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TALON



TF Bearcat 'King of the hill'

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NCO, Soldier of the Rotation

Two TF Bearcat Soldiers decades apart

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TALON

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Bearcats exceed standards

By Lt. Col. Gary Olson
TF Bearcat Commander

As we started this mission preparation over a year ago, my mission statement was pretty simple, “What have you, as a Bearcat Soldier, done today to help the lives of the people in Bosnia?” I believe we have contributed a great deal to the Bosnians and have exceeded the standards needed as a member of the NATO Peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Olson

As we prepared for this mission it was clear that the training was focused at times on the worst-case scenarios. Training like that gave us the confidence to succeed in any situation.

The first group of people we need to thank is our families. Without their support and steadfast love, we could not have been successful. You are the unsung heroes of this deployment and all the Soldiers in the Bearcat Battalion salute you! You are true American patriots.

The second group of people we need to thank is the civilian employers. I know that having your employees gone for this long has had an economic impact on you. Through it all, you have been a steadfast supporter of your employees and our Soldiers. Please welcome them back to your businesses. They have a wealth of knowledge and have had a once in a lifetime experience.

Experience that can have a positive

impact on the business.

To the Soldiers of the battalion. Thank you for your duty and your professionalism and dedication in accomplishing this mission here in Bosnia. The battalion has been very busy over the past year and a half. We have prepared and deployed almost 65 percent of the battalion in worldwide operations while at the same time maintaining a sound capability to respond in the event the Governor called, needing our help with a state emergency. Through it all, we have remained focused on our Soldiers, their families and always

conscious of the impact this deployment is having on the local employers.

I am extremely proud and very lucky to be associated with such a fine organization as the Bearcats. Through all the requirements, training, waiting, and mission execution everyone has responded with a dedication and professionalism that would make any organization envious. We have completed a lot and have a lot left to do.

From the Soldiers here in Bosnia to the ones now in Kosovo to the rear operations Soldiers back in Minnesota, all have carried out their duties in a magnificent manner reminiscent of the 2nd Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War.

I look forward to seeing all of you back at home, Bearcats, King of the Hill!



About the cover: TF Bearcat Commander Lt. Col. Gary Olson and Command Sgt. Maj Kelly M. Booge case the battalion's colors in a ceremony held Feb. 14 at Eagle Base. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

Deployment taught Soldiers lessons

By Command Sgt. Maj.
Kelly M. Booge

TF Bearcat

This deployment was an opportunity for our Soldiers to grow as human beings and as Soldiers. Though there were no bullets flying, this was a dangerous, real-world mission in which the junior leaders were in control on the ground. The decisions made by the junior leaders not only affected the lives of our Soldiers but also had an impact on the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I saw Soldiers affecting the lives around them by living the standards set forth in the "Army Values."

For many young men, this was a chance for them to see another part of

the world while doing the duty they were called to do.

For others it was only that sense of duty that brought them here. Whatever the reason I feel the Soldiers were proud to serve here and had a real feeling of accomplishment for what they have done in Bosnia. Although separated from their loved ones I sense that the loneliness was buffered by the ability to help people in BiH who are truly in need.

For myself, I have a feeling of eagerness to return home to my family



Booge

and friends intermingled with the desire to stay here and further affect change in the lives of the people of BiH that has been evident during our time here.

This is a beautiful country and with some economic growth and all people working together it could be a beautiful place for all to live. The downsizing of the NATO forces speaks well of the job our Soldiers, and those of the Multinational Brigade (North) have done. It also shows that there seems to be some cooperation between the local governments and the local police to do what is needed to further peace and build a stronger nation.

Special honors

TF Bearcat NCO of Rotation and Soldier of Rotation named

By Capt. Wade Bastian

TF Bearcat

A Task Force Bearcat staff sergeant and a specialist will leave Bosnia and Herzegovina with special honors. Staff Sgt. Nathan Modeen was selected as the Task Force Bearcat Noncommissioned Officer and Spc. Brian Ness was named the Soldier of the Rotation.

Modeen was selected as the NCO of the Rotation from among 135 of his Bearcat NCO peers. Ness was selected as the Soldier of the Rotation from a field of more than 200 Soldiers.

Modeen is with Company B based in Crookston, Minn. Ness is with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Moorhead, Minn.

Modeen, who resides in Grand Forks, Minn., with his wife and two children, was selected because he ranked highest in Army knowledge, professionalism and all around

soldiering.

His first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Gary Metcalf, said Modeen turned two inexperienced team leaders into great NCOs.

"He did it by always leading by example and doing what is right no matter who is watching," Metcalf said.

Modeen said he thought paying attention while soldiering gave him the edge during the board process.

"Having the opportunity to work with so many quality NCOs in B Company and the battalion led to my success as Bearcat NCO of the rotation," said Modeen.

Ness' loyalty and dedication to the



Modeen



Ness



Minnesota Army National Guard, as exhibited by all of his actions and military conduct, were of the highest order and distinguished himself as the top-notch Soldier in the task force. Ness lives in Ladysmith, Wis.

Ness' platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class James Hjelmstad noted that Ness joined the Guard only 17 months ago and has been on Active Duty for the entire time from basic training to this deployment. Ness also volunteered to stay with the battalion's Company B to support the end of the rotation.

"He has performed above his peers in all facets of his work," Hjelmstad said.

Sgt. Chad Imker, TF Iron, was named as the NCO of the Rotation.

Bearcats occupy Camp Clark

Camp named in honor of battalion's Civil War lineage

By Capt. Wade Bastian
TF Bearcat

Task Force Bearcat Soldiers spent most of their deployment with Eagle Base or Forward Operating Base Connor as their starting point and rendezvous point for patrols.

On Dec. 15, the Bearcats occupied the recently opened Camp Clark.

Camp Clark is named for Civil War Medal of Honor Recipient Cpl. William A. Clark, Company H, 2nd Minnesota Infantry.

Clark was among a 15-Soldier detachment who heroically defended a wagon train attack from 125 Confederate Soldiers at Nolinsville, Tenn., Feb. 15, 1863. The detachment repulsed the attack and saved the

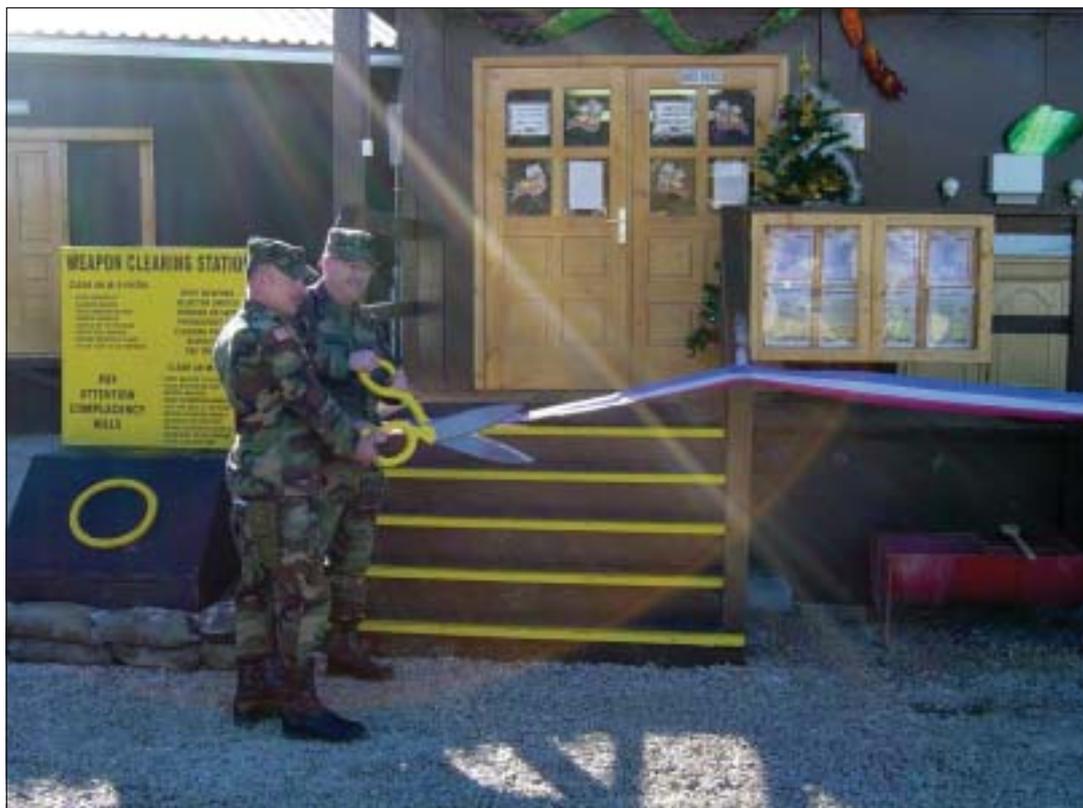


Photo by Maj. Jody Gunlock, TF Bearcat

1st Sgt. Daniel Essig (left) and former ASG Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Spridgen cut the ribbon to officially open Camp Clark.

train.

Judson Bishop's book "The Story of a Regiment" described the battle: "The cavalry charged down upon them firing their carbines and yelling, 'Surrender you damned Yanks.' Our

boys did not think it necessary to surrender but commenced firing in return with deliberate aim, emptying a saddle with almost every shot, and the astonished cavalry soon quit yelling and withdrew out of range for consultation, then decided that they had enough of the 'damned Yanks' and disappeared altogether."

The 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry "Bearcat" name also originated during the Civil War on the battlefield. It originated during a hand-to-hand combat engagement at a fence in the first decisive Union victory at the Battle of Mill Springs, Ky., a Confederate youth was physically dragged over the fence and taken prisoner. To his captors, the boy protested and declared that the Yankees fought like "Bearcats."



A Bearcat is a mythical beast, part bear and part cat. It is a cross between the power and ferocity of a bear and the cunning and quickness of a cat.

After the battle, the Second Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteer Infantry became known as the Bearcat Regiment. The regiment was organized July 22, 1861.



This painting depicts hand-to-hand combat at a fence in the first decisive Union victory at the Battle of Mill Springs, Ky. After this battle, the 2nd Minnesota became known as the Bearcat Regiment.



Submitted photo

Sun sets on FOB Connor

TF Bearcat Soldiers left FOB Connor near the end of the rotation. The small outpost was located near Srebrenica.

Giving children stuffed animals special for officer

By 1st Lt. Richard Brummond
TF Bearcat

The children of Bosnia, who were born after the 1992-95 civil war ended, still unfortunately must live in the war's aftermath.

They do not have all of the opportunities we enjoy in the United States. Growing up in this type of environment facilitates an appreciation for what ever you do have.

Seeing preschoolers receiving stuffed animals in the tiny village of Lukavac, truly warmed my heart. The stuffed animals were donated and shipped from a Girl Scout in Washington. If her intention of sending the stuffed animals was to brighten the life of a child here in Bosnia, she was

100 percent successful.

Smiles on the children's faces as they hugged a brand new stuffed animal nestled under their chin, was more than enough evidence to prove this to me.

Each stuffed animal had a green round tag that read: "To the Children of Bosnia from the Children of America and the U. S. Army."

Many Bosnian school children received stuffed animals from TF Eagle Soldiers during the deployment.



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

Bearcat Chaplain's team provide support near and far

By Chaplain (Capt.)
Daniel Pulju
TF Bearcat Chaplain

Sgt. Chad Byram and I traveled more than 6,000 miles to provide spiritual support to Bearcat Soldiers spread all over our Area of Operation.

The Soldiers were in places like Forward Operating Base Connor and Hilltop 1326, and some moved to Camp Clark halfway through the rotation. We also led two weekly worship services at Eagle Base.

We especially enjoyed the Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. I think it gave us another link to home and family and tradition.

We provided worship services, Bible study and support during emergencies. We also assisted in other areas—preparation for family reunions, stress control, and suicide prevention.

If we measured spiritual vitality primarily by service attendance, we would probably be disappointed. I have been encouraged, and sometimes surprised, by the faith that is alive in more Soldiers than you can imagine. Most of the time it is the not-much-for-talking-but-action-focused faith. That's refreshing.

I hated the phone calls in the middle of the night, not because I was awakened, but

because it usually meant that one of our Soldiers was receiving bad news.

I loved the occasional conversation that meandered between the casual and the profound. You would be surprised at the depth of some of these young men.

I feel I have the best job of anyone in the entire task force. I get to interact with people I like every day, I get to do what I love and I get to be involved with significant things— from

"I feel I have the best job of anyone in the entire task force."

– Chaplain (Capt.)
Daniel Pulju



Submitted photo

TF Bearcat Chaplain (Capt.) Daniel Pulju and his assistant Sgt. Chad Byram pose on a Bosnia hillside.

today to eternity.

I can rely on Byram to get us where we need to be,

when we need to be there and with the right stuff.

Byram has shown terrific commitment to this battalion. He doesn't like the spotlight. He has faithfully

served in the 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry for 12 years.

He always is there. It seems like he knows everyone. He knows how to accomplish what we need. He's even turned down promotions in order to remain a Bearcat.

I'm proud to serve with this battalion. I can't think of another group with whom I would rather serve. The level of commitment to country, duty, family and each other is inspiring.

I love these guys.



Two TF Bearcat Soldiers decades apart



Photo by Spc. Gordon Bergh, TF Bearcat

TF Bearcat's oldest Soldier, Staff Sgt. Richard Anderson, Co. B, poses for a picture while on patrol recently near Eagle Base.

By Master Sgt. Edwin Holt
135th MPAD

Every task force has one of each and for Task Force Bearcat the honor goes to two Soldiers who up to now, didn't really know each other.

That changed this week as Spc. Jesse Wiemer, 19, and Staff Sgt. Richard Anderson, 52, were given the respective titles of youngest and oldest Bearcat Soldiers.

Wiemer is an operations assistant for Headquarters Operations section while Anderson is a vehicle leader for Company B and out on patrol almost every day.

Wiemer is in good company being among a group of younger Soldiers deployed as part of TF Bearcat.

"I was surprised I was youngest," Wiemer said. "There are quite a few Soldiers around my age in the task force. I think we are all pretty close to the same age."

It is a little different for Anderson who can count on one hand the number of Soldiers close to his age in the task force.

Anderson began his military career in 1970 when he was drafted into the Army. He spent a tour in Vietnam

with the 1st Cavalry Division and when his duty was done, left military service until joining the Army National Guard in February, 1985. The 21-year veteran has been in ever since.

The military climate has

changed dramatically since the Vietnam War, Anderson said.

"The reason I didn't stay in the Army full-time was because of all the negative things going on at the time," Anderson said.

After spending time out of the military, Anderson said he wanted to rejoin the Army through the Guard as a way of fulfilling a desire to make the military a career.

Wiemer said he joined as soon as he could and had no qualms about the prospect of being deployed.

"I did a delayed entry when I was 17 and a junior in high school," Wiemer said. "I went to drill my senior year and then did basic and advanced individual training the following summer."

"Before I had even gone to basic, I learned about the possibility of this mission," Wiemer said.

"I had no problem with that. It's why I

joined, to deploy and do things," he added.

Anderson said he also did not mind being deployed.

"It's what we need to be prepared to do," Anderson said.

One thing is different for these two Bearcat soldiers. While Wiemer, almost a three-year veteran, is just beginning his military career, Anderson just passed his reenlistment date this month.

"I have 90 days to decide whether or not to reenlist," Anderson said. "Personally, I am ready to be deployed again to Iraq, Afghanistan or where ever, but it isn't my decision alone."

Anderson said he will sort all that out with his wife Therese after he returns home.

Both Soldiers said they are pleased to be part of TF Bearcat and Operation Joint Forge.

Anderson summed it up best when he said, "I hope everyone takes some humbleness back from this deployment. When we have problems back home, just remember the problems people here deal with each day."

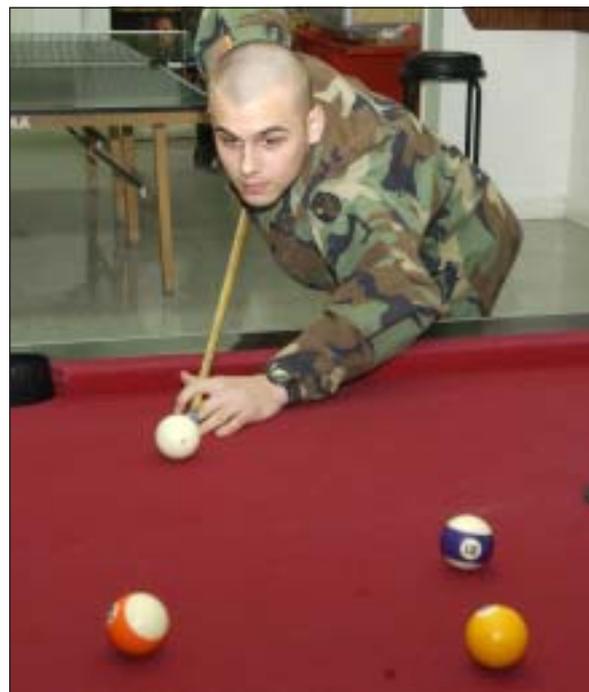


Photo by Master Sgt. Edwin Holt, 135th MPAD

Spc. Jesse Wiemer, youngest Bearcat, stops for a round of pool at Alma's Juice Bar.

Bearcat scenes



Photo by Capt. Wade Bastian, TF Bearcat

Maj. Jody Gunlock read the Reenlistment Oath to Sgt. Clayton Omberg on Eagle Base.

Bearcat Command Sgt. Maj Kelly Booge (left) and Sgt. 1st Class John Biby fold a flag after it was flown over Hill-top 1326 as Spc. Kurt Pulczynski and Sgt. Terrance Lunden salute.



Photo by Capt. Wade Bastian, TF Bearcat

Since Sept. 23, 2003, TF Bearcat has driven almost 500,000 miles and conducted over 2,800 patrols.



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

Bearcat facts

- Collected more than 29.5 tons of hand grenades, small arms ammunition, rifles, land mines and other miscellaneous weapons from Operation Active Harvests.
- Soldiers' family members and local communities in Minnesota provided aid to rebuild schools and soccer fields They also provided school supplies and clothes to needy families.
- As of Feb. 16, the battalion has collected and distributed more than \$50,000 in humanitarian aid from Minnesota communities.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ambrose Degidio, TF Bearcat

The TF Bearcat flag football team which won the Eagle Base championship. They are: front row, from left, Spc. Cory Simondet, Capt. Wade Bastian, Sgt. 1st Class Mitch Hellkamp, Spc. Thomas Sauvageau; back row, 2nd Lt. Daniel Cunningham, 2nd Lt. Keith Nelson, Sgt. Quincy Lofberg, Sgt. Chad Byram, 1st Sgt. Ricky Cameron and Sgt. 1st Class Jim Hjelmstad.

