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# TALON

## Teaching the way

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# TALON

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## Dance group entertains troops

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

Bosnian culture came alive on Eagle Base last Friday when the Gradsko Kulturno Umjetnicko Drustvo Artistic Society visited the base to entertain troops.

Established in 1945, the dance group prides itself on making every



Bosnian dancers give their all during a performance at Eagle Base last week.



Among the highlights was this traditional Muslim dance.

attempt to represent Bosnian culture from all ethnic and religious perspectives.

Featured in the 32-member troupe performance were dances from Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian origins as well as one dance adopted from Austro-Hungarian influences in Bosnia. Some dances were Muslim and some Christian.

Colorful costumes, live music and enthusiastic dances along with a soloist singing traditional Bosnian ballads entertained Soldiers during a two-hour performance.

Over the years, GKUD has performed in approximately 20 European countries as well as in the United States and Canada.



About the cover: 1st Sgt. Daniel Couture, TF Iron, assists a student during the Box of Knowledge program at the Brcko Library. Photo by Maj. Jarrod Krull, TFE PAO.

# Passing of the colors

## Multinational Battle Group celebrates command transition

Story by **Nedima Hazdiibrisevic**  
TFE PAO Media Specialist

**C**AMP DOBOJ, BiH — The New Year brought a command transition in the Multinational Battle Group made up of Polish, Portuguese and Slovenian soldiers, headquartered here. The Jan. 5, transfer of authority ceremony marked the passing of colors from the outgoing commander, Col. Luis Villa de Brito, who will return to Portugal as the commander of the 4th Cavalry Regiment, to the incoming commander, Col. Wojciech Kasprzycki, former chief of the Operational Division for the Polish Army Land Forces Command.

Brig. Gen. Richard Nash, commander of Multinational Brigade (North), used this opportunity to express his gratitude for the battle group's outstanding accomplishments during Villa de Brito's eight-month leadership which included about 4,000 patrols, two harvest operations, two training exercises and many local community projects.

"I am pleased to be here to recognize these dedicated soldiers who have done so much to ensure a safe and secure environment," said Nash.

Nash also awarded Villa de Brito the NATO Non-Article 5 Medal and the Minnesota Medal for Merit during the ceremony.

In his final address, Villa de Brito reflected on the group's mission under his command and thanked his soldiers for their exceptional performance. He also showed appreciation to the commanders of all the task forces and units in the MNB (N) area of responsibility for their tremendous cooperation.

"It was a genuine multinational environment that allowed me to

consider all of you not only as Soldiers but also as friends," Villa de Brito said. "Thank you all."

While bidding a farewell to Villa de Brito, Nash welcomed the incoming commander to the MNB (N) team.

"Col. Kasprzycki possesses a wealth of leadership experience and a diverse background that has prepared him well to lead the battle group," he emphasized. "I have absolute trust and confidence in his abilities."

In his remarks, Kasprzycki praised the work of Villa de Brito, whom he presented with the Crest of the Polish General Staff during the ceremony, and pledged to work meticulously to build upon his merits. He also expressed his pride to have an opportunity to guide MNBG.

"With the passing of the flag, I will accept the responsibilities and with enormous respect I will uphold and strive to insure our motto: One Mission-One Team," highlighted Kasprzycki. "I will work in close cooperation with the international community, local authorities and armed forces to fulfill our mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina."



Photo by Master Sgt. Tim Peterson, TF Eagle PA

**Polish Army Col. Wojciesh Kasprzycki accepts the Multinational Battle Group colors from Brig. Gen. Richard Nash.**



Photo by Nedima Hadziibrisevic, TFE PAO Media Specialist

**Polish Army 1st Lt. Adam Parker leads the MNBG color guard during the ceremony. A Slovenian APC is in the background.**

# Making futures bright

## Task Force Iron Soldiers share more than language in Brcko

Story by Sgt. DeAnne Gilger  
135th MPAD  
and Maj. Jarrod Krull  
TF Eagle PAO

**B**RCKO, BiH - Most children would think being at school on a Saturday is punishment, but many Brcko children think differently. Soldiers from Task Force Iron at Camp McGovern have teamed with volunteer Brcko high school students to help teach local children how to read and speak English.

"We started with about 20 children in the program and now we've grown that group to about 70," said 1st Sgt. Dan Toivonen, describing the response to the program, known as "Box of Knowledge," which started as a community service project at the beginning of their deployment.

Every Saturday, Soldiers from TF Iron volunteer their time to read to a roomful of children at the Brcko Public Library, as a continuation of the program that started just prior to Stabilization Force 13's departure. "The children are very enthusiastic. They come here on a volunteer basis and they really enjoy coming in on Saturdays to learn," said Toivonen.

Class begins each Saturday with a reading session where Soldiers read a story in English while the students follow along. Once complete, the children form

reading groups, each led by a volunteer Soldier acting as a coach. Within these groups, the children have the opportunity to read a portion of the story to the group, thus improving their English.

Not only is the reading program great for the children, it gives the Soldiers the opportunity to do something different from their daily routines. For

example, Spc. Greta Weiss, a medic and Carleton College, Northfield,



Submitted photo

The reading room at the Brcko Library is filled to capacity each Saturday when TF Iron Soldiers come out to conduct the Box of Knowledge program.





Minn., senior pursuing a degree in German language, not only brought her expertise in learning a foreign language to the classroom, but also her excitement for working with children.

“This is a great opportunity to meet and interact with the kids, to help them learn a skill they can use in the future and to just have a lot of fun,” said Weiss. “This program is something I’ll definitely remember.”

Bojana Lugonja, one of the high school volunteers, stressed the importance of this

program and her appreciation for TF Iron’s volunteer efforts.

“It’s very important to hear English, so the kids can hear how Americans talk and hear their accent,” she said.

Lugonja, a high school senior, and 22 other Brcko high school students recently took part in the Academic Year in the U.S.A. program, a premiere youth-exchange

program that gives high school students the opportunity to study English in the United States. One condition of the program is that participants must also take part in local community service projects

*“This is a great opportunity to interact with the kids. This program is something I’ll definitely remember.”*

**-Spc. Greta Weiss**

prior to, and upon returning, from the States.

Having spent six months in Phoenix, Ariz., last year, Lugonja is now into her second semester of volunteering at her local library.

“Everyone appreciates this program: the kids, their parents and their school teachers,” she said.

In addition to providing the opportunity to learn English, the Soldiers also distribute school supplies such as paper, pencils, erasers and crayons as well as educational materials that have been donated by family readiness groups, church groups and individual friends and family members back home.

To close each Saturday’s reading lesson, the children break into a boisterous round of singing, ‘If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands...’ accompanied by everyone in the classroom clapping and thunderously stomping.

This conclusion is only fitting. After all, through building new relationships, everyone walks away with something to be happy about – even if it’s being in school on Saturday.



Photo by Maj. Jarrod Krull, TF Eagle PAO

**Two Brcko students practice their English writing skills during the group session of the class. The weekly program has grown from 20 students to more than 70.**



**1st Sgt. Dan Toivonen coaches a student during the group reading assignment at the Brcko Library. Toivonen heads the program which aims to help local children learn to read and speak English.**

Photo by Maj. Jarrod Krull, TF Eagle PAO

# American Library opens in Tuzla

## Engineers play major role in renovation



Photos by Sgt. Terrence Krchnavy, MNB (N) Engineers

**Maj. J.P. Moszer looks over the proposed site for the American Library at Tuzla University.**

**Story by Master Sgt. Edwin Holt**  
*135th MPAD*

**T**UZLA, BiH — The American Library at Tuzla University is undergoing a major expansion which started last October and will be completed this month.

Currently housed in a small area, the library will more than double its size, going from 550 square feet to about 1,725 square feet. A grand opening is scheduled for later this month.

The inside area of the building designated for the library will be 100 percent remodeled said Capt. Scott Rohweder, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 682nd Engineer Battalion. He serves as contract manager for the project. Rohweder's role has been as middleman between the United States Embassy and the local contractor. Assisting Rohweder with overseeing the project is Maj. J.P. Moszer.

Funding for the project comes through the U. S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is designed as a civil and military cooperative effort.

"This will be a win-win situation," said Moszer, whose engineer Soldiers will contribute time and effort to the project.

"The construction of the library and it's opening will provide jobs for the local community while allowing our Soldiers an opportunity to participate in something they can walk away from knowing they have made a mark in Bosnia," Moszer said.

A civilian construction company is in charge of removing the wooden beams and replacing the brick roof with a steel and glass skylight while Soldiers will utilize their military engineering

skills installing flooring and making bookshelves.

The American section of the Tuzla University Library first opened in 1997. Prior to renovation, the library was housed in a small attic area with shelving for about 3,500 books out of approximately 5,000 books in English that are available.

Moszer said he hopes the library will be a nice place for the Bosnian people to go and have access to American literature. When completed, the library will also feature an Internet café.



**Exposed beams held up the roof during part of the renovation. They later gave way to enclosed beams and a skylight.**



**Nearing completion, the same area stands ready for shelving under a new skylight. The library will open this month.**

# Peaceful and beautiful

## Bearcats enjoy serving on Hilltop 1326

Story by Spc. Jeremiah Wickenhauser  
135th MPAD

For the Task Force Bearcat Soldiers stationed at hilltop 1326, a duty station doesn't get any better.

"It is very peaceful up here, we don't get bothered that much and the view is the best," said Pfc. Brandon Haugen.

The small base is on the peak of the highest hill in the area and provides a fantastic view. On a clear day, the view extends for miles in every direction.

Secluded from the rest of their company, second squad of the task force's fourth platoon was among the squads that were stationed at the post. They were replaced by fellow company Soldiers last December. The squad worked eight-hour shifts

and manned the base's two towers 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week. The squad also ran one humvee patrol weekly through the local area.

Sgt. Chad Lundsten said the isolation didn't bother him. "We have Internet, TV and we all share movies. I stay busy enough not to get bored," he added.

The hilltop has most of the same

conveniences that can be found on Eagle Base including Internet access, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation program room complete with pool table, big screen TV and a weight room with different machines and free weights.

Sgt. William Handt commented, "I wish I could stay up here. Everything is so close. The base has the

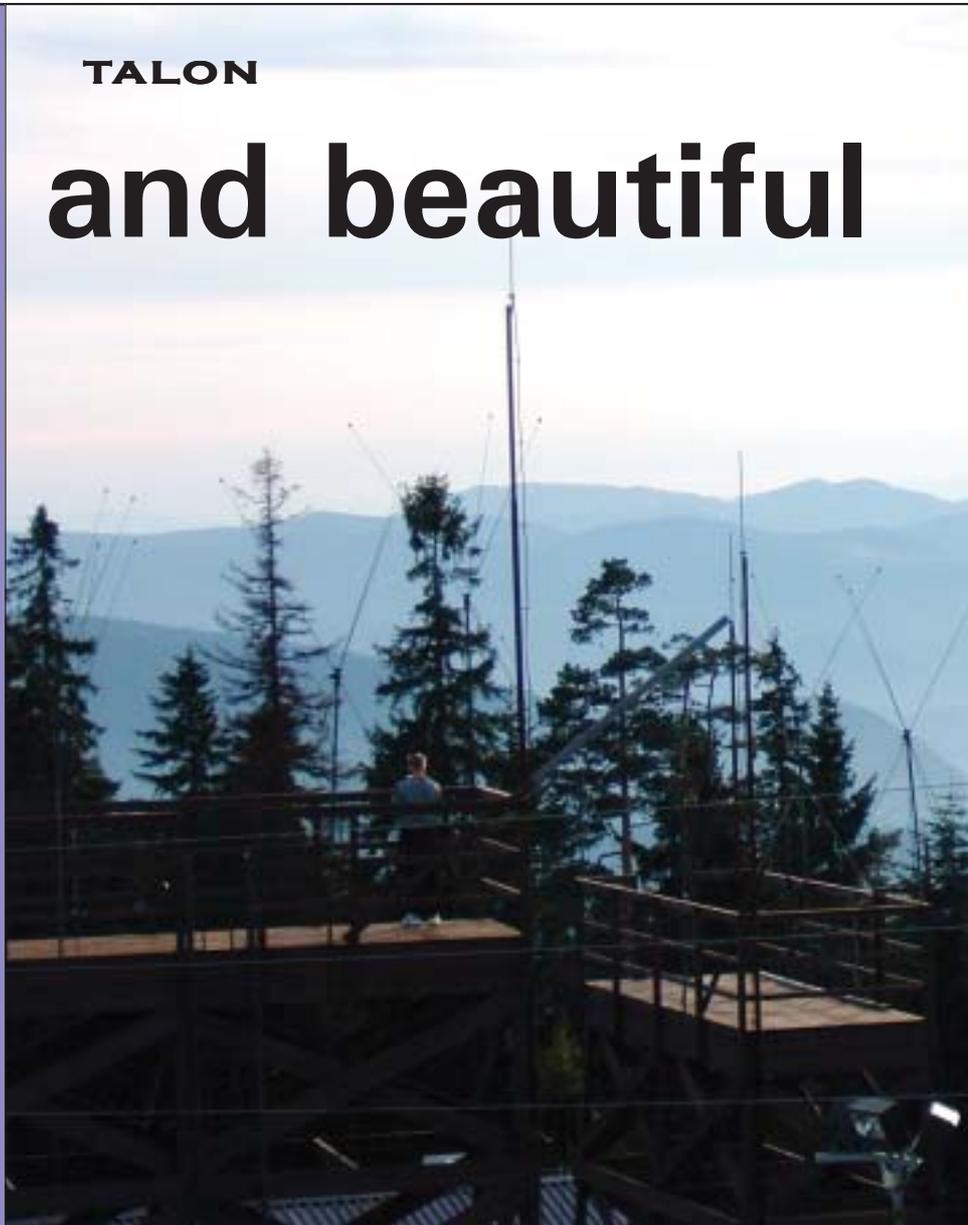
length of Forward Operating Base Conner but about one third of the width."

*"I wish I could stay up here. Everything is so close."*

– Sgt. William Handt

"We go down to Eagle Base once a week like hillbillies to pick up supplies,"

joked Sgt. Terry Lundon. But Handt does dislike the hilltop for one reason, "The only thing I miss about Eagle Base is being able to see new movies."



Submitted photo

This is a view from one of the towers on Hilltop 1326. Pfc. Brandon Haugen, TF Bearcat said being stationed on the hilltop was very peaceful.



Submitted photo

Sgt. Chad Lundsten, TF Bearcat, provided security for a UH-60 Black Hawk on the hilltop's helipad.

 **In our sights** 



Submitted photo  
Brig. Gen. Richard Nash (center), commander of MNB (N) and members of the brigade staff recently participated in the destruction of harvested and excess munitions at the VR range.



Photo by Master Sgt. Edwin Holt, 135th MPAD

Staff Sgt. Ruben Trevino (left) and Staff Sgt. Romell Orbe, both of TF Renegade, unload an AH-64 Apache's 30mm gun during a live-fire exercise.



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

An elderly Bosnian woman carried firewood back to her house near Cosici as TF Bearcat soldiers carried out an Operation Active Harvest mission at her neighbors.



Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron

Staff Sgt. Christopher Vanmeter, TFME, interacts with a local Bosnian citizen at a MEDCAP Monday in Vucilovac.