here easier, later in the year. This information will further be used for site orientation and briefing of the troops.

"A group of staff officers came here to conduct a 'flow conference' with the 1AD," said First Sergeant Don Cook, of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 1st Cav. "Basically, in a 'flow conference,' information is gathered and plans are made for the coordination and distribution of soldiers and equipment to the various camps here."

One of the significant sites on the 1st Cav's agenda was the railhead at Lukavac. The railroad system in Bosnia-Herzegovina has begun limited operation after being shut down for years due to the fighting.

"The purpose of our visit to the railhead was for a few reasons," explained Cook, a Columbus, Ga., native. "We wanted to see the capabilities of railhead, safety conditions, and we wanted photos so that our troops would have an idea of what to expect once they got here."

Captain Joe Ritter, from Houston, Texas, with the Regional Support Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (2ACR) and support team OIC at the railhead, briefed the team on the operations. "It is usually a three-day turnaround, from the time the units arrive to the time they leave," he explained to the group. All the vehicles and equipment that come to the railhead are thoroughly washed and inspected for microorganisms.

Sergeant Evan Writer, with the 560th Military Police Company from Manheim, Germany, and the Customs Inspection NCOIC, said that every vehicle and piece of equipment has to be 100 percent dirt free.

"Mostly, we're concerned with agricultural safeguards back in the states," said Writer, an Elmira, Ore., native. "Keeping microorganisms out, especially the gypsy moths, is one of our main concerns here."

With copious notes and photos in hand, the "First Team" soldiers were satisfied with the operation of the railhead at Lukavac and had their work cut out for the preparation of their briefings back at Ft. Hood, Texas.

The 1st Cav was impressed with the efficiency and thoroughness of the 1AD's operations here and did not foresee any immediate changes, according to Cook. "The 1AD has done a fantastic job. As I see it, we will just continue the legacy that the 1AD will leave behind."

As the 1st AD prepares to hand over the reigns to the 1st Cav, the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina will still have the highest priority for both commands.

# ACES – a winning hand for career advancement

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

The Education Center at Camp Dabol conducted its second FAST Class for deployed soldiers serving during Operation Joint Guard.

The Functional Academic Skills Training (FAST) aids soldiers in improving their functional literacy and gives them the opportunity to increase their General Technical (GT) scores.

“Although the basic goal of the FAST program is to help soldiers raise their GT scores, it can also be used for any functional literacy problem,” explains Barbara Goho, 41, of Würzburg, Germany.

The class is individually paced to ensure the soldiers feel comfortable in each area of study.

“We cover basic math, paragraph comprehension and vocabulary,” Goho explained.

In order to raise the GT score, soldiers must take the Armed Forces Classification Test (AFCT) which is given by the Education Counselor.

“Because you can only take the AFCT three times, we give a pretest at the end of the FAST class to give a general idea of how the soldier will do on the AFCT. If the soldier feels comfortable – we let them make the decision on whether to take the test or not,” said Goho.

According to Scott Downing, 52, of Mercedes, Texas, a member of the 417th BSB, this is the first time that a teacher has come to Bosnia to teach the FAST class.

Soldiers here have a great opportunity to increase their GT scores. They have more time to study with less interference, Downing noted.

“In my 26 years working for the Army, the three months I have spent here in Bosnia has been the best. The soldiers use the Education Center and the commanders support the program. This is an educators paradise,” said Downing.

The FAST class is an official class held during duty hours, whereas college classes are held during off duty hours. “The commanders have been very supportive of the program,” stated Downing.

“Compared to the classes that I teach in Germany, the students here are more motivated and focused,” said Goho. “They are eager to learn. I was amazed at the support I have received.”

Downing recommends that unit commanders who

would like to utilize this asset for their soldiers should contact Joyce Jacobs, the Education Services Officer for Bosnia at 762-7072.

“We have teachers that are willing to come to Bosnia to help the deployed soldiers further their education and military careers. It is easy to coordinate to make this class available throughout all the base camps located in Bosnia,” concluded Downing.



Barbara Goho helps a student with a test question.

Goho is a teacher with the 417th Base Support Battalion, Army Continuing Education System.

If a soldier would like to reclassify their jobs or go through the Green to Gold Program, Officer Candidate School or Warrant Officer School, they may not have a high enough GT score to qualify.

“The FAST class consist of 15 straight days to complete the 60 hour course,” said Goho.

# Summer health-situation awareness high on list for safety

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

**T**ask Force Eagle soldiers need to adjust their routines to accommodate the changing summer environmental conditions. Temperature variations; insects; snakes and poisonous plants are hazards to be wary of now that the weather has become warmer.

Sergeant Wallace Taylor, medic and assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of the 3rd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (3/2 ACR) aid station says that soldiers tend to become complaisant after a routine is established.

"We are all creatures of habit. So, soldiers must be reminded from time to time that precautions are necessary before the uncommon becomes commonplace," said Wallace.

What may not be evident in the seasonal temperature change is a slight change in how clothing is worn.

The well-worn cold weather boots should be replaced with either the moderate temperature or jungle boot as seasonal wear. Although dressing down to less layers, a soldier should have a layer of clothing in his or her ruck sack for night patrols or evening meetings.

"The poncho or wet weather gear should be a fixture until this weather settles into a predictable pattern," said Wallace.

Soldiers should begin to increase their water consumption to remain hydrate; even though they may not be thirsty, their bodies still need to remain cool. Two one and a half liter bottles per day, equivalent to six glasses of water, is suggested by medical authorities.

"By Army regulations, soldiers are not required to engage in a full-scale physical training regimen or otherwise until they have been acclimatized after a month," said Wallace.

Because of the prevalence of standing water in areas throughout Bosnia, mosquitoes pose a potential menace in the warm months ahead. "When 3/2 ACR first arrived at Camp McGovern last summer, we were inundated with mosquitoes," said Wallace.

Soldiers can do several things to keep the mosquito at bay.



**A soldier applies foot powder to keep his keep his feet cool and dry and to prevent athlete's foot from occurring.**

Tents should be checked for holes in which mosquitoes can fly through. Also, doors should remain closed if possible. Aerosol insect repellent to mosquito-proof the tents, as well as soldiers, can be obtained at the base camp's aid station. Topical insect repellent can also be purchased at the Post Exchange.

Increased vegetation is a likely environment for snakes to inhabit. Troops should be vigilant where they step. They should also be careful of what they pick up. Bushes, shrubs, and tree branches can be teeming with wild life intent on protecting their territory once they are disturbed.

"The best thing for troops to do is leave the environment as they found it. A good rule of thumb is if the creatures aren't bothering you, leave them alone," said Wallace.

Poison ivy is subject to grow in this area as well, which means soldiers should become aware of what it looks like to avoid the poisonous plant that sprawls like a vine around tree logs and river bottoms. Perhaps the best remedy to minimizing exposure to the ivy is to keep the BDU sleeves down.

Situational awareness is important not only on the battlefield but also in our daily routine of living, including recreation and leisure.



## Aircraft refuelers are 'always ready'

Private First Class Nipsey E. Rivera refuels an Apache helicopter. Rivera is a Fuel and Petroleum Supply Specialist with HHT, 4/2 ACR.

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

Remember the days of “full service” at the gas pumps — back when staying in the vehicle, allowing the attendant to fill the tank with fuel was considered the norm?

For the most part, those days are gone. Unless, you're a pilot flying the skies of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the surrounding areas.

“We refuel all SFOR and NATO aircraft,” said Sergeant First Class Michael Brown, the platoon sergeant with the Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Comanche Base.

The unit, which redeploys back to Fort Polk, La., during the month of June, has a primary mission to provide Class III and IV Supply — petroleum and ammunition.

“We run a Forward Army Refueling Point (FARP), provide ammo and packaged products, such as grease, lubricants and oil for all of Task Force Saber,” said Sergeant Deborah Ausbie, the section sergeant for 3rd squad. “And sometimes, give assistance to the 501st and the 127th.”

According to Brown, the unit keeps busy, maintaining the only 4-point hot refueling station in all of Multinational Division-North [MND (N)].

“What that means,” said Brown, 31, from Dallas, Texas, “is that four aircraft can land at the same time, one at each station, to get fuel and ammo.”

If an aircraft or vehicle cannot get to the refueling area, the unit makes housecalls. A Heavy Expanded Mobility

Tactical Truck (HEMTT), carrying 2,500 gallons of fuel, or a blivet, holding 500 gallons, are used for the “jump” FARP.

“To date, we have made 36 jumps and have pumped 938,000 gallons of fuel,” said Ausbie, 35, from Oklahoma City, Okla. “We've jumped to places like Camps Demi, Colt, McGovern, Valhalla, NORDPOL, Ugljevik and Glamoc,” she said, “and hope to reach the one million mark in fuel.”

According to Private First Class Nipsey Rivera, a Fuel and Petroleum Supply Specialist, “jumping” is a benefit to the job.

“We get to go out to other base camps and do our jobs,” said Rivera, 20, from Camden, N.J. “It's a treat, because a lot of people don't get an chance to do that.”

As with any mission, safety is a top priority to the refueling team, who start each day with a safety briefing.

“The brief includes a fire and crash plan, the proper use of equipment, lifting techniques, grounding the aircraft, bonding the nozzle, approaching the aircraft and staying away from the tail rotors,” Brown said.

According to Brown, the soldiers are trained to perform all the jobs, such as fuel-truck driver, nozzle person, fire guard and radio transmitter operator — which would enable one team member to take over for the other in case of an accident or personal injury.

“We have a good team who work well together,” said Ausbie. “They've been very motivated throughout the entire deployment and I'm proud of them.”

The unit members, themselves, take pride in their work — which is evident in their claim-to-fame and motto, “We can do an aircraft refueling operation any time, any where — we're always ready.”