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TALON



New Year brings new hope

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SFOR donates \$4,000 to Chaplain's Field Fund

Sgt. William Chaffee
Chapel NCOIC

The Chaplain's Field Fund Committee would like to thank all of the Stabilization Force 14 Soldiers who have donated to the fund. SFOR Soldiers and civilians have donated more than \$4,000 since the Sept. 30 transfer of authority. These donations have been used to fund projects that help the people of Bosnia in many ways. Here are some examples of the types of projects that have been supported:

(1) Clothing and blankets have been purchased and donated to the children at the Dom-Porodica Orphanage. (2) Soldiers have helped fund a hearing aid for a man who feels it is important to volunteer his time to the Friends of Bosnia. His skills have increased and he has become more of an asset to the foundation. (3) School supplies have been purchased for a number of schools. (4) Children at the Budozejlje Elementary School are now playing on new playground equipment, a soccer field, a basketball court, and a sand volleyball pit due to a jointly funded effort between the fund and other organizations. (5) Students at Budozejlja and Suceška Elementary schools are warm this winter because of funding to purchase heaters and furnaces. These schools also got some new athletic equipment and various other school supplies.

(6) Bathroom facilities have been

fixed at Fra Ilija Starcevic, Ruder Boskovic, and Papratnica Elementary Schools. (7) A donation was made to help fund a Red Cross-sponsored mine awareness class. (8) Books have been purchased for the Tuzla Library and also for students in various schools who could not afford them otherwise.

"It is very fulfilling to see the contributions of the Soldiers helping the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina," said Chaplain (Capt.) Jerome Fehn, fund manager.

To date the committee and the Soldiers of SFOR have dispersed more than \$3,300 to individuals and organizations that make a difference here in Bosnia. This money has brought so many smiles to the faces of young and old alike. "Each and every SFOR Soldier can be proud that we're making a difference in so many people's lives," said Fehn. "Thanks again for all your dedication and hard work."

As Sgt. Doug Heller of the Multinational Brigade (North) G5 said, "The Chaplain's Field Fund is a great resource to help the needy. It's a way to strengthen the bond between military and the local populace."

If Soldiers know of a worthy cause, contact Chaffee via e-mail.

Donations can be made to the offering during any scheduled service at Eagle Base Chapel. Contact Chaffee for more details.



About the cover: Capt. Jason Benson, TF Bearcat, reflects on Bosnia's future as Bosniak children walk by at the Potacari Memorial and Cemetery. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

Message of thanks from Lt. Gov. Molnau

By 1st Lt. Anna Lewicki
State Public Affairs

Many soldiers will tell you that the hardest part of a deployment is being away from family and loved ones, especially during the holidays.

Just before Christmas a delegation of 39 civic leaders, led by Minnesota's Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau, traveled to Eagle Base and Camp McGovern to visit the soldiers of Multinational Brigade (North).

"I know my visit probably meant you had to clean up and spend extra time making sure everything looked good," Molnau said to a group of soldiers. "My husband warned me that's how it would be. He said 'yeah, they probably won't be too thrilled to see you. They want to see their families,'" she said, eliciting a laugh from the crowd.

"But the message I want to bring is *thank you*. We know the work isn't always easy, and it certainly isn't glamorous, but we appreciate it. We will always remember the time you spent here," she said.

Molnau received a plaque from the McGovern Soldiers. She said she plans to hang it in her office with other "prized possessions."

"There aren't many things that make the wall in my office, but this will. Every time someone asks about it, I'll have a story to tell about our troops in Bosnia. You probably don't



Photos by Master Sgt. Tim Peterson, TF Eagle PAO

Col. Gerald Lang, MNB (N) deputy commander, shows Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau around Eagle Base, during her visit Dec. 21-23.

hear it enough, but thank you for all you are doing," she told the group after the presentation.

One of the travelers, Keiko Veasey, with the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, knows firsthand what it's like to be on the other end of a deployment. Her husband deployed here to BiH in July.

"Although we miss you a lot, we are *so proud*," she said. "When people ask what my husband is doing, I just beam with pride. I am sure your family and spouses feel the same. On behalf of all the families, I want to say 'thank you.'"

These messages of encouragement and thanks made an impression on the Soldiers.

"It shows their support of what we're doing. That means a lot," said Spc. William Ewing, a Task Force Eagle administrative specialist for the Joint Visitor's Bureau.

"The hardest part is the family aspect, but since I've been here I've seen a lot of young Soldiers grow and a lot of senior Soldiers become stronger," he said. "When you're here, your family is the Soldiers

behind you and the command group in front of you."

Brig. Gen. Richard Nash, MNB(N) commander, agreed that recent visits by both the Minnesota Governor and Molnau were good for Soldier morale.

"Soldiers love telling their story. They're doing great things here – they're doing what they have trained to do," Nash said.

But the deployed Soldiers were not the only ones who received a boost from the visit.

"This has been an extremely worthwhile trip, but maybe more beneficial for the travelers than the Soldiers," said Col. Dennis Lord, executive director of the Minnesota National Guard. "We're taking back more than we left. The Soldiers kept our spirits up with their enthusiasm for the mission and sacrifices they're making."

As part of the delegation, the Minnesota National Guard's Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Boone, had a chance to talk to several deployed Soldiers.

"It makes me extremely proud to be their senior noncommissioned officer and humble to have the opportunity to serve and work with them," Boone said.



Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau talks with Capt. Eduardo Suarez, TF Iron, during her visit to Camp McGovern.

Helping to build a

FOB Connor Soldiers provide hope in war-ravaged area

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood
135th MPAD

Srebrenica, BiH—
Anthony Lewis, a New York Times book reviewer, wrote, “Anyone who does not know why we should care about Bosnia ... should read ‘End Game’

(the betrayal and fall of Srebrenica, Europe’s worst massacre since World War II.)

Task Force Bearcat soldiers stationed at Forward Operating Base Connor don’t have to read this book to care about Bosnia and Herzegovina:

they learn to care everyday.

FOB Connor’s seven areas of responsibilities are in areas that saw the worst devastation from the 1992-95 war. They include Srebrenica, Bratunac and Zvornik.

For Spc. Nathan Anderson, being a humvee driver during patrols around Srebrenica has been a “great experience.” Several humvees make daily patrols around these areas to show a Stabilization Force presence.

“Just being able to know what went on to make the city what it is right now is very cool,” Anderson said of these patrols. “I have a chance to see it rather than read about it.”

The patrols around Srebrenica enable these soldiers to visit sites mentioned in the book, such as the former U.N. Compound; the shopping center where the commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, Gen. Ratko Mladic, stood on the steps and said, “We present this city to the Serbian people as a gift,” on July 11, 1995, after



Srebrenica residents watch as a F streets.

Srebrenica fell; and the Srebrenica-Potacari Memorial and Cemetery officially dedicated by Former President Clinton, Sept. 20, as the final resting place for many Srebrenica men and boys killed during the Bosnian



This is where artillery shells landed in the Srebrenica Elementary School playground.



A woman mourns at her loved one's grave site at the Potacari Memorial and Cemetery.

a stronger future



FOB Connor humvee with Spc. Joseph Butler manning the gun, patrols the city's

and listen to their concerns or problems.

“We point them in the right direction or to the proper people,” he said. “We try to respond to incidents quickly and effectively.”

FOB Connor Commander Capt. Jason Benson, said that the local populace has told him that SFOR is a great asset.

“Everything we do continues to bring progress to the area,” he said.

FOB Connor’s exceptional work is being recognized by its higher command.

Brig. Gen. Richard Nash, Multinational Brigade (North) commander, said these soldiers could be trusted with this mission.

“They’re well trained and conduct this mission extremely well and they’re exceeding my expectations.”

War. Their patrol area also includes an elementary school playground where artillery shells landed in 1992 killing 56 people, including 14 children playing soccer.

Spc. Nathan Johnson, a third-generation soldier, said after researching this area, he knew “this would

be the best place to interact with local people.” He said his reasoning was “to see firsthand the before and after effects of the war and see how everything is coming around.”

He noted that on these patrols soldiers talk to the local people

“They’re well trained and conduct this mission extremely well.”

– **Brig. Gen. Richard Nash**



Capt. Jason Benson, FOB Connor commanding officer, stands in front of a destroyed school in Srebrenica. A new high school was built near this school.

Air Traffic Service goes the distance

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Edwin Holt
135th MPAD

They were the first group from Stabilization Force 14 to arrive in Bosnia and without them, no one else could have gotten here - by air anyway.

Fourteen soldiers from the 34th Infantry Division's Company G, 147th Air Traffic Services unit landed in Bosnia in July, shortly after completing mobilization in-processing at Ft. McCoy, Wis.

While most of the division went to Ft. Polk, La., for further training prior to coming to Bosnia, members of the ATS were sent directly to Eagle Base to begin training on the radar equipment they use at the Ground Control Approach Facility. Their mission is to safely guide aircraft on their final approach to the airfield.

"Every base has equipment specific to that base," Sgt. Christopher Budahn, one of the unit's facility chiefs for the GCAF said. "As a result, we are required to be evaluated and complete a rating process before we can operate the equipment we use without supervision."

The rating process takes up to four

months and involves reading material, written tests and hands-on experience using equipment specific to the GCAF the Soldiers work in.

Two Department of Defense civilians along with Soldiers from Stabilization Force 13 trained and rated Soldiers from SFOR 14. Two Soldiers from SFOR 13 stayed on for SFOR 14 in order to provide enough rated personnel to complete the rating process for the 147th ATS.

"Eagle Base experiences a lot of foggy conditions which make high competency levels very important to attain for the unit's Soldiers," Budahn stressed.

"Foggy times should be our busiest times, but safety is a big factor, so aircraft try and avoid flying in here when fog is too thick," Budahn said. "But, we are trained, so if and when an aircraft needs to land, we are ready."

"We are a very specialized unit," Staff Sgt. Casey King, one of the SFOR 13 Soldiers who stayed on to rate Soldiers from SFOR 14, said. "There are only about 11 ATS



Pfc. Mathew Braff, 147th ATS, works on the radar scope at the GCAF at Eagle Base last week.

units in the National Guard nationwide."

As a result, ATS companies are in big demand whenever Guard units are deployed, King said.

Budahn could verify the latter statement. Other members of the 147th ATS were recently deployed to Southwest Asia.

For Sgt. Linnea Siebolds, air traffic controller, being with the 147th ATS is a positive experience.

"I really like it. We are a small group and because we work way on the other side of the base, we do a lot of things together," Siebolds said.

In fact, members of the unit probably have as far to go to get to work each day as anyone who lives on base. It's two or two-and-half miles one way from their billets, depending on the route they take, Siebolds said.

The GCAF is located on the perimeter road along the runway.

"Every now and then someone running or walking the perimeter will stop and ask for water," Siebolds said. "But most of the time, we are pretty much alone out here."

The GCAF is staffed and open from 8 a.m. until midnight and members of the unit are on standby after midnight and immediately available if needed.



Staff Sgt. Casey King, 245th ATS, (left) Sgt. Christopher Budahn and Sgt. Linnea Siebolds, both of the 147th ATS, work on a candy house over the holidays at the GCAF on Eagle Base.

Family support

Story and photos by
Spc. Jeremiah Wickenhauser
135th MPAD

Soldiers serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina are busy day-in and day-out accomplishing the task of providing a safe and secure environment for the people of BiH. The family support groups back home have been busy at the same time providing support to help the Soldiers accomplish their mission.

Family support groups from all over the United States have been sending cards and packages with different types of supplies and donations for the Soldiers serving, and the local population.

Capt. Jason Benson, the commanding officer of Forward Operating Base Connor, said family support groups in Detroit Lakes, Minn., and Bemidji, Minn., have been very helpful. "They had a parade for us when we left with about 8,000 people and we hear there is an even bigger celebration planned for us when we get back," commented Benson.

FOB Connor is where Task Force Bearcat Soldiers from the Minnesota Army National Guard's Company C, 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry, are stationed.



Capt. Jason Benson poses with a gift from the Detroit Lakes and Bemidji family readiness groups. His son's hand prints are among the hand prints.

Being in touch with the family support groups back home helps Soldiers stay close to their family and allows Soldiers to ask for specific items needed that can't be found in the country. Whether it's for the troops or the local community, the family support groups almost always come through with the requests and needs.

Spc. Nathan Johnson, whose mother is a chairperson on the Bemidji family support board, said the support groups have sent the soldiers several books and movies

while they have been deployed.

Johnson added that he and his fellow Soldiers talked with their support group back home and asked them to send a 50-by-20 foot tarp because an elderly women in their area of responsibility had no roof on her house. "The support group came through and we went out and put it up for her," continued Johnson.

The help from back home over the holiday season and throughout the rotation has been constant. People have gotten boxes of supplies from churches, school drives and individuals.

2nd Lt. Jason Inskeep said there was about a month when the Soldiers received a package full of donations and supplies every other day.

Johnson added, "Our job now is to try and distribute the donations evenly to all the people in need. Because of the weather change we are asking the family support groups to send hats and coats for the kids in need."

As Inskeep said, "Sometimes we are the only people to get out to some of the more remote locations in BiH so it's nice to have something to give them when we do show up."



Spc. Nathan Johnson, shown here during a recent patrol, said he is asking family support groups to donate winter clothing for children in need.



In our sights



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

An elderly Bosnian man and his dog watch as a TF Bearcat Active Harvest patrol departs Sekovici last week.



Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Craig Kampsen (left), 2nd Lt. Joseph Sangano, and 1st Sgt. Daniel Couture, all of TF Iron, enjoy a Christmas dinner at Camp McGovern.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

Sgt. Gordon Bergh, TF Bearcat, holds onto a humvee's antenna mast as he walks up a slippery hill during an Active Harvest Patrol last week.



Photo by Spc. Jeremiah Wickenhauser, 135th MPAD

Lt. Col. Joseph Burns, TFME (left), Staff Sgt. Thomas Murray, TF Eagle, and Maj. Lorna Weber, TFME, sing Christmas carols at Eagle Base on Christmas Eve.