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TALON

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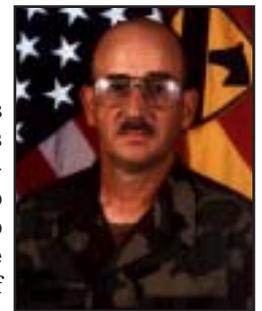
Private First Class Earnest C. Curtis, a staff carpenter with S-3 Operations, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-8 Cavalry, and an Austin, Texas native, adds lights to a star to be put on Camp McGovern's Christmas tree. (Photo by Private First Class Phillip E. Breedlove, Jr. See story next page.)

"Blessed are the peacemakers." – *The Holy Bible*

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 Brigades 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 most of you know, MG Byrnes has reinstated the Fighter Management Pass Program (FMPP), which will allow personnel who qualify the opportunity to travel to Budapest on an MWR R&R pass. I want to clarify who is authorized to take advantage of the FMPP, and share with you some of the information related to the program.

If you are authorized R&R leave back to the states for 14 days, you are not authorized to take advantage of the FMPP. R&R leave is for those personnel who are staying for both SFOR4 and SFOR5 or a TCS person that will remain in Bosnia for 270 days or more. R&R leave personnel are not authorized to take advantage of the FMPP unless they do not want to take R&R leave, in which case those persons may ask for the FMPP. All others are qualified to take advantage of the FMPP. The FMPP is a seven day process. On day one you will arrive at Eagle Base or Camp McGovern. At 7:30 a.m on day two you depart for Taszar where you will store your military equipment and spend the night. Day three you will depart to Budapest. When you arrive at your hotel you will be required to check in and pay for your lodging up front. Days four and five you will be in Budapest on your own. Day six you will depart back to Taszar, pick up your military equipment, and spend the night. On day seven you will return to Eagle Base and back to your unit. Remember, when you depart Taszar for your camp, General Order Number One is back in effect. Based on average costs for your room, food and entertainment it is recommended you take not less than \$500 for this trip. The major cost will be your room, which will include breakfast each day. The remaining expenses will be the amount you spend on food and entertainment. While in Budapest, you will use the buddy system at all times. We want you to enjoy your time in Budapest, but remember your safety is our number one concern. You also represent your Service and your country at all times. Every camp CSM has a tape that gives a good outline of what to expect during your pass. Please review that tape.

I want to wish everyone in Multinational Division (North) a safe and happy Christmas. Remember the number one thing we do is **FORCE PROTECTION. "STAY SAFE"**

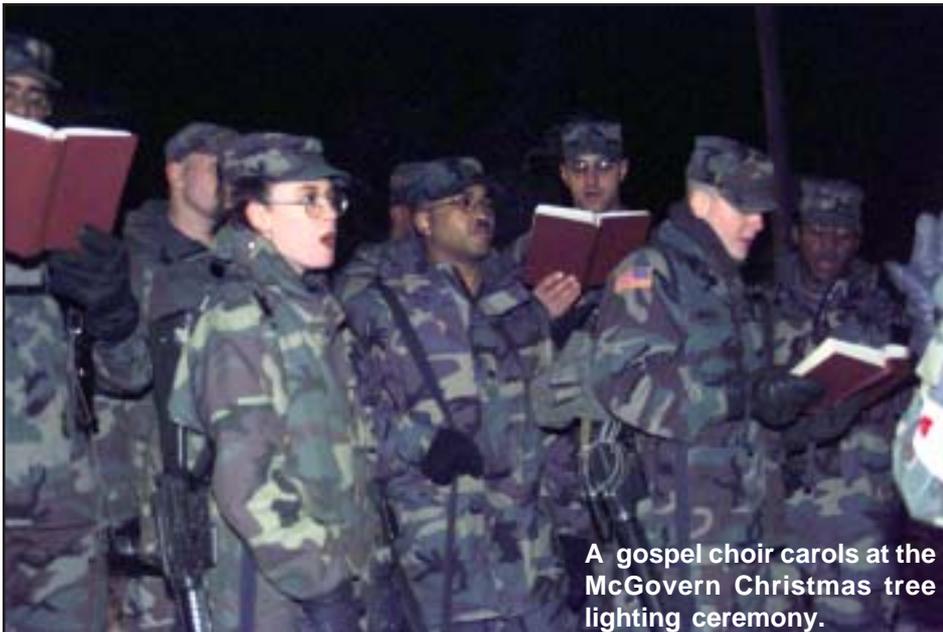
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ACampMcGovernChristmas



A gospel choir carols at the McGovern Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

Story and photos by

Private First Class Phillip E. Breedlove Jr.
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The Christmas tree lighting in New York City is a valued tradition among many residents of the "Big Apple." This holiday season at Camp McGovern kicked off with a similar ritual when the camp's tree was lit in the Rose Garden as the Gospel Service Choir sang Christmas carols.

According to Sergeant Herbert A. Veness, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, and a Danbury, Conn. native, this holiday tradition begged an interesting question: How will McGovern soldiers celebrate Christmas this year?

Some McGovern soldiers have unique Christmas traditions. Specialist Ly M. Hoang, a mechanized infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, said, "Our tradition in Vietnam is a two-day feast and gathering. Everyone visits the oldest living relative's house on Christmas Eve, and the family that lives there cooks up a lot of food, and I mean a lot, like a Vietnamese traditional beef stew. At midnight on Christmas Eve, we go to Catholic Mass, then talk until the sun rises."

"Instead of putting up Christmas trees," Hoang continued, "we put up a huge nativity scene each year made of paper and built by members of the family."

Private First Class Rodolfo Ruiz Jr., a mechanized infantryman with McGovern's Scout Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Division, said his family also has unique Christmas customs.

Ruiz, a Sun Valley, Calif. native, said, "My parents are from Mexico and we celebrate on Christmas Eve, not Christmas Day. We buy presents and everything, but on Christmas Eve we stay up all night and break piñatas like we do on birthdays. Once midnight hits, we open all of our presents and celebrate Catholic Mass. Then we drink Atoles, a non-alcoholic Mexican drink, and eat tamales. We have Christmas trees and lights, and fireworks. We don't just go to bed and wake up the next morning. It's a big celebration — about as big as New Years."

Ruiz said he wishes he could celebrate the way he did at home, but he will still try to talk with his family and be part of the festivities. "I'll probably celebrate Christmas like everybody else, then I'll get up about 9:00 a.m. our time and call my family in California while they are celebrating."

Sergeant Michael A. Feyh, a flight medic with McGovern's Flight Platoon, 126th Medical Company Air Ambulance Team, and a Rockland, Calif. native said he is also one of the many McGovern soldiers who brought his decorating traditions with him to Bosnia. "I and one of my roommates took it upon ourselves to go buy some Christmas lights and make it a little bit more 'Christmassy' here. He and I have a kind of Christmas competition going on now. He'll buy one thing, then I'll buy two, then he'll buy some thing to top it, and we kind of try to beat each other out. It's a friendly competition to see who can be more 'Christmassy.' This

ritual kind of makes me feel more at home."

Some soldiers' Christmas traditions have been altered because of religious beliefs. Staff Sergeant Ian S. Meizius, a vehicle commander with 1st Platoon, Company C, 1-8 Cavalry, said, "I'm Jewish, so I don't really celebrate Christmas in the traditional, religious sense that most Americans do. It's more of a Charlie Brown type Christmas where we put up a tree and give out presents every day of Hanukah, an eight-day Jewish holiday in December. This year, my mother is going to mail all of my presents at once."

It seems like many soldiers are going out of their way to bring the holiday season to their work and personal areas in an effort to make McGovern feel "a little more like home," said Specialist Maranda L. Bigler, an air traffic controller with Company E, 245th Aviation Battalion, and an Oklahoma City, Okla. native. She said she plans on spending Christmas with her family, though she isn't leaving Bosnia. "I talk to my family every day, so for me, it's like Christmas with my family with a few miles in between. That's the way it is no matter where I am, so wherever I go, I always take Christmas with me."



Specialist Sean D. Devaney, a gunner with 1st Platoon, Company C, 1-8 Cavalry, and a Newton, Mass. native, adjusts "Second Lieutenant Douglas Fir's" hat.

Laker Girl shit bigat Dobol

Story and photos by
Specialist Giovanni Lorente
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment at Camp Dobol got an early Christmas present this year when the Laker Girls arrived to entertain them. Despite numerous flight cancellations and long bus rides to get to Dobol, the Laker Girls gave the troops a show to remember.

The Laker Girls' bus pulled up in front of Dobol's Moral, Welfare and Recreation building in the early afternoon. "Who's that on the bus?" was the question passersby asked.

Although the Laker Girls were scheduled to visit Dobol earlier in the week, the word of their arrival spread quickly. The Laker Girls toured the camp and spent time at the dining facility, where they enjoyed some hot chocolate and interacted with soldiers.

After dinner at the dinning facility, they retired to their sleeping quarters for some

much needed rest. Their show was scheduled for later that night.

Fifteen minutes before the show the MWR building was packed with soldiers. The only space available was at the front of the building where the girls would perform. Some soldiers stood outside and watched the show through the window. As soon as the first Laker Girl stepped into the building, the crowd of soldiers went wild. Cameras were flashing from all over the place as soldiers vied for the best shot of the girls.

After a brief introduction from Jerry Bupp, MWR director, the Laker Girls began with their show.

After the show, the girls autographed and gave out pictures as a token of their appreciation to the soldiers of Operation Joint Forge.



The Laker Girls give autographed pictures to the soldiers after the show.



Michelle and the rest of the girls show the soldiers a few dance moves while visiting Camp Dobol.

SFOR Civilian Mission Essential



Edwin L. Ivester of Kempner, Texas, Brown and Root employee, checks electrical wires on a five ton truck.

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

These troopers "fight" their battles and perform much like the typical soldier in the battle dress uniform. But the cause they work for has to do more with the peacekeepers than the peacekeeping mission itself.

A small percentage of the people deployed to Multinational Division (North) are not soldiers, but civilians deployed to Bosnia in support of Operation Joint Forge.

Brown and Root, Lockheed Martin, and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, are just some of the companies with civilians serving the needs of soldiers in MND (N).

"The civilian employee's mission here is to provide 100 percent support to the soldiers," said Captain Mike Farley, Mayor of Camp Bedrock. "They are here to help ensure that the quality of life for the servicemembers deployed here stays high. They perform a number of different tasks, from making sure the servicemembers are fed three times a day, to ensuring the base camp roads are well main-

tained," said the London, Ky. native.

Farley said they use civilians instead of servicemembers to perform certain missions so servicemembers can stay focused on the peacekeeping mission. Also, it is less expensive to contract out to independent companies for certain jobs. Edwin L. Ivester of Kempner, Texas, a vehicle maintenance technician with Lockheed Martin at Bedrock, and a former member of the 615th Aviation Support Battalion at Comanche Base, said it's an individual's choice to deploy.

"Most of the people that come here to support the soldiers volunteered, and for good reason. A majority of us have been in the military or have a family member in the military, so we understand what deployment is all about," Ivester said. "We know how hard it is for the soldiers to do their initial tasking as well as the other tasking the mission here may require."

Ivester said it has been an excellent experience working with the soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment.

"You get to see so many different soldiers, and they are all eager to help out in any way that they can. Being retired from the 1st Cavalry Division, I know a deployment like this can be stressful for the soldiers and for the civilians supporting this operation, but the military is working hard to keep morale up," Ivester said.

Norman C. Mabe Sr. of Killeen, Texas, a vehicle maintenance technician with Lockheed Martin, said he volunteered to come to Bosnia because he knows the price of freedom.

"I have been here since the beginning, Operation Joint Endeavor to Forge, and I will be here until the end," Mabe said. "I retired after

24 years from the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment as a first sergeant, so deployments aren't new to me. Our interaction with the military has made it very easy for the soldiers to adjust to us."

Harry H. Albright of Seminole, Fla., Brown and Root camp manager at Bedrock, said he is proud to be supporting a peaceful mission like Operation Joint Forge.

"The Balkans have settled down a lot since this peacekeeping mission began, and it's good to be a part of that," Albright said. "I enjoy supporting the troops and making their lives a little easier, especially this time of year when they are away from their families for the holidays. They are here working to keep peace, not only for the people here in Bosnia, but also for my family in the states. I'm really proud of them."

Although they get fewer benefits than the soldiers do, many civilian employees said they would be glad to make sacrifices to come back here and support the troops again.

Wearing the camouflage uniform represents strength, pride, honor and courage, and that is just what the civilian employees in MND (N) stand for as they continue to work for their cause — supporting the servicemembers of Operation Joint Forge 100 percent.

SFOR and local firefighters



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

As the Camp McGovern fire chief confidently trudged toward the center podium, all eyes turned toward her. A variety of people sat expectantly as she prepared to speak. Some were Stabilization Force soldiers, others were from the local area, but all were firefighters.

Sergeant Iris R. Rodriguez, McGovern fire chief with the 463rd Engineer Detachment, Firefighters Platoon, and a Houston, Texas native said, "I would like to thank you all for participating in today's joint firefighter training mission."

"As firefighters, we have a common bond: to save lives, protect property and extinguish fires. Fire knows no race, nationality, age or gender. It discriminates against no one and affects everyone.

"Today, we have the opportunity to share fire-fighting techniques and learn from each other."

According to Rodriguez, the McGovern-hosted joint training was an exchange of fire-fighting methods between the Swedish and Norwegian fire teams along with local Gornji Rahic and Brcko Fire Departments. It also brought these groups together to build mutual cooperation among nearby fire departments.

"We depend on each other," Rodriguez said. "If there was a fire far away from all of our stations, the two closest could respond and get there faster and save more lives."

After an opening ceremony, the firefighters presented the equipment they brought and demonstrated its use. During the display, McGovern's firefighters discovered the Brcko and Gornji Rahic Fire Departments attack fires with little more than narrow fire hoses, protective vests and face shields, unlike the American and Norwe-



(Top left) Desoto, Mo. native, Specialist Logan W. Griffith and St. Louis native, Private First Class Kirk M. Jackson, firefighters with Camp McGovern's Firefighter Platoon, 463rd Engineer Det., demonstrate U.S. Army procedures for evacuating a casualty from a Blackhawk helicopter during a joint firefighting training exercise.

(Left) Sergeant Iris R. Rodriguez, the fire chief with Camp McGovern's Firefighter platoon, 463rd Engineer Det., seals a fire mask to prevent light from entering, simulating limited visibility during a fire.

Firefighters share experiences

gian teams which use air packs.

"I think this has to be the bravest thing I have ever seen," Rodriguez said. "The fact that someone would risk their lives to that extent for strangers really amazes me."

After a lunch filled with nostalgic stories of past feats of bravery, the group moved toward the McGovern fire department to practice casualty extraction from tents filled with obstacles like cots and cabinets set up to represent a burning room. The firefighters' masks were taped up to impair their vision and simulate a room filled with smoke.

Next, the group moved to McGovern's airfield to practice a scenario in which a Blackhawk helicopter crashed and the teams had to rescue the crew.

During a closing ceremony, Rodriguez presented the Gornji Rahic and Brcko Fire Departments with one air pack each, which allows them to breathe while fighting fires in smoke-filled rooms.

In her closing remarks, Rodriguez thanked everyone for coming and said, "As you can see, we have a few small differences, but many things in common. I'm glad to share this experience, and I hope this is the beginning of bigger and better things to come."

Private First Class Kirk M. Jackson, a firefighter with the McGovern Department, and a St. Louis, native, said he is sure the other nations will continue to build relations because this mutual cooperation benefits everyone.

Jackson said firefighters around the world depend on each other no matter where they are from or what their background, and this common bond is what brings every one of these brave souls together as comrades.

"When a firefighter suits up for battle, he isn't defending a border or strategic point," Jackson said. "He's going to save the lives of strangers. That is the thing that ties us together as brothers."



(Top right) A blindfolded firefighter with the Norwegian Fire Brigade rescues a mock casualty during a simulated fire at a joint firefighter training exercise hosted by Camp McGovern.

(Right) The Norwegian firefighter practices life saving procedures on a mock casualty during the training exercise.



McGovern soldiers ready for riots

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

Stabilization Force soldiers face risks as a part of their peacekeeping mission. It's simply part of the job of the soldier. Riots and civil disturbances present a special and dangerous hazard to SFOR soldiers.

Although not frequent, soldiers must be trained and ready to face civil unrest at any time and in any place outside Camp McGovern. Will they be?

"Yes!" was the emphatic response from Staff Sergeant James B. Pacheco, a squad leader with 1st Platoon, 410th Military Police Company, and a riot control instructor. McGovern is doing their part by providing riot control training for soldiers.

The course is a way of ensuring soldiers know what to do if they face a violent crowd while on patrol, according to the East Providence, R.I. native. "Every soldier that's going to be outside the wire is required to take this class."

Training consists of different postures, striking techniques and types of formations. "It's just another tool in the box they have to use."

According to Pacheco, professional appearance is one of the most important factors in riot control. "It's important to show the crowd we know what we're doing. If we can form up and disperse the crowd with a show of force, then that's what we're going to. If not, we have to do what we

have to do, and we'll be ready to do it."

Pacheco said he enjoys being an instructor. "My motivation is knowing that I am able to make a difference. I like seeing the troops go from good to exceptional."

Pacheco is no stranger to crowd control. "This training has been drilled into my head so many times, it's just second nature to me. If you asked me to go execute a riot control mission right now, I could handle it."

Pacheco seeks to give the McGovern soldiers he instructs the same experience and confidence. "The first time you go into a live riot shouldn't be the first time you have done the maneuvers."

To ensure his soldiers get the most out of his class, he strives to make it interesting. "I don't want to give them a seminar. I want them to learn something, and I have to see results when I teach."

Pacheco said one way he measures results is by how well he can hear after the class. "I like the soldiers motivated, and yelling and screaming the words. By verbalizing, it increases the motivation tenfold. It also helps the soldiers enjoy the class, and they learn more because of it."

He also likes to step aside at some point to let the class practice what they've learned, and he won't release them until they are able to perform the task without the guidance of an instructor. To him, this is the final exam for his class. When they complete the maneuvers flawlessly, he knows they are ready.



Soldiers from 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1-8 Cavalry practice striking techniques during a riot control class led by Staff Sergeant James B. Pacheco.

Mine action center hosts first demining conference

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

The Multinational Division (North) Mine Action Center recently held its first Entity Armed Forces Demining Team Leader Conference at Pegasus Hall on Eagle Base.

Senior leaders and team leaders from throughout MND (N) were on hand to be recognized with awards for their accomplishments over the last year.

"We had a safe and successful demining season with no deaths or injuries," said Colonel Douglas L. Horn, 1st Cavalry Division chief engineer, and Engineer Brigade commander for Demining Operations in MND (N). "This is a major contribution to solving the mine problem here in Bosnia, and we are making this country safer for all its citizens. The purpose of this conference is to have an After Action Review. We want to figure out what we did well and what we need to do better," said the Jefferson, Texas resident.

The commander of MND (N) and 1st Cavalry Division, Major General Kevin P. Byrnes, was on hand to award all 17 teams.

"You are doing what needs to be done, and you are disciplined to meet the standards. You can make no mistakes in what you do, and your safe performance is commendable. You have my full support. We are moving forward together. I am honored to be in the same room with you," Byrnes said.

Following the ceremony, a deminer in a full demining suit read the Deminer's Motto: My duty knows no mistake! I am an Engineer Deminer! There are few like me. I fight with danger daily and triumph. I tolerate no oversight and I'm alert at all times. I'm expected to complete every operation to perfection. I do my duty to restore peace to my country. People trust me with their lives. My duty knows no mistake!

"This year we cleared 65,000 square meters, because we shifted from mine lifting," said First Lieutenant Jeremy Jeffery, 1st Cavalry Division Mine Action Center officer. Mine lifting involves finding mines based on old maps and recorded information, according to Jeffery.



Demining teams were broken into groups to do after action reports during the first Demining Team Leader Conference at Pegasus Hall on Eagle Base.

"The problem with this is there is still some uncertainty about hidden mines. The proper method now is 'mine clearing,' which is taking a defined area and clearing every square meter. This takes care of all the uncertainties. We also were able to get deminers life insurance — now each deminer is insured up to 100,000 Deutsche Marks."

Mine strikes have been reduced in the past three years. In 1996 there were 190 incidents and in 1997 there were 140. In 1998 there has only been 39 to date.

Demining teams were separated into four groups to discuss what was done right this year, and to consider improvements.

The first group worked on mine field marking and clearing mine fields. The second group was tasked with mine layout and the best way to set up mine data by laying out sites and limitations. The third group emphasized working and executing mine clearing procedures. The fourth group discussed reporting the completion of clearing a minefield and marking it.

The mine action center will have training courses to help the deminers, including a Refresher Training Course in February and a Survey Course. There will also be some new equipment issued in February, to help with the mine clearing. The Mine Action Center is also setting up a mine awareness class for local schools, to help children recognize and avoid mines.

SFOR helps refugees stay warm



Specialist Wayne L. Rake Jr. oversees refugees as they gather wood in a designated area of Eagle Base.

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

Civil Affairs teams supporting Operation Joint Forge in Multinational Division (North) assist the base camp commanders with communicating and accomplishing missions with the civilians in their area. The Civil Affairs team at Camp Bedrock is taking their job one step further by helping locals stay warm this frigid winter.

The 431st Civil Affairs team at Bedrock has taken on an extra peacekeeping mission while deployed to MND (N). They are helping local refugees gather discarded wood from nearby U.S. base camps so they can stay warm as they battle the Balkan winter season.

Sergeant First Class Patrick L. Gillean, noncommissioned officer in charge of the Bedrock Civil Affairs team, said there are many refugee camps in the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment area of operation that are in need of wood this winter.

"The need for wood is one of the major issues that the refugee camps bring up every year," the Mena, Ark. native said. "We found out that Eagle Base had a project on the way that involved clearing the area of unwanted trees and wood so they could have a better line of sight around the sector. We started talking to the 52nd Engineers about what was going on with the wood, because they were involved in the project. Once they told us the wood had no purpose and they were just clearing it out of the way, we started

talking to the Civil Affairs team at Eagle Base," Gillean said.

He added that it took a lot of coordination to get the project rolling, but once it got on the way, everything came together.

The Civil Affairs team has been helping locals from a refugee camp known as Karavla for the past few months, and they have recently started working with another camp by the name of Visca. Gillean said his team escorts the refugees by truck to the different wood sites located on Eagle. From there they oversee the refugees as they cut the wood into three to four foot lengths for firewood. The wood may not be sold for monetary profit.

"This is a good opportunity for the refugees, because it's hard for them to get wood where they live because of safety issues," Gillean said. "There are still a lot of uncovered mines in the area, and they have to be careful of where they are walking around looking for wood."

Helping the refugees collect wood not only helps them keep warm this winter, but also keeps them safely away from suspect areas that may contain mines, according to Gillean. "This is good for continuing relations between SFOR (Stabilization Forces) and the locals."

The refugees said they are thankful and happy for the privilege to come to the base camp to gather wood. They said that each person comes to collect wood individually for his family. There are more than 300 people living at the Visca refugee camp, and the wood will allow them to cook food and heat their homes.

"Most of the families are just trying to get back on their feet. You will see a lot of them come together as a team for the whole refugee camp in events like this wood collecting," Gillean said.

He also said there are still trees being knocked down at Eagle and Comanche Base, so there is still wood for the refugees to collect.

The Bedrock Civil Affairs team is the only group involved in the wood collecting project, but they said they would like more service members to get involved so they can bring more refugees into the base camps to collect wood. They said there are a lot of sites, but not enough people to oversee all the refugees.

Specialist Wayne L. Rake Jr. of Phillipsburg, N.J., and a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-8 Cavalry, is just one of the soldiers from Bedrock who has volunteered to give the Civil Affairs team a hand. "Doing missions like this gives me a chance to get off the base camp and see some Bosnian culture. It also helps me see what we are doing here. You come here and you think they don't want you here, but a big percentage of the people appreciate what we are doing here," Rake said. "I would be glad to do this again, because it makes you feel good to help out people who are really in need of help."

Gillean said this project is helping the military save a lot of money. "The refugees coming and gathering the wood gives the military less to cleanup and provides a means of survival for the refugees, which makes this a good project all around."

Santa's Post Office, gift from APO



Specialist Lashaunda R. Duncan (left) and Specialist Benjamin T. Adams, two postal clerks in the 15th Postal Company, help soldiers get their mail to their families for the Christmas Holiday.

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

The 15th Postal Company on Eagle Base started something new this holiday season. They extended their postal service to accommodate soldiers' mail this holiday season.

15th Postal created "Santa's Post Office," located in the Eagle Base Post Exchange near the stereo equipment at the rear of the store. This service provides postal support to all soldiers mailing out gifts and Christmas cards during this holiday season.

"This is something we decided would help the soldiers, because the PX is closer for most soldiers than the main post office. This is better than walking all the way down to the other end of post to mail packages," said Captain Darrell K. McKown, the Eagle Base postal commander for the 15th Postal Command and a resident of Tallahassee, Fla.

"This has been so successful, we are currently looking into making this service permanent. We are just looking for a location now to make it happen," McKown added.

The mini post office has a variety of services just like the main post office to include scales to weigh packages, international mail services, certified mail, money orders and regular mail services.

They also have free mail for most personal items as long as they don't weigh over 11 ounces.

"The only thing we can't offer is registered mail. There is no way to secure it," said Specialist Lashaunda R. Duncan, a postal clerk and a resident of Thomasville, Ga. "Even if the power goes out, we can get the mail out by using our International Mail Books to figure out postal zones and zip codes," Duncan added.

A team of five soldiers were sent here from Taszar, Hungary to help support the mail this holiday season.

"I was sent ... to support the soldiers and their mail for this Christmas holiday season. The best thing about this is you can buy your presents here, and then mail them off right here in the PX," said Specialist Benjamin T. Adams, a postal clerk and a resident of Texarkana, Texas. We got mail bags going to all APOs, and we are open six days a week," Adams added.

"I saw the sign a few days ago and I came here because the main post office is so far away," said Private First Class Mark G. Savel, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division intelligence analyst. "This is good especially when you have heavy boxes to mail."

The new service promises to help soldiers stationed on Eagle Base with holiday mailing, and is expected to continue once a permanent location is found and approved.

The Black Knight

officer challenge

Story and photo by
Specialist Giovanni Lorente
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Like bold knights from the middle ages out for a friendly joust, officers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, divided into teams to compete in a variety of events designed to test leadership skills and teamwork. With these two skills already mastered by the officers from both Camp Dobol and Camp Demi, there were only two reasons left to compete in the Black Knight Challenge: to see who was the best, but more importantly, to have fun.

The events were timed, and the team with the best overall score at the end would win.

While the rest of the camp was still asleep, contestants were briefed on the rules of engagement.

Each team had to complete seven tasks in the least amount of time possible. Teams consisted of 10 to 12 members with one squad leader and two team leaders in each team. The squad leader and team leaders were the only ones who could decide on how they were going to perform the tasks, unless they asked the rest of their team members for suggestions — but no one was allowed to volunteer suggestions.

The most tiresome event was the sandbag race. Here

the contestants had to load a pallet with as many sandbags as they could within ten minutes. Each sandbag weighed about 30lbs, and was frozen solid from the winter weather. The sandbags had to be transported a distance of 20 yards.

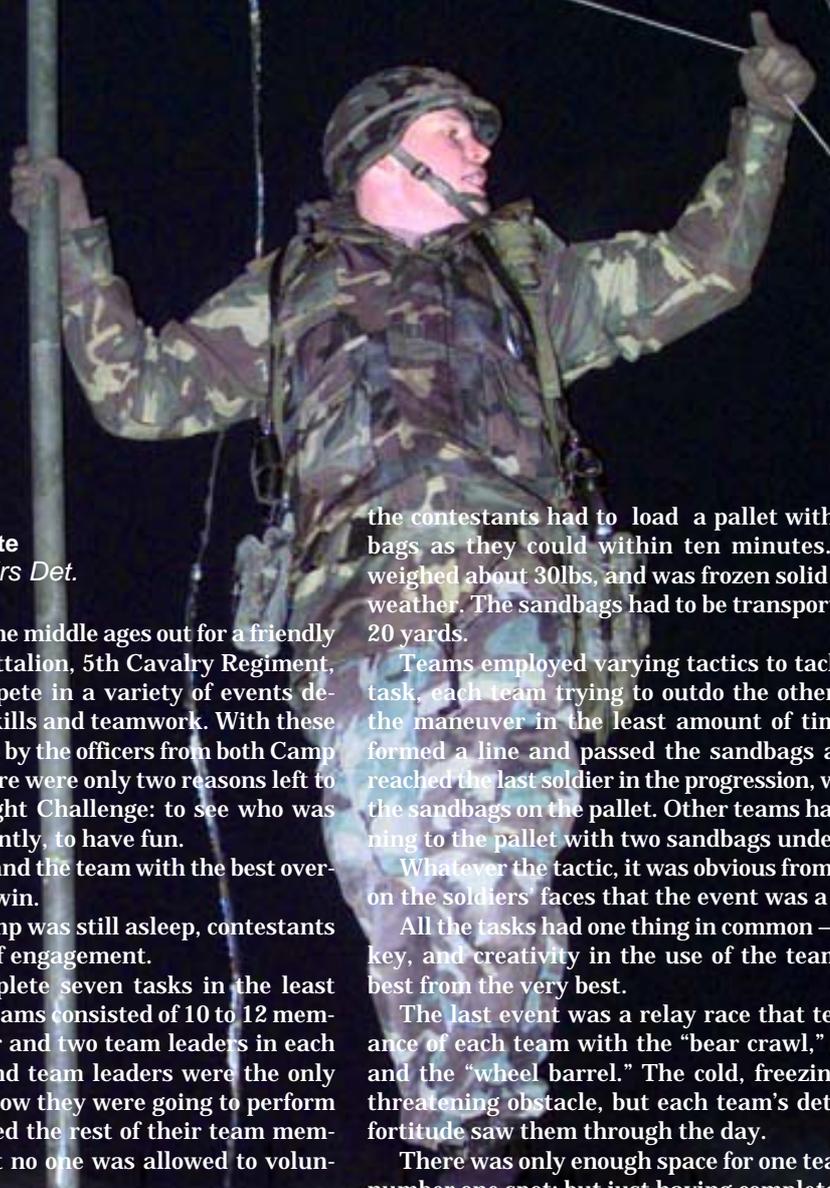
Teams employed varying tactics to tackle the grueling task, each team trying to outdo the others and complete the maneuver in the least amount of time. Some teams formed a line and passed the sandbags along until they reached the last soldier in the progression, who then stacked the sandbags on the pallet. Other teams had members running to the pallet with two sandbags underarm.

Whatever the tactic, it was obvious from the expressions on the soldiers' faces that the event was a tough one.

All the tasks had one thing in common — teamwork was key, and creativity in the use of the team separated the best from the very best.

The last event was a relay race that tested the endurance of each team with the "bear crawl," the "crab walk" and the "wheel barrel." The cold, freezing snow posed a threatening obstacle, but each team's determination and fortitude saw them through the day.

There was only enough space for one team to occupy the number one spot; but just having completed all the events made every team a winner.



Captain Scott Roberts stands on the back of a team member to hook up a line to an OE254 antenna as part of one of the events in the Black Knight Challenge.