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TALON

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Food inspection guarantees safe sustenance for soldiers

Inside this issue:

Eagles Cheerleaders, Coolio, and Candelaria DANCON, two down, one to go

Task Force Eagle www.tfeagle.army.mil

Word on the street...

“If you could have any job for a day, what would it be and why?”

TALON

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Staff Sgt. Ronnie Butts
Scout
A Troop, 104th Cav.
Camp Morgan

“I would love to be a doctor because it’s in my blood to help people.”



Maj. Arjo Kaarre
Civic Officer
FINCON

“Airport security because I think that job would be interesting.”



Spc. Chrisina Bartholomew
Administrative Specialist
330th Medical Det.

“I would like to be a Black Hawk pilot because that is the job I originally wanted.”

Be who you are and say what you feel. Those who matter don’t mind and those who mind don’t matter.

~ Dr. Suess



Lt. Col. Byron Ross
Director of Logistics
Area Support Group

“Trauma surgeon. I would like to save lives.”



Sgt. Jamie Allen
Reserve Pay NCO
220th Finance Det.

“I would like to be an actress, maybe in a comedy or action film, to get the experience.”

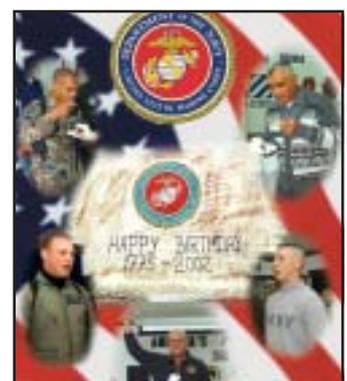


Sgt. Andrew Schrantz
Scout
C Troop, 104th Cav.
Camp McGovern

“A pilot because my grandfather flew and I’ve always been fascinated with planes.”



About the covers: Front, One of the many fruits imported from Italy to MND (N), currants are small seedless raisins. *Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster.* **Back,** In true Marine Corps style, Marines and former Marines gathered to celebrate the Corps’ 227th birthday. *Photo illustration by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster.*



Rap star brings hip-hop to Bosnia

Story and photos by
Spc. Jessica Abner

Assistant editor, 354th MPAD

Worldwide rap star Coolio made himself a lyrical home on stage at Eagle Base's Peacekeepers Hall. With disc jockey DVS (pronounced Devious) spinning records on the turn tables, and Goast assisting on the microphone, Coolio entertained the soldiers with music from new and previous albums.

Moments after Coolio's stage appearance, the uniformed fans, along with civilians who work on Eagle Base, rush the stage as he called the sound managers to turn up the music. Although the concertgoers range in age, jobs, and taste of music, they seemed to enjoy the hip hop beats Coolio and his crew brought to Eagle Base. Soldiers are not the only ones who benefit from the concert, Coolio said he takes something away from the experience as well.

"I really believe in what I do and I think it really affects people in a positive way. At the end of our lives we are going to have to answer to God and he's going to pull out his book and say 'well what did you do'," said Coolio. "I want my good stuff to outweigh the bad. So, I'm getting something out of it, too, and I get to see a part of the world that I never saw before."

Being in a danger zone is not something new to the performer. He said he was a little apprehensive about the trip to Bosnia at first but he has been in dangerous situations before. This is Coolio's fourth USO tour, however, it is his first time in Bosnia. He has performed for U.S. troops in Korea, Kuwait, and Europe.

"I'm from Compton and I've been to Kuwait. I feel like I've been in dangerous areas all my life," said Coolio. "Not only that, I believe when it's time for you to go, you have no choice or weight in the matter, so it doesn't matter if I'm home or if I'm performing here."

"I perform for soldiers because they are



Before flying to Camp McGovern, CW3 Dave Cox, pilot, COMSFOR Flight Det., lets Coolio take a look from a pilot's point of view.



Multi-platinum selling rap artist, Coolio, performs on stage for soldiers at Eagle Base's Peacekeepers Hall. This marks his third USO tour.

important. Somebody that's willing to die for someone else is another kind of person," said Coolio. "They are willing to die for me to be able to do the things I do everyday, for my kids to be able to go to school and be free."

He marked the end of his concert with his 1996 Grammy Award winning single "Gangsta's Paradise" and thanked the soldiers for doing their jobs and serving the United States.

The performance received good ratings by the soldiers who said the entertainment gave their morale a boost.

"I'm an old fan but I can't believe people like that perform here," said Spc. Juana Lopez, medical supply, Task Force Med Eagle. "My brother is going to be so happy because he thinks that we are not getting much entertainment over here and that we're isolated. He will appreciate Coolio."

"I thought it was a great time and a lot of fun. The interaction with the crowd was the best, he knows how to put on a good show," said Spc. Steve Connelly, psyops specialist, 13th Psyop Bn. "I'm just grateful that he's able to come out here and do the show, it's a great service and I respect him for it."

Even though Coolio performed on Eagle Base, he and his entourage paid a visit to soldiers at the forward operating bases (FOBs) and Sarajevo. While at those locations, he signed autographs and hung out with the soldiers. Although he wanted to visit all the FOBs, weather and time did not permit a visit to Hilltop 1326. But those who met Coolio appreciated his time.

"It means somebody cares. He comes over here, knows a little about our soldiers and what they are going through, it's really appreciated," said Major Shaun Jones, commandant, 28th Inf. Div.

After the concert, Coolio spent time talking with soldiers and signing autographs. He said if he could tell the servicemembers one thing it's, "Be yourself. Everybody's not a leader and I'm cool with that, if you're not a leader, then be a good follower. If you are going to be a follower, make sure you got a good leader."



Spc. Greg Bynum, engineer, 103rd Eng. Bn., talks to Coolio and receives his autograph after the show.

Food inspectors go sub-zero to guarantee food safety for soldiers

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster

Editor, 354th MPAD

PETRINJA, Croatia — What would you say if someone told you the warehouse in which all the food served at different bases throughout Multinational Division (North) is infested with rodents, bugs and bacteria? According to Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver, food inspection non-commissioned officer, 422nd Veterinary Services Detachment, you will never have to answer that question.

“It’s my job to make sure the food the soldiers are eating is okay,” said Weaver. “If there is something wrong with the food and soldiers become sick, it could ultimately affect them doing their mission.

That won’t happen as long as I’m doing this job.”

Often something that gets the least

amount of attention is that which is right in front of you. Troops pass through the chow line at the various dining facilities on a daily basis never questioning the safety of the food being spooned, scooped and flipped onto plates. Snacks are purchased by the bagfull at the Post Exchange often without a second thought. The Cinnamon Toast Crunch, bananas and bagels come from somewhere — that somewhere could be the United States, Italy, Germany, Hungary, or a local supplier. But what does it take to get it to you — the soldier?

According to Mark Orthman, project manager for Theodor Wille Intertrade, one of the companies supplying food to the U.S. armed services throughout the Balkans, there’s almost no possible way in which the food being shipped

for the consumption of soldiers can be tampered with due to the stringent system of checks it goes through getting here.

“If there is something wrong with the food soldiers could become sick... that won’t happen as long as I’m doing this job.”

*Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver
422nd Veterinary Services Det.*



Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver checks a pallet of rice for signs of bug or rodent infestation.

“When the items come from a warehouse in the United States, they go through our quality assurance,” said Orthman. “Before the items are palletized they are checked. A supervisor checks them again before being shrink-wrapped. They get placed in a government-supplied container for shipping and are sealed. Once they arrive in here they go through several more checks.”

Orthman said products are inspected again once they arrive in the warehouse to ensure they meet all standards put forth by the Department of Defense. They must have been shipped in the proper container and kept at the correct temperature. That’s when veterinary services gets involved.

“I check all the locations that are used to store food that is used for soldiers,” said Weaver. She inspects dining facility storage areas and AAFES storage facilities. Even though Weaver’s main concern is the inspection of food products once they arrive here, she said she is not the first line of defense, but rather one of the final lines of defense. She said food that eventually reaches troops go through at least a half a dozen different inspections.

“When we check out a location we make sure they follow a very strict set of guidelines. For example, an extreme cold storage site has to maintain a certain temperature and records to show that it is being monitored on a regular basis.” Weaver said fluctuation in food temperatures could cause different bacteria to grow and could potentially make soldiers ill.



Mark Orthman, Theodor Wille Intertrade project manager, discusses a pallet of expired products that is scheduled to be destroyed with Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver.

Many of the foods in the dining facilities are flash frozen and kept at temperature reaching minus 20 F or more. The purpose for the extreme cold temperature is maintaining freshness in the product. According to Orthman, even though an item may be frozen it still has a shelf life.

“When something is frozen there is still movement in the fat cells of that product. The extreme cold temperature and quick freezing process not only inhibits the product from breaking down and going bad, but when it is used it will taste fresher and better than something you might take out of your freezer at home,” said Orthman.

In addition to checking temperatures of cold storage, Weaver also checks to make certain there is no infestation of bugs or rodents in any of the food. There are rodent traps placed specific distances apart in close proximity to food products that are monitored regularly.

Another extremely important issue besides where or how the food is stored is what foods are stored together. It’s similar to having groceries at home bagged at the local supermarket. You never want to place cleaning products in the same bag with food items. In the case of food supplied to soldiers, it often goes even further.

“Our regulations don’t even allow for certain meats to be stored in the same freezer,” said Weaver. She said the reason

is that if there were a problem with the cooling unit, certain meats are prone to specific bacteria or problems. “Rather than take the chance of cross-contamination, we require the meats to be stored separately.”

“In the case of AAFES sites, I check to make sure they are not storing non-food items with food products. It important for those items to be stored in separate areas,” said Weaver. Similar to grocery shopping at home, efforts are made to keep soaps and chemicals away from food.

Anywhere food is shipped to soldiers there will surely be an Army food inspec-

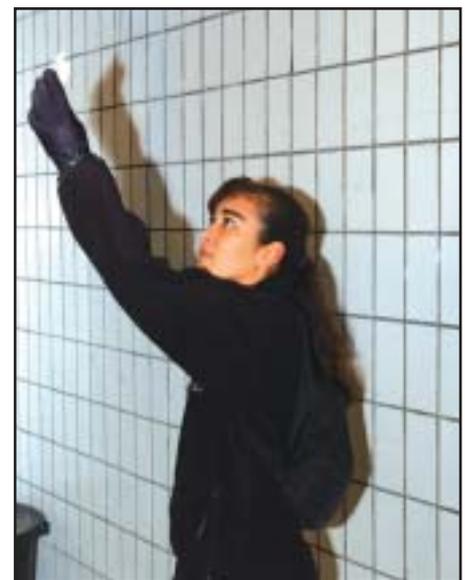
tor nearby — and for good reason. The Army is the only branch of the five services that has veterinary services.

“Veterinary services cover all the branches... we are DOD-wide,” said Weaver. “I spent the first six years of my career at a naval base doing the same job I do now.”

It doesn’t matter whether it’s the sailors going to sea, grunts going to the field, or Marines assaulting a beach, U.S. Army veterinary services will ensure the food service members depend on is the safest they can get.



Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver inspects the contents of a pallet scheduled for delivery to Camp McGovern.



From left to right. Staff Sgt. Amy Weaver inspects a case of corndogs in the sub-zero storage facility. Freezing and maintaining temperature ensure not only the safety of the food, but can also affect the taste and quality. Temperatures in the facility are monitored and must be at least minus 20 F. Weaver inspects thermometers to ensure they are functional and accurate.

TALON



by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster



by Spc. Jessica Abner



by Maj. John Dowling



by Spc. Jessica Abner

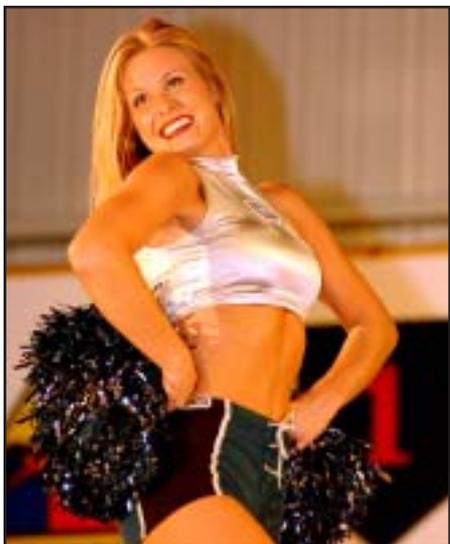
The Philadelphia Eagles Cheerleaders and Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher, John Candelaria, traveled more than 4,000 miles to spend some time with soldiers at Forward Operating Base Connor, Camps Morgon and McGovern, and Eagle Base. After performing, the cheerleaders and Candyman signed autographs and posed for pictures.



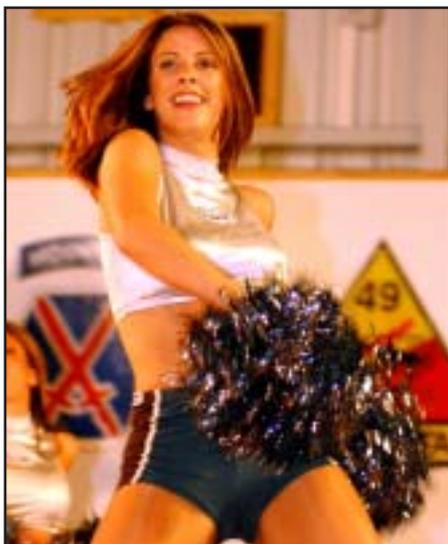
by Maj. John Dowling



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by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster



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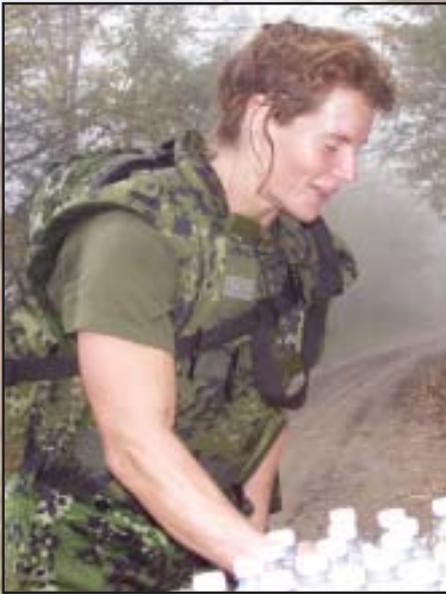
Dancon March; two down one to go

Story and photos by Maj. John Dowling

Commander, 354th MPAD

While some people may consider walking 30 kilometers around hilly terrain more like pulling teeth than a walk in the park, Lance Cpl. Karen Brogger of the Danish Contingent of SFOR sees it as fun.

Just a few days before her 30th birthday, the tank mechanic bolted around the hills surrounding Camp Dannevirke on a sunny Sunday morning in 3 hours 15 minutes.



Danish Contingent Lance Cpl. Karen Brogger, tank mechanic, hydrates before hitting the road during a three hour, 15-minute performance at the first Dancon march.



Sgt. Maj. Timothy Mateer, Deputy G-1, 28th Inf. Div., takes care of his "barking dawgs" while participating in the first Dancon March in October.

Brogger and nearly 300 personnel including soldiers, international police officers and contractors of SFOR were participating in an annual Danish tradition called the DANCON March.

Despite Brogger's outstanding performance, the objective of the march is not to finish first or even achieve a quick time. It's to meet people and make new friends from other countries.

As commander of the Danish Contingent headquartered at the Nord-Pol Barracks at Camp Doboij, Lt. Col. Jes Rasmussen officially opened the event by recognizing its historical significance. Three marches will be held so everyone interested can participate.

"I am proud to welcome you to this event on its 30th anniversary," said Rasmussen, who joined the marchers in their pursuit. "Use this time to make new friends from new countries and get familiar with the Nord-Pol Battle Group area."

Even though the DANCON is not a competitive race, all official participants are required to carry at least 10 kg of equipment, which includes helmet, flak vest and individually assigned weapon. Some took the opportunity to test their physical limits by carrying additional equipment.

Everyone is allowed eight hours to complete the course that starts at Camp Dannevirke. The track winds through the local mountainous terrain for 22 km before passing by the starting point at Dannevirke and finishing with a shorter, yet challenging 8 km loop. The last 50 meters, marchers make their way through a tunnel of pine trees where the satisfying finish line awaits.

The spirit of friendship is clearly evident as soldiers from throughout the world

encourage, cajole, and sometimes even physically assist their SFOR partners to keep "picking 'em up and putting 'em down." Two soldiers from the 109th Infantry paired together for most of the march and left with fond memories of the event.

"I thought the march was wonderful. I got to

learn a lot about a bunch of different people. We also talked to some kids and met Bosnian families along the way," said 1st Lt. Marcel Minutolo, Assistant S-2. Minutolo spent most of the day with Spc. Martin Winter, gunner, Co. C, who also enjoyed the camaraderie despite the aching muscles and tender feet.

"It was very scenic, which gave me some motivation," said Winter who also drew inspiration from The Doors and Nine Inch Nails CDs. "We checked out different weapons, shared some candy and food, and had a good time."

Having previously traveled outside the United States to Mexico and Canada, Winter was thankful for the opportunity to see what Bosnia and Herzegovina was really like beyond the towns and main transportation routes he usually takes on patrol.

"I like seeing the different culture. Having never been to Europe before, I got to experience something different," he said.

Others just welcomed the opportunity to enjoy the warm October weather and vibrant colors of the changing leaves in this part of the country.

"It was amazing. We got to be outside for eight hours instead of behind computers. It was beautiful," said Capt. Ylva Johnsson, a Swedish political analyst from Camp Butmir. "It's a physical challenge you get to do with your friends and meet lots of new people along the way,"

The physical effort required is obviously harder for some than others, but everyone is committed to the same common goal – to finish.

"Around the 19.5 km mark, I was very tired, but some American soldiers came by and said 'you are doing a really good job.' That makes a big difference."

In the end, the shared experience helps validate the primary reason for the DANCON, as some lit cigars, proposed a toast with cans of soda, or just rested their tired legs and joined in conversation about their achievement.

"At the end of the day, you get a feel for each other and everybody just has to let go," said Johnsson. "We're all really tired toward the end and that really helps to break the ice as well."

Breaking the ice just helps reinforce the cooperative spirit of the many nations represented in SFOR. "We are united in the same cause, in this case, the DANCON road march. Different people can motivate other groups of military people to accomplish the mission," said Minutolo.

United in their mission to complete the DANCON March, SFOR soldiers return to their military missions with a better understanding and appreciation for their international partners.

