



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL BRIGADE (EAST)
CAMP BONDSTEEL, KOSOVO
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PSYOPS delivers messages of hope

Story and photos by Spc. Matthew Lang

KAMENICA, Kosovo — In Kosovo, hope is a currency as valuable as the Euro. It is one of the intangibles that a war can damage along with a sense of peace and security.

In the Multi-National Brigade (East) area of operations, the 13th Psychological Operations Company tries to restore that sense of optimism through education.

“Our main mission here in Kosovo is to put out information to various villages and to bring information back from the local villagers to help us assist them,” said Sgt. Chris Price, a team leader with 13th PSYOPS.

On Jan. 6, a team from the company spent a day visiting villages in the Kamenica area, handing out posters, informational newspapers and brochures, which 13th PSYOPS produced. They covered the Administrative Boundary Line or ABL, electricity rules and the dangers of unexploded ordnance. The calendars highlighted some of the most beautiful vistas in Kosovo.

In Strelica, a mostly Serb village, people seemed appreciative of the information. It was sometimes hard to tell whether they were happier to receive the items or have American soldiers as guests in their community.

“It is not too often that they get any news here,” Price said. “To get it they have to travel all the way to the Serbian border.”

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The team also brought toys along to donate to a local kindergarten. The teacher was so overwhelmed with the soldiers' generosity she invited them to stay for coffee.

In Bosce, the team met with Elizabeta Stefanovic, a local citizen who works as a representative for the United Nations.

“Do you see the KPS (Kosovo Police Service) often in town? How does that affect you?” Price asked.

“Everyday we see them but it doesn't affect us much because it has become almost normal,” said Stefanovic through an interpreter.

Stefanovic said that the village has become more peaceful, mainly because of KFOR's presence.

The conversation lasted about an hour. No major issues were raised, so the team moved on, thanking Stefanovic for her time.

“Face to face conversations are the only way to do things,” said Sgt. Mike Flaherty, a PSYOPS specialist. “Just getting out there and talking to people is how we can establish better friendships.”

Several towns later, in Donje Korminjane, a villager complained that the electric company kept turning off his power.

“Have you been paying your bills?” Price asked.

“No,” responded the man, “because they're trying to charge me for three years of electricity.”

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Price showed him one of the pamphlets that listed the various rules on paying electricity. Many of the people were used to living under a Yugoslavian Socialist system where they didn't pay for their own electricity, he explained.

“The several items that we hand out help us establish a state of mind with the locals of Kosovo that it's not an ‘us against them’ situation,” said Price.

Flaherty added, “I think the things we hand out help. I heard that incidents of people who were having trouble with things like crossing the ABL without proper authorization have dropped dramatically since we started putting up our products that address these issues.”

The people of Kosovo must learn how to trust the KPS and their municipal leaders if they want a brighter future, Price said. That is what the 13th PSYOPS team is trying to influence.

Cutlines

Sgt. Chris Price, a PSYOP specialist with the 13th Psychological Operations Company, displays a poster that shows a choice between fighting or peace and the consequences of each. The posters are one way the 13th PSYOPS promotes peace in Kosovo.

A local boy from the village of Donje Korminjane reads a brochure passed out by the 13th PSYOPS Company. The brochures warn of the dangers that still exist in Kosovo.

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