

# TALON

# Talon Inside



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**By Command Sergeant Major  
Dwight J. Brown**



The challenge of serving our country in Bosnia involves great sacrifices made by members of Task Force Eagle and their family members.

Your can-do attitude and ability to work in a changing environment, where discipline and restraint are absolutely necessary, are both physically and mentally demanding. Consider time away from friends and family, and we have the makings of a true American sacrifice.

You should feel proud about the way we meet every challenge, and maintain a positive outlook on mission accomplishment.

Many soldiers will redeploy soon. Don't become too focused on getting home and drop your guard. A single mishap could ruin our great reputation, so be sure to watch your buddy.

Your sacrifice is the cost for keeping the peace. Feel proud with the understanding that you have personally made a difference — not only for the Army, but also for the world. Your dedication and commitment to excellence has not gone unnoticed. And remember: **"Dare to make a difference."**

To commemorate the great sacrifices of the men and women of Task Force Eagle, The 1st Armored Division Association has commissioned artist Roger Price to capture the historical importance of our mission in Bosnia with a limited edition print that will embody the spirit of sacrifice. The project is underway, and efforts are being made to keep the cost of the print affordable to everyone. Your unit 1st AD ASSN Rep can provide you purchasing information.

### On the Cover

Sergeant Rene Cantu catches a ride on a bike with help from the children of the Mridic Refugee Center. Cantu, a seven year veteran, now serving with 2/6 Infantry, enjoyed helping the children of the center. (Photo by Staff Sergeant Robert Powell, see page 4).

"To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." – George Washington

### 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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# TankerstrainonBosniantrails

Story and photos by  
 First Lieutenant Lillian Sydenstricker  
 196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**W**hen you're a tanker, you're in an elite club to which few venture. Imagine maneuvering 68 tons of steel over land, leaving dust clouds in your wake. For Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, this is reality.

"This opportunity to train in Bosnia puts together a training scenario so they can receive the most realistic training available," explained Bravo Company Commander, Captain Bruce Griggs, 34, of San Marino, Calif.

Bravo Company uses the area that once was the artillery camp (called the "Steel Castle") for the Implementation Force (IFOR) in 1995. "We know this land has been de-mined and it is safe for us to train," Griggs added.

Bravo Company's Second Platoon participated in field training exercises for the M1A1 Abrams tank, consisting of defensive training, sectors of fires, the possibility of Nuclear, Biological or Chemical attack and spotting and killing the enemy.

"This is an opportunity to train to a high-intensity level," added Second Platoon Leader, Second Lieutenant Kyle Vahle, 23, of Chicago, Ill. "With peacekeeping day to day, we lose the battle edge. We use this to refresh the soldiers of the real-world mission."

Griggs added that his company normally doesn't get to maneuver as frequently as they do here. They try to get each

platoon out at least twice a month.

Bravo Company 1-35, out of Baumholder, Germany, is currently serving with 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry and participating in Operation Joint Forge. The majority of their M1A1 Abrams training is conducted at the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC).

Meanwhile, Second Platoon sets up the defensive position and paints a picture for the commander who monitors their position. "They are the eyes and ears for the squadron, and they need to be pretty accurate on the information because these reports go up to the top," Griggs commented.

The most important position in an Abrams is the tank commander, who is the eyes of the tank. "I am responsible for the tank. I tell the driver where to go," explains Sergeant Andrew Martin, 27, of Tomah, Wis. "While we are out here, we work on actions on contact and defensive operations. You know, tank stuff!"

The soldiers of Bravo 1-35 are serving as peacekeepers now, but they still train to keep their combat skills sharp.

"I feel very confident of my troops and their skills. If they can do this training at platoon level, then they can do it at any level," Griggs reasoned confidently.

Soldiers of Bravo 1-35 gather experience from both worlds; knowledge and experience of the peacekeeping force, and realistic training for battle.

"If you train to standards all the time, then when it comes time for the real thing, you're more prepared," Griggs concluded.



Bravo 1-35 stirs up the dust in a M1A1 Abrams tank during a recent training exercise at "Steel Castle", conducting defensive operations.

# Soldiers help soothe scars of war



Private First Class Paul S. Julio greets a young refugee at the Mridic Refugee Center near Banovici, Bosnia. Julio, formerly of Luanda, Angola, was only two-years-old when he and his parents fled the west African country during a civil war in 1976.

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Robert Powell  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

A vicious civil war ripped apart the west African country of Angola in 1976. A two-year-old boy clung to his mother's waist a little closer as pangs of hunger tugged at his stomach. The five-ton dump truck the boy and his family were traveling in lurched on a pothole as it rolled into a small refugee camp. The boy couldn't think of anything other than his aching stomach.

For Private First Class Paul S. Julio, 24, a combat engineer from Bravo Company, 40th Engineer Battalion, from Baumholder, Germany, the hunger he felt is now a slowly fading memory. Since his company was deployed to Bosnia two-and-a-half months ago, he has come face-to-face with his past.

"I don't remember much about being a refugee myself," says Julio. "Except the hunger."

Julio, in his second year of service, is stationed in Germany. His wife, Zira, was also a refugee from the Angolan Civil War.

"We met in high school, and it was merely coincidence," Julio said, in describing how he and his wife met at Long Branch High School in Long Branch, N. J. "I wish she could be here to see this. She would really feel for these kids."

Sitting in the back of a Humvee, the young "Iron Sapper" from Bravo Company looks out at the destination for the latest humanitarian mission from Camp Bedrock – the Mridic Refugee Center. "What does doing this mean to me? That's a hard question to sum up. It means so much," Julio said.

Julio and his family were forced from their homes in Luanda, Angola, during the bloody, 1976 civil war. Julio's father had his own mining company, and the family was only able to escape with a few personal items thrown in the back of one of his father's trucks. Eventually the family made it to relatives in Portugal and finally to the United States.

"This is my second humanitarian mission since I've been here in Bosnia," Julio said. "Our unit is scheduled to redeploy soon, so I doubt I'll get a chance to go out on another mission. We've been pretty busy," A smile broke out on his face, as he looks out at the children in the camp. "These kids are so cute!"

Eleven soldiers from Bedrock seemed to mirror Julio's sentiments on the drizzly Friday morning. Private First

Class Travis G. Austin, 21, of Alexandria, La., is assigned as the Chaplain's Assistant to the Second of the Sixth Infantry Regiment at Bedrock. Austin coordinates the weekly missions.

"I've been on six humanitarian missions since I've been deployed," he said. "I'm a medic, but I've been assigned as the chaplain's assistant. This has been the fourth humanitarian mission that I've been in-charge of. It's a lot of work to set these up, but the payoff is worth it."

Specialist Jeremy Ball, 25, of Louisville, Ky., a mechanic with Bravo Company, 47th Forward Support Battalion of Baumholder, Germany, is on his first humanitarian mission. Out of breath from playing a game of "Keep Away" with the children of the center, Ball said, "This brings things into perspective how you have so much, and they have so little. You tend to take for granted what you have."

The more than 100 families at the Mridic Refugee Center are divided up among more than two dozen bungalows situated between strip mines north of the town of Banovici. Each of the small homes has a small garden with a few stalks of corn, squash and peppers. Small clusters of children and adults mill around soldiers carrying boxes of clothes, toys and schools supplies. It did not take long for the boxes to empty.

Children from West Virginia collected the supplies for the Bosnian kids as projects during their summer bible schools. The supplies, along with pennies to pay the cost of shipping, were sent directly to the soldiers at Bedrock.

"For me, the old saying 'do unto others as they would do unto you,' may describe why I'm doing this," commented Julio. "Even better, do unto others as they did for you."

# Rehab program helps rebuild Bosnian communities, provide jobs



Major Bill Wright tracks Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program projects.

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

**T**he Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (CIRP) helps the citizens of Bosnia rebuild their war-torn lives and communities by fixing local schools, bridges, medical centers and academic sports fields, according to Major Bill Wright, of Kansas City, Mo.

Wright is a member of the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, located in Belton, Mo., deployed to Camp Dobol in support of Operation Joint Forge.

In order for projects to get approval for funding, they must meet several requirements; It must be a war-damaged infrastructure or neglected because of the war; it can't be private property, and must have public benefits. The more people that benefit from the funding, the more likely the chance of approval, he explained.

"One of CIRP's goals is to provide jobs. Each project cost is supposed to be at least fifty percent labor," said Captain Steven Amrom, of Philadelphia, Pa.

Amrom is a member of the 358th Civil Affairs Brigade from Norristown, Pa., and is working at Dobol on a joint military

inter-service team. The team consists of two soldiers and three Marines.

"We visit each site weekly and talk with the foreman and workers to ensure work is progressing smoothly," he continued.

Only with special approval can projects exceed \$100,000, noted Wright.

"The CIRP projects are helping to rebuild the infrastructure here in Bosnia and at the same time provide jobs to give economic relief to individuals – even if they are temporary," Amrom said.

The projects are designed to assist the local community back to the standards it had prior to the war, he added.

In addition to CIRP projects, the Civil Affairs Tactical Support teams are the liaison between the civilian populous and the military.

"We meet with the local government and interact with international and nongovernmental organizations," Amrom continued. "We also meet with the local residences to find out how the community is (progressing) and what they need."

With the help of Civil Affairs, the people of Bosnia are able to restore their vital structures, and stabilize the lives of those in the community.

# Multinational Division North bids farewell

Story and photos by First Lieutenant Annmarie Daneker  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Every soldier that has ever served in the military understands that saying good-bye is a way of life. Working together, often under stressful situations, builds camaraderie and friendship that is almost unheard of in civilian employment.

Such friendship was obvious at the honors ceremony for Brigadier General Anthony R. Jones, Assistant Division Commander (FWD), held at Eagle Base on August 14. In attendance at the ceremony were the soldiers that worked

alongside Jones during his 13-month tour, as well as invited guests and officers representing many of the multinational forces assigned to MND (N).

After reviewing the troops, Jones took the podium and spoke to the soldiers and guests attending the ceremony.

"I feel blessed for having been able to participate," he said, speaking to the soldiers of MND (N). "You have been the wind beneath my wings."

Jones also addressed the subordinate commanders of MND (N). "I have learned a lot. I have grown and I will take your story wherever I go," he said.

"Thank you for your patience, trust and confidence.



Brigadier General Anthony R. Jones, Assistant Division Commander (FWD), takes the podium during a ceremony in his honor held at Eagle Base on August 14. He is flanked to his left by Multinational Division-North Commander Major General Larry R. Ellis and flanked to his right by Colonel Paul D. Eaton.

# ad I to Brigadier General Anthony R Jones

Thank you for your leadership and mentoring," he said, directing his words to Major General Larry R. Ellis, Commander of MND (N) and 1st Armored Division. "Together we have met each and every challenge."

Reflecting on the overall peacekeeping mission, Jones stated, "this is a mission of peace, giving hope to the future of this war-torn country and hope to the generations to come."

Major General Larry R. Ellis spoke about the exemplary service of his second in command.

"Today, we bid a fond farewell to a devoted and selfless leader," Ellis said. "We could not have accomplished any of the missions to standard without the help of Brigadier General Tony Jones."

Ellis highlighted many of the milestones of Jones' deployment, including past and upcoming elections, the Brcko arbitrations, and working with visiting dignitaries to include the President of the United States and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Brigadier General Jones has been the difference between success and failure on many of our operations here in Bosnia," Ellis said, closing his farewell speech.

Also in attendance was Colonel Paul D. Eaton, who will replace Jones as Assistant Division Commander (FWD). In his speech to the crowd, Eaton stated he was eager to begin his duties.

"I have observed soldiers of Task Force Eagle and I am impressed with your competence and talents. I am proud to serve beside you," he said.

Jones has served in the army for over 30 years. He was commissioned through ROTC at the University of Indiana, where he received a bachelor's degree in business. His military education includes: Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses; Rotary Wing Aviator Course; Army Command and General Staff College; and Army War College. Jones has commanded several units, including the 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

When all the speeches were finished, friends and unit members gathered around Jones to wish him well. Mementos from several guests were presented, from unit patches to berets. Overall, the entire ceremony was a classic example of one of the toughest assignments in the military: saying good-bye.



(Left to right) Brigadier General Anthony R. Jones, receives a hearty handshake from the Russian Brigade Commander.



Color guards bearing flags representing MND (N) Forces supporting peacekeeping operations stand at attention during the farewell ceremony.

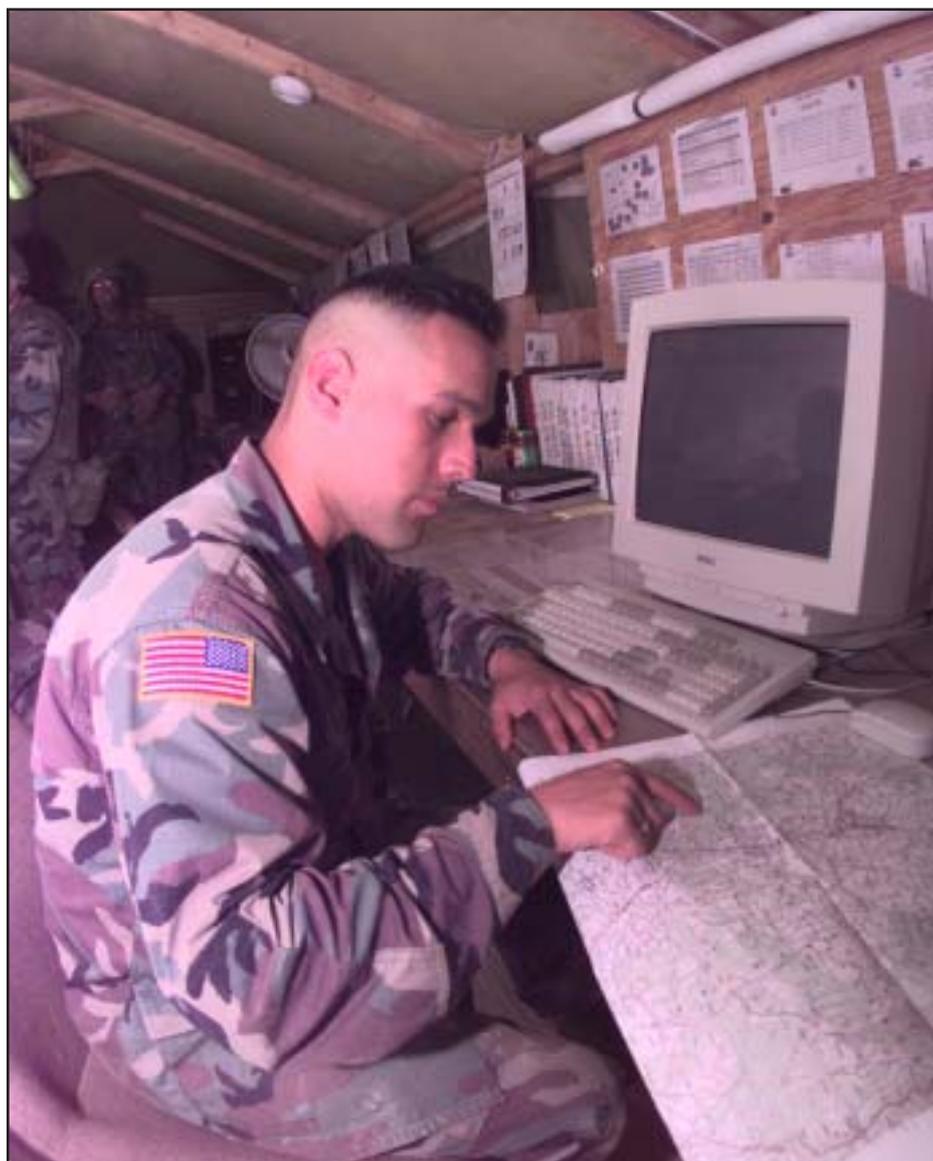
# Training teaches soldiers 'Call for fire' techniques with new technology

Story and photo by Sergeant Gary Hicks  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**Y**ou are driving your Humvee without a care in the world, thinking about the evening's chow, when you hear a distant whistling coming from the sky overhead. Suddenly, explosive rounds throw dirt and pieces of asphalt high in the air, cutting off any possible escape route. Your convoy is under attack and receiving mortar fire. Immediately, everyone seeks cover from the deadly rounds raining from the sky. Moments later, a soldier spots the mortar position 2000 meters away on a small hilltop. The only weapons at your disposal are a few M-9s, some M-16s

*"(The simulator) allows soldiers to learn and sharpen skills in a controlled environment and still retain a realistic atmosphere."*

Sergeant Leon Luna



Sergeant Leon Luna, a fire support specialist, plots a grid coordinate for a fire mission on the Guard FIST II simulator.

and one M-60 — you don't have enough firepower and time is running out. Your mind races through the possibilities.

'Call for fire' is the logical course of action. A field artillery battery located miles away can destroy the target in a matter of seconds, but would you know how to call in a fire mission if your convoy received indirect fire?

Sergeant Leon Luna, a member of Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 427th Field Artillery, is training soldiers for such a scenario at Camp Bedrock.

"Basically, my job as a fire support specialist is to advise commanders and leaders when and how to 'call for fire,'" said Luna, a six year Army veteran from San Antonio, Texas.

Luna has been working diligently to train and qualify every section within Task Force 2-6 on 'call for fire' procedures using a simulator called Guard FIST II.

The simulated trainer, which uses actual photos from Fort Sill, Okla., allows the trainee to engage both stationary and moving targets using a variety of missions including illumination, smoke, shift, polar and grid.

"The simulator is a very good training tool," Luna explains. "It allows soldiers to learn and sharpen skills in a controlled environment and still retain a realistic atmosphere."

Luna said it's very important that every soldier is familiar on how to call for fire. A fire support specialist won't be there most of the time, so you need someone who can call in a fire mission so the rounds get down range and eliminate the threat, he said.

# Chaplain provides spiritual support



Deputy Division Chaplain, Navy Lieutenant Commander James Sharrett, assigned to the 1st Armored Division, conducts services at Eagle Base's main chapel.

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

In a small town in northwest Ohio, far removed from the troubled land of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a minister tends his congregation- not known to him or his family that one day soon, he would be in the Balkans.

In April of this year, Navy Lieutenant Commander (Chaplain) James Sharrett was ordered to active duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina under a special program. According to Sharrett, he and two other Navy chaplains were chosen to participate in a pilot exchange program – three Navy chaplains were to go to Bosnia, while three Army chaplains were to go to sea.

After serving ten years of active duty service in the Navy, Sharrett joined the Navy Reserve in 1993.

Sharrett is the Deputy Division Chaplain for Task Force Eagle and is assigned to the 1st Armored Division (1AD) at Eagle Base. Along with a myriad of duties that come with this position, Sharrett's overall role is the responsibility of religious matters to all servicemen and women deployed to this region.

"It is a tremendous honor to be the Navy chaplain assigned to Task Force Eagle in Tuzla," said Sharrett. "Although the family separation is difficult, I am having the greatest ministry experience of my life."

The major battles soldiers fight are the emotional hardships of a deployment. Loneliness, fear, heat and boredom all take an emotional toll on a person. A chaplain can play a

strategic role in the morale of troops in this environment.

Sharrett is responsible for coordinating 15 chaplains to the ten different base camps scattered throughout the U.S. sector in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina. He ensures that all the different denominations have religious services at the base camps. Often, chaplains must fly by helicopter to various camps on Sundays.

One of the most prominent dangers here are the countless land mines left buried after the war. Mines are a danger to the Bosnian people and to the soldiers whose job it is to find and dispose of them. Besides providing spiritual support for the servicemen and women, one of the most important concerns Sharrett has is to provide counseling to those who locate and destroy these land mines.

"As a chaplain, it is my obligation to counsel servicemen under stress," said Sharrett. "For example, engineer units involved in clearing mine fields experience a tremendous amount of job-related anxiety. In many cases, just to be able to talk to a chaplain helps."

Sharrett has had the opportunity to go on convoys into the various towns and villages. He has seen the destruction and devastation of the war firsthand.

"The sight of bombed-out houses in the countryside serves as a constant reminder this is a war-torn environment," said Sharrett. "In some areas, entire villages have been destroyed."

As Sharrett prepared to go about his daily duties he said, "I believe our mission here as peacekeepers is absolutely necessary. I am grateful to be here."

# Air Ambulance Medevac crew save lives with speed, skill, teamwork

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

**T**hey started their mission in December 1995, during Implementation Force (IFOR), flying throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina until their departure in November 1996. Now, one and a half years later, the 236th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) has returned for the Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission.

Since assuming the mission from the 159th Medical Company (AA) on July 15, the 236th has flown nine missions and has logged over 300 hours of flight time.

The Air Ambulance crew moves into action with a call from anyone supporting Operation Joint Forge, to include civilians. A "nine-line" is then filled out as the caller provides information such as location of the pickup zone (PZ), frequency and call-sign of the PZ unit, number of patients by precedence, any special equipment needed, number of patients by (injury) type, security of PZ, method of marking PZ, patient nationality and terrain description.

With that information, the "first-up crew," consisting of two pilots, a medic, a crew chief and (most often) a Norwegian doctor and nurse, go into action. The pilot commander is ultimately responsible for the helicopter and plots the grid coordinates to pinpoint the PZ. The crew chief assures aircraft maintenance, while the medic verifies the type and cause of injuries. He counts how many patients there are and the type of equipment needed for patient care and evacuation.

During these processes, the pilot of the "second-up crew," who are also present when the call comes in, confirms the PZ plotted by the first pilot.

"There is always a double-check of the pinpoints to be sure of the landing area," said Chief Warrant Officer Christopher J. Frey, a medevac pilot commander. "This also helps to serve in the expediency of getting there," said the 28-year-old Pittsburgh, Pa., native.

When it comes to travel time, there are restraints on each of the three evacuation categories — urgent, priority and routine.

"On an urgent call, we have a two-hour response flight time," Frey said. "That's from the time the call comes in to the time we arrive at the next-level-of-care facility. A priority call is four hours and a routine is 24 hours," he said.

An urgent evacuation involves someone who is at risk of losing their life, limb or eyesight, according to Staff

Sergeant Leo Edelen, Jr., a flight medic with the 236th.

"A priority is someone with an injury that is not life-threatening," said Edelen, 26, from Birmingham, Ala. "Should a patient's condition start deteriorating, we would bump the evac to the urgent status."

According to Frey the unit has 24 hours on a routine call, which is mainly the transfer of a stable patient from one place to another.

"Ninety percent of our missions are flying from one base camp to another, evacuating patients suffering from dehydration to those whom have died," Frey said.

Once on the scene of the trauma, each crewmember has a specific job, according to Edelen.

"After landing, the pilots stay on the aircraft, along with the crew chief, as the medic and Norwegian team go to the patient and assess the injuries," Edelen said. "If more equipment is necessary, the crew chief will run it out to us, then return to the helicopter," he said.

The medic keeps the pilot informed via radio on the number and status of the patient(s), the approximate return time to the aircraft, and if any other aircraft are needed.

"The standard load on the Blackhawk is four litter patients and one ambulatory and, if necessary, we can handle six litters and one ambulatory," Edelen said.

Once the aircraft lands at the hospital or drop-off area, the medic and Norwegian team will brief the receiving medical staff on the care given to the patient.

"After the patient has been escorted to the final destination, our job is not done," Edelen said. "We immediately refuel the aircraft and fill out the After Action Report — in which the entire crew, unit commander, operations officer, telephone operator, Norwegian team and a hospital representative reviews," he said.

The following morning at 9 a.m., the unit is briefed about the day's events and the missions performed the day before, according to Frey.

"The briefing helps maintain our operating levels by pointing out any shortcomings and areas that may need improvement," Edelen said. "They're very beneficial and keep the team running as a whole — we have a great working atmosphere."

Frey said the unit has bonded and works well together thanks to the unit's professionalism during a previous mission since one third of the unit members served during IFOR.



Norwegian medic Lars Jenssen prepares to take a patient's blood pressure while being transported in a SISU to a medical facility.

# Mother, son reunite in post office



(Left to Right) Sergeant Marsha Umphry sorts the outgoing mail while her son, Specialist Garry Umphry, places packages in a mailbag to be mailed to soldiers' friends and families.

Story and photo by Sergeant Cynthia A. Hernandez  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Redeployment for soldiers means reuniting with family members, but for one Bethany, Mo., family, their reunion began during their deployment to Bosnia. Sergeant Marsha Umphry and her son, Specialist Garry Umphry, Jr., 21, were deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina on January 2. They are members of the 795th Adjutant General Company, an Army Reserve postal service unit.

Although this is not the first deployment for her, this is the first time both family members have deployed together. "This is my third deployment with this unit. I have been to Saudi (Arabia), Haiti, and now, Bosnia," said Umphry.

Upon arrival to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Umphrys were sent to different camps. She went to Camp Demi and her son went to Guardian Base. "I didn't get to see him very much during the tour since I was at Camp Demi and he was at Guardian Base," said Umphry.

When asked what she liked the best

fast because we were always so busy, but it's time to go home," said Garry, who sells farm supplies to help the family's farm business in Bethany.

Marsha had plenty of support from the soldiers that worked with her at Demi. "The 2/2 ACR (2nd Squadron, 2nd Brigade, Armored Cavalry Regiment) people were very good people to work with at Demi. They treated me good and made the job nicer," she said. She also liked the food and living arrangements in comparison to her tour in Desert Shield.

After their peacekeeping mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina, she plans to go back to work on the family farm, while her son continues to sell farm supplies.

"These are model soldiers, hard working and dependable. The type of soldiers that any unit would be proud to have," said Donley, a Kansas City, Mo., native.

At the end of their deployment, they worked together for a short time at Eagle Base's post office. The Umphrys' advice to other soldiers with family members in Bosnia, "stay positive."

*"These are model soldiers,  
hard working and dependable.  
The type of soldiers that any  
unit would be proud to have."*

Captain James A. Donley

# Russian, American soldiers exchange weapons skills

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

**A**fter firing an American-made M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) during a combined small-arms range at Camp Dobol on August 18, Russian Colonel Yevgeniy Khanin was a man of few words.

"It shoots like any other machine gun," the stone-faced, 26-year Russian infantry veteran stated via an interpreter. "It just fires a lot quieter."

Khanin compared the SAW to the Russian-made 5.45mm RPKS machine-gun. The 43-year-old applies a wealth of experience. He served during Russia's bitter war in Afghanistan during 1980 and 81.

Similar comparisons rained down on the 25-meter firing range following the familiarization exercise.

Members of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry from Camp Bedrock joined nearly 30 Russians for the weapon comparison. After Russians fired the M-16 assault rifle, M-9 handgun and SAW, the American troops fired a Russian-made AK-47 assault rifle and RPKS machine gun.

Soldiers from both countries compared notes on the American-made M-203 and Russian-built GP-25 grenade launchers.

"The combined small-arms range allows soldiers from both countries to become familiar with the weapons in a spirit of cooperation," explained Captain Tarn Warren, 32, of Yreka, Calif. Warren is an American liaison officer stationed at Russian Base Camp Ugljevik, located 40

kilometers northeast of Tuzla.

While the Russians tested the American small-arms technology, the U.S. troops were excited at the thought of finally firing a Russian weapon.

"I'm looking forward to firing their weapons," said Corporal Levis Castie, of Fannett, Texas. Castie conducted the familiarization training for the American-made M-16 prior to the Russian live-fire. "I've never even touched one of them," added the wide-eyed Castie.

Corporal Roy Bickel of Landcastle, Ohio, shared the same sentiments. "We've trained with the Swedes before, but this is the first time with the Russians. Not only will this range firing bring us closer, it will help us better understand each other's weapons," he reasoned.

Russian First Lieutenant Vladimir Makarov, 24, liked the American-made M-16 assault rifle and M-9 Baretta handgun, but fell short of rating them above the Russian weapons. "They are good," he said. "But I like ours."

During the familiarization training on the SAW, Khanin asked just how many rounds could be fired from the small-caliber machine gun before its barrel would need to be replaced.

"The SAW can fire up to 200 rounds per minute before the barrel begins to melt," Castie responded. "I guess they like to fire some rounds."

That was apparent as Khanin reloaded his weapon. A burst of 5.56mm rounds blazed from the SAW, creating a puff of smoke behind the target. A smile slowly but distinctly etched its way across his face. For Khanin, few words were needed.