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TALON

Air extraction an invaluable asset

Inside this issue:

Soldiers cut loose at monster's ball
Boot scootin' good time with Kevin Banford

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TALON

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Word on the street...

"What do you think about the food in the dining facilities since you arrived in Bosnia?"

Capt. Marie de Jong
Liaison Officer
Dutch Air Force

"I miss the bread and food from back home in Holland, but the the food here tastes good."

Maj. Diego Gonzalez
Flight Surgeon
HHC, 28th Inf. Div.

"The food is good. It provides all nutrients that our soldiers need."

Sgt. John Bates
Administrative Assistant
HHC, 28th Inf. Div.

"I think the variety is great and I like the way they measure the calories — it's great for maintaining physical fitness."

Sgt. 1st Class
John Thompson
Chaplain's Assistant NCOIC
ASG

"We have the best chow halls in Bosnia."

Sgt. Cody Hutchinson
Airframe Structure Repair
1-183rd Avn. Bn.

"I like the food in the chow halls, but a little more variety would be nice."

Spc. Sara Mercinko
Video - Teleconferencing Operator
HHC, 28th Inf. Div.

"It's the same thing every day. It probably wouldn't be so bad if they didn't start our rotation off with a variety of tasteful food."

About the covers: **Front,** Task Force Eagle medics practice air extractions in the event of an emergency. *Photo by Maj. John Dowling* **Back**, A Turkish soldier welds a railing as his unit finishes building a bridge located near the village of Zavidovici, Bosnia. *Photo by Spc. Jessica Abner*

Turkish soldiers teach students a lesson — before landmines do

Story and photos by
Spc. Jessica Abner

Assistant editor, 354th MPAD

ZAVIDOVICI, Bosnia — Do you remember classes given to you or your children on the dangers of drugs, talking to strangers, or crossing the road without looking both ways? The lessons learned during those times play an important role and may potentially save young lives. As a result of the war, children of Bosnia and Herzegovina have to cope with those dangers as well as the possibility of losing their lives to deadly landmines.

An Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from the Turkish Battalion recently conducted awareness classes in the Zavidovici Second Primary School to educate students about this dangerous legacy left over from the three-and-a-half year war.

One classroom in a school of approximately 970 students is filled to capacity with first graders eagerly awaiting the lesson from their visitors. Standing in front of the class, 1st Lt. Ramazan Demirci, EOD officer, Turkish battalion, prepared to show the children the presentation about the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Derimici used several visual aids to help the children identify potential threats from landmines and minefields. Some common aids are a red, upside down triangle with "mine" printed on it or even a pile of rocks; both indicate mines may be in the area. He also explained to the children what to do if they find a mine and what different mines look like.

The children were actively involved and answered Demirci's questions pertaining to mine awareness. As the presentation continued, the children gasped and awed at the site of pictures and illustrations of various land mines. One student could barely sit in his seat when he knew the answers to questions or when he could correctly identify signs indicating a mine.

Demirci discussed ways explosives are masked to look like ordinary products. For example, he showed the children a VHS tape with a simulated explosive hidden inside. Other items containing simulated explosives included soda cans, books and radios.

According to Demirici, it is essential for children to be knowledgeable about the hazards of mines. "The class is important because the children should be aware of the dangers. During the war there were about 18 million known mines and today there are still about seven million unrecorded mines," said Demirici. "When people are working outside, they should be very careful because of the threat of mines."

A first grader at Zavidovici's Second Primary School participates in the mine awareness discussion.

Because the countryside is littered with deadly landmines and other unexploded ordnance, the school is mandated to incorporate a mine awareness course in their education program but welcomes extra classes given by soldiers of Multinational Division (North). The director of Zavidovi Second Primary school, Nezin Starcevic, believes in the benefits of the mine awareness classes and witnesses the results.

"The classes have very useful results. The children spread the information they receive to their families so the families are learning about bombs and explosives as well," said Starcevic. "Also, I have not seen any accidents involving the students at this school. If the students had not received the mine awareness classes, they might not have been so fortunate."

The Turkish EOD unit's mine awareness class is designed to prevent potential accidents or deaths in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the most heavily mined countries in the world.

While children in the United States may receive classes about the dangers of drinking, drugs, or smoking, and may not worry about landmines – children here are given a fighting chance for their futures due to classes by EOD soldiers.

During a mine awareness class, 1st Lt. Ramazan Demirci, EOD officer, Turkish Bn., shows students items with simulated explosives hidden within its contents.

Country band two-steps into Bosnia

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster

Editor, 354th MPAD

Sgt. Gregory Herring, terrain analyst, 1002 Eng. Co., and Pfc. Ashley Gotwalt, administrative assistant, HHC, 28th Inf. Div., take advantage of the open dance floor and do a little two-step during the show at Triggers.

EAGLE BASE, Bosnia — A painted cement floor, patrol caps, physical fitness uniforms and sneakers replaced dusty floors, Stetsons, belt buckles and cowboy boots. But the music and good times didn't change much at all.

Soldiers of Multinational Division (North) were treated to the sounds of Kevin Banford and the Bakersfield Boys, a honkey tonk country band touring the Balkans entertaining troops.

Banford's roots are in the Midwest but were transplanted to Southern California at a young age. Banford said he decided at age 13 music was his future.

"One day I was watching a garage band play in the quad and it's like a light went on in my head," said Banford. "Seems like the guitar players get more chicks than the jocks."

Banford feels that everyone from America, regardless of age or locale has a connection to country music and that's one of the reasons it's his chosen genre. "If you're born in America, you are exposed in some way and at some level to country music. It may just be a memory of what grandma and grandpa used to listen to when you visited."

Banford's musical inspirations come from a veritable who's who of country music legends. "When I was real young, I grew up listening to many different bands. But the ones that intrigued me were the ones on the fringe of rock-n-roll. Guys like Hank Williams Sr., Web Pierce, Faran Young, George Jones, Buck Owens, and Merle Haggard from the Bakersfield area help create a unique Bakersfield sound."

Banford said the sound created by some of those legends of country music account for a cool dance-driven sound that's still heard today in many songs.

"I liked that he played a variety that everyone could recognize. It wasn't just for a young crowd or an older crowd, it was for everyone," said Pfc. Ashley Gotwalt, administrative assistant, Headquarters, Headquarters Co., 28th Inf. Div. "It is great to see dedicated musicians travel from the United States to visit troops. For a band to travel throughout the Balkans entertaining soldiers — to me that shows an incredible amount of support. I feel proud to know that we are not forgotten while we are here, there are those who are serving the country who do not necessarily wear the same uniform that we wear."

Banford's visit wasn't however confined to a "one nighter" at Triggers. Banford visited the Task Force Med Eagle Hospital during his time on Eagle Base.

"Kevin came to the Hospital Wednesday afternoon and sang for about two hours for the patients on the ward," said Maj. Deb Stuart, chief surgical nurse, TFME. "He gave a detailed commentary about the history of each country western song and welcomed requests. Most of us from TFME call Texas "home" so it was great to hear those familiar songs. I especially enjoyed the old western tunes like "Tumbling Tumbleweed" that you sing around a campfire under a sky full of stars."

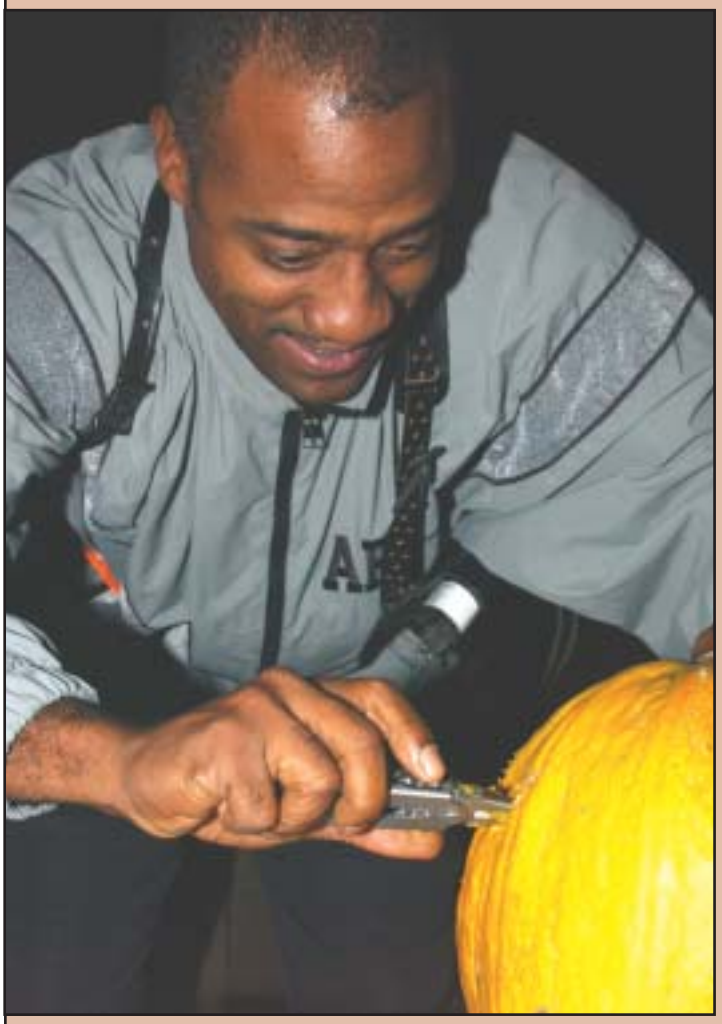
During the band's travels throughout the Balkans, they played at Eagle Base, FOB Morgan and Camp McGovern, and will continue on to Butmir, Sarajevo.

Banford is no stranger to the Balkans though. "This is actually our third tour of the Balkans," said Banford. "Each time we've toured here, it's been a unique experience."

Banford said, "I jump at every opportunity to bring a little home to those who are a long way from home. They hold a deep and abiding place in my heart. We appreciate the service young men and women are doing over here. We do understand how important it is and they are not forgotten."

Kevin Banford performs a sound check before the show at Triggers, Eagle Base.

Steel guitarist, Michael Johnstone, and bassist, Gregg Hyatt, strum for the Bakersfield Boys.



Clockwise from top left: A soldier couldn't get his head on right. Spc. Sherrie Bowen stuffs one more marshmallow in her mouth for the win. Maj. Deb Stuart and Pfc. Ashley Gotwalt cheer on contestants in the costume contest. Spc. Zane McGowan wins the costume contest. Participating in the pumpkin carving contest is 1st Sgt. Maurice Scott. ***Photos by Spc. Jessica Abner***

Overcoming obstacles to save lives

Story and photos by
Maj. John Dowling

Commander, 354th MPAD

EAGLE BASE, Bosnia — Swinging precariously from a half - inch wire over Eagle Base, soldiers here could easily be considered for the leading role in the next edition of the hit film "Spider - Man."

Considering the magnitude of the mission for which they train, Task Force Eagle medics are already superheroes.

The soldiers train in medevac extraction procedures to respond in the event of a medical emergency. Because of the widespread existence of unrecorded mines and unexploded ordnance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, anyone straying off safe routes could also necessitate being plucked by a hovering UH-60 Black Hawk of the 1159th Med. Co. (Air Ambulance).

"The hoist extraction is designed to evacuate a casualty or rescue people in an area you can't land, "said Sgt. Christopher Brassard, flight medic, 1159th. "If a guy is in there, we can put a medic right on top of him and get him out."

That may sound simple enough, but the procedure requires a continual flow of information between the medic on the wire, the crew chief on the hoist, and pilot on the stick. Communication and trust between these individuals is absolutely essential to get the distressed soldier out of a threatening environment or back to medical facilities, according to Spc. Keith Dawson, flight medic, 1159th Med. Co.

Danish medic, Pvt. Stine Beinholt, listens as Spc. Keith Dawson, flight medic, 1159th Med. Co., explains the procedures for an air medevac extraction.

"Communication is extremely important. As soon as we lose communication, it's all over," said Dawson.

Air extractions are increasingly more difficult in Bosnia and Herzegovina than what these aviators practice at the unit's home station in Concord, New Hampshire. Because every open field is considered a minefield, the Army has established a 125-foot hard deck, under which the aircraft cannot fly.

What is a fairly routine procedure flying over the treetops back home now becomes a challenge of both space and time with human life at stake. Add in a layer of Bosnian fog and nighttime conditions, the potential for error increases dramatically. The crews use night vision goggles to navigate the darkness.

"The NVG hoist is one of the most taxing training exercises we do," said Brassard. The goggles magnify ambient light such as the moon, stars and streetlights. In many rural areas little light exists so even when conditions are optimal, using goggles is a challenge.

"It's like going through a black hole. Here in BiH, it is darker than anything I've ever experienced in my life," said Brassard, who has been a flight medic for eight years. "It's like looking through two toilet paper tubes."

By practicing during the day, crews are better prepared to meet this difficult mission.

Ground ambulance medics of Task Force Med Eagle also train in air extraction procedures designed to bring patients home alive. The training began with a hoist of a simulated patient on a stretcher, a likely scenario used to expedite a victim to the hospital. The exercise gave the soldiers what they will need in the event of a real-world medevac request.

"A lot of what you practice is basically what you're going to do on a reflex. Once it's done on reflex, it gives you confidence," said Spc. Craig Fisher, healthcare specialist, Co. E, 728th Main Support Bn. "It really helps that we're familiar with it."

Fisher and fellow medics followed the airborne stretcher into the helicopter by being hoisted on the jungle penetrator, a large, metal "hook" that serves as their seat. Nearly all of the healthcare specialists balance the desire to help fellow soldiers with the thrill of hanging perilously by a thread from a hovering aircraft.

"I loved it," said Sgt. Richard Mastrangelo, healthcare specialist, 728th FSB. He spent six years as a ranger in the Bn., 75th Ranger Regiment before deciding to become a medic so he's used to airmobile operations. But the excitement never gets old. "It's an adrenaline rush," said Mastrangelo.

"I like being able to help people, but it's a big adrenaline rush," agreed Dawson, who is a firefighter-medic back home in South Berwick, Maine. "That's why I do it on the outside."

During this rotation, the medics have already responded to eight real-world medevac transport missions, but have yet to perform an air extraction procedure. However, training they conduct now will prepare them for the eventuality of an actual air emergency extraction.

Spc. Craig Fisher prepares a simulated patient for extraction along with Sgt. Richard Mastrangelo. Both are healthcare specialists with Co. E, 728th Main Support Bn.

Medics exchange soldiers and ideas

by Maj. John Dowling

Commander, 354th MPAD

EAGLE BASE, Bosnia — Dressed in her purple and green, pixilated camouflage, Pvt. Stine (pronounced STEEN) Beinholt, stands out among her American counterparts in their woodland battle dress uniforms. During recent air ambulance extraction training the 20-year-old Danish Defense medic looked just like one of the Task Force Med Eagle soldiers.

She should. Beinholt was the first soldier chosen to participate in a newly instituted exchange program with the Nordic Polish Battle Group. For a week, she married-up with Task Force Med Eagle medics to train together in healthcare services at Eagle Base.

"It's been wonderful. Everyone has been so nice and kind," said Beinholt. "They taught me all (sorts) of things I didn't know that I can use when I get back to Doboj."

Beinholt is normally assigned as a medic in the Doboj infirmary at NPBG headquarters. During her week of cross training with Americans, she was able to draw blood, insert an IV, and observe an operation.

The highlight of the week was participating in the medical extraction. Beinholt was seated in the jungle penetrator and hoisted into the safe haven of a hovering UH-60 Black Hawk flown by the 1159th Medical Company, (Air Ambulance).

"The view, the wind, it was very fun. It was like going to Disneyland but much more fun," she said, smiling from ear to ear.

Pvt. Stine Beinholt, Danish Defense medic, was chosen to participate in a medic exchange program with the Nordic Polish Battle Group.

She also had the opportunity to learn more about her own Danish companions who operate the SISU, a modified Finnish infantry vehicle that provides ground ambulance support here. It is manned by a four-person Danish crew.

"The SISU team and helicopter ambulance work together and that's why we did the training," said Beinholt, who also learned something about Americans.

"We have the same sense of humor, Americans and the Danes. We can laugh about the same things. We watch a lot of American television shows, so we think that all Americans are like (the characters) in Beverly Hills 90210 and Baywatch. But you are not really," she said laughing, demonstrating that common sense of humor.

Beinholt signed a four-year contract to become a medic in the Danish Defense. After eight months of initial training, Danish soldiers are required to complete a six-month deployment to locations like Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After that time, the person is free to work or study without being involved with the military, but can get called up to serve on another deployment if needed.

After finishing out the final four months of her tour here, Beinholt intends to return home to attend law school.

Attention soldiers: easy money for you

If there is one thing soldiers like it is payday. However, what if your payday was a little more lucrative? Where can you get a guaranteed 10 percent annual rate of return on an investment? Answer: Right here in Bosnia courtesy of the Savings Deposit Program (SDP).

Members of the armed forces serving on permanent duty assignment outside the United States or its possessions in support of a contingency operation are authorized to make deposits with the Treasury in amounts not to exceed their monthly unallotted pay and allowances. Amounts deposited accrue interest in accordance with Executive Order 1298 at the rate of 10 percent per annum compounded quarterly from the first of the month. The maximum amount on which interest is computed is $10,000 – principal and accrued interest combined.

To be eligible, soldiers must have served for at least 30 consecutive days or at least one day in each of three consecutive months in the area of operation.

To make cash contributions, soldiers should go to the Finance Customer Service office to complete a DD Form 1131 Cash Collection Voucher. Once complete, the soldier then makes their deposit at the cashier window.

Soldiers should retain their completed DD Form 1131 as proof of deposit.

Daily and monthly check writing limits do not apply to SDP deposits; however, you are still limited to writing a check up to your monthly un-allotted pay and allowances amount.

Active duty soldiers may contribute to the program by allotment as well. Soldiers should submit a DD Form 2558 Allotment To Start, Stop, or Change An Allotment through their unit personnal clerk. Here's an example of how it works.

Example: A soldier makes the following deposits

Date	Deposit
Nov. 3	$1,000
Nov. 5	$1,000
Nov. 20	$500
Dec. 10	$500
Total Deposits	$6,000

$6,000 is used to calculate quarterly average
Average quarterly balance is ($6,000/3) = $2,000
Quarterly interest earned ($2,000 x 2.5% or one quarter of 10%) = $50.00

For questions concerning the Savings Deposit Program (SDP) or any other finance issues, please feel free to contact the finance office at the following DSN numbers:

Cash Cage
1LT Pierce 762-3030
Customer Service/ Military Pay
SFC Jones 762-1016
Vendor Contracts
SPC Ramsey 762-3576
SPC Wilkinson 762-2117
Bad Check Control
SPC Wilkinson 762-2117