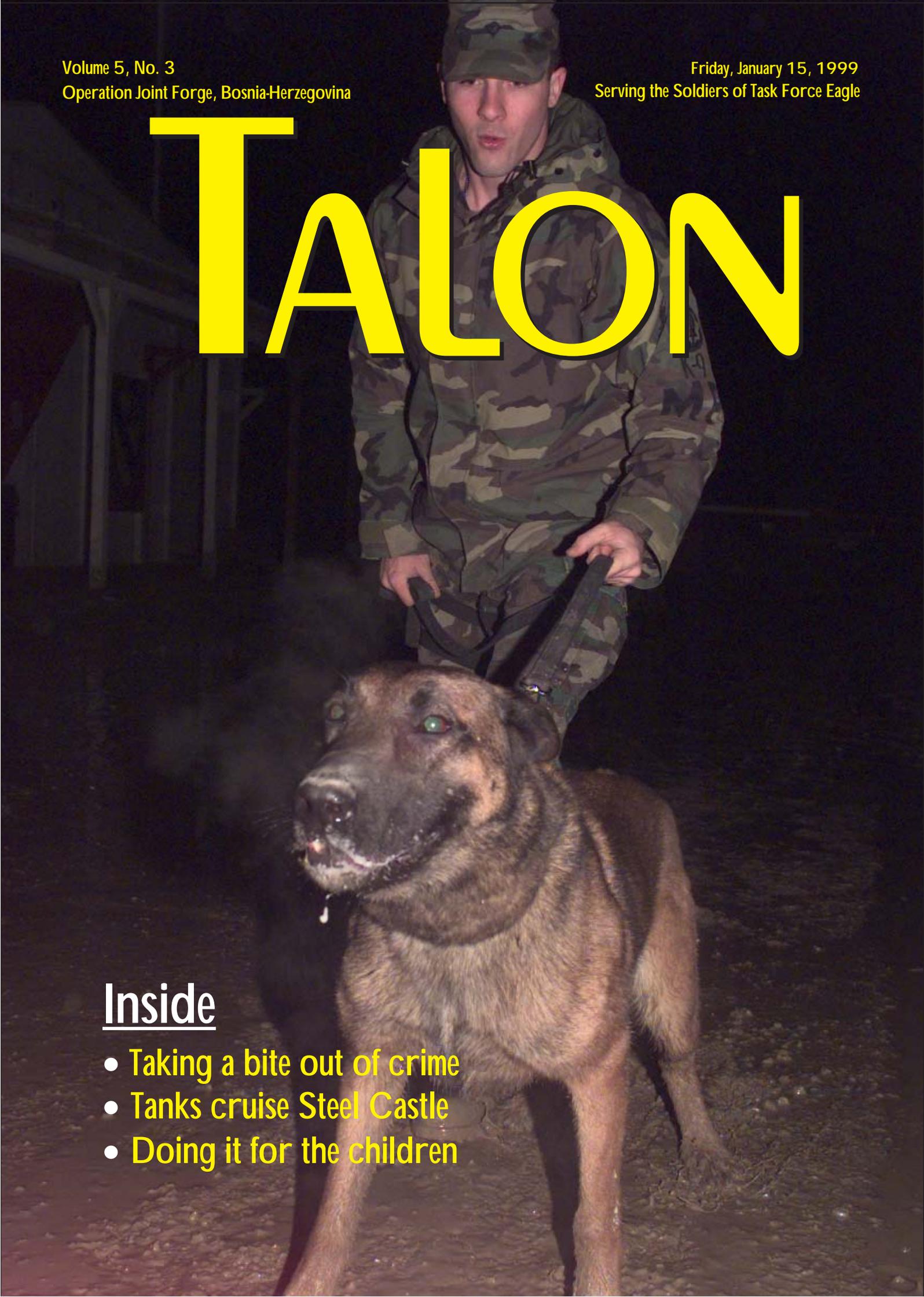


Volume 5, No. 3
Operation Joint Forge, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Friday, January 15, 1999
Serving the Soldiers of Task Force Eagle

TALON



Inside

- Taking a bite out of crime
- Tanks cruise Steel Castle
- Doing it for the children

Talon Inside



Winter relief.....4
Refugees receive aid



Stateside sponsorship 8
Donations go to local school



Out and about 11
Street patrols

Contents

Up Front 2
New education center

Working at Steel Castle 3
Tankers hit the trails

Bridging the gap 5
Interpreters aid PSYOPS mission

Canine soldiers 6-7
Military Police Dogs in action

The Swedish perspective..... 9
Swedish compound visited

III Corps Commander checks on troops... 10
Lieutenant General boosts morale

Soldier reunites with orphan 12
Soldier returns to orphanage

On the Cover

Specialist Michael R. Forrest, a Phoenix native, and a military police patrol dog handler with 178th MP Detachment, maintains control of his dog during a building clearing exercise. (Photo by Private First Class Louis Sardinha, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det. See story on pages 6 and 7.)

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

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.

UpFront

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

In CSM Inman's absence, the guest author this week is CSM Watkins, 4th Brigade CSM, from Camp Comanche.

This is 1999, and we are on the eve of a new millennium. With the beginning of a new year often comes a sense of wanting to do new things; new beginnings, new resolutions and new commitments. I would like to take this opportunity to share a vision of forward thinking, focusing on our future and letting the past be the past. Thus using the past only as an avenue of making things better for the future.

You can count on this — the past ended one second ago; once something happened it happened. We cannot change the past, but we can affect our future by reaching forth unto those things that are before us.

Recently, a new education center opened on Eagle Base. It brings a computer lab with 20 workstations, which allows Task Force Eagle's soldiers internet educational access and eventually satellite video classes. This will give our soldiers the opportunity to take advantage of another new educational program called UpFront Funding For Distance Learning with all U.S. accredited colleges. This benefit enhances educational opportunities by providing courses not available locally in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Army Continuing Education System (ACES) remains committed to the extension of quality voluntary education services and programs for all deployed soldiers. Remember that education is one of the key ingredients for success in life, regardless of whether you are getting out of the Army or staying in. So plan for your future by contacting the education counselor on your base camp.

Task Force Eagle soldiers in the pay grade E-4 to E-7 who are in their reenlistment window of 1999 could become \$20,000 richer, *tax free*. The Army has introduced a new retention incentive program called Targeted Selective Reenlistment Bonus Program. Soldiers that qualify for the TSRB will be entitled to a higher selective reenlistment bonus. However, the TSRB is not the only cash incentive program. There are at least two others: the Bonus Extension and Retraining (BEAR) Program and the SRB.

Plan for your future by contacting your reenlistment NCO early on to see what your options are and to see what cash incentive programs you might be eligible for. These cash incentive programs might not be around long. **First Team! Warriors!**



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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.

Steel Castle; where tankers train

Story and photos by Specialist Kimmanda Collins
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Between guard duty and constant missions, units don't always have the time to conduct training related to their military occupational specialty. But when there's a hiatus between missions, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment soldiers seize the opportunity to train.

Although the early morning fog was dense, 2nd Platoon, Company B soldiers rolled their tanks out of Camp Dobil

helmets, which allows inter-vehicular communication as well as communication with the surrounding tanks. My primary position is the loader, but I drive sometimes. The last time I drove a tank was back at Fort Hood about five months ago. It was fun driving again at Steel Castle, but I like being the loader. I think a tank is the most powerful piece of equipment the Army has and I figure, why carry a weapon when your weapon can carry you," laughed Private First Class Joaquin Perdormo, a Katy, Texas native and a tanker with Company B.

While training on the M1A1, safety is the number one priority. "I think weather conditions would be the number one cause of accidents here," Simmons said. "The fog was very thick when we went out, and we had to be extra careful when we were rolling the tanks through town. We don't train with the hatches open, but when we are road marching, the hatches are open to increase visibility."

Driving the tanks during the day with variable weather conditions can be difficult for the tankers, but driving at night under the same circumstances can be even worse. "During night driving, the driver has a night viewer with a night vision device that helps him see the road. The tank commander and the loader wear night vision goggles also so they can see the road and aid the driver in his maneuvers," said Sergeant Domingo Rivera, a Dunkirk, N.Y. native and a tanker with Company B.

When the tankers train overnight with the M1A1, the tanks become their home. "We sleep on



Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment soldiers drive M1A1 Abrams tanks at Steel Castle for training.

headed for Steel Castle, a muddy tanker training paradise.

"This is the first time 2nd Platoon has driven the tanks up to Steel Castle. All the other platoons have had an opportunity, and our time finally came," said 1st Lieutenant Patrick Simmons, a San Antonio native and the 2nd Platoon leader. "This was the first time the platoon has maneuvered together since I've been the platoon leader."

Sometimes routine training can be monotonous, but it doesn't have to be. "At Steel Castle, we practice individual tank maneuvers, section maneuvers and battle drills. The soldiers seem to enjoy the training despite the fact that it's training. Most of the maneuvers are nothing new to the soldiers, but we needed practice," Simmons said. "This type of training usually lasts anywhere from two weeks to one month in the rear, but because of our primary duties we only had two days to train. We took four M1A1 Abrams tanks and a M-88 Recovery Vehicle out to Steel Castle. The 88 was for recovery purposes just in case one of our tanks broke down or something happened to it where we couldn't drive it back to the base camp."

On the M1A1 there are four positions that are maintained. "The tank has a driver, a gunner, a tank commander and a loader. Each crewmember wears Combat Vehicle Crewmen

top of the tanks or inside of them at the end of the training day. We bring all of our cold weather gear because it gets cold out there, especially at night. To me, it's like a bonding experience because we spend all day training on the tanks, and then we sleep on them at night. We received a lot of support from our command group while we were out training. First Sergeant Shetler made sure hot meals and mail were brought out to all of the soldiers and fuel for the tanks," Perdormo said. After two days of intensive training and extreme fun, the tankers rolled their tanks back through town. Destination -- "home."



Staff Sergeant Matthew Salchert, tank commander with Company B, 2-8 Cavalry wears his protective mask during Nuclear Biological Chemical training in a M1A1 Abrams tank.

Soldiers bring relief to refugee camp



Private First Class Charles Thames unloads relief supplies to refugees at Camp Jezevac.

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

Convoying down a muddy, icy road in the Bosnian countryside, 13 soldiers paid a visit to some eager new friends. Soldiers of the 263rd Maintenance Company, 13th COSCOM, delivered 80 boxes of relief supplies to displaced refugees at the Jezevac camp. The supplies were gathered from U.S. donations.

As soon as the truck, loaded with goods, backed into the open area of the camp, men, women and children swarmed the soldiers as they unloaded the boxes.

People around the camp were excited and smiling.

"The drop-off went great," Staff Sergeant Ian Griffen, a maintenance control supervisor, said. "It was unbelievable. This was good for the morale of my soldiers and for the people we helped. We are planning another trip to this camp at the end of January," the Pittsburg, Texas native said.

Jezevac camp first opened in March of 1994. It now contains 525 people, including 191 families (110 single women with children). There are 171 children in the camp. Four to five families share a single house. Most of the people are originally from

Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik or Vlasenica.

"I first started gathering support for this trip, even before we got mobilized," Griffen said. "I wrote an article in the Pittsburg Gazette and the ball started rolling from there."

Word spread of the refugees' plight from Griffen's family and soldiers from his unit. The request for help was carried from Pittsburg to Corinth, Texas and then on to Mesquite, Texas; Metairie, La.; Enterprise, Fl. and St. Petersburg, Fl. Many different generous individuals and organizations contributed in the effort to help the families.

"It is very rare that we get deliveries such as these," Hatida Huskic, the camp director, said. "We thank you very much for your help." Huskic said that clothes and food are the highest priority. Most of the 80 boxes that the soldiers delivered contained warm clothes for children, teenagers and adults.

"I have been here since 1993," 20-year-old Medisa Rahmic, a native of Brutunac, said through an interpreter. "I would like to go back, but I don't know when that will ever happen. I have been waiting here for five years to go home."

Unfortunately, after all of the supplies were distributed, not everyone received a box of clothes. The director has to go by a list, and give out boxes to the head member of each family. If a certain family did not receive a box during one delivery, they go to the top of the list for the next delivery, Huskic said.

"Overall, I think the drop-off went well, but I felt bad seeing how the people there live," Private First Class Kristy Chambers, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic with the 263rd Maintenance Company, said. "It made me feel happy to be involved, but I wish that we could do more," the Edmonson County, Ky. native said.

Driving away, the soldiers said goodbye and headed back to Eagle Base, but not before shaking hands and taking pictures with the grateful people whose lives they had touched that day.



Soldiers unload boxes of donated relief supplies.

Interpreters vital for PSYOPS mission

Story and photo by
Specialist Kimmanda Collins
319 Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The Psychological Operations Unit at Camp Dobol found that it takes more than a couple of HMMWVs, some radios and a destination to complete their everyday missions. To PSYOPS, interpreters are mission essential, and they never leave the base camp without them.

"We have entertainment magazines for the children and informative magazines for the adults," said Staff Sergeant Gary A. White, a St. Paul, Minn. native and assistant PSYOPS team leader with the 339th PSYOPS Battalion with 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. "We also hand out tapes to the local radio stations with music and messages on them so the radio disc jockeys can play them for the public. We do a lot of interacting with the citizens, and because of that interpreters become very significant."

Most of the units on the base are assigned interpreters to aid them during communication with the citizens. "We have three interpreters assigned to us. I think they are a great asset and we couldn't do our job without them. They help us gather information about the area we are working in," White said.

The PSYOPS unit is comprised of reservists. "Being a reservist in Bosnia is a good learning experience for me. It gives me a chance to see another country and experience different cultures while doing my job at the same time. I also get the chance to help the people in this country, and the interpreters are a big help when it comes to that," White said.

Occasionally, when units are in an unfamiliar country, they do not have access to interpreters. "If we didn't have interpreters, then our mission would be ended. We would have no way of communicating with the citizens here, and hence no job to do," White said. "The interpreters are very open when it comes to teaching us the language so we can communicate with the locals on our own. They teach us everyday greetings and phrases and how to say who we are and where we're from. I think it shows the citizens that we care and that we're making an honest effort to help them."

Because the interpreters work closely with the soldiers on a daily basis, they make subtle improvements in their speech. "Our interpreters speak English very well. Sometimes we help them with English words they don't quite understand, so it's a learning experience for us all," White said.

Although the interpreters work for the Stabilization Force, they are still citizens of Bosnia, and they were affected by the war. "I believe the citizens as well as the interpreters appreciate our presence," White said. "I think the interpreters enjoy working with SFOR and particularly us. They tell us stories about their lives and vice versa. We've met their families and I



Staff Sergeant Dan Kobylinski, a Roseville, Minn. native and PSYOPS Team Leader with 339th Psychological Operations Battalion, talks with one of the Bosnian locals in Srebrenica with the help of an SFOR interpreter.

feel we have grown very close. I guess you can say we are all friends."

"I have been working with PSYOPS for three years and I must say that it has been a good learning experience. I get along with everybody in the unit and we have fun," said Marin Maksimovic, a Tuzla, Bosnia native and SFOR interpreter.

"I have been working as an interpreter for PSYOPS for a year and a half and it's been great," said Alexander Stevanovic, a Chicago, Ill. native and SFOR interpreter. "I appreciate the way they make us feel important to their mission and I believe we are in a way. I believe my experience as an interpreter will help with future deployments."

Reservists have responsibilities in a civilian occupation that can become useful when performing military duties. "I am a loan officer for Firststar Bank in Minnesota. As a loan officer, I work with a lot of people and I have experience when it comes to getting people to open up and talk," White said. "The skills that I have acquired on my civilian job really help when I go out to talk to the citizens, and the interpreters are my outlets to the people. Even though they don't understand English, I feel the locals can sense the sincerity in my voice when I speak."

"Being in a PSYOPS unit, we are constantly leaving the base camp so the interpreters are basically with us everyday, all day. Besides, going out on missions everyday makes the days go by faster and it gives us the chance to spend more time with our interpreters," White said.

Even though the interpreters are not in the U.S. Army, they still wear the uniform. "The interpreters wear the uniform so they can look like the soldiers when we go out, but I think the locals can tell the difference between them and us," White laughed. "It really doesn't matter to me what they wear because even though they are not in the Army, they are still a part of our team."

And now a word from

Story and photos by
Private First Class Louis Sardinha
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The sound of a dog snarling permeates through a door held shut by a desperate police suspect. As the dog moves closer, the suspect hears a man shouting orders, commanding the perpetrator to show himself. When the suspect fails to appear, another command is issued, and the hound heads for the door. Suddenly, the door bursts open, and the dog lunges at the perpetrator's arm.

"Heel!" shouts Sergeant James N. Samuels, of Palmer, Alaska, a military police explosives patrol dog handler with 178th Military Police Detachment from Fort Hood, Texas. "Alright, let's try that again."

These soldiers and their canine companions were conducting a building search exercise at Camp McGovern. The exercise focused on maintaining the dogs' room-clearing skills.

"It's more efficient because their senses are just so much higher than ours," said Specialist Michael R.

Forrest of Phoenix, also an MP patrol dog handler with the 178th MP Detachment.

Canines are particularly efficient when it comes to room clearing. "A dog can go through a building a lot faster than it would take two people to go through," Samuels said.

The patrol dogs play a large roll in the safety of the soldiers as well. "It places most of the danger onto the dog because the dog becomes an immediate threat to the perpetrator," Forrest explained.

According to Samuels, the first thing the team needs to do when clearing a building is announce themselves and then state a reasonable time for someone to respond or exit the building. If there is no response, they move in and let the dogs locate the suspect's scent by sniffing the seams of the doors. "That's where the dogs' role comes into play," Samuels said. "People emit a body odor you and I might not be able to smell, but a dog can smell. The dog searches the building until it finds the perpetrator or bomb."

Forrest said that having the dogs clear a building takes away a lot of guesswork when trying to locate a person. "I'd know if there was someone behind a door waiting for me because the dog would have detected him," he said. "Once the dog begins barking, you know he's got something. We can then take the appropriate measures."

The dog's ability to sense things at great distances is a useful tool to soldiers patrolling McGovern. "What McGovern's roving guards might not hear or see while patrolling, my dog might actually smell, see or hear on the other side of the perimeter," Forrest said.

Both dog handlers were pleased by the positive performance their dogs displayed. Each dog located the suspect while maintaining its obedience skills. Using the patrol dogs to apprehend suspects and clear unsecured buildings increases the success rate of the missions. "At least with a dog, no one is going to outflank or come up behind you without the dog knowing about it," said Samuels.



Sergeant James N. Samuels of Palmer, Alaska, a military police explosives patrol dog handler with 178th MP Detachment, maintains control of his dog during a building clearing exercise.

murdero... "Ruff!"

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

He doesn't have much in common with his namesake — the poisonous, Roman emperor Nero — who was deposed and exiled by some of his own soldiers. This present-day Nero is a veteran of the Lebanon conflict. He was called out of retirement for duty in Bosnia. Because of his great devotion to duty and personal bravery, he was promoted to Sergeant Major by the Secretary of Swedish Defense.

When introduced to American soldiers, Nero will look at them with intelligent, amber eyes. He'll nod his shaggy black head and wag his black tail.

Nero is one of the most famous mine-detection dogs in the Swedish Army. He has spent all of his 12 years helping his fellow soldiers find a 30 centimeters wide path through mine fields.

Swedish Battalion dog-squad leader, 1st Lieutenant Henrik Ekstedt, from Uppsala, said that he first knew of mine-detection dogs in Lebanon, where Nero got his initial real-world experience.

The dogs are now so important to Swedish mine rescue teams that there must be a mine-detection dog available at all times. Since dog handlers rotate every six months, and it takes a couple of months to get a new team working together effectively, the Swedish Battalion needs four dogs at all times. Currently, the canine mine-detection team at Camp Oden has four members; Sergeant Major Nero, Private Gaston, Specialist Ascar and Specialist Vindy, the only female member of the squad.

Most Swedish Army mine-detection dogs are German shepherds because that's a common breed of dog in Sweden, but Nero and Ascar are of German shepherd and Labrador breeding.

Smelling ability is critical because that's how the dogs detect the mines, but size is also a consideration because the dogs work between the legs of their handlers during this hazardous operation. Gaston, a large rambunctious German shepherd is almost too big for the job.

It takes about a year to teach the dogs to smell a mine (or piece of a mine). Unlike bomb-detecting dogs, mine-detecting dogs must keep their nose to the ground the

whole time they are working. When they sense a mine, they sit down immediately. Once handlers have been working with a particular dog, they will know even before the dog sits that the dog has found something. Paint spray from a harness on the dog is activated by the handler to mark a footpath, and the team moves cautiously around the mine and continues the search.

It's a close relationship that has to work, because the team trains in live minefields. "That's a good way for the handler to experience some of the stress and nervousness that will be part of a mine rescue," Ekstedt said.

After initial training in Sweden, dogs undergo training on local mines in an area not far from Camp Oden. It takes about two months to familiarize a new dog with local mines, according to Ekstedt.

Nero's current handler, Specialist Daniel Westerlund from Timra, Sweden, said working with The Sergeant Major — as Nero is known by the Swedish Battalion soldiers — can have its ups and downs. "He's had a lot of dog handlers before, and he thought he could cheat me on some things, so he was a little difficult in the beginning, but now we're getting along all right," Westerlund said.

Nero became "The Sergeant Major" a couple of years ago when Danish soldiers on patrol drove over a couple of TMA-3 antitank mines, one of the most common mines found in Bosnia. They had to stay

Samuels acts as a suspect during a building-clearing exercise conducted for the patrol dogs, while Specialist Michael R. Forrest of Phoenix, a MP patrol dog handler also with 178th MP Det., maintains control of the dog.



Swedish dog squad leader, 1st Lieutenant Henrik Ekstedt, (center) introduces Nero to Scouts from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-8 Cavalry.

in their jeep all night until Nero arrived. He searched a path through and got them out safely, according to Ekstedt.

Swedish EOD soldiers will resume mine clearing soon. Nero, along with Westerlund, will be there to ensure their safety.

"I hope he gets a real celebration when he finally gets home," Westerlund said. "He's been working in the Swedish Army his whole and life and I think he deserves it."



Soldiers, ambassadors and a

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

Peacekeeping is perhaps the noblest of missions, and probably the most complex. The tasks of the peacekeeper range from peace enforcement through combat readiness to intelligence gathering to negotiation. They demand the utmost flexibility," said Major David Eubanks, the executive officer of Camp Demi. "In the myriad of tasks associated with peacekeeping, the purpose of the mission can blur ... the purpose for Operation Joint Forge can get lost in the complexity of tasks we must accomplish everyday. In Task Force 2-5 at Camp Demi, a program exists that reminds its soldiers — and the rest of us — that everyday we are here to set the stage for a more peaceful tomorrow."

As part of the Stabilization Force, the troops at Camp Demi must meet demanding mission standards and at the same time provide humanitarian help to the citizens of Bosnia. Soldiers at Demi notice the emotional scars and discontent in some of the faces of citizens touched by the war. Memories from the war will linger in the hearts of all, but that won't hinder Bosnians from rebuilding their lives with the help of the SFOR soldiers, one mission at a time. The soldiers of Task Force 2-5 at Demi brought more than ammunition and weapons from Fort Hood. They brought the spirit of freedom and peace — an intangible gift for the people of Bosnia.

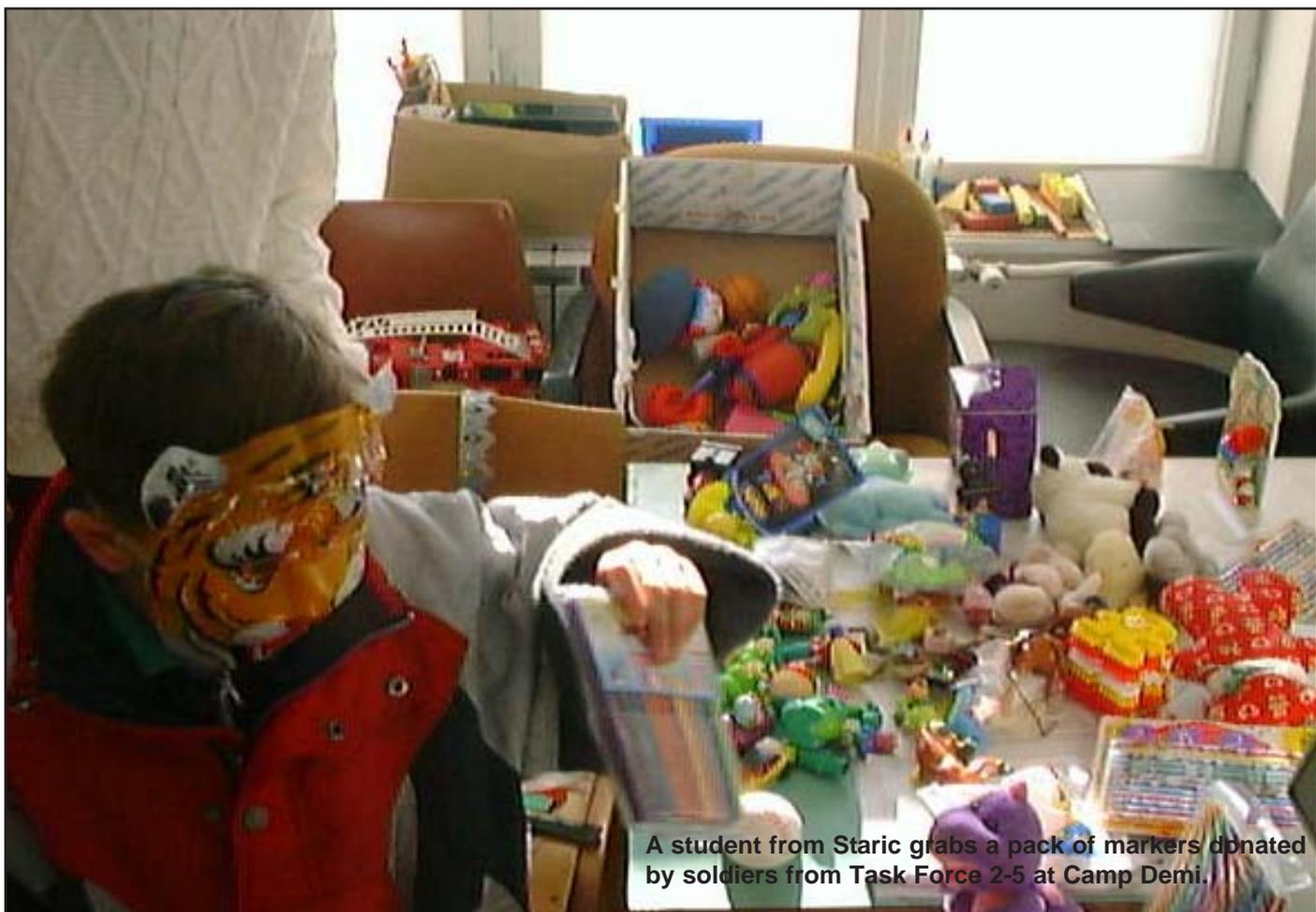
Back at Fort Hood, some units started a sponsorship pro-

gram for several U.S. schools in the Fort Hood area. Soldiers visited the schools and had the chance to talk with some of the students. They got to know the students by asking questions about their families, about their hobbies and about their favorite foods.

"With the backing of the camp commander and the executive officer, the units have implemented a similar sponsorship program here in Bosnia," explained Lieutenant Kyle Stewart with Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

With donations from family, friends and several organizations, the different units at Demi helped the students acquire some basic school supplies for the schools. The program bolsters the teaching process and allows the students to interact with SFOR soldiers and learn about the U.S. mission in Bosnia. "It allows us to interact at a more human level with the people," Stewart explained.

The books, along with other donated school supplies, help the children get back on track when it comes to their education. The sincerity and dedication shown by the soldiers builds cohesion and camaraderie between the SFOR soldiers and the Bosnian citizens. By interacting with the students in the surrounding schools, the parents of the children will get an up-close look at what the SFOR soldiers' mission really is. Not only are the soldiers keeping the peace, but they are also rebuilding and reshaping the lives of the children who were directly affected by the war. The students will not only see them as soldiers, but as ambassadors for peace.



A student from Staric grabs a pack of markers donated by soldiers from Task Force 2-5 at Camp Demi.

Army Scout s visit ,work with hSwedes

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

Training with other Stabilization Force soldiers can bolster morale. The 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's Scout Platoon would heartily agree after spending four days with soldiers of Swedish Battalion Company B.

The Scouts left Bedrock for the short ride to Swedish Camp Oden.

With gear stowed, the American soldiers were given two excellent demonstrations by their Swedish hosts. The first trip was to mine-detection dog kennels where the soldiers met four dogs used by the Swedish Explosive Ordinance Disposal for minefield rescue. One of the dogs and handler gave a very impressive demonstration of mine-detection work.

The group was then led to a large building where an "Andros" robot was on display. Andros, an American-made robot, has three cameras, an arm that can be fitted with different implements, a shotgun, three control methods and looks like a giant erector set. Eager Scouts took turns at the robot's controls. "It was like opening a present on Christmas Day and running around with a new toy," said Staff Sergeant Douglas M. Thompson, Scout Platoon section sergeant.

More interesting things to see followed as the group was taken to "the Bomb," Camp Oden's famous pub-munition's museum. Captain Henrik Lauksteins, an EOD officer from Linksping, Sweden, gave an in-depth talk about the different weapons collected by Swedish soldiers here in Bosnia. The Thompson machine gun and briefcase-sized homemade claymore were some of the more interesting pieces of armament in a truly unique display.

That night, the Scouts and Company B soldiers assembled for a briefing about that night's mission. The four SISUs, which are large, six-wheeled futuristic-looking armored personnel carriers, were to be manned by both Swedish and American soldiers. The SISU teams would take turns manning mobile checkpoints outside Petrovo to check for weapons, doing a mobile checkpoint hunt, which Brown called a quick-reaction drill, and ending the evening by setting up observation points to listen for celebratory fire. Since it was the first day of the Serbian Christmas holiday, no one knew what would happen that night.

First Lieutenant Kelvin Demetris Brown, a Barstow, Ga. native and Scout Platoon leader, said that this joint operation was exciting for him and his troops, since they had been trained for this kind of patrol at Fort Hood, but hadn't done it in Bosnia.

Following the briefing, the soldiers gathered for an evening's meal. Dinner was a memorable event for the Scouts. They were seated at two long tables in an empty mess hall. A



Scouts are impressed with the Swedish Battalion's mine-detecting Andros robot.

uniformed waiter arrived to announce the menu in English and Swedish. Mouths began to water as the hungry soldiers were told they would be served pepper steak, fried potatoes and amaretto-chocolate cake.

After the excellent dinner, soldiers were told to meet at their SISUs.

The American soldiers commented on the names of the four SISUs; Riders of Destiny, Alamo, Shootist and Undeclared. The Swedish company commander is a big John Wayne fan and all of his SISUs are named after John Wayne movies.

For some of the American soldiers, this was their first ride in the Swedish SISUs. Thompson said that you can see everything from one of the three SISU hatches. He was wearing his polypropylene and BDUs only, but said he didn't get that cold riding around as gunner on a SISU until much later that night. "I guess it was the excitement of going out on something new that keeps you warm," the Washington, Okla. Scout said.

After completing all operations without incident, the teams reassembled for the ride back to Oden.

Everyone enjoyed a well-deserved rest, and after a brunch the next day, two SISUs and four HMMWVs set out to patrol the Swedish area of responsibility.

The convoy went back to Camp Bedrock where the Scouts hosted the Swedish soldiers for the night.

The next morning Swedish soldiers accompanied the Scouts to a weapon's site inspection in Tuzla.

Soldiers from both countries learned a lot about each other's geographic areas of responsibility, MND (N) missions, equipment, operational procedures, cultures and customs.

"We talked to some of their soldiers and they think the same thing — it's good to get out of their normal routine," Thompson said.

III Corps Commander boosts morale



Lieutenant General Leon J. LaPorte reenlisted Sergeant Jerry L. Marquez, in the motorpool at Camp Demi, for six more years as a heavy vehicle operator.

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

Lieutenant General Leon J. LaPorte, the commander of III Corps and Fort Hood, Texas, recently visited with Task Force Eagle soldiers and their commanders.

First stop was Eagle Base, followed by Camp Dobil where LaPorte was briefed by Lieutenant Colonel Bob Brown, the commander of 2nd Battalion "Black Knights," 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. He ate with soldiers in the dining facility before going out on a patrol to Zvornik, Bratvna, and the city of Srebrenik to assess damages, and the rebuilding and resettlement in these areas.

Captain Omar J. Jones of Ellicott City, Md., the company commander of Company D, 2-5 Cavalry, walked with LaPorte through the city of Srebrenik and explained the recent changes and improvements being done for the people there.

The patrol returned to Camp Dobil where LaPorte was given a mission briefing by Brown. They toured the base camp and he showed him all the new improvements, which included a new chapel, SEA huts, and a site for the new post exchange.

"LaPorte greeted and talked to all the soldiers he came in contact with," Specialist Brandon Lovett, a driver in Company D, 2-5 Cavalry, and a Redding Calif. native said. "It's good to see the general come here, and it's good for the morale of the soldiers."

LaPorte flew by helicopter to Hill 1326 to visit a communications site, and visit with soldiers in the remote locale. Corporal Jeffrey J. Miller, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the dining facility, said, "It's good to see the general is concerned about us way up here on this hill."

The next stop was Camp Demi, where LaPorte met with Major Dan Mahoney, the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-5 Cavalry and a resident of Marlboro, Pa. After checking the security of the base camp, LaPorte said, "The thing about force protection is you never know when you've done it right, you only know when you haven't. I want people to say I don't want to mess with that." He then made some recommendations to improve Camp

Demi. The highlight of the visit was when he reenlisted a soldier in the motorpool for six more years.

LaPorte also met with Camp Demi's Quick Reaction Force. He asked them if they had been given a pass yet. He then told them they were important and it was because of them that people still aren't killing each other here.

After talking to the soldiers he gave them his coin, one of over 200 he gave out while visiting soldiers while he was in theater.

His final stop was Comanche Base, where he ate dinner with the soldiers before departing back to Eagle Base.

Visits such as these boost soldier morale, and also give higher commands an opportunity to get a first-hand look at unit operations.

Soldiers patrol Brcko streets for peace

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

That time we spend outside the wire is a release for us. It's good to get out and do what we do best," said Sergeant Michael G. Gal, a team leader with 1st Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, and a Neuwied, Germany native.

For the soldiers of 1st Platoon, presence patrols are anything but routine, Gal said. It's a chance for them to contribute to the mission while enjoying their job – something to look forward to each day.

Gal said several companies conduct presence patrols daily to keep the peace in Bosnia.

"Basically it's SFOR's (Stabilization Force's) way of policing around the area and making sure the local populace complies with the laws set by SFOR and local organizations."

Private First Class Don C. Leddick, a mechanized infantryman also with 1st Platoon, and a Vernon, N.Y. native, said his company was assigned to patrol the city of Brcko. Brcko is considered the most ethnically diverse city in Bosnia.

Gal said the unit was chosen to patrol the sector because of its special training with infantry tactics.

"It's part of our skills to operate in urban terrain," Gal explained. "Tankers are trained in open spaces to move in fast and furious while infantry soldiers are trained to take ground inch by inch."

According to Leddick, when the platoon patrols the city, they look for anything that violates treaties or local laws and do what they can to deter the activity, such as suppressing violent crowds and confiscating or reporting counterfeit money. Even cars with expired license plates don't go beneath their notice.

"We try to do what we can. We don't act as local police, but if we need to, we will stop. We always at least report what we find," Leddick said.

Gal said a large part of their mission is preventing crime, but the unit also tries to show the locals that SFOR is here to help them. "When we're out there, we try to convey to the locals that we're just like them."

Gal said they do this by speaking with locals and asking them about their concerns. As a result, 1st Platoon can uncover issues residents are concerned about and help build confidence in SFOR.

Gal said these patrols give him the opportunity to learn about the local culture, and he found the people were not much different than citizens from the United States of America, except for their experiences in the war. "You can tell the people have been through a lot. They're just normal people trying to get on with their lives."

Leddick said the most favorable part of patrolling comes from seeing the children. "Our biggest fans are the kids. They are always waving at us as we pass. It just kind of brightens your day."

Both Gal and Leddick agree that this deployment was a wonderful experience. Leddick said he is trying to extend his tour for another six months. "We learn something new every day, and this has been a good experience for all of us," Leddick said. "I've had such a good experience, I don't want to leave."



Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment patrol the streets of Brcko, speaking with locals as well as keeping the peace.

Cavalry soldiers visit Tuzla orphanage

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

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment have performed many humanitarian aid missions while deployed to Bosnia, but this time it was personal. It was a reunion between an American soldier and his friends.

Members of Camp Bedrock's Tactical Operations Center recently went to the Tuzla Orphanage on a humanitarian aid mission to donate clothing and toys to the children. While there, Captain Stephen A. Webb, assistant operations officer for Task Force 2-8, received the chance to reunite with two of the children at the orphanage he'd visited earlier in his deployment.

"When I first got here last August I went on a humanitarian aid mission to the Tuzla orphanage. I met a couple of the kids there and I gave my address to a few of them," the Kettering, Ohio native said. "I got letters from two of the children a few weeks later. One from a boy named Demir and another from a little girl named Lusija. With the help of an interpreter I wrote a letter back to them. It turned out that the letter got returned to me six weeks later because of some postal problems, and ever since then I have been trying to figure out a way to get back to the orphanage."

Webb said it took a while to come up with a plan to get back to the orphanage, but with the help of his wife and his in-laws the door was finally opened.

"I talked to my wife and my in-laws about the humanitarian aid mission that we do here, and they were very interested in helping out. My mother-in-law, Paulette Flaum, took it upon herself to coordinate with the Centerville Church of God, which is our church back at home, to collect items of clothing, toys and Christmas presents, and she packaged all of it up and sent it to me," Webb said.

He added that it took about six weeks for the packages to come over, and the last boxes finally came around the end of December.

Considering that it had been a while since any soldiers had visited the orphanage, Webb jumped at the opportunity

to go there on a humanitarian aid mission.

"The last soldiers to go to this orphanage were the ones I went with when I first got here, and since no one from Bedrock has ever visited this orphanage, I seized the opportunity to get some soldiers out there. We have a lot of refugee centers in the area, and they all have a great deal of need, especially in the wintertime, so the Chaplains are focusing on those refugee camps. That is why none of our soldiers have been to this orphanage yet, but it's good that we were given the opportunity to go," Webb said.

He also said it is somewhat hard for him and the other soldiers who work in the tactical operations center to get out on the Chaplains' weekly humanitarian aid mission, so this was a big reason for performing a separate mission aside from the one the chaplain does.

Major Kenneth H. Riddle of Leesburg, Fla., operations officer for Task Force 2-8, said Webb has been working hard to find a way to get back to the orphanage to see the children who wrote him.

"He has been working on this project for a while because it's hard to get everyone who works in the TOC to go out on a mission together because of the work schedule, but he did it," Riddle said. "It was nice to go out there and play with the kids. You know you can never take the place of their parents, but for a little while you can be a father to them, and maybe even a friend for life."

Dropic Meliha, a teacher at the orphanage, said the soldiers' visit would make a big impact on the children's lives.

"These children are what is left of a terrible war that caused a lot of damage and heartache," Meliha said. "The soldiers coming out here and talking to the children shows them that someone cares about what happened to them, and that one day things will get better for them. I thank the soldiers for all they have done to help these children."

The children didn't have much to say, but their actions said it all as they played with their new toys and laughed with their new friends.

As the soldiers prepared to leave the orphanage, Demir and Lusija ran to Webb and gave him a big hug, repeating the words, "Thank you!"