

TALON

Inside

- American and Russian joint-range
- PSYOPS lends a hand
- Entertaining the troops



Going strong..... 5
Working for tomorrow



Enjoying time off 8
MWR provides entertainment



Daily radio show 11
Helping locals understand

Contents

UpFront

Up Front 2
Force Protection

Reaching out 3
PSYOPS helps locals understand SFOR

Through mud, ice, snow and hail..... 4
Post Office always delivers

Working together 6-7
Russian and American joint-range

Vietnam vets in Bosnia..... 9
Six pilots share knowledge

From M-1 Abrams to HMMWVs..... 10
Multi-skilled mechanics

Looking down from "the hill" 12
Hill 722, its own small community

On the Cover

Soldiers of Task Force 2-8 Cavalry are instructed by Russian Airborne Brigade soldiers in firing the RPKS Russian machine gun at Lazarevichi Range in Republic of Srbska. (Photo by Staff Sergeant Pat Johnston. See page 6-7.)

"History never looks like history when you are living through it." – John Gardner

The Task Force Eagle Web site is located at 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.

By Command Sergeant Major Paul M. Inman
Multinational Division (N) CSM

As we settle into our routines, I feel it's important to remind you that our primary focus remains Force Protection. I want to share some of the things we trained on when we were preparing for this mission.

Mines -- If you aren't completely sure an area is clear, don't go into that area. Stay on the hard surface when in doubt.

Drivers' safety -- During the winter months, all drivers must know how to react to posted road conditions. The up-armored vehicles are much heavier than the vehicles you are used to driving at your home station, and the stopping distance is even greater when the road conditions are less than "green."

Weapons safety -- Always keep your weapon within arm's reach and maintain 100 percent accountability of your ammunition at all times. Use proper clearing procedures when clearing your weapon. Too many soldiers have had to be corrected for not using the proper procedures.

Terrorism -- One of our biggest concerns. Everyone needs to be aware of what's going on around them-- situational awareness. As you go about your day, remember you are in a potentially hostile area. Keep your eyes and ears open. If you see or hear something out of the ordinary, report it immediately to your chain of command.

Fatigue -- A frequent occurrence. You're in an environment where you work seven days a week. You will always be fatigued to some degree. It's very important for you to rest when you get the opportunity. Eat a balanced meal three times a day and exercise daily. It's also very important that you stay alert while performing your duties because our lives depend on it.

Risk assessment -- Assess the risks for everything you do. Don't take anything for granted or take unnecessary risks. When given a mission always follow the proper risk assessment procedures.

These are just a few of the many things you need to be aware of concerning Force Protection. The list goes on and on and I will reiterate them during this mission. Remember our primary concern is **Force Protection. Stay safe!**



THE TALON is produced in the interest of the servicemembers of Task Force Eagle. THE TALON is an Army-funded newspaper authorized for members of the U.S. Army overseas, under the provision of AR 360-81. Contents of THE TALON are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or Task Force Eagle.

THE TALON is published weekly by the 1st Cavalry Division (Task Force Eagle) Public Affairs Office, Eagle Base, Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina APO AE 09789, Telephone MSE 551-5230, Sprint 762-5233.

E-mail: talon@email-tc3.5sigcmd.army.mil. Visit the Talon and other Bosnia-Herzegovina related items from the TFE homepage: www.tfeagle.army.mil. Printed by PrintComTuzla. Circulation: 5,500.

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PSYOPS reaches out with info for peace



Staff Sergeant Tony Cunningham, a psychological operations specialist in the 13th PSYOPS, hands out the "Mirko Magazine" to two Tuzla children.

Story and photo by Sergeant First Class Donald R. Dunn II
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

P psychological Operations do much more than man a loud speaker. Using the power of positive persuasion is an important part of the Operation Joint Forge mission. The 13th Psychological Operations Battalion from Arden Hills, Minn., is working hard everyday to target potential audiences, to break down cultural barriers through face-to-face communication. They are the commander's link to the local population and help to minimize conflicts in this area.

PSYOPS uses planned information campaigns to convey selected information to audiences that will influence emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of those selected organizations, groups and individuals, according to Major James King, the commander of the 13th PSYOPS, and resident of Grand Rapids, Minn.

King said training is the most important part of their mission. "You cannot sprinkle PSYOPS on a problem and fix it. It has to be a well thought out, phased process. Then we cater to specific needs of the most vulnerable areas."

PSYOPS tries to show people what's going on in an area. They are presently in the process of trying to put together field trips and produce documentary tapes.

"Right now our team here takes prerecorded tapes (called) MIR Mix, which means they have messages using music, and

hand them out to local radio stations and cafés," King said. "PSYOPS is also going out in teams and passing out the 'Mirko Magazine,' which is very popular among the young adults and children. They enjoy the color and photos in it."

"Mirko: the magazine's name stands for peace," Specialist Mark D. Lathrop, a PSYOPS specialist and resident of Stacy, Minn., said.

"We do some of the layout here for the PSYOPS product," Sergeant James N. Aman, product development team noncommissioned officer in charge, and a resident of Maple Grove, Minn., said. The product layout is sent to Sarajevo where it is produced. After production, it is broken down and distributed to Multinational Division (North). "We have Tactical PSYOPS Teams at Camps Bedrock, Dobol and McGovern, and they cover the Russian, Turkish and Norwegian Sectors," Aman said.

"We offer a variety of television and radio coverage using the 'Mirko Magazine' — posters, handbills, cassette tapes, video tapes and face-to-face communication to promote our PSYOPS operations in this area," King said.

"The people here are seeking our products. Also, we are a multinational effort, not just a U.S. dissemination effort," he added.

In the future, PSYOPS teams will be working on new equipment issues that can link base camps, according to King. This link, including Sarajevo, will better enhance the PSYOPS information for peace campaign.

Post office delivers mail for soldiers



Working together in the 15th Postal Company Task Force, Specialist Meredith Hoage, (left) a finance and tracking clerk, witnesses the registered mail book transactions with her sister Specialist Melissa J. Hoage, a postal clerk.

Story and photo by Specialist Robert B. Valentine
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow or mud – lots of mud – can prevent the hearty efforts of the Army's postal service. Especially since nothing brightens up a person's day and lifts morale like receiving a letter or package from home, Eagle Base's 15th Task Force Postal Company is committed to making sure the mail gets through.

"When you send your mail out in the morning, it leaves for Frankfort, (Germany) that night," Captain Darrell K. McKown, commander of the 15th TF Postal Company said. "We don't leave the mail sitting in one place. We push to get it to where it needs to go," the Tallahassee, Fla. native said.

Comprised of both active and reserve soldiers from the 151st, 329th, 351st and 755th Postal Companies, this group works 24 hours a day to receive and send mail for soldiers stationed throughout Multinational Division (North).

"We stay until everything is done on our shift and help each other," said Specialist Melissa J. Hoage, a postal clerk with the 15th TF. "We came here as a team, and we will leave as a team," the Menomonie, Wis. native said.

"I don't mind being here for nine months. I'm young and

this will be a good experience for me," Hoage said.

Soldiers can take advantage of free mail to the states and Military Postal Service addresses. A package can be mailed at the local rate as long as it weighs under 70 pounds and measures a girth of less than 108 inches. Soldiers have the choice of sending their mail by priority, first class or Space Available Mail. Packages can also be insured for safety.

First Lieutenant Teresa M. Nelson, the operations officer from Tallahassee, Fla., said, "Brown & Root plays a critical role in the movement of mail. They drive the trucks between mail pickup and drop-off points in Frankfort, Germany, Tuzla, Bosnia and Tazar, Hungary."

"We process about two to three thousand pounds of mail per day," Sergeant Robert R. Henderson, a shift leader from Panama City, Fla., said. "We expect it to triple around the holidays. Everybody should send his or her Christmas mail off early in order for it to get there on time," he said.

"Our unit morale is very high. We work together here. One team — one family," McKown said.

Unlike most soldiers who leave their family and close friends behind on a deployment, Hoage is an exception. Her older sister, Specialist Meredith Hoage, has also been deployed to Bosnia. Both are assigned to the 15th Postal Company TF.

"We've always lived together, even during college. I'm glad that we have each other over here," Meredith Hoage, a finance and tracking clerk, said. "It keeps us from getting homesick. We're best friends," she said.

"We all understand how important mail is to soldiers. It makes our day to receive a package from our mom. She sends us the local paper, the Dunn County News," Melissa Hoage said. "The mail is our connection to home."

For many soldiers, mail call is an exciting, highly anticipated part of the day. When far away from home, reading a handwritten letter or opening a care package from a loved one makes your job here that much easier.

National Guard mom going strong

Story and photo by
Private First Class Phillip E. Breedlove Jr.
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

My kid asked me, 'Why can't you be like all the other moms?' I told him, 'Even if I wasn't in the guard, I still wouldn't be like all the other moms.'" Sergeant Virginia G. Priegnitz, a Camp McGovern air traffic controller with the Oklahoma National Guard, 3rd platoon, Company E, 245th Aviation Battalion, said.

The Norman, Okla. native joined the National Guard in June 1997, with the intention of eventually getting her pilots license. She said being an air traffic controller seemed to fall into place with her future ambition.

This same ambition stayed with her as she was told to pack up and move to Bosnia for a nine-month deployment. After one month at Camp Colt and three at McGovern, she said she is still going strong and loving every moment of it. "This is a golden opportunity for a National Guardsman to get a lot of real-world training."

Her unit's air traffic controllers combined with 2nd platoon's technical support and generator mechanics, Company F, 58th Aviation Regiment, make up the McGovern team. The team's mission is to communicate with helicopters in their designated control area and ensure pilots check in at predetermined points, then confirm the position with radar if they are in range, Priegnitz said. They also inform aircraft of current weather in the landing area and advise pilots of landing conditions.

"You want to get them in as quickly and safely as possible," Priegnitz said. "The safely part is more important than the quickly part."

The recent construction of a new control tower gives even more control over McGovern's airspace. The control tower provides the team with a better view of the camp's helipad, allowing them to actually guide the helicopters in when pilots are unable to see the ground.

Priegnitz said the team handles their new mission well, but she knew they would before they arrived in country. However, her main concern was how her unit would handle being in close quarters for long periods of time. She had known everyone for nearly a year but only saw her guardsmen peers one weekend a month and two weeks a year. Fortunately, the team was up to the challenge and bonded almost immediately. "I think the word 'family' describes us pretty well," she said.

Sergeant First Class Monty L. Davis, the communications and electronics chief, also with 3rd platoon, said Priegnitz is a valuable member of the family, not only for her contribution to the mission, but also for her witty nature and confidence under pressure. "Whenever you're starting to get confused and frustrated with the world and everything is starting to fall apart, that's when she cracks a joke and takes all the tension away."

She said in a way, the entire camp is just like her hometown. There is always someone to talk to, whether you are standing in the laundry line or bringing in helicopters. She said McGovern isn't Oklahoma, but it's a great substitute.



Sergeant Virginia G. Priegnitz, an air traffic controller with Company E, 245th Aviation Battalion, and a Norman, Okla. native, talks with a nearby Blackhawk helicopter pilot.

American, Russians soldier first train together



Chief of Staff, Training, Colonel Anatoly Rodichev of the Russian Brigade, fires the Beretta 9mm as Lieutenant Colonel Barry Fowler, Task Force 2-8 Cavalry Commander, watches from behind him.

Story and photos by Staff Sergeant Pat Johnston
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The Task Force 2-8 Cavalry Scouts and Company D soldiers came well armed. Along with their personal M-4 and M-16A2 rifles, M-9 pistols and M-249 squad automatic weapons, they brought M-2 .50 caliber machine guns, M-60 machine guns, an MK-19 automatic grenade launcher and an M-203 Grenade launcher.

They also had thousands of rounds of ammunition carried in another truck.

What kind of mission requires Stabilization Force soldiers to show up at a foreign base camp with this much firepower?

Strangely enough, it was a peace mission.

As part of the mission of the 1st Cavalry Division in Bosnia-Herzegovina, U.S. Army soldiers will work with Russian Brigade soldiers located in the northeast corner of Multinational Division (North).

Russian and American soldiers inspect weapon's storage sites together, perform joint patrols and work side by side on construction projects, such as bridge building, to help keep the peace and rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina.

To enhance the Russian-American cohesion and team-building spirit, soldiers will visit each other's base camps. One of the more popular ways that soldiers from two sides of the world get to know one another is by participating in "joint-weapons" exercises.

The Russian and American soldiers are keenly interested in weaponry; these are the tools of their trade. Soldiers memorize

the specifications of their weapons and use this knowledge daily as they fire, load, clear, clean, oil and make repairs on their weapon systems. They also study the weapons of other nations and compare them with their own. Corporal Ricardo Garcia, a 1st Platoon, Company D, Task Force 2-8 Cavalry gunner from Miami, Fla., echoed the sentiments of many of his comrades. "It was a chance for Russian and American soldiers to get their hands on weapons that we've only heard about or seen in pictures," he said.

Once the American soldiers arrived at the Serbian, Lazarevichi firing range used by the Russian Airborne Brigade, they dismounted from their trucks and HMMWVs and gathered for a welcome and safety briefing from their Russian hosts.

A demonstration of their airborne version RPG-17 anti-tank weapon

followed as two Russian airborne soldiers ran across the range, quickly knelt and fired at two tanks in the distance. Smoke billowed and rounds flashed as they hit metal.

After the RPG-17 firing, the Russian troops gave an up-close demonstration of their RPKS machine gun, AK-74 assault rifle, and Markov 9mm pistol.

Once the descriptions and operations of the weapons were related to the intent crowd through interpreters, the American soldiers were divided into groups so they could take turns firing the Russian weapons.

As one soldier left the standing 9mm-target range, another waited to take his place. Soldiers lined up to fire Russian rifles in the prone position while Russian soldiers stood by to assist with the operation of their weapons. Interpreters helped with commands, but most soldiers adopted the "show-me and I'll do it" approach. They watched, learned and accepted help when necessary.

Smiles from U.S. soldiers were thanks enough as they got the hang of operating the Russian weapons from their instructors and then started concentrating on the targets downrange.

Cavalry soldiers agreed unanimously on their favorite Russian weapon. "I liked the sniper rifle the best, everybody liked



A Task Force 2-8 cavalry soldier from the Russian Airborne Brigade fires the .50

er during joint weapons exercise

it," 2-8 Cavalry gunner, Specialist Scottie L. Gibson, a self-professed hunter from Welch, W. Va., said.

"My favorite weapon was a sniper rifle that they had, because of the scope," Garcia said. "You could shoot targets out to 300 meters, and it looks like the target's right in front of your face."

Soon it was the 1st Cavalry soldier's turn to unload their weapons and arrange them behind the firing lanes. The soldiers demonstrated clearing, loading, firing and immediate action on the M-4, M-16A2 rifle, M-9 pistol, M-2HB machine gun, MK-19 automatic grenade launcher, M-60 machine gun, M-249 squad automatic weapon and M-203 grenade launcher. The Russian soldiers watched every movement carefully and listened closely as interpreters described the different clearing, loading and firing procedures.

Boxes of ammunition were set up at the firing stations as the weapons were lined up for firing.

Soldiers were again divided up in groups, this time to try out the American weapons. Gibson, who gave the .50 caliber demonstration and assisted the Russian soldiers in firing it, said they really liked the .50 cal. "A few of them were scared to fire it on rapid fire, but they got into it real fast," he said as they quickly spent their 100 rounds each.

The firing had gone on longer than scheduled, but was finally over.

Gibson, who had never met a Russian soldier before, is enthused about a return visit to the Russian camp. He hopes that being a unit armorer will give him an edge in going.

After packing up the cooled-down weapons and storing the ammunition crates, the 1st Cavalry soldiers loaded up and rode to Ugljevik, the Russian Brigade Camp. Lieutenant Colonel Barry Fowler complemented the soldiers for their safety consciousness.

After being served lunch in the Russian dining

facility, the Russian Brigade Deputy Chief of Staff, Training, from Siberia, Colonel Anatoly Rodichev, spoke to the 1st Cavalry troops. He told them that he knew their commander, but didn't know the soldiers until today's exercise. He said, "We like your discipline, your professional skill and your weapons."

Pointing to the 1st Cavalry patch on the plaque presented to him, Rodichev said that he expected to see Stetsons and spurs on the soldiers the next time he visited



A Russian Airborne Brigade soldier instructs a 2-8 Cavalry soldier in firing a Russian rifle.

Camp Bedrock.

The 1st Cavalry soldiers hadn't set out to conquer an enemy when they'd left that morning with so much firepower. But they did overcome the fear of meeting the unknown -- a Russian soldier.



Staff Sergeant Sean McMurtrey assists a Russian Airborne Brigade soldier fire the .50 caliber.



Soldier helps a Russian Airborne soldier fire the .50 caliber at Lazarevichi Range.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center, making a difference for soldiers

Story and photo by Sergeant Derrick Witherspoon
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

From World War II to Operation Joint Forge, the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center works hard to help soldiers relax and join in the fun. MWR provides recreation and leisure to all the service members deployed to Multinational Division (North). Frank P. Batteford of Leesville, La., former MWR coordinator at Camp Bedrock, said that MWR wants to give something back to the soldiers "for all that they do" in Bosnia.

"What we like to do is create an atmosphere like the one back at the service member's home station," Batteford said. "We try to divert service members' attention away from the mission for a little while so they can sit back and relax."

Brent D. Pierson, current MWR coordinator at Bedrock, said the Bedrock MWR holds a variety of events to help keep soldiers relaxed and at ease while deployed away from their homes and families.

"We show movies three times a day, and we also have a tournament every night, be it pool, darts, etceteras," the Fort Hood, Texas native said. "The service members have to go around in flak vests all day, and they have a number of duties to perform. By providing these leisure activities, it gives them a break away from the everyday stress."

Pierson said one of his goals here is to provide each service member with some form of recreation.

"Before it gets too cold, I want to get soldiers involved in some outside events like football and basketball," Pierson added. "I also want to start preparing for some DOD (Department of Defense) shows we have scheduled."

Batteford and Pierson said there was a ban placed on DOD shows because of the upgrade in the force protection level, but recently the ban was lifted.

"Now that we can start bringing in DOD shows again, morale should get an extra boost," Pierson said.

Soldiers from Camp Bedrock said that not only has MWR boosted their morale, but it also gives them something to do on their time off.

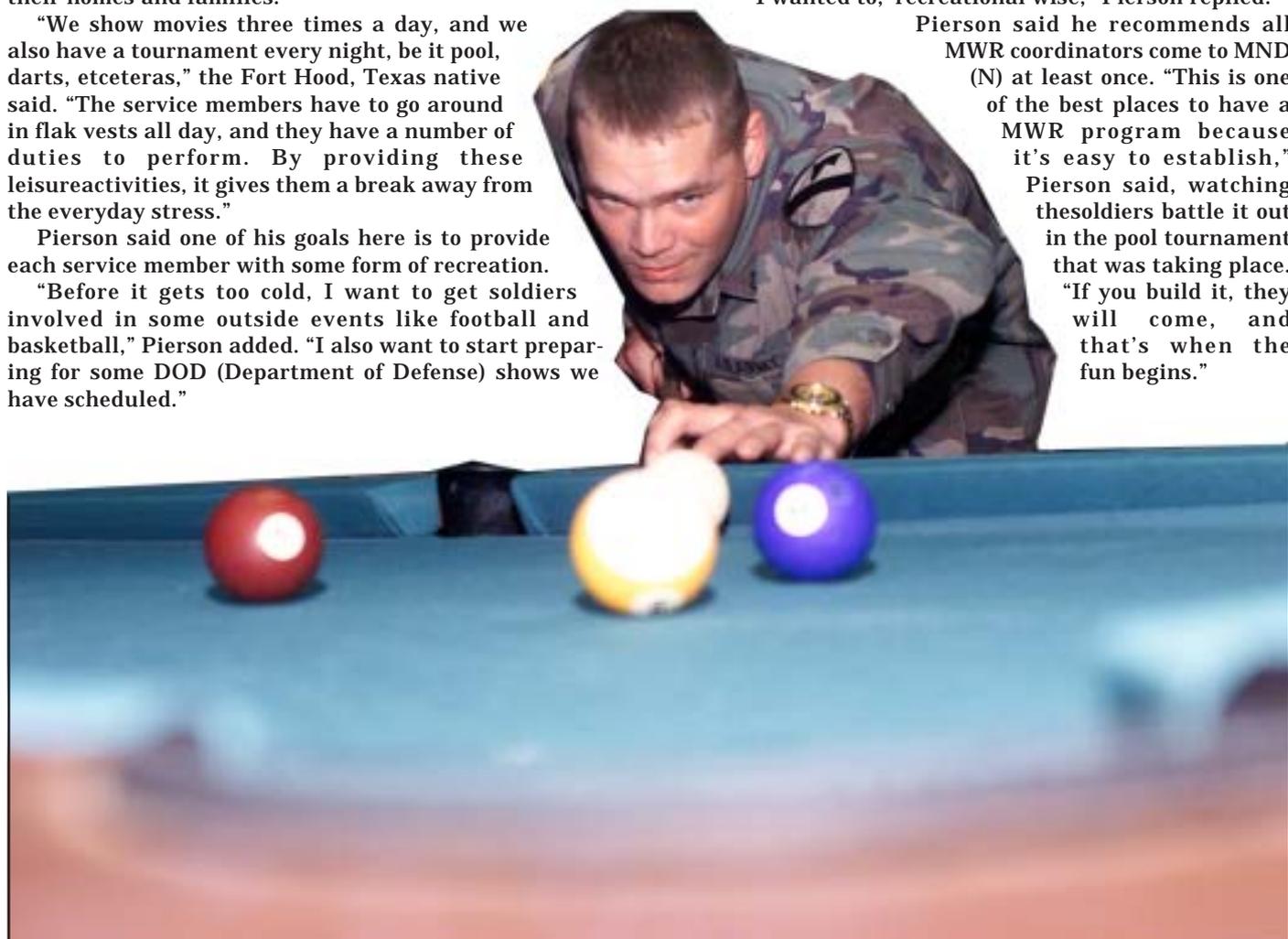
"I like the fact that MWR provides us a place to go to in a military environment like this," Private First Class Peter E. Bowie of Portland, Ore., said.

"MWR has everything we need. I've enjoyed all the tournaments, movies and shows that have come through 'The Rock' and I can't wait for what is next. We really appreciate all that the MWR coordinators are doing for us," Bowie said.

Morale is high at Bedrock said Pierson, but he wants to provide more opportunities to soldiers. "Every soldier should have the chance to say 'I had an opportunity to do what I wanted to,' recreational wise," Pierson replied.

Pierson said he recommends all MWR coordinators come to MND (N) at least once. "This is one of the best places to have a MWR program because it's easy to establish."

Pierson said, watching the soldiers battle it out in the pool tournament that was taking place. "If you build it, they will come, and that's when the fun begins."



Private First Class James K. Sapp of Adel, Ga., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Cavalry, prepares to sink a ball during a pool tournament held weekly at base MWR facilities.

Vietnam veterans challenge Bosnians

Story by David Pendergrass
Military History Office

Photo by Chief Warrant Officer David Rosenthal
126th Medical Company

Thirty years after flying the hostile skies over Vietnam in observation helicopters and gunships, Chief Warrant Officers Robert Nance, John Mahoney, Ray Green, David Rosenthal, Clint Cain and Mike Padilla have once again returned to an area of conflict and international concern, this time as medical evacuation pilots.

The 126th Medical Company of the California National Guard provides medical evacuation support for Stabilization Forces.

Why would these veteran warriors choose to go in harm's way more than a quarter of a century following their last date with destiny? It isn't that they have anything to prove. Between them are 28,000 hours of military flight time, plus several thousand additional hours accumulated flying civilian aircraft — more total hours than some aviation battalions. In addition, during Vietnam, the six pilots accumulated 179 Air Medals, five Distinguished Flying Crosses and three Purple Hearts in the course of flying over 6,000 combat hours. That was a large record for a group of young, inexperienced flyers.

"Individually, we had the option to elect not to go (to Bosnia), but that is not the way we want to finish our careers," declared Rosenthal, a nuclear physicist from Ridgecrest, Calif. The pilots agreed that each of them wanted to come.

Rosenthal carefully laid out his viewpoint on the importance of serving in Bosnia. "It is a moral issue and a character issue. Vietnam was a life changing experience. To be part of something that makes a difference in the world is significant and of great value," he said.

Green, a technical services supervisor for Placer County, and resident of Auburn, Calif., did not join the 126th, headquartered in Sacramento, until 1984. "After Vietnam, I felt I had done my time in the Army and wanted out," he stated. He wanted to join the National Guard unit because of his love of flying and because of the special services that the 126th provides to the state of California. He added that the aviators had received threat briefings prior to deployment, indicating the different situations they might encounter in Bosnia. The old adage, "If it flies, it dies," did not deter them.

"The threat is probably less here in Bosnia," said Padilla, the chief pilot for the Department of Forestry for the State of California, and a resident of Elk Grove, Calif.

The others agreed with Green when he pointed out that fighting forest fires or rescuing hikers in the Sierra Nevadas offers more dangers than what will likely be encountered in the southern European Theater.

Nance emphatically made the point that the entire unit is very close. "Professionally and personally there is a real bond between us. We socialize as a unit and our families all know each other." The majority of the six aviators have been together in this unit for close to 25 years. There are only a handful of soldiers in all of the Multinational Division (North) who have even been on active duty for that length of time.



Chief Warrant Officer Ray Green flew Huey gunships and "slicks" (cargo and troop-carrying helicopters) in Vietnam from 1966-67. Now, in addition to flying MEDEVAC Blackhawks, he's in charge of developing computer networks for Placer County in California.

When asked to compare and contrast the differences between flying in Vietnam and Bosnia, they all offered their opinions. When each of the warrant officers had arrived in Vietnam, they had an average 200 hours of flight time. The pilots who initially mentored them usually had less than a year of flying experience. Nance noted that half of his class from flight school did not come back from Vietnam.

"Here in Bosnia, we are the veterans and have a wealth of experience to offer to the younger pilots," Nance said.

As a group, they agreed that the Blackhawks they are flying now are superior to the Hueys of the Vietnam era. Two engines instead of one, superior engine performance, the ability to withstand small caliber fire better, greater crashworthiness and a greater payload capability, 2500 hundred feet per minute vertical climb with 12 fully armed soldiers aboard, give a big edge to the Blackhawk. Rosenthal noted that with the old Huey if you lost your engine, you only had about four seconds to take decisive action to avert disaster. The Blackhawk simply offers more choices to the pilot.

Another difference noted was the diversity of soldiers in Bosnia. Here, their comrades in arms include females, as well as European and NATO allies from more than 20 countries. One warrant officer said that he had recently spent time talking to an Italian soldier in the afternoon and played Ping-Pong with a Russian in the evening.

Six aviators, who each flew in the dangerous skies over Vietnam, have continued their love of flying in the California National Guard for a quarter of a century, and now are back in a potentially hazardous environment. They are not seeking glory or honors, but a chance to contribute their skills and experience to something bigger than they are. For any soldier, sailor, airman or Marine in the SFOR area of responsibility who needs to be medically evacuated while the 126th is here, you can relax. It is a rock solid cinch that you will be in good hands.

Right on track multiple talented Army mechanic fixes all types of vehicles

Story and photo by Private Louis Sardinha
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

A massive M-1 Abrams tank sits motionless by a muddy road at Camp McGovern, the engine sprawled out before it. Parts are scattered across the ground. In the middle of this immense metallic puzzle, a small figure scrambles around piecing it all together.

Meet Specialist Kristy S. Meldrum, of White Hall, Ill., a tracked vehicle mechanic with Company B, 115th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas. Her job is to replace engines and transmissions on tracked vehicles.

According to Meldrum, the organizational mechanics pull the engine, or “pack” as she calls it, out of the vehicle and set it on the ground. At that time, she disconnects the part that needs to be changed out, whether it is part of the engine or transmission, and replaces it with a new one. Then they put the engine back together, or “stab it” as they call it. Once together, it’s ready to go.

Meldrum is a part of the McGovern Maintenance Support Team that is attached out to units to provide constant maintenance support during missions.

“Even though I’m a track mechanic, we work on a lot of wheeled vehicles, basically HMMWVs,” Meldrum said. There is more demand for HMMWV maintenance at McGovern because they are used more. Most of the vehicles she repairs are up-armored HMMWVs, and those are a little tougher to work on.

“We’ve only been able to do a few track vehicle engines. I’m sure we’ll do more because the M-1s are my priority as far as work goes,” she said.

“I’d rather work on track vehicles than wheeled vehicles,” she added.

Meldrum said there is an advantage to working in Bosnia, such as being able to cross-train on other vehicles. “You’re always learning something new,” she said. “I never thought I would work on both track and wheeled vehicles.”

Before deploying to Bosnia, Meldrum worked mainly on track vehicles. M-1 tanks are part of her usual maintenance routine, but she also repairs 113 armored personnel carriers, M-88 recovery vehicles, and M-577 command tracks.

Meldrum said she thinks her father had a lot to do with her becoming a mechanic. “When I was younger, I always thought it was neat to work with my father in the garage, so I chose to be a mechanic.”

“I think it’s cool that I’m a track mechanic because most people wouldn’t expect me to be working on a car, let alone a tracked vehicle. It’s something different.”

Meldrum said she enjoys being a mechanic. “I like the fact that when I come in each day, I’m not always doing the same work.”

For Meldrum, her job isn’t difficult at all. “I know my job. It would be different if I didn’t.” But later added, “Sometimes it gets frustrating because when we’re working outside, it’s really hard to maneuver around the vehicle with all our gear on.”

Since Meldrum has been in Bosnia, she says she’s gained a lot of experience. “I’m still learning a lot, and I’m willing to learn whatever my peers have to teach me.”



Specialist Kristy S. Meldrum, of White Hall, Ill., a tracked vehicle mechanic with Company B, 115th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas, tightens a bolt on a windshield bracket to an up-armored HMMWV after replacing a cracked windshield.

Working the airwaves, answering questions for Bosnian locals

Story and photo by
Private First Class Giovanni Lorente
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

When Implementation Forces were in control of the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the local government radio stations were airing inaccurate information to the public, at which point IFOR began buying airtime at radio stations to inform the public about the IFOR mission.

This interaction between IFOR and the people of the Bosnian government paved the way for better communications between the Bosnian public and the Stabilization Force that followed IFOR.

"In our area, it is the most popular form of media and the most readily available," Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Brown, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division, from Fort Hood, Texas explained. He said radio "allows us to get our message out to the public, and at the same time interact with the people by answering questions the listeners ... call in."

Questions vary from current events to differences in fashion trends between Americans and Bosnians. "The people are very curious of what we think about their culture and of (the Bosnian government) as a whole," Brown explained.

"I get a lot of questions on refugee returns, on the elections, and most recently on what is happening in Kosovo," Brown said.

According to Brown, the people of Bosnia are also interested in the American culture, especially "where we are from and our background."

"Everyone I've talked to wants progress with the implementation of the Dayton (Peace) Accords, but the wounds are still very deep from the war," Brown explained. "The shows help us get the message out."

According to Brown, Bosnians want peacekeepers to treat everyone the same regardless of ethnicity as SFOR applies the tenants of the Dayton Peace Accord. Brown hopes the radio shows will ease concerns over equal treatment.

"The more contact we can have with the people in the streets and through the radio ... the better the chance we have of making (the Dayton Peace Accord) work, because they'll see that we really are here trying to enhance the future of their country," Brown said.

There were doubts about



Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Brown listens carefully to a caller at Srpska Radio station in Zvornik.

"The fact that people are calling in helps us get our message out on what we are here to do."

— Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Brown

how many people would actually listen to the radio shows until callers started calling in with questions and comments concerning SFOR's mission.

"The fact that people are calling in helps us get our message out on what we are here to do," explained Brown, which he said is to bring peace to a nation torn by war.

On Hill 722, seeing is believing



Private First Class Greg S. Gifford Jr., a multi-channel systems operator and maintainer with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 13th Signal Battalion and a Modesto, Calif. native, checks the circuits on a generator to ensure proper operation.

Story and photo by
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The view is the major perk of being stationed on Hill 722, according to Specialist Christopher J. Previglian, a network systems operator and maintainer with 2nd Platoon, Company C of the 13th Signal Battalion and an Olean, N.Y. native. From the hill, soldiers can see a wide variety of landscapes. Each day, the scenery seems to become more beautiful and majestic.

Hill 722, named for its height above sea level, is the place Previglian calls home. The mission of the hill's soldiers is to provide tactical communications to U.S. forces in northern Bosnia and to support the mission, Previglian continued.

One interesting aspect of the site is that it's self-sustaining, Previglian said. It has to be, considering some soldiers spend their entire tour on the hill. Cooks provide hot meals, mechanics and technicians repair and maintain equipment, and a combat medic takes care of medical emergencies.

Previglian said finding something to do isn't a major concern for soldiers on the hill. The site provides its own entertainment. A morale, welfare and recreation tent provides a variety of board games, books and an overall relaxing environment, giving soldiers something to do when they're not on duty. Morale phones allow soldiers to speak with their loved ones.

Fortunately, the soldiers have a chance to get off the hill, Previglian said. Several convoys a week are sent to Comanche Base, allowing soldiers access to a post exchange, a laundry facility and fast food restaurants — conveniences

which are not available on the hill. "There's not enough room up here to have those things," Previglian said. "The fact is, we are very limited on space up here." The goal is to give every soldier the opportunity to visit Comanche every ten days.

The site does support a small gym consisting of one exercise bike, two treadmills, two stair climber machines and a collection of weight lifting machines and free weights. When they don't have something they need, they improvise, Previglian said. For example, the facility had no triceps pull-down machine, so they created one using a metal bar, a rope, and a pulley attached to the ceiling. The result was a decent replica of the original design.

Despite the limited access to gym equipment, physical training is much more efficient at the hill than on other base camps, Previglian said — especially cardiovascular endurance training.

"It's harder because we don't have flat ground to run on," Previglian said. "The fact is, everywhere you go, you're either going up or down a hill."

The altitude does offer unique experiences. Previglian recalled a morning where the hill was covered by a cloud. "It amazed me because I hadn't realized how high up we were until that moment."

Previglian said the thing he enjoys the most about the hill is the view of the countryside. Although the remote nature and limited space of the site prevents the hill from having certain conveniences, it does allow the soldiers to witness the full beauty of Bosnia from a unique point of view. Previglian said he feels seeing the countryside from 722 meters above sea level makes his job worthwhile.