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Task Force Iron 'On the way'

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Gutknecht: 'Task Force Eagle mighty fine peacekeeping force'

By Lt. Col. Kevin Gutknecht
TF Iron Commander

Soldiers of Task Force Eagle, we began this deployment as a group of diverse individuals. We were pulled from jobs, families and daily life. We trained to conduct a mission that was brand new to us. We were dropped into a country struggling to rise from the ashes of a terrible war. We spent the summer training for a winter mission in probably the hottest place in the United States and we moved clear across the country between training events like vagabond hobos.

We overcame adversity, and molded ourselves into a mighty fine peacekeeping Task Force. Eagle's Area of Operation is calm and stable,

and we are doing things because of the transition that no other rotation here has needed to do.

We are once again showing the world just how good the 34th Infantry Division is and what it can do. Yes, we've had some bumps along the way and there have been some surprises, yet through it all, we've remained flexible, steadfast, strong



Gutknecht

and resolute.

TF Eagle has a great deal to be proud of as its soldiers have been magnificent and the leadership top-notch. The soldiers of TF Iron are honored to be part of Stabilization Force 14 and make history with the Red Bulls.

ON THE WAY!!

Iron Soldiers professional, dedicated

By Command Sgt. Maj.
Erick Keppeler
TF Iron CSM

To all Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 194th Armor Task Force Iron; it has been my distinct pleasure and privilege to serve with all of the fine Soldiers from the 34th Infantry Division and Task Force Iron.

Rarely, in a leader's career in the National Guard is there a chance to serve with such professional and dedicated Soldiers.

I will remember fondly, the many

obstacles that everyone has overcome. There were many long nights, difficult decisions and stressful moments during the whole deployment process. Yet, everyone came together and made it happen despite those hardships.

I look to the future and will remember with pride, all of the accomplishments that you each have made. I, without a second's hesitation, would again deploy

anywhere, any time and any place with this Division. I will cherish this time with you, always. These are high times. I salute you all.



Keppeler



About the cover: A VRS tank crushes weapons in a destruction ceremony in Bijeljina. Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron PAO.

A special thanks to 1st Lt. Julieanne Gertken, Sgt. Brian Taylor and Capt. Eduardo Suarez for their contributions to this publication.

Success of SFOR's Mission reason to 'cold base' Camp McGovern

By 1st Lt. Kevin Schooler
TF Iron Asst. S2

There was a peaceful silence across Camp McGovern one late night as a blanket of fresh snow fell on this northern outpost of the Stabilization Force's American brigade. It was a silence that will return later this month as the camp closes its gates one final time before the post is "cold based." The decision to "cold base" Camp McGovern was made possible by the success of the SFOR mission in creating a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Constructed in 1996 on the site of a former government cooperative hog farm southwest of Brcko, Camp McGovern was named in honor of one of America's many heroes, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient 1st Lt. Robert M. McGovern. McGovern was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions at Kamyangjani while serving with the 1st Cavalry Division during the Korean War. Another part of the post is also named in honor of a fallen Soldier. In autumn 2003, the Camp McGovern motor pool was named in honor of Spc. Blake C. Kelly. Kelly died in a vehicle accident during SFOR 13 while serving with 1st Battalion, 167th Cavalry, 35th Infantry Division, Nebraska National Guard.

Camp McGovern has been vital to SFOR's success in this region due to its location. Prior to the 1992-95 war, Brcko was the largest Bosnian city along the Sava River to have a



Photo courtesy Department of Defense weblink

IFOR crossing the Sava River near Brcko in November, 1996.

majority Muslim population. The Bosnian Serbs wanted to claim the city for themselves because it is an important link between the eastern and western parts of the present day Republic of Srpska. Due to the fact that the present Brcko District was of strategic importance to both Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims during the war, it was the site of some of the war's fiercest fighting. At one time there were more than 50,000 troops engaged in combat in and around Brcko. As a result of an artillery offensive in the spring of 1992, the Bosnian Serbs took Brcko and held it until the conclusion of the war.

The city continued to be a major sticking point during negotiations leading up to the Dayton Peace Accords. In order to reach an agreement on the Accords, it was decided that the status of Brcko would be resolved by international arbitration within the following year.

American forces were soon placed in the midst of the three former

warring factions at this piece of key terrain. To see evidence of the fighting, a Soldier on one of the early rotations need not look any further than the building that was then used as the Tactical Operations Center. The exterior of the "Old TOC," located just east of the main gate, is pock marked with damage inflicted by small arms and crew-served weapons fire.

After the three former warring factions could not come to an agreement on the status of Brcko, the International Community announced in 1999, that the Brcko District would be neutral territory and not part of either the Bosnian Federation or the Republic of Srpska. The presence of American forces at Camp McGovern have been responsible for maintaining this arrangement ever since. One can only hope that the peaceful silence observed here last week would win out over the pock marked Old TOC even after those forces have departed.



Life as a Task Force Iron

Story and photos by
Sgt. Brian Taylor
TF Iron PAO

Task Force Iron Soldiers were spread out between three of the U.S. bases here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The majority of the task force was located at Camp McGovern outside of Brcko. TF Iron Soldiers are also stationed at Forward Operating Base Morgan and Eagle Base where they worked diligently to maintain the high standards and exceptional reputation that TF Iron had strongly upheld since being activated more than eight months ago. The life of an Iron Soldier was an eventful one filled with humvee patrols, Ready Reaction

Force missions, and day-to-day tasks. Most mornings you were bound to see Soldiers preparing their daily missions. Soldiers rallied at "Hollywood and Vine", an intersection where they did their Pre-Combat Inspections and mounted up to roll out. Soldiers understood that the mission came first, but when the missions were finished, they knew how to have a good time. From comedians to the Washington Redskin cheerleaders, punk rock to poker night, there was never a dull moment at

Camp McGovern. Because Soldiers at FOB Morgan are awaiting a multipurpose building, some drove to McGovern on the evenings when MWR events take place.

1st Lt. Scott Davis, who is stationed at FOB Morgan, said the MWR activities are a great stress reliever and motivator for the Soldiers.

"We've enjoyed the sports, when operationally able to attend, because it gives the Soldiers a time to relax, play hard and win medals," he said.

MWR, which has been responsible for coordinating the Soldiers' after-hours activities to boost morale, made the stay in Bosnia much more



n Soldier

enjoyable. Events included poker nights, 5 kilometer fun runs, and sumo smack downs. Without a doubt, every night, you could walk into the ZOS

entertainment facility and there was at least one Soldier playing Halo on the X-Box. The weight room was also a very popular place for Task Force Iron Soldiers.

While some Soldiers on the deployment furthered their civilian educations through online classes and weekend seminars; some others furthered their military educations by completing correspondence courses and other military education options.

Cpl. Andrew Cumings took 12 college credits online while deployed, including a German

course offered by the University of Maryland. "Online classes take more time-and discipline, but it has been nice because it is at your own pace

and teachers are more flexible when you are deployed," said Cumings. "And of course the state pays for it."

Some junior officers of Task Force Iron have completed the required correspondence courses to attend Advanced Officer

School.

1st Lt. Chris Kirchoff enrolled in the Armor Captain's Career Course, a three-phase course. He completed the Phase One Correspondence course before deployment.

Kirchoff and four fellow Soldiers from Multinational Brigade (North) enrolled in Phase Two while deployed. Phase Two is an online interactive classroom course. It normally is one

weekend a month for six months.

The course for deployed Soldiers started in November and will end in May. Classes were held at Camp McGovern Distance Learning Center and will move to Eagle Base in March.

"It is also nice to do the course on the Army's time as opposed to the students who are not deployed who have to give up one weekend a month to participate in the class," Kirchoff said.

Regardless of what the role of a TF Iron Soldier, they were all motivated and dedicated to getting home safely. Soldiers have participated in many different activities while they were here.

Whether it has been at McGovern, Morgan, or the former Camp Cody, Soldiers completed their missions above and beyond the standard.

Many built friendships here that will last a lifetime; most have sacrificed something to be here and are happy to be going home to their family, friends, and civilian lifestyles.

"We've enjoyed the sports, when operationally able to attend, because it gives the Soldiers a time to relax, play hard and win medals."

- 1st Lt. Scott Davis



Iron Soldiers participated in many operations

By 1st Lt. Julieanne Gertken
TF Iron PAO

Task Force Iron soldiers had the opportunity to participate in many operations during their deployment here. Live fire at the Glamoc Range, conducting joint patrols, and Active Harvest Operations are just a few of the many activities that have been a success to its peacekeeping mission.

From Nov. 16-21, 2003, approximately a third of Task Force Iron traveled to the western edge of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to conduct weapons firing at the Glamoc Range.

Glamoc is the only range in Bosnia where Soldiers can fire heavy weapons at full distance targets. Iron's gunners and assistant gunners were able to pump approximately



Photos by Capt. Jon Dotterer, TF Iron

TF Iron Soldiers fire .50-caliber machine guns from their armored humvees on the Glamoc Range.

50,000 rounds of M249 Squad Automatic Weapon and M2 .50-cal machine gun ammunition down range during the event. The task force also trained with soldiers from the Hungarian Army and fired Soviet-made weapons.

"The Combined Live Fire Exercise with the Hungarians at Glamoc Range was an excellent opportunity for our soldiers to see how other nations

conduct training," said Staff Sgt. Michael Olson, "and it gave us a chance to fire multiple weapon systems such as the AK-47, .50-caliber sniper rifle, and the main gun of a BTR 80 just to name a few."

TF Iron had the rare opportunity to work with soldiers from many different militaries during the deployment. The task force conducted more than 40 joint patrols with

soldiers from the Italian carabinieri, the Hungarian Army, the Polish Army, the Portuguese Army, the British Army and an Italian Marine Regiment.

"We were pleasantly surprised and encouraged by these soldiers' skill and professionalism,"

said Maj. Gary Mundfrom, task force S3. Due to language barriers and different methods of operating TF Iron Soldiers had to work harder than usual in order to accomplish the mission, he added.

Mundfrom said his Soldiers rose to the

challenge. "Each patrol was a success in which we shared experiences, shared tactics and learned about each other's culture," he said.

Iron conducted a very successful Operation Active Harvest in December 2003. Soldiers went door to door with local police and local military representatives asking citizens if they had any banned weapons or munitions that they wanted to turn in under amnesty. The response was tremendous due to the respect and courtesy our Soldiers showed to the local Bosnian citizens. In fact, several communities asked task force Soldiers to come and do harvests in their areas because of the professional way that the Soldiers conducted themselves. Operations like this was one of the greatest contributions to a more safe and secure Bosnia because every item collected could mean one less person killed or injured.



Sgt. Paul Lussier fires a AK-47 Machine Gun at the Glamoc Range.

Special service

McGovern Chapel celebrates eight years of ministry

By Maj. Grant Speece
TF Iron Chaplain

A special service celebrated Camp McGovern's Iron Chapel the first Sunday of February. The service recognized eight years of ministry, which has taken place during the time that Camp McGovern has been in existence. The names of chaplains and chaplains' assistants who have served the camp were read. During the service, a letter of greeting from the Task Force Eagle Command Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Alan Johnson was read.

Prayers were said thanking God for the Soldiers who have assisted

with services through the years. Certificates of Appreciation were given to the musicians who assisted at the chapel during the present rotation.

The service concluded with protestant communion being served for the very last time. One final service was held on Sunday, the last Sunday Task Force Iron was at Camp McGovern.

Chaplain services also were held at the other task force's camps, Forward Operating Base Morgan and Camp Cody, during the deployment. They were slated for Sundays, but often switched to Mondays or Tuesdays due to operational taskings.

1st Lt. Kelly Johnson of FOB Morgan said this flexibility was

greatly appreciated.

"To have the church

services available and having the time to reflect and put things back into perspective was a much needed break at times," he said.

"Having these services meant having that little piece of home away from home."

The McGovern Chapel also allowed 1st Lts. Conrad Ross and Bruce Kelii to take something home with them they couldn't otherwise, 14 songs they recorded.

Many times, these two officers spent hours playing everything from rock to reggae in the chapel.

"Now we are taking

songs home with us from Bosnia," said Kelii, "We

"To have the church services available and having the time to reflect and put things back into perspective was a much needed break at times."

– 1st Lt. Kelly Johnson

never would have had the opportunity to do this otherwise."

In the civilian world, church closings are somber occasions. Usually, it means not enough young people are interested in being a part

of the congregation. Here, a church closing is a positive event. This means Bosnia is peaceful; a place that no longer has a strong need for our Soldiers to remain here.

So we celebrate and look forward to the joyful reunions that will soon take place between our Soldiers and their family and



Photo by Sgt. Bradley Gangstad, TF Iron

Brothers Staff Sgt. Dean Esala and Sgt. Ryan Esala pose near the Camp McGovern Chapel.



Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron

Chaplain (Maj.) Grant Speece held the final worship service at Camp McGovern's Iron Chapel Feb. 1.

'On the Way'

Task Force Iron



Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron PAO

Sgt. Cale Nelson (left) and Sgt. Peter Rosholt team up to do paperwork required to turn in a computer monitor.



Photo by 1st Lt. Julieanne Gertken, TF Iron PAO

TF Iron Command Sgt. Maj. Erick Keppeler (center) and commander Lt. Col. Kevin Gutknecht case the TF colors during the Camp McGovern closing ceremony Sunday.



Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron PAO

Sgt. Shane Cunningham packs his duffel bag in preparation for redeployment.

Camp McGovern
1996 to 2004