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Guardian East

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Task Force Falcon 5B:
Looking Back
Special Edition

Message to the troops



By Command Sgt. Maj.
James McEntaffer

It has been my honor and privilege to have served in Kosovo with all of the Soldiers from Multi-national Brigade (East). It seems like yesterday that we assembled in Fort Stewart, Georgia to begin this journey. Strangers from 19 states were quickly drawn together as a cohesive team through many hours of mobilization training, austere conditions, and a common goal. The training and living conditions at Fort Stewart, Ga. are now a mere memory. I will not forget your efforts to organize, load, and ship the tons of equipment to Germany for further training, and then on to the mission in Kosovo. Sleeping on metal bed

frames with no mattress for the "Bondsteel" folks or a cot in an unlined tent in the middle of winter for the "Monteith" personnel are "Hohenfels merit badges" we will keep with us forever.

You have performed admirably throughout our rotation. You the Soldiers of KFOR 5B have completed the mission assigned successfully and safely. Soldiers and leaders alike have adhered to the standards. Certainly there have been a few minor hiccups in this journey, but you all stepped up and worked through them. I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your efforts. Extended time away from family and friends is not easy, but you accepted the hardship



**Command Sgt. Maj.
James McEntaffer**

and challenges to do what your Nation asked, the epitome of "selfless service".

It is now time to return to the awaiting families and friends. Do so knowing that every one of you, in some way, has touched the lives of the people of Kosovo in a positive way. Return home with your heads high knowing that you made a difference. Be proud of what you have accomplished. Keep in mind this mission is not complete until everyone has returned home safely. Don't let your guard down; we must complete this final phase without incident.

I wish each of you success and best wishes in your future endeavors whatever they may be. Thank you all for a job well done, Attack!

SEE THE PHOTO OF THE DAY

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Submissions or story ideas related to the MNB(E) mission are encouraged. Send regular mail to MNB(E) PAO, Attn: Editor, Camp Bondsteel, APO AE 09340; send e-mail to guardianeast@bondsteel2.areur.army.mil.

COVER: Staff Sgt. Jeff Robinson, with Alpha Company, 2-136th Infantry, uses a spotting scope to scan for illegal activities in MNB (E).

Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy.
See page 10 for the story

Guardian East

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Staff Sgt. Josh Hinrichs, an assistant squad leader with Alpha Company, 2-136th Infantry, examines a tree stump in an area along Kosovo's Administrative Boundary Line with Serbia. Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy. See page 10 for the story.

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Lt. Col. Monica Stafford, a dentist with Task Force Med Falcon, examines an x-ray at the Camp Bondsteel Dental Clinic.

Task Force Story and photo by Spc. Sean McCollum

MED FALCON

Task Force Medical Falcon, with Soldiers from many medical units around the U.S., will finish a ten-month deployment as the group departs with the 5B task force. That translates into three rotations of doctors, more than 30 Medical and Civilian Assistance Program missions, and as many or more local hospital and school visits for the “teach, coach, mentor” program.

“We’ve all learned a lot,” said Col. Marlin Brendsel, the executive officer for TFMF who is from Milwaukee, Wis. “For the most part, 75-80 percent of our Soldiers, this has been the first deployment for them.”

One major program in which Med Falcon participates is the “teach, coach, mentor” program – where doctors, physical therapists, and dentists visit local medical high schools, health houses, and orphanages to teach local counterparts the tricks of the trade.

“Our health care providers really like to do that because they see a real possibility to improve health care by passing on information and skills,” said Brendsel of the TCM program.

The TCMs are only part of Med Falcon’s effort to spread a message of health and goodwill to the people of Kosovo. Participation in MEDCAP events, visits to the Camp Bondsteel hospital by civilian doctors, and weekly conferences among fellow doctors from the civilian world and NATO countries, can also be counted as successes to the mission, according to Brendsel.

In addition to these planned events, there is also the need to expect the unexpected.

“At times we aren’t very busy but we’re staffed for the exception. Luckily the exception and not the rule,” Brendsel said.

One of these was the shooting of 11 U.N. corrections officers by another U.N. officer April 17 at a detention facility in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. Two were dead at the scene and one died later from complications.

“That happened on a weekend, it came to us mostly on other than normal duty hours. You’ve just got to be prepared all the time,” said Brendsel.

One of the surviving officers, Elizabeth Meckler, recently came back to Camp Bondsteel to thank one of the people who treated her, 1st Lt. Sherry Hedge, a nurse with Med Falcon who is from Chicago, Ill.

“For the first time that day you knew you were safe and cared for,” said Meckler.

Hedge realized the significance of what she had done.

“I will be part of their life for the rest of their life, a part of history, a part of a good friendship,” said Hedge.

As the ten-month deployment winds down, the mission goes on. Some time soon, another task force will take the reins to prepare for the expected and unexpected events that Kosovo may provide for them.

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2nd Lt. Brian Douty, left, an escort with Task Force Falcon's Joint Visitors Bureau, works with Slatina Airport personnel on coordinating a plane's landing time to prepare for a guest's visit to Kosovo.

JOINT VISITORS BUREAU

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. ROB BARKER

With Kosovo's summer comes visitors, and with visitors comes a team of Soldiers dedicated to providing the guests with their accommodations. In Multi-national Brigade (East) the Joint Visitors Bureau of Camp Bondsteel consists of 12 Soldiers whose main mission is to support distinguished visitors from all over the world. This support includes providing escorts, meals and lodging to name a few.

Fortunately for the JVB they do not hear about visitors the day they are arriving. It is a long, planned process.

"First we have to get the intent of the mission from the visitor," said 2nd Lt. Brian Douty, an escort with the unit. "Once we know the intent of the mission we need to figure out the times of arrival and departure. Once we have times of flights we can start the initial planning phase.

"We plan lunches and dinners for the visitor and we coordinate to have Soldiers there to eat with them and get some face-to-face time with the guest," added Douty, a Pipestone, Minn. resident. "Then with the remainder of the time we try to fill the visitor's intent. Sometimes we will plan a patrol with the maneuver units or have a tour of Camp Bondsteel or Camp Monteith to show them the facilities."

And then comes the fun part when the visitors land.

"Once the visitor arrives we are with them from landing to departure at the airport. We are always working on the next event on the itinerary," said Douty. "For instance, when the distinguished visitor is in an office call with the commanding general, I am making phone calls to make sure the next event is ready to go and that people are in their place."

Although sometimes the visitors get off schedule, there are a few things the JVB likes each visitor to complete.

"Each visit there are things that we always do: a VIP operations brief, office call with the CG and an office call with the commander of the unit they are visiting," added Douty.

Recently the JVB welcomed and escorted Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty around Camps Monteith and Bondsteel. The governor came to show his support of Minnesota Soldiers and other U.S. troops, said Douty.

Visits like this are one of the reasons Douty enjoys being in the JVB.

As for the parts of the job he likes the most, Douty said "it is the people I get to meet and that I get to go out in the sector with visitors and see parts of MNB (E) that most Soldiers do not get to see."

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Soldiers of Bravo Company, 2-135th Infantry, position their humvees on a road in Novoselle/ Novo Selo in the MNB (NE) sector during the March riots. Photo courtesy by Bravo Company.

Task Force Bayonet

Story by Spc. Rob Barker

Six months away from everything you know in life is not always as bad as it seems. In fact, Task Force Bayonet Soldiers of Camp Bondsteel have enjoyed many aspects of this deployment and are prepared to leave their six-month tour in Kosovo with more experience and knowledge than when they arrived.

Task Force Bayonet consists of 2-135th Infantry's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Alpha, Bravo and Charlie Companies, and currently their Delta Company is serving in Afghanistan. All the companies here have different areas of responsibility in Kosovo, but they all have similar missions and duties.

"We make sure our vehicles are operational, conduct patrols, and record information," said Spc. Paul King, an infantryman with Bravo Company speaking of a few of his squad's responsibilities. "We have target areas where we talk with the mayors and random people around town to see how they're doing."

"When we first got here right away we started doing vehicle checkpoints, searching of abandoned buildings and permissive searches of compounds," said Staff Sgt. Timothy Patterson, a squad leader with Bravo Company. "We have also done air inserted patrols during our time here."

Each Soldier also has additional individual responsibilities.

"Being a squad leader, I lead, train and work with troops also while on patrol," added Patterson, a Bay City, Minn., native.

The Soldiers utilized this leadership and training during the March riots.

"The first day we got the call, we didn't know what to expect, but we headed north toward Pristina," said King, who resides in Pine Island, Minn. "We ran into multiple crowds and had rocks thrown at us. Once we arrived north we stayed at the French base. We did vehicle check points for twenty-four hours a day for a week straight non stop. We literally searched thousands of vehicles."

That experience, training they have received and other lessons learned while in Kosovo have given the Soldiers knowledge they otherwise may not have gained as National Guard Soldiers.

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Soldiers from Alpha Company, 2-136th Infantry make their way down a steep hill in a small unit support vehicle while on an extended patrol along Kosovo's Administrative Boundary Line with Serbia.

Task Force RedHorse

Story and photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy

For many Soldiers of Task Force Redhorse, which is made up of Soldiers from the 1-113th Cavalry, 2-136th Infantry and the 682nd Engineer Battalion, when they first arrived in Kosovo the end of their rotation and the time to go home seemed a long six months away. For some, that time has gone past quicker than originally thought. The six-month rotation has been filled with many events, with some of those events standing out more than others.

For many, one event that stands out the most is the March riots.

"The riots were a big [event]," said Staff Sgt. Jeff Robinson, a squad leader with Alpha Company, 2-136th Infantry. "I never thought we'd see riots like that during our rotation, and I never thought that we'd be driving Bradleys through a city."

But for other Soldiers, it wasn't the riots that stood out, but the after effects of the riots.

"We weren't really busy when the riots were going on," said Spc. Nick Vogel, a paralegal specialist with the Camp Monteith Judge Advocate General office. "But after the first day when we had to go take statements and take care of the legal issues, that's when it got busy," said Vogel, who added that even weeks after the riots had ended the JAG office was still working on the aftermath by making trips to local courts to insure the cases were proceeding in a timely manner.

And while the riots were big in the minds of many, for others there were different missions and events that stood out.

For Staff Sgt. Josh Hinrichs, an assistant squad leader with Alpha Company, 2-136th Infantry, the event was a 20-plus hour mission that involved snow, stuck vehicles and a trip along the Administrative Boundary Line with Serbia.

Following reports of shots being fired in an area along the ABL where illegal woodcutting was suspected, Hinrichs and his squad were

sent to investigate.

"First it rained, then it turned to snow," said Hinrichs recalling the incident. "We got one vehicle stuck and had to use a winch to get it out."

In addition, once arriving in the area the Soldiers realized that the location they had been given was not where they needed to be, said Hinrichs.

"We were one grid square off," said Hinrichs. "Once we realized that, we were able to adjust and continue on."

And once that adjustment was made, tractors laden with wood and other evidence of illegal woodcutting were found, said Hinrichs, adding that once the discovery was made the Kosovo Police Service was called into the area. Though despite the long hours and poor weather involved in the mission, for Hinrichs it was one of the best missions during their rotation.

"That was one of the coolest missions," said Hinrichs. "It had one definite purpose. There was a goal that was tangible, unlike a lot of other missions where you go to talk to someone about how things are going and you don't see any immediate results from it."

But for Robinson, a veteran of the first Gulf War, as he reflected on his unit's time in Kosovo, what stood out most for him was simply being in Kosovo.

"Just being able to experience and see a different way of life, a different culture, that's been one of the best experiences about being here," said Robinson. "It's very different, and in some ways way behind the U.S. A lot still farm and till their fields by hand. Just seeing a different way of life, that's the best part."

And soon enough Robinson, and the other Soldiers who make up TF Redhorse, will be reunited with family and friends and will be able to share stories and photographs about Kosovo with them.

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Task
Desperado

Soldiers from Task Force Desperado swap out shooters during an aerial door gunnery on range Falcon Four. Photo by Sgt. Eric Rothery, 1-207th Aviation.



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Story by Spc. Tim Grooms

Task Force Desperado



14 *Sgt. Al Schoonover, left, a crew chief with the 1-207th Aviation, works with Spc. Steven Hambrick, a motor pool non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4-278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, to run the ammo point for an aerial door gunnery range. Photo by Sgt. Eric Rothery, 1-207th Aviation.*



Task Force **LOOKING BACK** Falcon 5B

Almost a year ago, Soldiers from six states began a mission that brought them together for a six-month tour in Kosovo. This group of Soldiers became the aviation unit known as Task Force Desperado. From aircraft maintenance, to dropping off troops for patrols, to Medical Evacuation training, Desperado has accomplished many tasks and missions while here. In the end it was a lesson in peacekeeping and a successful experience for veterans and Soldiers on their first deployment.

"The Task Force has done a great job and I am very pleased with their performance," said Maj. Robert Covert, Task Force Desperado commander and Maryville, Tenn. resident. "It's been very educational and we got eight years of National Guard experience in just under a year."

Most Soldiers said they found it very enjoyable working together during the mission.

"I've enjoyed working with the Task Force Desperado people because for the most part all of the team are of one mind and one goal set, getting the job done right the first time. It makes any task more enjoyable and easy to tackle," said Sgt. Guy McCarter, a mail clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4-278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and resident of Sevierville, Tenn.

Along with the enjoyment of performing their jobs, Soldiers of Task Force Desperado also had many accomplishments.

"During the riots we played some really key parts in breaking up demonstrations," said Chief Warrant Officer Harry James, safety officer with Alpha Company, 1-207th Aviation, and resident of Juneau, Alaska. "As soon as we were in place the riots stopped."

Assisting during the riots wasn't the only accomplishment for the aviators.

"The accomplishments have been Phase One and Two MEDEVAC training," said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Kabrud, a flight medic with the 1085th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), from Rapid City, S.D. "Phase One is where we teach the soldiers to load the MEDEVAC with the patient and Phase Two is where we do that with the rotor system turning and teach them how we use the hoist. We do that with NATO soldiers here."

"I think another major thing is we came with thirty-three people and are leaving with thirty-three people so we had no major accidents," Kabrud said.

From avionics to engines, the aircraft maintenance crews put many hours in on the helicopters here.

"During our mission as far as avionics we have been able to merge two units, mainly from Alaska and Tennessee unit level maintenance to accomplish approximately five-hundred job orders relating to avionics and electric orders on OH-58 Delta aircraft and UH-60 Lima aircraft," said Staff Sgt. Rick Pannell, an avionics section sergeant with Tango Troop, 4-278th Armored Cavalry Regiment whose hometown is Knoxville, Tenn. "The transition of working with the different units has gone better than I expected and at this point we're working together as a real cohesive team and able to accomplish every task given to us at our level."

Finally, military personnel of Task Force Desperado finished up work in the air traffic control tower and will be turning the mission over to civilians. But for the final military crew working the tower, it was a great training experience.

"For the unit, I brought seventeen Soldiers with me that have never been deployed before. This was a good first mission for them," said Sgt. 1st Class Terry Martin, air traffic services chief with Delta Company, 1-114th Aviation (Air Traffic Services), and resident of Little Rock, Ark. "I brought seventeen novices with me and now I am taking back seventeen well trained personnel," he said. "They got real world training they would have not gotten otherwise."

It does not matter if they came from Alaska, Arkansas, Tennessee, South Dakota, Michigan, or Minnesota, the Soldiers of Task Force Desperado came to Kosovo to do the mission required and in the end are a closer group.

"Here, for this task force we came together all as one right away and I think that has brought us closer together," said Kabrud.

Task Force Dragoon

Story and photo by Spc. Sean McCollum

As the Military Police officers of Task Force Dragoon, made up of Soldiers from the 192nd MP Battalion, the 192nd MP Detachment (Provost Marshal), the 514th MP Company and the 515th MP Detachment (Criminal Investigative Division), look back on their time here, three days is what comes to mind most often.

“The riots were the big one,” said Sgt. 1st Class William Nicholson, platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, 514th MP Company who is from Snellville, N.C. Ask any of the 514th and you may well hear a hero story about saving elderly women or reporters trapped in the violence near a Serbian Orthodox church in the town of Ferizaj/Urosevac.

“The riots weren’t defining,” said Sgt. William Becker, an MP with the 514th and a resident of Fountain, N.C. “But it’s an event that sticks out more than day-to-day because that’s the blip in the screen.”

So much of a blip, in fact, the mission of Becker’s counterparts in the 192nd changed somewhat. Originally dividing up responsibilities – the “law and order” patrols enforcing traffic safety and business checks were assigned to the 192nd while “public information operations” patrols that involve talking with local business owners were the main responsibility of the 514th – the task force has taken a proactive role to prevent further disturbances in Multi-national Brigade (East).

“Our mission changed two months ago,” said Sgt. Andrew Phillips, an MP with the 192nd, who is from Bellevue, Neb. “Mainly we patrolled the main supply routes doing escorts, running radar, that stuff. Then it kind of switched. We did VCPs. We were stopping buses to make sure they weren’t going to a protest. We were looking for illegal weapons. That’s basically where we’re at right now.”

Preventive measures such as vehicle checkpoints have some task force members feeling like they have made a difference besides protecting property in the riots.

“Doing vehicle checkpoints and knowing that even if you don’t find anything you may have helped a little bit to prevent people from smuggling weapons or drugs. Maybe some of those people will think twice knowing that we’re out there,” said Becker.



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Staff Sgt. Frederick Lewis, a military police officer with the 514th MP Company, greets children while conducting a patrol of Kamenice/ Kosovska Kamenica.

Basketball Safety

By Diana Settles, MAT, ATC
Manager, Injury Prevention Physical Fitness Programs
Navy Environmental Health Center, Norfolk, VA

PERSONAL FITNESS:

- Pace yourself; don't do too much too soon when pre-conditioning for basketball season.
- A conditioning program with emphasis on aerobic and muscular fitness training should be implemented prior to the beginning of basketball season.
- Begin gradually participating in activities specific to basketball, such as motor skill components of fitness: jumping (rope skipping) and agility/coordination/balance drills. This mode of training will strengthen the connective tissue (muscle, bones, ligaments, and tendons) which will assist the body in accommodating to physical stress. These exercises will also assist with neuromuscular coordination, the ability to integrate the senses – sight, sound, and proprioceptive (knowing the position of your body in space) – with motor function to produce smooth, accurate, and skilled movement.
- Add ankle, shin (anterior tibialis), and soleus strengthening exercises to the basic lower extremity muscular fitness exercise program.
- Participate daily in a complete body stretching program.
- Remember to warm-up and stretch at least 5 – 10 minutes before participating in a basketball activity.
- A continued maintenance program throughout the season would also help prevent injuries.
- Contact a local MWR Trainer for additional information on basketball conditioning. Many MWR Facilities provide safety/injury prevention information to coaches, players, and officials regarding preparation, conditioning, and training proper playing techniques.
- NOTE: Prior injury to the body predisposes one to re-injury of that particular extremity.

EQUIPMENT:

- Jewelry, i.e., rings, necklaces, etc. are not recommended during basketball activity participation.
- Clothing attire that contain pockets are not recommended due to the risk of fingers getting caught/lodged in clothing.
- Protective eye goggles would help prevent ocular injury.
- Basketball playing shoes should be used. Shoes specific to other sports are not recommended.
- Basketball goal must be padded; allow space of at least 8-ft. clear area past goal. Ensure bumper guards are installed correctly on glass boards.

TRAINING / TECHNIQUE:

- The style of play by a basketball team may increase risk of injury; the more contact involved, the higher the incidence for injury.
- Trained coaching staff can impact positively upon basketball injury prevention. Coaches should be able to provide safe information to players on the team regarding preparation, conditioning, and training proper playing techniques.
- Officiated games decrease the risk of injury occurrence. Enforcement of rules assists in decreasing the incidence of injury.

ENVIRONMENT:

- Be aware of the environment around you. Prior to participating in basketball, look for predisposing risk factors on the playing court such as foreign objects, towels, gym bags, water, etc.
- Alcohol consumption should be discouraged during any athletic participation.
- Proper hydration during activity is recommended.

REFERENCE: Caine, J., Caine, C., and Lindner, K. Epidemiology of Sports Injuries.. Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1996.

Soldiers of Camp Bondsteel participate in a three-on-three basketball tournament. Photo by Spc. Rob Barker.



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(BAYONET from page 9)

“I have gained a lot of active duty experience verses what my guard experience has been — one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer,” said King. “Basically I’ve learned a lot on day-to-day infantry skills. We did a lot of training from Fort Stewart to Camp Bondsteel, anything from EIB training to riot control.”

The Soldiers also worked in groups they normally don’t have the opportunity to.

“In the infantry a lot of times we operate as a platoon, but rarely do we operate as just an individual squad,” said Patterson. “Ninety percent of the time I am out on a patrol and decisions have to be made, we are the highest level there and make the decisions.”

While out on patrols the Soldiers said they enjoyed many different things, but Patterson said one sticks out in his mind.

“I like the fact we can go out and interact with the population,” he said. “We were in Kuwait in 2001 and did not enjoy this type of freedom. Just being able to talk to the general population is the best part of the experience.”

Bayonet Soldiers also had the chance to enjoy some free time away from Kosovo when some of them took advantage of a spiritual retreat to Greece and follow in Apostle Paul’s footsteps.

“I enjoyed getting to see the history behind Greece; seeing sites regarding Apostle Paul and places he preached and ministered to people; and seeing the history, how ancient it was,” said King.

Whether it was during a normal day on patrol, in the midst of the riots, or while taking some time off, the Soldiers said the experiences gained on this deployment will be with them for the rest of their lives.

Soldiers of Bravo Company, 2-135th Infantry, help a local man retrieve his tractor that was stuck in mud. Photo courtesy of Bravo Company.

SOUL FOOD: MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPLAIN

LOOKING BACK AND GIVING THANKS

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.)
Timothy Peterson

This issue of the Guardian East is dedicated to looking back at our time of service in Kosovo. From a spiritual perspective, this is a time to give thanks – a time to thank God for the blessings that He has given us.

KFOR 5B Services of Thanksgiving are being scheduled for Sunday 22 August at both Camp Bondsteel and Camp Monteith.

For what should we give thanks?

1. Let us give thanks for the opportunity to be peacekeepers. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who work for peace! They shall be called the Children of God!” We have been working for peace in Kosovo. We have prevented acts of violence that would have taken place. We have protected churches, communities, and individuals. We have encouraged reconciliation. Now we hand over the work of peacekeeping to KFOR 6A. God has blessed our work as peacekeepers. May God bless all those who are continuing this challenge!
2. Let us give thanks for the jobs we have been able to do. We have done a wide variety of jobs here in Kosovo. Some Soldiers go on patrols, some fly helicopters, some write plans, some handle supplies, some do medical work, some deliver the mail – on and on it goes. Besides all being peacekeepers, we have all served by doing our particular military jobs. We have made each other successful, with each Soldier doing his or her part.
3. Let us be thankful for the Soldiers with whom we have served. I have gained a lot of new friends here. I have had a lot of interesting conversations in the Dining Facilities. I have enjoyed the people I have worked with. I am thankful for the people with whom I have been able to worship. We have a family here – it’s not



**Chaplain (Lt. Col.)
Timothy Peterson**

like our family back home, but it’s a family that God has used to help us make it through this deployment.

4. Let us be thankful for our families and friends back home. Many people have encouraged me during this deployment – people I know and some people I don’t know. People have thanked me for my service as a Soldier. I am especially thankful for the support and encouragement I have received from members of my family – and I am very thankful to be looking forward to seeing them soon!

5. Let us thank God for the privilege of serving our country. President Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country!” We have chosen to be American Soldiers. Our country asked us to come and serve in Kosovo and we have

carried out that mission. We have achieved the honor that comes from doing our duty.

6. Let us be thankful for the life God has given us. I am glad that I get to go home now and return to my life as a civilian. God has blessed me during this time in Kosovo – and I’m looking forward to an even greater blessing of being at home! All of us will face some times in our lives that are easier and some times that are more difficult. No matter what awaits you in the future, I pray that you would know God’s help and presence.

On October 19, 1781, the British army commanded by Lord Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington at Yorktown, ending the fighting in the Revolutionary War. On the next day, General Washington ordered that Services of Thanksgiving be conducted:

“In order to diffuse the general Joy the General orders that... Divine Service be performed tomorrow in the several Brigades or Divisions. The Commander in Chief earnestly recommends that the troops not on duty should universally attend.”

Let us continue that tradition as we look back on our time here in Kosovo and give thanks to God.

Army doctors publish combat stress study

By Courtney Hickson

WASHINGTON — Soldiers deployed to the front lines of Iraq face a higher chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental disorders than their counterparts in Afghanistan, a recent Army study reported.

The study, published in the July 1 New England Journal of Medicine, was led by Col. Charles W. Hoge, a medical doctor at the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. It surveyed members of three Army units and one Marine unit.

The study was conducted with service members who had various lengths of deployment. Some Soldiers were surveyed in January 2003 before a year-long deployment to Iraq; the second group responded to questions after a six-month deployment to Afghanistan; while a third group of Soldiers was surveyed after an eight-month deployment to Iraq. The Marines were surveyed after a six-month deployment to Iraq. All who were surveyed were involved in hazardous security duties.

There were 5,386 Soldiers and 815 Marines in the survey. Hoge said they focused exclusively on combat arms units and Army Infantry during the initial invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. This was done with the knowledge that these Soldiers and Marines would be more likely to have seen combat and have combat stress as a result.

“This is not generalized to all service members,” he said. “The initial ground experiences may be different.”

Hoge said the study puts numbers to what is already known.

“What is unique is this is the first time we have looked at this so close to combat deployment,” he said.

Eighteen percent of the Soldiers who responded to the survey questions after returning home from Iraq had PTSD, almost double the number, of Soldiers surveyed before deployment to Iraq. While only 11.5 percent of those returning from Afghanistan had the broad definition of PTSD. Soldiers in Iraq had a significantly higher exposure to combat than those deployed to Afghanistan.

PTSD is “a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape. People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person’s daily life,” according to the National Center for PTSD Web site.

When asked if they have received professional help in the past months — which could have been help from a mental health care profession, a general medical doctor or a clergy member — 11 percent of Soldiers returning from Iraq said yes. In the same group, more than 16 percent said they were interested in receiving professional help, while 19.5 percent had a perceived moderate or severe problem.

Many Soldiers, who need mental health care the most, said they are not seeking treatment out of fear of being stigmatized the survey reported. Of those meeting the screening criteria for a mental disorder, the largest perceived barrier — at 65 percent — was “I would be seen as weak.” The next largest barrier was “My unit leadership might treat me differently,” at 63 percent.

Hoge said the perception of being stigmatized with a mental health disease is not unique to the military but there are some factors such as cohesion and leadership that are unique.

“They are perceived that they may be treated differently but that may not be the reality,” he said. “But it could be enough to not want to seek help.”

One of the challenges now is to find a way to reduce the stigma and encourage Soldiers to seek treatment, Hoge said.

In addition to Hoge, Army and Navy doctors performed and wrote study results. It is part of a larger ongoing study, which will be reported on in the future. Hoge said they will be looking at in greater detail factors shown in this study and looking to improve mental health and intervention to help the Soldiers. The study took over two years to complete and had support from the highest levels of the Army from the beginning, Hoge said.

SECTION Q N' A:

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What is one piece of advice you would give someone coming to Kosovo?

Sgt. Jessi Dodson

"Try to stay positive and motivated. It's really easy to get stressed out. It's also important to talk with family and friends, you need to have their support while here."



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy

Sgt. Jessi Dodson, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-113th Cavalry, readies a Hepatitis B vaccination to be given to a patient at the Camp Monteith Troop Medical Center.

Spc. Krista Steinbach

"Keep busy and get outside the wire as much as possible."



Photo by Spc. Sean McCollum

Spc. Krista Steinbach, an awards clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 34th Infantry Division, answers the phone at her desk inside Camp Bondsteel's Tactical Operations Center.

Sgt. Michael Brown

"Have everybody try to work together as a team and keep safety first."



Photo by Spc. Tim Grooms

Sgt. Michael Brown, a crew chief with Oscar Troop, 4-278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, works on the rear section of an OH-58D Kiowa helicopter.

Staff Sgt. Carl Witty

"If you stay busy, the time will go by fast."



Photo by Spc. Rob Barker

Staff Sgt. Carl Witty, the non-commissioned officer in charge of Task Force Falcon's Judge Advocate General section, prepares a will worksheet for a customer.

Scenes of Kosovo

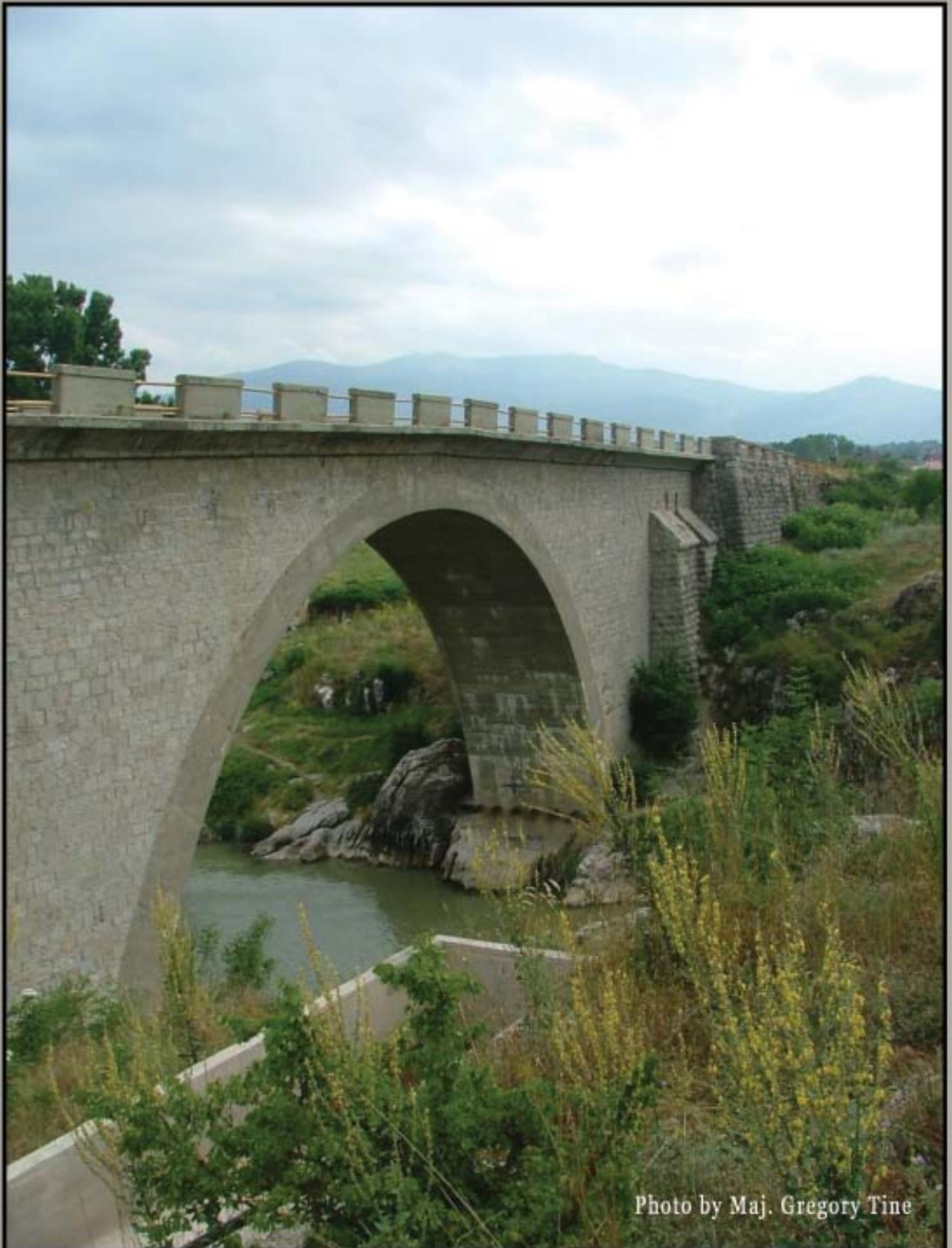


Photo by Maj. Gregory Tine

**The Ura E Shenjte / Sveti Most bridge
near Gjakova / Djakovica.**