

TALON



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Balkan challenge builds teamwork

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



In CSM Inman's absence, the guest author this week is CSM McMurtrie from Eagle Base. Greetings and salutations from Camp Eagle. As usual, we here at Eagle Base are in a constant state of motion. Today I would like to take a little time and look back at the last few weeks. Before I do, I would like to say thanks to one and all civilians and military personnel, here on Eagle or at other camps, for all of the hard work and professionalism that you demonstrate on a daily basis. You are all truly some of the finest ambassadors our country has. On the eve of our transition, we look back and we see the many accomplishments and improvements that have taken place over the last few months. To start with, we have improved, and will continue to improve, the perimeter. This is great for our guards. The perimeter road will be finished in the Spring with towers and lighting soon to follow. We also see many changes in the MWR facilities. The Fitness Center is now state of the art, both in cardiovascular, as well as weight machines. The Sports Multi-Complex has brought great moments to those who were able to partake. With movies, basketball, aerobics and volleyball, what more could someone want?

To increase our intellectual fitness, we have built an education center, which by some is considered the 'Pearl of the Balkans.' It has a state of the art computer center and a distance learning center that tests everything from FAST to College courses. Many other improvements from the new hospital and Longhorn Café to the Eagle Run for Life track to upgrades to the Frat Row, SEA huts, and motorpools are designed to make life better for all members of MND(N). Probably the ultimate indication of teamwork is Eagle's new club, Trigger's (by the soldiers, for the soldiers). The teamwork between all the units that resulted in Trigger's was nothing short of superb. All in all, as the 1st BCT begins its transition and 2nd BCT begins its ride, Camp Eagle will continue to grow and prosper. We are living the legend here at Eagle. **FIRST TEAM! CAN AND WILL!**

On the Cover

Two displaced children poke their heads outside as Civil Affairs soldiers from Camp Bedrock talk to their parents at a displaced people camp. (Photos by Sergeant Derrick Witherspoon, 319th Mobile Public Affairs Det. See story page 9.) Cover designed by Private First Class Nicole Alberico

"Good judgement comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgement." – excerpt from "Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On!, A Cowboy's Guide To Life" by Texas Bix Bender

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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.

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@emailtc3.5sigcmd.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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Civil servant stake step toward unity

Story and photo by Camp McGovern's
Private First Class

Phillip E. Breedlove Jr.

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

For nearly half a decade, firefighters and police officers of Bosnia's three major ethnic groups have been divided. These Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian professionals once worked side by side to save lives until driven apart by the conflict.

Ibrahimovic Xiufik, a duty officer with the Gornji Rahic Police Department, said the time has come to join forces again. "We all used to work together, but the war brought division. I would be a happy person if we were brought together again, and most of the people in my department agree with me."

Sergeant Iris R. Rodriguez, Camp McGovern's fire chief with the 463rd Engineer Detachment, Firefighters Platoon, and a Houston native, shares the same philosophy. "In the United States, we have no borders, and we assist all communities — no matter what. Our actions could determine if someone lives or dies. That's the nature of being a firefighter or policeman, just as it should be here."

Rodriguez recently played a part in making her vision a reality by bringing these groups together. When McGovern's Civil Affairs team asked her to lead a two-day joint First Responders training course at McGovern involving fire and police departments of all three ethnicities around McGovern, she agreed without hesitation.

Rodriguez went to work immediately and came up with an agenda. She met with the chiefs of the Brcko Fire and Police Departments, Gornji Rahic Fire and Police Departments, Ravne Brcko Police Department and the Cerik Traffic Police to discuss what they would like to see happen. Every department was enthusiastic about the idea.

They also agreed to have

two identical training days so each station would only need to send half of their employees one day, leaving the other half to perform their daily duties. The next day, employees would rotate.

After an opening events ceremony, Rodriguez introduced the individual departments, then divided the people into five ethnically mixed teams. The groups rotated between five stations, consisting of basic first aid, packaging and transporting patients, scene safety, extricating a victim from a vehicle, and extricating a victim from a vehicle fire.

After a brief lunch, the teams went outside to practice the day's events in a variety of vehicle-accident scenarios involving drunk drivers and mock casualties played by McGovern soldiers and interpreters.

The group then moved inside for a closing ceremony where McGovern representatives presented the departments with much-needed first aid supplies as a token of appreciation for participating.

Rodriguez said she thought the training went well considering it was the first time these departments had

worked together since Bosnia's conflict. "It was a very professional atmosphere. They worked hard and took the training seriously. I really feel they left knowing a little more than when they arrived."

Staff Sergeant Cato Zdravko, a police officer with the Brcko Police Department, said the exercise was a great chance to refresh skills, but the training also served another purpose. "This day brought us together. This training should symbolize the way we live. You can't ignore a person who is dying just because he is another religion. Right now, we don't cooperate as well as we should, and this could be the beginning of more cooperation between us."

"It's good to be together again," Ibrahimovic added.

Rodriguez said she was happy the departments made so much progress and felt the event was a huge success, but she realized that the event wouldn't solve all problems overnight. "I don't think we've resolved all the issues, but it's definitely a step in the right direction."



Specialist Robert W. Berleth, a firefighter with Camp McGovern's Firefighter Platoon, 463rd Engineer Det., and a Houston native (middle), helps stabilize a "victim's" neck while members of two different departments move her onto a board to stabilize her and prevent further injury.

Local school made safer

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

Many lives were changed in the conflict in Bosnia, which left destruction and homelessness in its wake. The children growing up in the conflict's aftermath are left to struggle through a complicated rebuilding process to get their nation back on its feet. Engineer soldiers from Camp McGovern are making an extra effort to help make the future brighter for children at a local school.

McGovern engineers recently came together in a humanitarian effort to rebuild a staircase railing in a previously burned school in the town of Omerbegovaca, just south of Brcko. The condition of the stairs without railings was a hazard for the students. With the help of combat engineers from Company B, 20th Engineer Battalion, the children attending the school now have a safer learning environment.

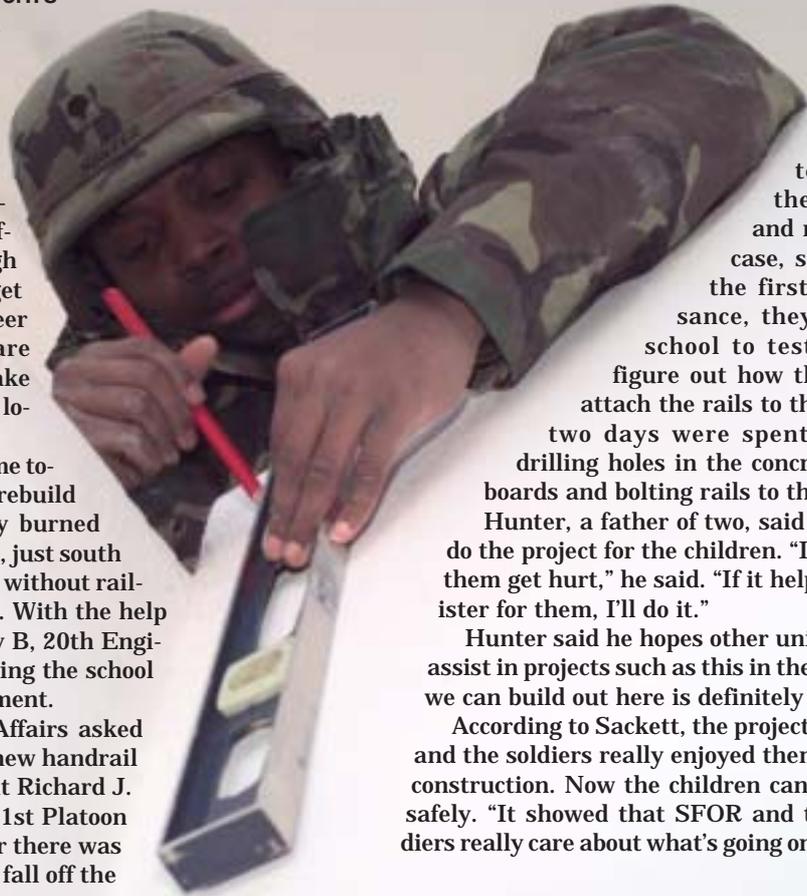
Soldiers from McGovern Civil Affairs asked the engineers if they could build a new handrail for the school, said First Lieutenant Richard J. Grasfeder, of Germantown, Tenn., 1st Platoon leader for Company B. "The teacher there was really afraid the kids were going to fall off the stairwell," he said. "So we went out there, checked it out, and came up with a design for the railing."

The reconstruction project is one of the Stabilization Force's ways of giving assistance to the community, according to Grasfeder. "It's within our abilities, so we decided to help them out," he said.

Grasfeder's soldiers wanted to conduct more humanitarian aid missions for the local communities. When they heard about the school's problem, they volunteered their services, said Sergeant Stephan R. Sackett Jr., of Nichols, N.Y., a combat engineer with Company B. "We just wanted to lend a helping hand wherever we could," he said.

Although the school has a functional staircase, the stairs and second floor landing didn't have any railings, causing a safety risk for the children, according to Specialist Al A. Hunter, of Washington D.C., and a combat engineer.

Hunter said it's their job as engineers to build or repair things such as the railing. "It's just something we naturally do," he said. "You can call us part-time carpenters."



The whole project took four days to complete. It began when a reconnaissance team was sent to the site to examine and measure the staircase, said Sackett. After the first day's reconnaissance, they returned to the school to test their tools and figure out how they were going to attach the rails to the stairs. The final two days were spent constructing — drilling holes in the concrete stairs, cutting boards and bolting rails to the steps.

Hunter, a father of two, said that he wanted to do the project for the children. "I didn't want to see them get hurt," he said. "If it helps to put up a banister for them, I'll do it."

Hunter said he hopes other units will continue to assist in projects such as this in the future. "Anything we can build out here is definitely worth it," he said.

According to Sackett, the project was a big success, and the soldiers really enjoyed themselves during the construction. Now the children can move about more safely. "It showed that SFOR and the individual soldiers really care about what's going on out here," he said.



Sergeant First Class John S. Saunders, of Clinton, Tenn., and a combat engineer with Company B, ensures a piece of wood is the correct size for the handrail.

Roses of peace bloom at McGovern

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

The Camp McGovern Rose Garden has attracted the attention of local civilians and soldiers alike, said Semso Sofovic, a McGovern Brown and Root employee. Some come to witness its colorful atmosphere, while others come to drink coffee at the local café. Sofovic said to see the garden's true beauty though, one would have to look beyond the flowers. For Bosnian citizens, the roses have a special meaning — hope.

The McGovern rose garden was born April 25, 1996, less than five months after Implementation Forces arrived and established the camp. Local employees built it as a tribute to the soldiers who had come to save their homeland, and a symbol of lasting peace, Sofovic said.

"When this camp was first built in December of '95, we were still afraid of each other because of the war," Sofovic said. "Nobody would talk, and everyone stayed with their (ethnic) group. We built the garden and planted one rose for each nation as a symbol for peace."

The garden was a tough project, Sofovic said. Soil was tainted from grenade explosions and other weapons of war. The roses wouldn't grow. New dirt needed to be brought in to create a lasting garden. The dedicated Brown and Root employees went to work.

When they finished, the employees had created a five foot square flower garden surrounded by a haggard-looking landscape, the ruins of the conflict.

It was beautiful, Sofovic said. "Everyone loved it. The war was fresh in our minds and it gave us hope."

Sofovic encouraged everyone to plant a rose, and the concept caught on quickly. The camp's commander added two flowers for his children, and even U.S. Secretary of State Madeline



Camp McGovern's famous Rose Garden.

Albright added her contribution during a visit to McGovern. The garden grew steadily as soldiers and locals continued to plant roses, adding their hope for lasting peace.

Since that time, the face of the Rose Garden has changed. In July of 1996, the Rose Garden Café opened next to the garden, further contributing to the site. Dina Pamukcic, the owner, said soldiers work hard during the day to make Bosnia safe, and she recognizes their need to unwind.

The coffee shop offers soldiers many of the comforts of home, Pamukcic said. Currently, it provides people with a variety of board games and music. While enjoying the company of friends, soldiers and locals can relish the taste of everything from orange juice to cappuccino.

Private First Class Juan P. Garces of Glendale, Calif., a tanker with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion of the 8th Cavalry Regiment, said the café is exactly what soldiers need at the end of a long day. "Soldiers need a place like this. Relaxing isn't just helpful; it's essential. I love the selection and the employees are great. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Pamukcic said the café is her way of thanking the soldiers for all they have done for her homeland. "We are just happy SFOR is here now. The war was tough, and now, thanks to them, our children can play outside again."

The soldiers appreciate Pamukcic's contribution, and are doing their part to add to the café, said Staff Sergeant Larry G. Hopkins, a platoon sergeant with Assault and Obstacle Platoon, Company B, 20th Engineer Detachment, and a Smith River, Calif. native. Recently, Hopkins led a team of soldiers to build a new section of the café and expand the shop from eight to 16 tables.

As the café continues to grow, the garden does also. It now holds over one hundred roses planted by American soldiers, and Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian citizens. The garden has also become a major tourist attraction among SFOR base camps, Sofovic said.

However, the symbolism of the roses has not lost its meaning for the veterans of Bosnia's war, Sofovic added. They are just as important today as they were three years ago. Their caretakers work hard to ensure the roses continue to bloom, and even as the roses die with the chill winter air, the roots remain strong.

Roses of Peace

"Spring has come, bringing joy to the children;
Roses in McGovern blossoming.
The building is a sad sight, ruined in war,
To keep peace in Bosnia, my daddy will go.
IFOR soldiers planting roses now;
Young girls watching them bloom.
The roses will blossom, there won't be any war,
Love and Peace we won't hide anymore.
Don't fade my dear rose,
You are my only hope.
Don't cry anymore; we'll go back home,
In Bosnia to plant a thousand more.
God let there be peace and let the music play,
Let the songs be sung and let the children play,
Let the roses bloom, let the dreams be dreamed;
Beautiful dreams are what we really need."

- Semso Sofovic
April 25, 1996

Grand Opening

Story by Eagle Base's
Sergeant First Class Pat Johnson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Eagle Base soldiers, after passing time in the gym, the dining facility and the Eagle Nest's lounge, will finally have a real club to call their own. "The Eagle Base Trigger's club is long overdue," said Ray Romero, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation coordinator. "The quality of life has improved immensely."

Aside from sports activities in the gym, taking a course at the Education Center or watching a movie at the Eagle's Nest or Sports Complex, there have been few options for social gatherings and recreation.

Trigger's sports bar atmosphere provides soldiers a relaxing, after duty hours hangout, and will feature special activities, like dance lessons and pool and darts competitions. The club is 60 feet by 80 feet square, and has the look and feel of a modern club in the states. It has a large screen television projector, food concession booths, video games and pool tables.

MWR has a schedule of live bands and monthly events to entertain personnel while they socialize.

The Eagle Base Fitness Center formerly doubled as gym and clubhouse, and was called Club 21. Live bands and guest entertainers performed at the gym to entertain personnel after duty hours. This arrangement was not always convenient for personnel wanting to get a physical fitness workout while their courts and training areas were already occupied for other events. The new facilities have solved this problem.

Major General Kevin P. Byrnes, Multinational Division (North) and 1st Cavalry Division commander, delegated a Process Action Team to come up with a plan for a club everyone on Eagle Base could enjoy.

The PAT, which consisted of one representative from the each unit on Eagle Base, gathered in December to discuss soldier input and regulation requirements.

After getting approval for the club, construction and renovation couldn't begin until the old tenants moved out of the designated club space and into their new location. The area had been an AAFES warehouse.

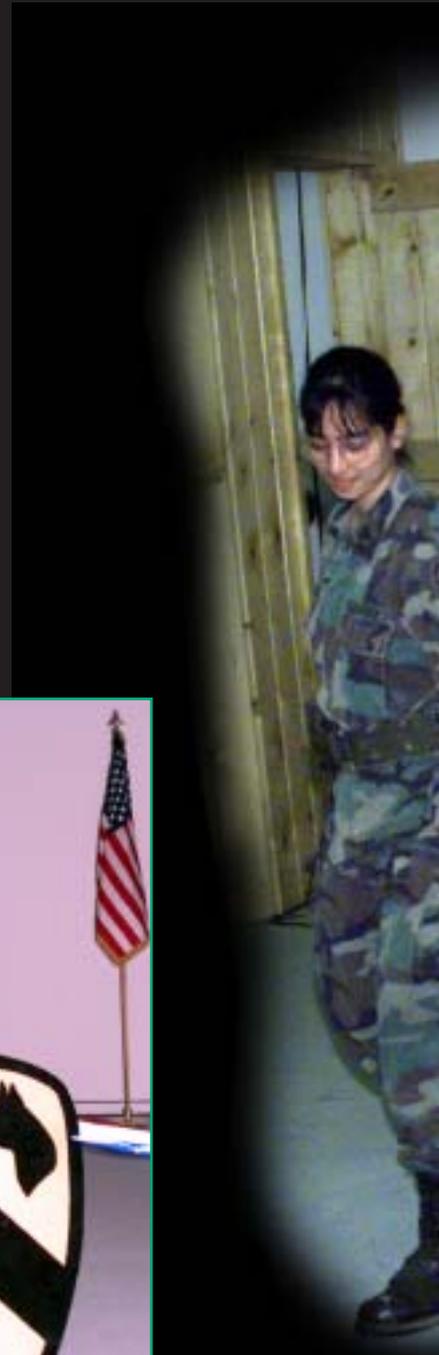
Construction began with Navy Seabees building the booths and tables while Brown

& Root employees put in a drop ceiling, insulation, doors and electrical items.

Romero said he feels the overall improvements to the base camp should please soldiers. "There are activities here for soldiers such as educational classes, life fitness circuit (machines), weights, tournaments, sports competitions and holiday events," Romero said. "MWR activities like chess, pool table games, card games and movies on the big screen are available for recreational purposes."

The club offers soldiers a new and improved outlet for socializing, according to Romero. "... For a large number of soldiers to relax, socialize and just hangout, space was limited. There's a lot of construction and renovation on Eagle Base at this time, and soldiers may have to go without some activities for a little while, but the progress is for the soldiers."

With the gym nearing completion, the Eagle Sports Complex and the opening of Trigger's, Eagle personnel have a place to workout, watch movies and socialize without interfering with each other's activities.





Brcko Arbitration: A Scorecard



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

Story by The Coalition Press Information Center

The people of Bosnia, and many in the international community, are watching and waiting as the fate of the municipality of Brcko is announced next month, ending three years of binding arbitration on the disputed city to which both the Republika of Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation lay claim as their own.

Brcko — a 487-square-kilometer jewel in the eyes of the Serbs and Bosniaks — is not just another war-ravaged community in the Bosnia countryside. It is the key link between the east-west route that connects Banja Luka and other cities in Serb-held western Bosnia with Serbia itself, as well as the north-south route linking heavily industrial Tuzla with Croatia.

But it is more complicated than a simple commercial asset. Brcko's location is strategic, and the return of the city to either side sees it as a psychological and moral victory over the other. This combination of attributes over the control of Brcko is the basis for the potentially explosive consequences of the announcement of any result: be it in "favor" of Srpska or the Federation, a geographically and politically equitable apportionment, or even its establishment as a special neutral zone under international supervision.

The final hearings, which concluded in Vienna on Feb. 17, began with both sides warning of renewed violence if the town is awarded to one or the other. After 10 days of outlining their cases, arbitrators and representatives took back with them their interpretations of the proceedings and are conveying them to their respective constituents.

Government leaders of Srpska are hedging their bets on the arbitration results by discrediting the arbitration process even before the results are announced. They are reportedly communicating to the Serbs that there are inherent flaws in the arbitration process that unfairly represent the Serbian point of view, so that if indeed Serbia is mandated to relinquish control to any degree, their charges of arbitration unfairness are immediately validated by the Serbian people. At that point, a call to violence and other violations of the Dayton Accord would be encouraged by Serb leaders, undoing the peace and the slow progress that has characterized the region for the past three years.

International monitors and Stabilization Force leaders are

concerned with public perception of the proceedings and emphasize that it is the truth, and not rhetoric, on which the people base their personal judgments of the decision. At the conclusion of the Vienna hearings SFOR commander of forces in the Brcko area Lieutenant Colonel Mike Ryan, who was present in Vienna, offered to the residents that "Whatever the decision, it will be the best for the people on ground. It is my hope that all the local officials and police that represent those people also support the people." And at this stage of the peace process, it is support in the form of truth-telling that is key.

Further, entity officials on both sides are said to be providing inaccurate information to their constituents, in that the Vienna talks were leaning in their respective favor. Promises of progress toward the goals of each entity are being made to both Serbs and Bosniaks. In these instances, if the arbitration findings are not to the liking of entity leaders, their response to their constituents is expected to be one of feigned disbelief, followed by displays of outrage and calls to arms.

"There are few people with power and influence that will not support the arbitration agreement," Ryan said. "These people will try to convince the local citizens that their ethnic group — whether it is Serbian, Bosniak or Croatian — is being victimized. They will encourage violent demonstrations and will want to create violent demonstrations to draw attention to their own self-centered goals."

Arbitration officials have emphasized that the arbitration process was a mutually agreed upon sequence of events designed to look to the welfare of the entities, and that their constituents on all sides should keep an open mind as to what the facts of the final outcome will be. They also warn that raised hopes and false predictions by entity leaders can only serve those making the predictions, and advised all seeking equity to be aware of distortions of the truth.

The decision announcement that awards the city to either entity or to none has the international community braced. And now, whether the fate of Brcko is perceived to be a successful model for the rest of Bosnia to follow — or as a territory of continued programs of ethnic consolidation and exclusion — depends on the degree of the people's faith in the Vienna proceedings compared to their faith in the leaders who drove the people's interests to the arbitration process.

The long road home

Story and photo by Camp Bedrock's
Sergeant Derrick Witherspoon
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The mission of every servicemember deployed to Bosnia in support of Operation Joint Forge is crucial to main training the peace, and Civil Affairs teams play a key role in keeping Bosnia on the right track.

The mission of the Civil Affairs team at Camp Bedrock involves assisting the camp commander in all his legal and moral obligations when dealing with the local populous.

Major Peter F. Gruen of Tonawanda, N.Y., and a member of the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, said their mission plays a major role in the peacekeeping operation.

"Our main focus now is to do whatever we can to help return (displaced people) back to their homes. Helping them get back to their rightful place in Bosnia will not only help them regain their lives, but help bring this country back to where it was," Gruen said.

"Right now we are going around to various ... camps and talking to the people there to get a sense of where they are from, how many people are at each camp, and if they have any immediate medical needs." Gruen said they are doing whatever they can to aid displaced people return back to their homes safely.

"Right now we are helping them visit their homes to see if anyone is there, or if their homes are still there. We also are educating them on how to register a claim for their property," Gruen said.

Staff Sergeant Daniel A. Moreno of Chickasha, Okla., and a member of the 486th Civil Affairs Unit, said there is still much to do.

"Our mission never really ends. We just pass it down to the next group. The end result of a lot of the stuff we proposed while we were, here, like the resettlement of the (displaced people) we

won't see, but will be seen by the teams coming in behind us," Moreno said.

"It takes time to get the things that we would like done taken care of because it's a long process, but the end results are all that matter. It will take a while to get everything right, but I think our effort being here is going to make it worth while in a few years," Moreno said.

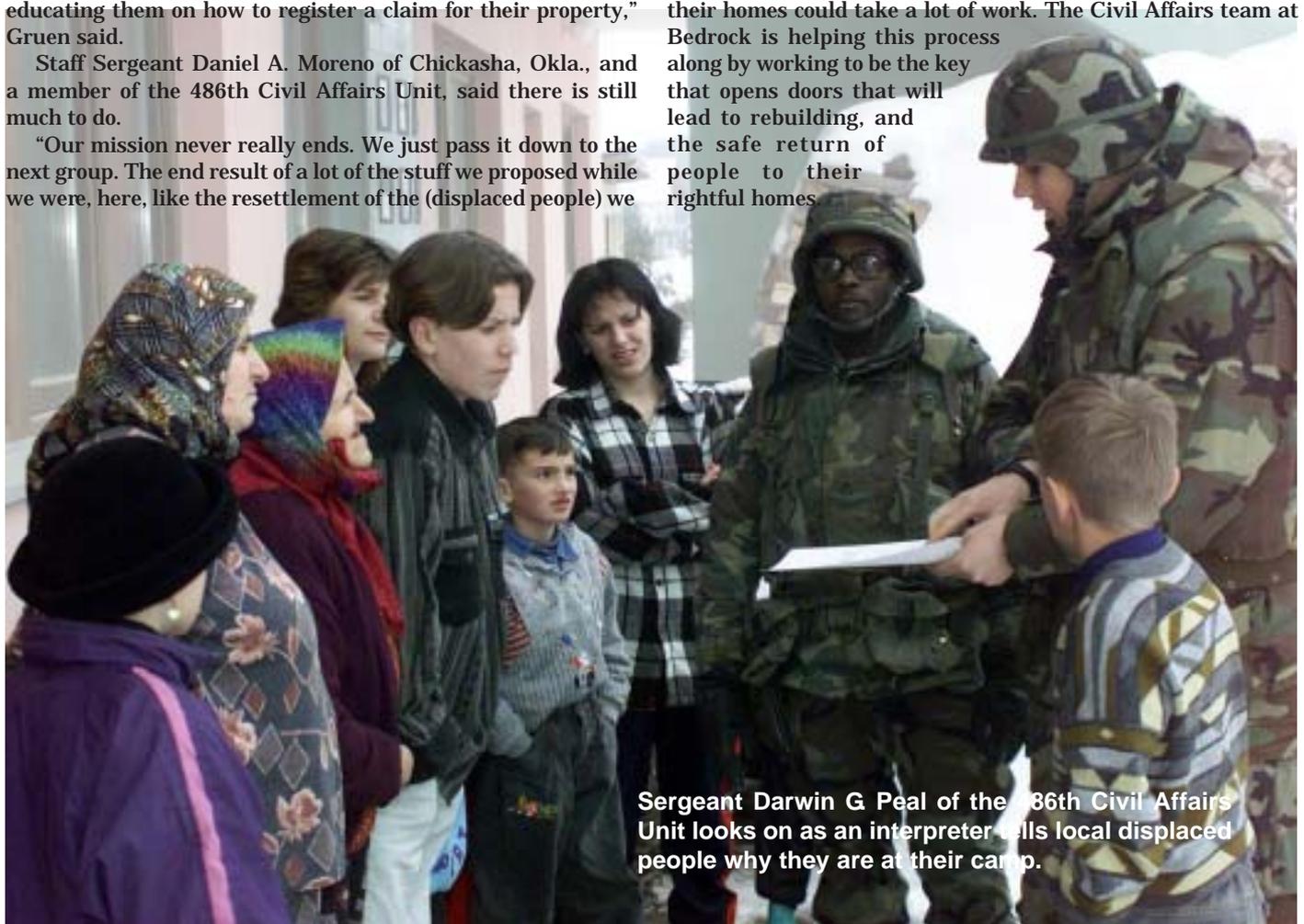
Moreno said he enjoys helping the local people rebuild their lives.

"I joined Civil Affairs to help people, and there is a lot of work that can be done here. I want to make a difference in somebody's life, and I feel like I'm doing that here," Moreno said with a smile. "I hope I can do the same in Honduras because I just volunteered to do a mission there once I get back home. I'm gaining experience here that will help me once I get there. Granted the war has been over for a few years now, but we are seeing what the first CA teams came in and did. It's amazing what a little help can do for a person."

Moreno said growing relations between the different ethnic groups in Bosnia is indicative of enhanced stability in the region.

"You can see all the ethnic backgrounds still living in the local communities. Whether it be in small numbers or not, they are still getting along," Moreno said. "You don't hear of any reports of violence taking place, and that means that everyone is working to get along."

As one can imagine, getting all the displaced people back to their homes could take a lot of work. The Civil Affairs team at Bedrock is helping this process along by working to be the key that opens doors that will lead to rebuilding, and the safe return of people to their rightful homes.



Sergeant Darwin G. Peal of the 486th Civil Affairs Unit looks on as an interpreter tells local displaced people why they are at their camp.

Tax season storms in

Story and photos by Eagle Base's
Specialist Natalie D. Haslem
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Calculators, 1040s, 1040EZ's, W2s, 10 instruction books, account numbers, deadlines, and a headache; that's right, it's tax season again. April 15 will be here soon, and unit tax advisors are waiting to help soldiers through the woes of tax season at the Eagle Base Tax Center.

The Eagle Base Tax Center held its grand opening ceremony recently, and Multinational Division (North) and 1st Cavalry Division commander, Major General Kevin P. Byrnes, gave an opening address to soldiers before cutting the ribbon.

"We have saved soldiers about \$60 to \$65 for returns," said Staff Sergeant Elia Arguello, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division. The tax center's services are free of charge to soldiers, according to Arguello, a Los Angeles native, and noncommissioned officer in charge of the tax center.

"Average refunds were \$750. Refunds for soldiers are definitely bigger due to the tax-free program for soldiers deployed during Operation Joint Forge in Bosnia," said tax program coordinator, Captain Jacqueline J. Branham of HHC.

"So far soldiers are getting back over \$30,000 collectively," said Branham, who is a Pikeville, Ky. native. According to statistics calculated from 35 processed tax forms, soldiers who normally get a refund can expect even bigger refunds.

Unfortunately, not all soldiers will be getting a refund. Some may have to dig into their pockets for Uncle Sam. For people who are going to owe money, there is an extension period allowed to pay those taxes. Of course, all soldiers serving under Operation Joint Forge are authorized an extension on taxes. "Indicate this by writing 'supporting former Yugoslavia' using red ink in the top right corner of your tax form and outside the envelope," Branham said.

"We encourage soldiers to come in now. We especially encourage soldiers who are single, can file electronically and expect a refund. Those cases will be easier. We want to make it through the crunch. I think the cen-

ter will be busy. Last year, close to 500 soldiers filed their taxes. This year we expect more than that," said Branham.

Soldiers interested in electronically filing their income taxes need to bring their W-2(s), identification card and their check or bankcard with routing and account numbers. Some soldiers will need to bring their 1099 or bank statement showing interest income earned in 1998. Documents pertaining to mutual funds, stocks, or any sizable investments will be needed as well, including information for deductibles.

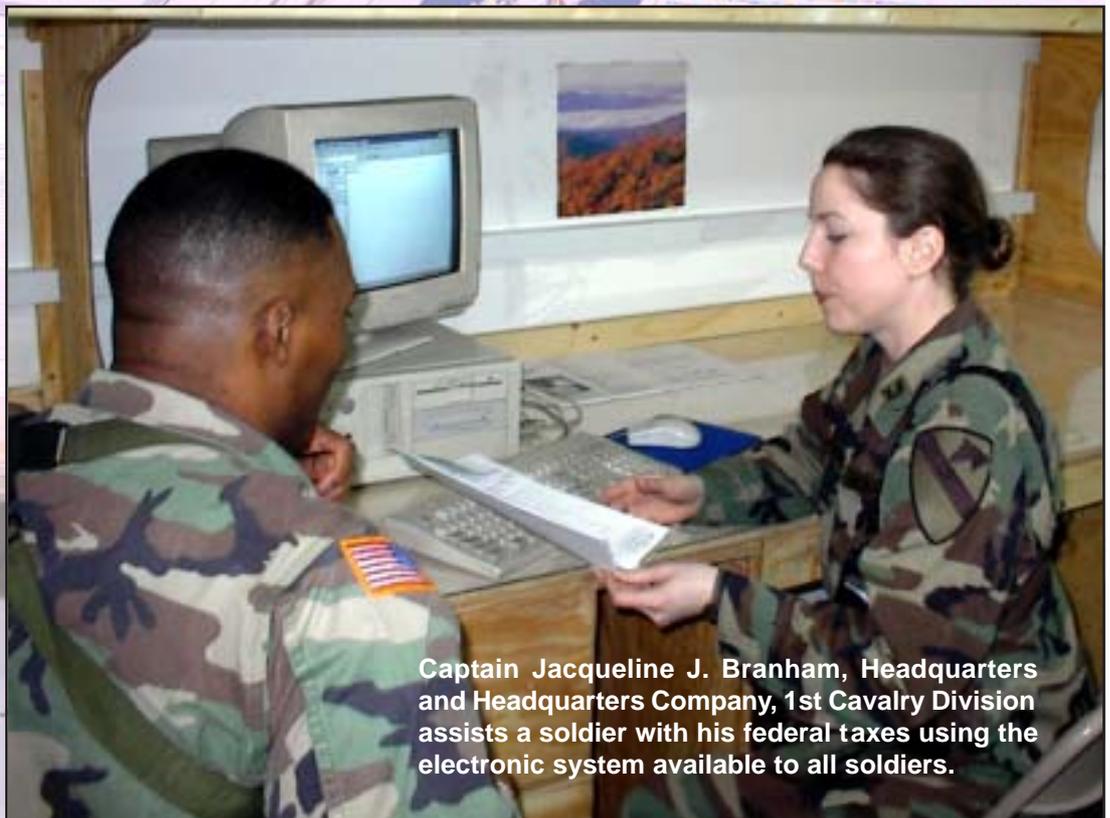
Married soldiers can also file their taxes. The tax center allows deployed soldiers to file jointly with a special power of attorney. "The special power of attorney form allows soldiers' spouses to file taxes jointly," Branham said.

"We do everything to help. If we can't help them, we can always find an answer for them," said Arguello about different problems soldiers run into.

Redeployment may be an issue for soldiers who want to meet the April 15 deadline. Soldiers should file now and save the headache of trying to meet the deadline during their leave immediately following redeployment.

Unit tax advisors are certified and ready to help. Tax advisors went through classes conducted by volunteer Internal Revenue Services instructors. The classes were conducted throughout MND (N) to ensure proper service before the center opened.

The tax center can help with both federal and state taxes electronically or manually.



Captain Jacqueline J. Branham, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division assists a soldier with his federal taxes using the electronic system available to all soldiers.

Engagement Skills Trainer keeps peacekeepers' skills sharp

Story and photo by Eagle Base's
Specialist Robert B. Valentine
319th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Ensuring that soldiers are ready for any mission, whether it is peacekeeping or war, is a high priority for the Army. Recently, the 1st Cavalry Division unveiled their newest means for maintaining soldier readiness and training — the Engagement Skills Trainer at Eagle Base.

"The EST is a multipurpose marksmanship trainer which allows soldiers up to squad size to engage targets in a video laser-disk driven scenario using a variety of U.S. Army weapons," said Master Sergeant Timothy A. Dodge, the division master gunner with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division.

Soldiers improve and maintain their sharp shooting skills on the M-9 Pistol, the M-16A2 Rifle, the M-203 Grenade Launcher, the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon, the MK-19 Grenade Machine Gun and the AT-4 Anti-Tank Weapon.

The facility is designed to enhance training based on the eight-step training model and provides an excellent After Action Review. The AAR shows the soldiers' strengths and helps trainers to identify and correct weaknesses. The EST provides instant feedback on target hit or miss, and has a playback feature that allows the gunners to "replay the battle," said Dodge, a native of Corydon, Indiana.

Following the engagement scenario and AAR, the soldiers have the opportunity to retrain in weak areas using the Weaponeer Marksmanship Trainer and the Multipurpose Arcade Combat Simulator, both of which are located in the facility.

In addition to the marksmanship trainers, this facility will also

serve as a fully functioning Training Aids and Support Center. This TASC has a large inventory of training aids, and is available for issue or loan to Multinational Division (North) units, and is operated by an on-site facility manager, Mr. Clarence Morton.

"This is great for training soldiers because of the realism," Morton said, a Government Service-10 weapons specialist. "There are different combat scenarios that soldiers can run through such as urban, desert, police, SWAT and shoot-don't-shoot sequences," said the Killeen, Texas native.

The Weaponeer shows soldiers their shot groupings, and helps them properly adjust the sights on their weapon. The MASC allows soldiers to improve shooting techniques by analyzing the soldiers' breathing, trigger pull and body position, all of which can affect shooting accuracy.

"(The Engagement Skills Training Center) will help ensure our skills haven't atrophied over time while we're on this peacekeeping mission," said Major General Kevin P. Brynes, commander of Multinational Division (North) and the 1st Cavalry Division.

"If you look at the array of possible responses to hostile actions here, the EST includes scenarios engaging those who would threaten the lives of Stabilization Force members, persons designated special security by the International Community, or citizens who are being subjected to serious harm by those who oppose peace," Brynes said.

"This (peacekeeping mission) is where we lose a little bit of our edge on gunnery and maneuver skills," Brynes said. "While we're on a peacekeeping mission, we can't forget the enduring mission of the 1st Cavalry division ... to go to war on short notice."

The EST promises to keep peacekeepers sharp, and ready for success on the battlefield.



Major General Kevin P. Brynes tries out the Multipurpose Arcade Combat Simulator at Eagle Base's Engagement Skill Training Center.

International Balkan Challenge

Story and photo by Camp Dobol's Specialist Kimmanda Collins
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Camp Dobol became a Multinational Division (North) melting pot for competition when soldiers from all over the region showed up to compete in the first International Balkan Challenge.

The competition tested individual strength as well as teamwork. Seven teams competed for the distinguished honor of taking home the trophy.

Swedish, Polish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Danish soldiers, along with two American teams out of Camps Dobol and Demi, displayed their resolve to win through their unrelenting efforts to accumulate more points than their opponents.

The first four events — push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups and the 600-meter shuttle run — put major emphasis on each soldier's physical ability. For some of the soldiers, these events meant that it was their time to shine and to show their opponents what they were really made of.

"I was really confident during the push-up event. Push-ups are a part of my daily workout, so I'm used to doing them. I knocked out 87 push-ups for my team, so I think my actions spoke louder than my verbal desire to win," said Specialist Michael Loston, a Tallahassee, Fla. native and a dismount infantryman with Company D of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

After exerting every ounce of their energy during the first half of the competition, the competitors took an hour break to recuperate and prepare for the upcoming events. The sandbag carry, ammo crate carry, litter carry, HMMWV push and log carry events required a team effort, because no soldier could have completed the events alone.

"I had a great bunch of soldiers on my team. We all pulled together when it was necessary, and I feel it brought us closer together at the same time," said First Lieutenant Timmy Mack,

a Georgia native and Executive Officer for Company D of 2-5 Cavalry. "I believe it is important to have a good relationship with the members on your team because when push comes to shove, they'll be there to back you up every step of the way," Mack said.

The competitors' enthusiasm caused a crowd of spectators to flock to the competition. "I heard shouting and cheering outside of my SEA hut so I came out to see what was going on. The soldiers were in the middle of the pull-up event so I could see what all the fuss was about," said Specialist Terrell Hood, a Columbia, S.C. native and automated logistical specialist with Company C of 2-5 Cavalry.

The soldiers said they felt the most challenging event was the 10.5-mile road march from Dobol to Mount Vis. dressed in full gear and rucksacks on their backs. The soldiers carried 100 extra pounds all the way to the top of the mountain. "When it was time for the road march event, I thought I had used all the energy that I had in my body," Loston said. "But I knew it wasn't over so I took a deep breath, collected my thoughts, and pushed myself one more time."

The International Balkan Challenge was not going to be an easy win for any of the teams. Though some teams had an advantage over the others in different events, they all showed sportsmanship, and encouraged each other throughout the entire competition. "Even though I wanted our team to win and the competition was heavy, I still had fun. I had to keep reminding myself that it was all a game, and winning really wasn't that important, although it would have been nice," laughed Loston.

In the end, the Swedish Battalion took home the trophy, and was declared the winners of the first International Balkan Challenge. "I think every team was hoping to win first place, and even though our team didn't come in first, I believe we are still winners because to me, it doesn't matter if you win or lose, it's whether or not you had fun doing either one," Loston said.