TASK FORCE FALCON

Falcon Flier

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UAE shows TFF how to celebrate the past

Sharing their culture with the other soldiers of TFF, UAE soldiers follow the advice of their leader Sheikh Zayed: "A people that knows not its past can have neither a present or a future."

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Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson

Special Forces soldiers from the United Arab Emirates perform a martial arts exhibition during a celebration Aug. 6 at Camp Bondsteel commemorating the day that Sheikh Zayed came to power in 1966.

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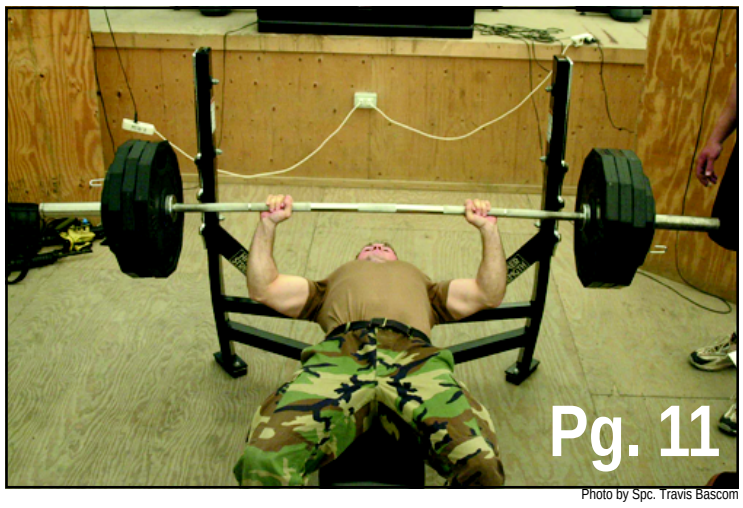
Photo by Spc. Engels Tejeda

The Washington Redskin Cheerleaders, the "First Ladies of Football", raised Task Force Falcon morale on Aug. 1

Soldiers went wild to welcome the lovely Redskinettes to Kosovo.



Pg. 11

Photo by Spc. Travis Bascom

left: Sgt. Charles K. Hall , a tanker for B Company of 3-69th Armor benches 197 pounds more than his body weight to win the Raise the Roof competition.

right: This vehicle was forced off the road by a local car trying to pass. Soldiers of the 3-7th Infantry motor pool have come to the rescue.

Pg. 11

Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Greer

Words that our leaders must live by

Story by
Brig. Gen. Bill David
Task Force Falcon Commander

William Shakespeare once said, "To sin by silence when one should protest, doth make cowards of men." These are words that our leaders must live by, relentlessly.

We're at about the halfway point of our rotation. It's a critical point for leaders. You may be getting tired – tired of being a leader and tired of doing things required of a leader. Remember what Shakespeare said and don't sin by an act of omission.

Maybe you don't face each day with the same level of enthusiasm. Pretty soon you are not making on the spot corrections.

Uniform standards begin to slip. Then you pay less attention to safety. The very success of our units depends on your ability to overcome.

Recently, a combined team of Task Force Falcon soldiers set the example for all of us to follow. In full battle rattle they conducted an eight-hour cordon and search operation in temperatures that neared 100 degrees. With effective force protection measures, the soldiers and leadership accomplished the mission safely.

They personified our creed of "BE RELENTLESS!" They cleared two villages of illegal weapons and ammunition to make Kosovo safe and secure.

Believe me, the leaders in this unit understand what it means to fight through exhaustion.

Our task force has done a tremendous job so far. We are half way through the game. It's our game to win in the second half.

It will take the continued strength of our leaders to make the second half as good or better than the first.

Check the fire in your belly. Get stoked if you need it. You owe it to your soldiers to get them through this experience in a way that makes the unit stronger. Be relentless!

Go out on a limb

Story by
Command Sgt. Major Marvin Hill
Task Force Falcon CSM

"If you want good fruit, you have to go out on the limb and get it," someone once told me. That goes for privileges too I think. You all have done an outstanding job since you deployed here. We want to see that trend continue.

When we first arrived, we planned not to make changes right away. Sudden changes are never a good thing when you are steering a ship with a new crew through stormy waters. Well, it's time we can make some changes.

You earned a change we made recently to the wear of the Physical Fitness Uniform in certain facilities. Now, with the relaxed policy you can go to our AAFES stores, dining facilities, and theaters in your PFU. Aside from some rare instances that we have worked through, this has been a good thing. What do you think?

Now, after careful consideration, we decided that you can wear civilian clothes from 18:00 to 02:00 every other Saturday beginning with the 11th of August. Six months ago this would have been unheard of. But you have moved the ball forward and that deserves a just reward.

We're going to let you take a trip without leaving the farm. Wearing civies will make you more relaxed. There are responsibilities that come with being relaxed though. Standards for weapons accountability, customs and courtesies, and discipline are unchanged with this privilege.

Change comes when people show that they can handle the responsibility that comes with it. This won't be a fashion show. And leaders are empowered to make corrections when they see that this privilege is being abused.

The next item on the plate is unit theme night. I envision that on the Saturdays when we aren't wearing civilian clothes, we'll allow units to demonstrate their esprit de corps by allowing the wear of unit specific clothing. What I mean is that units that want to wear their Stetsons, unit baseball caps, and t-shirts (with PFU shorts) can do so during specific hours of the day. What do you think?

Now, I know that things will come up that no one thought of. We'll work through them just as we worked through the issues with the policy regarding the wear of the PFU. I think it's time to go out on the limb and pick the fruit that we earned. Join me and BE RELENTLESS!

The Rumor Round-Up

Story by
Task Force Falcon Public Affairs Officer

Q: I heard that we will be able to wear civilian clothes. Is that true?

A: The truth is that civilian clothes are authorized every other saturday from 1800 till 0200 starting on August 11.

You will be able to wear civilian clothes at Camp Bondsteel, Camp Montieth, Vitina, and in Pristina. However, when traveling outside the camps, you will still need to be in BDUs with your battle rattle.

You will still need to keep accountablility for your weapon. Military courtesy and discipline standards will also remain in effect.

Falcon Flier

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Pvt. Rocky Rodriquez (right) and Sgt. Tony VanDuyn, both with B Company, 11th Engineers, set up explosives during a range exercise July 30 at Camp Bondsteel. B Company is based out of Camp Monteith and is in charge of operating six checkpoints in Gjilan/Gnjilane while providing security to the city.

Creating force protection is their job

Story by
Spc. Engels Tejada
358th MPAD

KFOR soldiers were patrolling their sector when they encountered a triple-stranded concertina wire barricade on the road. Measuring approximately 20 feet, the barricade contained hair-thin threads that if touched, would detonate several anti-personnel mines.

A soldier threw a grappling hook into the obstacle, and as he pulled it away, a small mine went off. The explosion resulted in no casualties. Immediately, the squad on patrol reported to headquarters, and the second platoon of B Company of the 11th Engineer Battalion was sent to aid the soldiers. Within minutes, the "Mighty Deuce" arrived on site.

The first squad used the grappling hook again to clear part of the area. Then, two soldiers low-crawled to the obstacle, and set up a Bangalore in the middle of the wire. The Bangalore, a cylinder-shaped container filled with 10 pounds of C4 explosive, was triggered from a tank-like armored vehicle called the "track" that was parked approximately 150 meters away.

Within minutes, the path was cleared, and the patrolling squad carried on with its mission. While the Mighty Deuce had succeeded in clearing the way, they were not done for the day. Immediately after this incident they were ordered to assist yet another unit.

This time, they had to make it impossible for hostile units to follow a given route. The soldiers set up several blocks of explosives on the road, and created large enough holes to prevent vehicles from passing by. The engineers then laid several feet of concertina wire across the path.

It is all part of a hypothetical scenario. Thankfully, soldiers of B Company have not faced such challenges, though their services have been used to clear minefields during their six-month deployment to Kosovo.

However imaginary, the scenario is not far from real situations in which the skills of the Mighty Deuce would be necessary. While in Kosovo, for example, the soldiers of B Company as well as soldiers of other engineer companies have filled a wide spectrum of obligations, ranging from the building of local structures to laying out hundreds of meters of concertina wire to maintaining security in cities throughout the region.

"Engineers have such a wide variety of missions," said 1st Lt. Robert Peterson, platoon leader of the Mighty Deuce. He said that his platoon is currently operating six checkpoints in the city of Gjilan/Gnjilane, the largest city in the U.S. sector in Kosovo. They also are in charge of patrolling the city regularly, averaging nine to 11-hour shifts daily.

The peacekeeping mission in Kosovo has required little of the engineers' war fighting skills described at first. However, Peterson said he feels it is important to continue to train in those areas to maintain the high proficiency level required of combat engineers.

"My primary goal is to keep my platoon up to their combat engineer abilities," said Peterson during a training exercise at Camp Bondsteel.

The soldiers were given the opportunity to detonate hundreds of pounds of explosives and to use the grappling hook.

"This is what I was born to do," said Pfc. Anthony Powers, combat engineer with the Mighty Deuce. "I get to blow up stuff. I get to drive the 'track.' My family is insured, and I am making lots of money here in Kosovo."

Pvt. Rocky Rodriquez, combat engineer with B Company 11th Engineers, practices using a grappling device during an exercise at Camp Bondsteel "EOD Hill" July 30. Rodriquez said he has only been in the Army for eight months.

Wordsearch: War is great, but only in movies

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O M A G T B N U L D N H S H D K H W Q C Q Z B Y G V L T V I R H A B E E N I F R

WORD KEY:

ABRIDGETOFAR
APOCALYPSENOW
BACKTOBATAAN
BATTLEOFBRITAIN
BATTLEOFTHEBULGE
BLOODALLEY
BORNONTHEFOURTHOFJULY
BRIDGEONTHERIVERKWAI
COURAGEUNDERFIRE
DARBYSRANGERS
DESERTRATS
FLYINGLEATHERNECKS
FLYINGTIGERS
FORCETENFROMNAVARONE
GLORY
GOODMORNINGVIETNAM
GOTELLTHESPARTANS
GREENBERETS
GUNSOFNAVARONE
HAMBURGERHILL
HEARTBREAKRIDGE
HELLCATSOFTHENAVY
ICESTATIONSEBRA
KELYSHEROES
KINGRAT
MASH
NAVYSEALS
NOTIMEFORSERGEANTS
OPERATIONPETTICOAT
PATRIOTGAMES
PATTON
PLATOON
PORKCHOPHILL
PRIVATEBENJAMIN
RUNSILENTRUNDEEP
SANDSOFIWOJIMA
SAVINGPRIVATERYAN
SOUTHPACIFIC
THEALAMO
THEBEAST

Falcon's force

How do you feel about the last three months?

Spc. Pasquale Pietrefesa
ground surveillance
311th Military Intelligence Battalion, Vitina

"The things that keep me going out here are the memories I have. Going golfing with my dad or taking my nieces to the movies."

Sgt. Amar Shine, dismount team leader with 3-7th Infantry Regiment, Montieth

"I feel that it's been worth us being here because I feel like we are a big contribution to this country, and the locals respect us and look up to us for the job we do."

Staff Sgt. Richard Stiver
infantryman
2-502nd Infantry Regiment, Klokot

"I feel we're making somewhat of a difference. I believe we've been providing a safe and secure environment to the best of our abilities."

Spc. Michael Breder
ground surveillance
311th Military Intelligence Battalion, Vitina

"We got better at our job. It makes six months go by fast. I think it's gone by pretty quick."

Spc. Dennis Brenneman, field artillery soldier with 1-41st Field Artillery, Montieth

"I met new poeple, and I learned about new cultures. I learned how to speak a little bit of Albanian, but I've missed my family and friends."

Sgt. Steven Banks
ground surveillance
311th Military Intelligence Battalion, Vitina

"I felt it's been an enlightening experience. The people of Kosovo are very friendly. We've had a lot of challenging real-world missions."

UAE soldiers show TFF how to celebrate

Story and photos by
Spc. Marshall Thompson
358th MPAD

Special Forces soldiers from the UAE display their martial arts skills for the celebration.

A soldier from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) went flying through the air only to find that when he landed he was pinned underneath another solider with a vicious knife. The knife flashed halogen-white as it rocketed downward and stuck in the ground only inches from the pinned soldier.

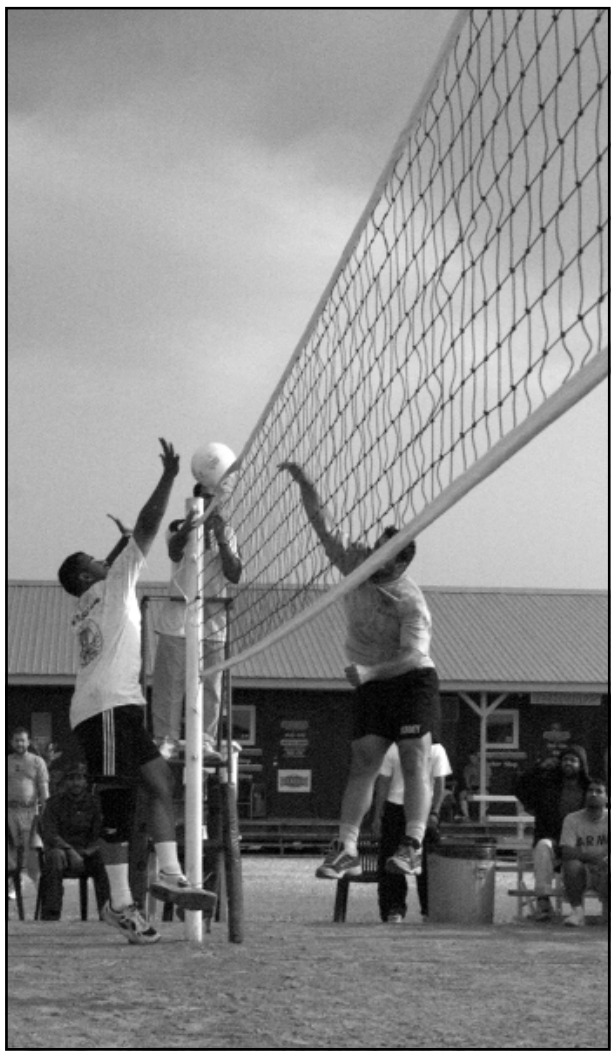
The crowd erupted in applause for this adrenaline-filled martial arts performance by the UAE Special Forces during their celebration of the day the leader of their country, Sheikh Zayed, took control in 1966.

Soldiers from different countries on Camp Bondsteel all gathered together to celebrate with the UAE soldiers. The festivities started out with a volleyball tournament. The UAE soldiers, who are especially gifted at the sport, ended up having the two final teams, the Special Operations Group (SOG) and the Night Falcons. Task Force Falcon Headquarters and Headquarters Company team did the best of anybody else coming in third overall.

In the first game the Night Falcons took complete control and devastated the SOG 25-11. The second game seemed to be going the same way, but then SOG struck back with some smashing spikes. Their rally gained them the victory of the second game 25-21. They entered the third game tied one game each. SOG put up an excellent fight, but in the end the Night Falcons won the game 25-12 and took first place.

Weather made the game harder to play. Winds and rain kept the players constantly on their toes. With such inclement weather, it was surprising to find that spectators showed up for the game.

"I came to show support for the UAE because this is like our Independence Day and they were there for ours," said Sgt. Shawn Love, a narcotics dog handler with the 716th Military Police Battalion and a member of the third place volleyball team.



A member of the SOG team smashes the ball over the net against the Night Falcons.

Right after the final volleyball game was finished, the party began up at the Camp Bondsteel Theater where there were beautiful displays of pictures and items from UAE. UAE soldiers greeted everybody at the doors and took them on tours to explain all the photos and share their culture.

"I learned a lot by looking at all the pictures and from them greeting us at the door. It was a good opportunity to talk with them and ask questions," said Spc. April Taase, a topographical analyst with the 61st Engineer Detachment.

The UAE soldiers were as happy about sharing their culture as the other soldiers were about hearing it.

"I'm feeling great. I'm sharing my home and my culture," said Sanad Nasser Rashid, an aircraft engineer with the 6-9th squadron of the UAE Air Defense.

A variety of different pastries and desserts were available for everybody to try. Some UAE soldiers walked around with burning incense while others offered hot tea.

The celebration kicked off with the UAE national anthem and speeches from their military leaders here in Kosovo. Brig. Gen. Bill David, Multinational Brigade East commander, was present and said a few words as well.

"Multinational Brigade East is not only a U.S show. The strength of this brigade comes from its diversity. We are proud to serve with the UAE," David said.

"We enjoy being with the U.S. Army," said Rashid. "We are not different. We are the same. We do the same things and we target the same things."

The spirit of cooperation and celebration permeated the mood the entire night. After the spectacular display of martial arts some poetry was recited. The crowd cheered between the stanzas even if they didn't understand Arabic. After that, a few poems were read in English. Then it was time for the dancing.

UAE soldiers danced and stomped to the eastern beat as a soldier carying a stick lead them around the stage. Before long, U.S. soldiers as well as David had joined the queue. What they lacked in rhythm and talent they made up with energy. The crowd loved it and did not hold back its applause of approval.

Another traditional dance followed, this time with white robes and drums. Two parallel columns formed and a chant was echoed from side to side. Soldiers danced in a circle between the two columns jumping and throwing M-4 rifles and swords into the air.

When the rifles stopped flying, the awards were given for the volleyball tournament. TFF HHC team was given the third-place trophy and received their medals from the ranking UAE officer. In turn, the SOG team and team Night Falcon were awarded by David.

Even though not everybody was able to get a medal, they still were able to learn more about the UAE and help them celebrate.

"I think it's a good opportunity for us all to see. In a regular field environment we wouldn't have a chance to see them dance and see a little of their culture," Taase said.

Brig. Gen. Bill David, MNB (E) commander and Lt. Col Torrey, participate in a traditional dance.

TFF soldiers keep a close eye on church

Story and photo by
Spc. Maria Jaramillo
358th MPAD

Religion. What it can mean for people is as varied as history itself. Americans have enshrined in their constitution the right to religious freedom, and in Kosovo, soldiers are also helping to protect the religious rights of the citizens.

Task Force Falcon soldiers guard churches from extremist attacks. Soldiers in Rotation 3A have taken a step out of their specialized jobs in the military to keep protecting these places of worship from future harm.

"We have these little kids that hang around here all the time, and they tell us that as soon as we leave the church is going to get blown up," said Spc. Kenyatta M. James, a light wheel mechanic with Service Battery, 1-41st Field Artillery.

James was referring to the Orthodox Catholic church in Binaq/Binac. The church performs services for the village's minority Catholic population, and the grounds also contain graves dating back to 1950. The church has been attacked each time there was no KFOR presence. Now the service battery protects the building 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"We are here to keep people from vandalizing it –from blowing it up," James said.

The current guards originally came to Kosovo as mechanics, cooks and technicians. They began their deployment performing those separate missions but were ready to adapt to changing mission requirements.

"I would rather be out here, because here all the training we received back in the rear feels useful. I like my normal job, but if I'm already in Kosovo, I'm glad I'm doing something like security that helps keep the local civilians safe," said Spc. Edmond Lubin, a logistical specialist also with Service Battery, 1-41st Field Artillery.

Service battery soldiers also perform presence patrols in the nearby village, and they protect more than buildings. Recently, on a patrol through Binaq/Binac, the soldiers were alerted to a situation one of the citizens was experiencing.

"We were in a town, when an Albanian man was complaining about the barbed wire surrounding a house being too close to the road. When we went to talk to the Serbian man who owned the house, we found out that he had had rocks thrown at his house. One of his windows was completely broken out," said Xhavit (David) Berisha, a translator with the soldiers out in Binaq/Binac.

Now that the soldiers are aware of the potential harm to the citizen, they can better plan the strength of military presence in the village.

"We patrol the area more now. There haven't been any more incidents," James said.

While the soldiers do their job and the church stays protected, everyone involved will benefit. The Catholic minority will have a protected place to worship, and soldiers can feel good about providing the security that will eventually lead to a strong, peaceful Kosovo.

Two TFF soldiers keep a constant vigil on the church in Binaq/Binac.

KFOR teams up with TMK to bring medical assistance to Kosovo

Story and photo by
Spc. Travis Bascom
358th MPAD

A medical civic action program (MEDCAP) was held in the town of Vlastica by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3-7th Infantry Regiment, and members of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC or TMK).

The MEDCAP was held in the town to reward the citizens for the peaceful integration of the Albanian town, Vlastica, and the Serbian town, Pasjane after the recent opening of Route Red, said 1Lt. Christopher Carlson, medical platoon leader for HHC, 3-7th Infantry Regiment.

The KPC worked along side the U.S. soldiers, taking vital signs of 126 patients, including a few refugees from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The original plan was for the American soldiers to give the KPC medics a quick class and then have them begin taking vital signs, but the KPC medics caught on so quickly that no class was needed.

"The TMK hit the ground and took off running," said Pfc. Dionisio Hyman, a medic for HHC of 3-7th Infantry Regiment. "You can tell that they have prior medical knowledge.

"While I was screening one patient they started screening another," said Hyman. "These guys are good."

The MEDCAP provided minor medical aid and optometry assistance in an area where the health care system has become very limited, said Carlson.

"This helps the people a lot," said Bislim Bislimi, a medic with the TMK. "It's a big point that both the United States and the TMK are working together."

"I enjoy it," said Capt. Mark Friberg. "It definitely helps the people. We get to make a difference. I wish we could do more."

Two TMK medics talk with a woman holding her child during the screening process.

Medics and surgeons reach out to Kosovo

Story by Sgt. Gary Peterson
358th MPAD

A woman lay in her bed, writhing in anguish. The disease had already done its worst. Pain and waiting are all that seemed to remain in this woman's life.

She hardly had the endurance to stand, let alone walk to a local clinic to find treatment for her pain. In a part of the world with little to no medical care at all, a house call couldn't even be imagined. It was when all hope was lost, a couple of heroes arrived.

"For some of the elderly or particularly ill people, it's too much of a hardship coming up and down these hills," said Maj. John Palmer, a flight surgeon with the 2-17th Cavalry attached to Task Force Sabre.

On August 7, a resident of Sevce/Sefce came to a local medical civic action program (MEDCAP) to get help for his bedridden mother. He told Palmer that his mother was very ill and could not walk to the MEDCAP.

Palmer then went to visit the woman at her home. There he examined her, and found that she possibly suffered from medistatic cancer. He then gave her some medication to help relieve the pain. After Palmer completed his visit with the woman, he instructed her son on where to go for further treatment.

"It's stuff like this, helping people, that makes you proud to wear this uniform," said Spc. Antonio Cartagena, a combat medic with the 2-17th Cavalry. "Our goal is to see as many patients as we can and treat as many people as best we can with the time and equipment we have."

Sgt. Andre Brown, a combat medic with the 2-17th Cavalry, said they had seen as many as 80 patients that day.

"As far as my job in Kosovo, I think the MEDCAPs are the highlight because that's where we are doing something that makes a difference," Palmer said.

Brown explained that MEDCAPs are also a good way to better relations with the population of Kosovo and to let them know that we are here to help them.

After all the patients have been seen, those that helped with the MEDCAP gave one more gift to the community they served. As a sign of friendship, clothes were donated to the local community for those in need.

"Some of the cynics may argue, 'are you making a long term impact?' To that I can't say yes or no, but I know we are making a short-term improvement to the peoples quality of life, and we're making this place a safe and secure environment," Palmer said.

A TFF soldier gives a local doctor toys for kids.

Task Force Falcon searches for key to safe and secure Kosovo

Story and photo by
Spc. Marshall Thompson
358th MPAD

"I hope you like Italian music," said Spc. Daniel Thompson as he started to play a recording of Louis Prima singing "Domenic, the Italian Christmas Donkey."

The unlikely music accompanied Thompson, a military policeman with the 340th Military Police Company, and his fellow military policemen off Camp Bondsteel on their way to perform a cordon and search in a remote Kosovar village.

The convoy arrived outside the city early and waited in the morning blackness for the time to begin the search. More soldiers showed up as the dawn approached and finally it was time to begin.

As the first rays of sun filtered through the mountains on the sleeping village, they cast light on small houses, haystacks and teams of military police with dogs.

Two Apache helicopters hovered above the scene, adding yet another bizarre image to what previously could have been a backdrop for a Balkan version of Little House on the Prairie.

Upon discovering the arrival of the troops some villagers attempted to run.

There are many reasons for running, but fearing the soldiers shouldn't be one of them. Thompson said they try to be especially reverent to the people they search.

"It's important to be nice to the people. If you move stuff around, put it back where you found it. Don't leave everything a mess. Be considerate," Thompson said describing how to conduct a search properly.

Sgt. James Volpe, a military policeman with the 551st Military Police, climbs up to inspect a small shack during a cordon and search the morning of Aug. 2.

In fact, the reason for the searches is to protect the people of the villages. The searches discover weapons, ammunition, and other items that might pose a threat to the safety of everybody in the region.

"We don't want them [different ethnic groups] to fight at all. That's why we're disarming them. It shows that we're not taking sides, and we're disarming both sides. We want them both to live," said Spc. Andrew Youssef, a military policeman from the 340th Military Police Company.

"If we can search and get the weapons out of their hands it will be hard for them to fight and kill each other," Thompson said.

The citizens of the Kosovo region are not the only people who are put in danger by the unregistered weapons that these searches confiscate.

"We're here to search all the houses and make sure there are no illegal weapons. The weapons are not only a threat to the Serbian and Albanian populations, but a danger to KFOR soldiers," Youssef said.

The KFOR soldiers conducting the search have given up their homes and personal safety and comfort to make sure there is safety in Kosovo –even in drowsy mountain hamlets.

"I love it here, but I miss my family," Youssef said. "But it's a noble cause –promoting democracy, freedom and peace."

"I think what we're doing over here is really nice. When you walk down the streets and all the little kids are coming to you and slapping you five, it's a good feeling," Thompson said.

At the end of the search, the solders went through all the houses, fields and possible hiding places. Only a few items were turned up. Perhaps the situation in Kosovo is already improving.

above: Flaming battons marked one of the highlights of the Variety Show performed by the cheerleaders.

left and upper far right: The Redskinettes visit Kosovo as part of an MWR tour that included visiting Iceland and Bosnia. The ladies left their daily occupation, which range from computer programmer to public relations student, to visit soldiers and "bring to them a little bit of home."

upper near right and lower far right: The Washington Redskins Cheerleaders require the participation of soldiers during their Variety Show at Camp Bondsteel and Camp Monteith.

right: While in Kosovo, the "First Ladies of Football" also performed at Vitina and Camp Able Sentry and visited several remote sites including the newly opened Observation Point Power.

The First Ladies of Football raise morale in Kosovo

Story and photos by
Spc. Engels Tejeda
358th MPAD

Stages throughout Multinational Brigade East were "on fire" August 1-4 as the Washington Redskins Cheerleaders invaded the camps and left the soldiers practically numb during their hour and a half Variety Show.

The cheerleaders put on an incredibly diverse show that some soldiers are calling "the most fun [we've] had since we got here."

Kimberly Chenowith, a Redskinette, said the goal of the show was to "let [the soldiers] know that back at home we are still thinking about them.

"What makes it all worthwhile is that we know that for that hour and a half of the show [the soldiers] are not thinking about their jobs and they are relaxed and having fun," said Chenowith. "I think it shows them that they are always in our hearts."

Chenowith said the 19-day tour which included visiting military installations in Iceland and Bosnia, had a lot of personal meaning to her, since she grew up in a military family.

"I grew up in a Navy family. I was born in Guam and used to live in Hawaii, Florida, Main, Spain and Virginia. My brother-in-law is currently in the Army, and he flies Apache helicopters... Being able to see all the soldiers and actually visit places where I've had family members stationed is really an incredible experience," Chenowith said.

Popular with the soldiers was Shaunte Usual, who was visiting Kosovo for the second time as part of the Armed Forces Entertainment tour. Usual described her previous visit to KFOR.

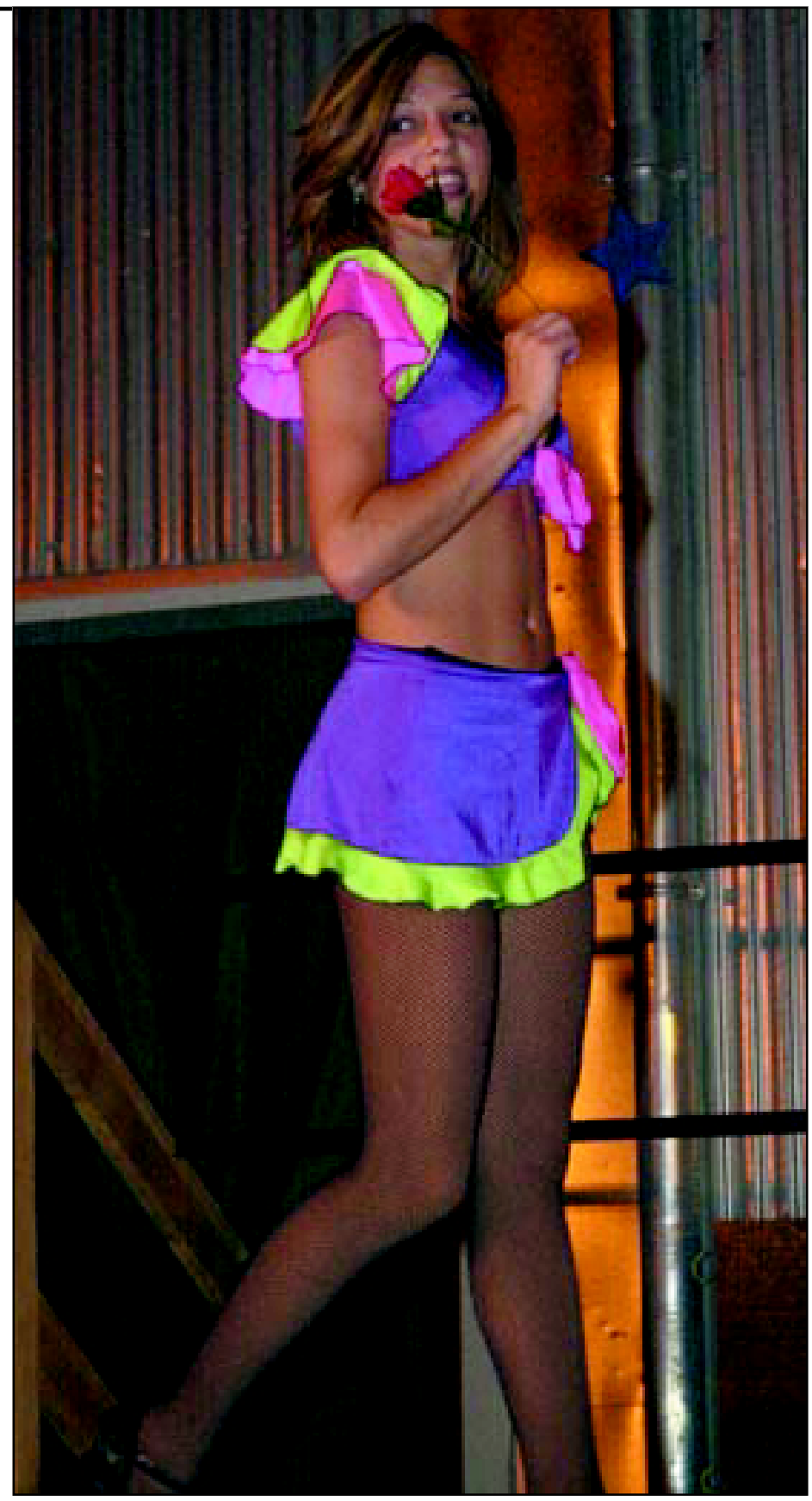
"The last time I was here in Kosovo, it was shortly after the war ended; and there was definitely not this much build up. [There were] maybe two sea huts, covered in dirt... soldiers were very excited that [we came]," Usual said.

Usual said she remembers her previous visit boosted the morale of many soldiers, and that motivated her to come back.

While in Kosovo, the "First Ladies of Football" performed at Camp Bondsteel, Camp Monteith, Camp Able Sentry and at Vitina. The girls also visited several hard sites to include the newly opened Observation Point Power.

Capt. Robert Dye, Commander of A Company, 3-69th Armor, summarized the importance of the cheerleaders visit in one sentence:

"I have a renewed interest in America every time these girls come here."



Legal

What to do about all that debt during deployments

Story by
Cpt. Matthew W. Caspari
Cheif, Client Services

Dealing with our financial affairs is sometimes difficult on a deployment. There are many ways to arrange for payment of your bills while you are gone, such as leaving your checkbook with your spouse or a family member, start an allotment, send payments directly from Kosovo, and so on. Regardless of your chosen method, sometimes bills are not paid on time or in full or in some cases, you may even receive notice that you are delinquent on an account that you did not authorize or even know about. The following are several questions frequently asked by my legal assistance clients followed by a brief explanation of the issues involved. It is important to be aware of your rights in order to avoid negative marks on your credit report and more serious problems such as repossessions.

Q: What Can I Do If I Receive A Debt Collection Notice While I Am Deployed In Kosovo?

A: There are several federal statutes that protect consumers in the area of debt collection and credit reporting.

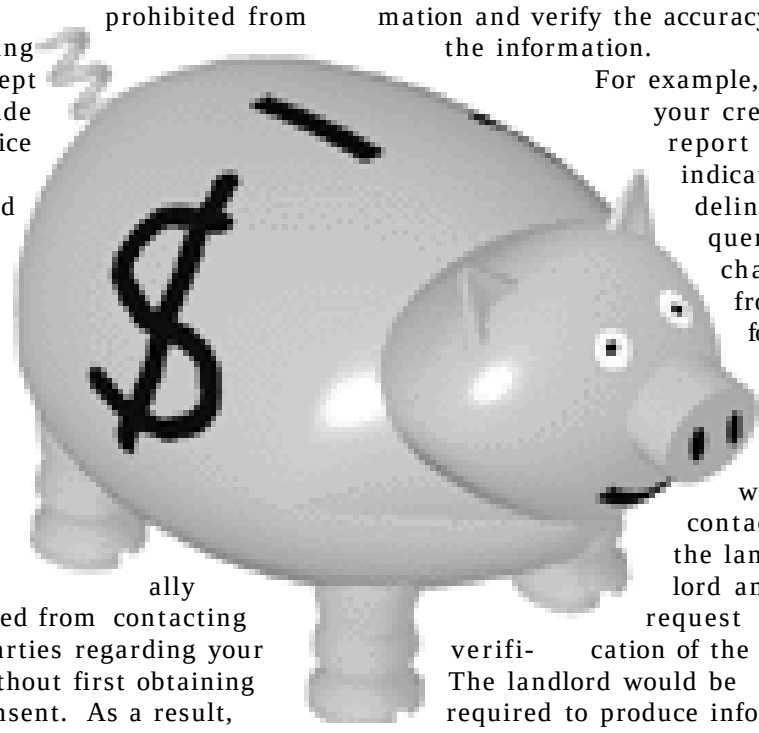
If you ever receive a debt collection notice, chances are that you can avail yourself of the protections of these laws.

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act regulates the conduct of debt collection agencies and provides many protections to the consumer. The most important is the right to challenge the legitimacy of a purported debt. This is an important yet little known right.

The Legal Assistance Office can draft and send a letter to whatever agency is attempting to collect the debt and demand that they verify it by sending proper documentation indicating the legitimacy of the debt.

Verification may include the copy of the contract or financing agreement and should also include a copy of all payments received on the account.

A collection agency must suspend collection activities against a consumer once a request for verification has been received until they provide the proper information. After that, they are prohibited from contacting you except to provide you notice of their intended actions in pursuit of collection.



In addition, they are generally prohibited from contacting third parties regarding your debt without first obtaining your consent. As a result, many agencies run afoul of this law when they contact your Commander or First Sergeant.

Although businesses collecting on their own behalf do not fall under this statute, they sometimes fall under similar state laws, which generally impose the same requirements.

Q: What If There Is A Mistake On My Credit Report or An Account That I Dispute?

A: The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act protects consumers in relation to their credit reports. The statute provides many protections including the right to dispute charges on your credit report, request an investigation and the ability to attach a brief statement to your credit report regarding disputed charges.

If you need to correct your credit report or dispute the accuracy of an account, you can write to the three major credit-reporting agencies (CRAs), Trans Union, Experian and Equifax, and request that they investigate the disputed account. Generally, the investigation requires the agency to contact the creditor or debt collection company that supplied the information and verify the accuracy of the information.

For example, if your credit report indicates a delinquent charge from a former landlord, the CRA would contact the landlord and request verification of the debt. The landlord would be required to produce information or documents necessary to demonstrate the existence of the debt, such as a signed lease.

If he or she could not substantiate the existence of the debt, federal law requires the CRA to remove the derogatory information from your report.

In any event, the CRA will notify you of the results of their investigation, and if there is still a dispute the CRA should allow you to submit a brief statement and attach that statement to your credit report.

Q: What If I Become The Victim Of Identity Theft?

A: Discovering an unauthorized charge on your credit report is a serious problem. It could be the first sign of identity theft. It's important to seek legal consultation as soon as you discover the problem. If you are a victim you should do the following immediately:

1. Contact the fraud departments of each of the CRAs and report that your identity has been stolen. Since institutions must access your credit report in order to extend new credit, ask the CRA to add a "fraud alert" notice on your file so that no new credit will be granted without your personal approval.

2. For any accounts that have been fraudulently accessed or opened, contact the fraud or security department of the appropriate creditors or financial institutions and close these accounts. Use passwords on any new accounts that you open and refrain from using your mother's maiden name.

3. File a report with your local police or the police where the identity theft took place. Most local police departments will agree to take a telephonic report and fax a copy of the report to you.

Maintain a copy of the report in case the bank, credit card company, or others need proof of the crime later on.

There are many resources available on-line addressing the issue of identity theft including the Federal Trade Commissions on-line resource located at www.consumer.gov/idtheft.

Due to the nature of the crime, time is of the essence in contacting the CRAs and the financial institutions involved. The Legal Assistance Office can assist you as well.

If you have any additional questions regarding the issues discussed in this article, please visit the Legal Assistance Office located near the TFF TOC at Camp Bondsteel in building 1340A, or in the Striker Hall at Camp Monteith.

Observation Point Power open for business

Story and photo by
Spc. Travis Bascom
358th MPAD

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held the first of August to promote the opening of the new Observation Point Power located between the towns of Cernica/Cernice and Gornji Livoc/ Livoc i Eperm.

The opening will allow for soldiers living in both the Cernica/Cernice and Gornji Livoc/ Livov i Eperm areas to relocate to the new facility while still providing an adequate protection force for the outlying area.

"They [Kosovars] hate to see us leave because we have established such a rapport," said Capt. Kelvin Brown, commander of B Company, 3-69th Armor. "It's a great facility that will provide safety for our soldiers."

"This is a big change for the people of Gornji Livoc/Livoc i Eperm and Cernica/ Cernice, seeing us move out of town. For the next few days, we'll be reassuring them that there isn't going to be any change in terms of our presence and commitment," said Lt. Col. David Bishop, commander of 3-69th Armor.

Local civilians employed by Brown and Root with support from the 11th Engineer Battalion constructed the observation point in six weeks.

The location contains living quarters, a dining facility, weight room and a recreation room.

"We hope the soldiers find comfort and shade here," said Butch Gatlin, supervisor for Brown and Root.

A soldier cuts the ribbon on the new facility.

The new site is located at a high elevation level and could serve to promote training and communication needs.

"It is a symbol of the commitment of U.S. Forces in Kosovo," said Brig. Gen. Bill David, commander of Multinational Brigade East who also attended the ceremony. "It is our hope that our continued cooperation will allow us to progress the peace process."

Mechanics keep TFF running smoothly

Story by Spc. Engels Tejeda
358th MPAD

Driving around a region where many of the roads are full of bone-jarring potholes and overly aggressive drivers presents a dangerous and destructive atmosphere for KFOR soldiers. From vehicle breakdowns to lethal rollovers, KFOR has seen all sorts of road incidents.

Taking a measure of safety, each vehicle, be it a light wheel HMMWV or a heavy tank, is periodically inspected by battalion motor pool personnel throughout the task force.

During dispatch procedures, highly trained mechanics attempt to prevent the disastrous accidents from happening and fix vehicle damage that has already occurred.

"The dispatch process is important because as soldiers drive their vehicles, discrepancies happen while on the road," said Sgt. Tyrone Major, squad leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company maintenance, 3-7th Infantry Regiment.

"As mechanics, we are trained to identify these problems and fix them; such as the truck we just got out of here. It had a whole in the break line," said Major while working on a vehicle at the 3-7th Infantry Regiment motor pool, Camp Monteith. "That could've killed a person. If we didn't have this (dispatch) process, that would not have been identified and the driver could have been in an incident out on the road were he would try to push his breaks and went slamming into another vehicle or off the road somewhere."

Dispatches are generally held weekly for every vehicle in the task force. According to Sgt. Jonathan Uyeda, shop foreman at the motor pool for 3-7th Infantry Regiment. His team dispatches between 82 and 105 vehicles weekly.

That is in addition to doing other duties that include servicing equipment, providing task force recovery assets (37 since they arrived in the spring), and even pulling security for gate 1.

Uyeda said his team is doing well at accomplishing its important tasks. However, they also face tremendous difficulties, the most prominent is the lack of personnel.

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hopkins, maintenance team chief with HHC, 3-7th Infantry Regiment, explains the problem at hand. "(My team) has done above and beyond what they are requested to do because we are so short of mechanics. The average mechanic for a team has five to seven jobs per week, where these guys are doing 21 to 25 jobs per week per man."

Uyeda said the shortage of personnel could be attributed to a number of factors including the frequent deployments and field hours that his team faces.

Since October, the shop has spent 142 days in the field participating in exercises such as gunneries and National Training Center events that last 30 and 45 days respectively.

But the most probable reason, he said, is that the civilian market offers large sums of money for the same or similar jobs.

He points out cases like Hopkin's, where a civilian company offered $70,000 per year to hire him as a manager. "The average mechanic would make $25 per hour out there," Hopkins said.

While the soldiers know that the amount of work and the difficulties coupled with it are making a stressful environment, they developed their own techniques to maintain the strength within.

"They manage pretty well. They use the facilities on camp and that makes it a bit easier," said Hopkins.

Spc. Victor Paris, a Bradley mechanic with HHC maintenance with the 3-7th Infantry Regiment, said that he and other soldiers try to relax by going to the gym or the movies.

Sgt. Todd Black, also a Bradley mechanic with HHC maintenance of the 3-7th Infantry Regiment, said jokingly, "Sometimes we just dress up at night." Then in a more serious note he added, "You just have to make friends out here. We are getting through it with a lot of camaraderie."

When asked why they choose to join their nation's Army as opposed to selecting the attractive incomes offered by the civilian market, one soldier answered: "because of honor."

"I have a lot of military heritage in my family and I make my wife proud everyday," said Sgt. Scott Heaton, a Bradley mechanic with HHC maintenance with the 3-7th Infantry Regiment. He said that his wife Tammy "understands that it's a very hard job, she appreciates the fact that we will put our lives on the line for our country." Heaton had been previously deployed to Kuwait and re-enlisted in December.

Another reason for serving is the security that comes with the job, said Major. "What kept me here was the fact that I have a family and the security that the military provides as far as you'll always have a place to stay. They help you take care of your family whether you deploy or not. That's what has kept me in, the stabilization that the military offers for your family."

Major, and all the soldiers at the shop, said that their families were very supportive of them, and that has certainly helped more than anything else.

"My family, that's the only thing I miss. I don't miss my car; I don't miss anything else, just my family," said Major of wife Aiysha, and children Khaliah, 5, Khain and Niysha, both 6. "I know my wife is taking care of the kids and I just wish I was there to take care of her.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Greer

While on a mission in the "Chicken Leg" a soldier got stuck in a puddle of mud. The driver tries to pull out with the help of the Recovery Team of HHC of the 3-7th Infantry Regiment.

Raise the Roof competition brings out the big guns in Monteith

Story by Spc. Travis Bascom
358th MPAD

Nearly 15 soldiers gathered around a bench press. Some were drinking supplements while others jumped up and down trying to enhance their competitive edge as onlookers cheered the first "Raise the Roof" weight lifting competition held at Camp Monteith's fitness center.

The bench press competition divided participants into groups of 30-pound intervals where they had three chances to bench their desired weight, being able to increase the weight as they saw fit.

The winner, Sgt. Charles K. Hall, a tanker for B Company, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, weighing only 168 pounds, benched an incredible 365 pounds.

Hall lifted 197 pounds or 117 percent more than his body weight.

"It feels pretty good," said Hall. "It's one of the first goals I've accomplished over here. It's a lot of fun and it helps energize morale."

Hall contributes his success to "a lot of water and bread." For his herculean efforts, he won a Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) T-shirt.

At the next weight competition a more advanced formula will be used to determine the winner. Weight lifting competitions will be held monthly.

Lavon S. Wasburn, MWR specialist for Camp Monteith and civilian in charge of the competition, stressed the main purpose of the event is to have fun.

"It gives those that come in regularly a chance to show what they have worked so hard for," said Lavon.

"Come on out. It's about participation and representing your unit," he said.

Children help in the "The Great Cleanup"

Story and photo by
Spc. Maria Jaramillo
358th MPAD

A four-year-old child picks up trash from the littered ground in Kacanik. She was participating in the first ever Great Kacanik Cleanup on Friday.

Four-year-old Shyhreta struggled to lift the garbage bag filled with the trash she had collected with her younger brother Bekim. The two children staggered to a truck that waited a building away. They were spending their Saturday afternoon together with soldiers cleaning up the waste that lay around their home. This afternoon was the first ever "Great Kacanik Cleanup."

Soldiers from the 9th Psychological Operations Battalion working inside Kacanik decided to 'clean up' the city.

"When we first moved out here to Kacanik, the first thing we saw was all this trash around the area. We thought, 'This is terrible.' I mean, this is just not right," said Spc. Shaun P. Ulrich, a visual/audio electronic technician with the broadcast team of C Company, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion.

The group ran a local radio station and used the opportunity to launch a neighborhood cleanup activity that soon turned into "The Great Kacanik Cleanup."

"We asked, 'Is anybody interested in helping us cleanup,' and we got a good response. We started coordinating and it just kind of snowballed into The Great Kacanik Cleanup," Ulrich said.

The group picked the last Saturday of July and headed out at 10:00 a.m. with trash bags, latex gloves and a truck to fill up.

"We just kind of showed up ourselves and hoped that there would be enough people to cleanup, and now we're running out of trash bags and gloves," Ulrich said.

The response that day included almost over 50 children. Most children were so young that their hands only fit into the palm of the gloves provided. The areas that the soldiers wanted to focus that day were the village's bus station, parking lot and river.

"The kids are the future of Kosovo. If they start to realize that they need to keep this place clean, then the future is going to be better for Kosovo," Ulrich said.

The team of soldiers stayed out in Kacanik until they ran out of supplies. While their rotation in Kosovo is ending soon, they hope that while this was the first cleanup put together, it won't be the last.

"We hope to get the word out to everyone. Maybe other units could start something like this and get something really great started," said Spc. Nathan M. Lewis, a visual/audio electronic technician with the broadcast team of C Company, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion.

Tying up the trash, Spc. Nathan Lewis, a radio prgram specialist with the 9th Psychological Operations Battalion, continues to fill up a truck with the trash collected from the Great Kacanik Cleanup.

The littered ground of Kacanik was the focus of the Great Kacanik Cleanup Friday.

Chaplain's Corner

What type of legacy do we leave for those who follow?

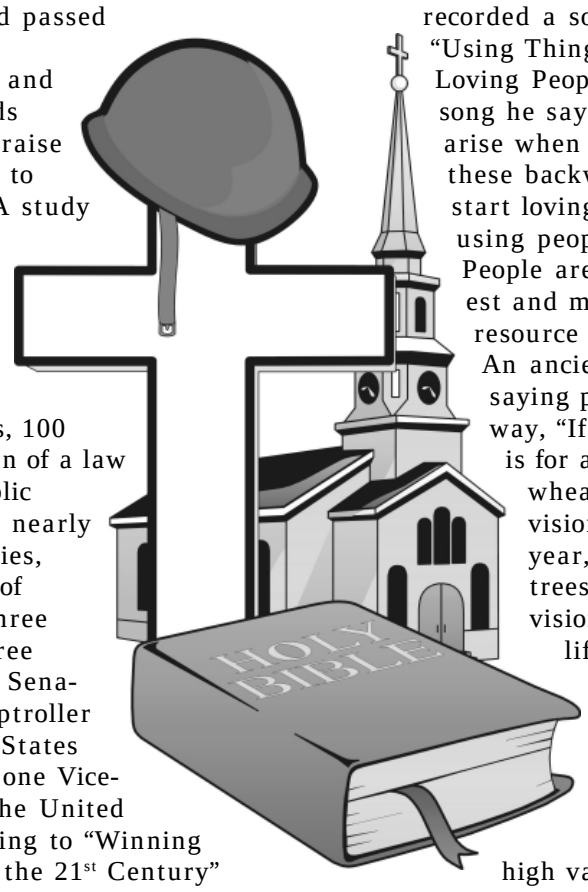
Story by Cpt. Timothy Stiers
1-41st Field Artillery
Battalion Chaplain

There is an old West Virginian folktale about a rural couple. They called the doctor in the night to deliver a baby. The farmhouse was converted into a makeshift delivery room. The doctor handed a lantern to the husband and asked him to hold it so the doctor could see.

After a baby boy was delivered, the doctor shouted for the new dad to hold the lantern up, as he delivered another baby, this time a girl. The new father was thrown into shock when the doctor again insisted that the light be held up again. He said, "We can't stop now, it looks like there's another one."

The shaky father then asked the doctor, "Do you think it's the light that's attracting them?"

We have the opportunity to impact the next century long after we pass off the scene. We leave a legacy to our children by our own life and what we consider to be important. There is no place in the home for the old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do." The values we live out in our lives will be communicated and passed on to others.



Jonathan and Sarah Edwards committed to raise their children to respect God. A study of their descendents reveal 13 college presidents, 65 professors, 30 judges, 100 lawyers, a dean of a law school, 80 public office holders, nearly 100 missionaries, three mayors of large cities, three governors, three United States Senators, one comptroller of the United States Treasury and one Vice-President of the United States, according to "Winning the Battle for the 21st Century" by Marshall Foster.

The amount of love in a home is not dependant on one's rank or the latest pay scale. The only need is determination on the part of parents to place the value of their children above their belongings. BJ Thomas once recorded a song entitled, "Using Things and Loving People." In this song he says problems arise when we get these backwards and start loving things and using people.

People are the greatest and most valuable resource we have. An ancient Chinese saying puts it this way, "If your vision is for a year, plant wheat. If your vision is for ten year, plant trees. If your vision is for a lifetime, plant people."

In the military, we place a high value on our soldiers and their families. Many resources are expended on Army Community Services and Morale, Welfare, & Recreation activities. AFTB (Army Family Team Building) is another example of the priority the Army places on our families. God also places a high value on our families and has a genuine concern for our morale. God desires our morale to be high and still be moral. The way we lift our morale should be moral. Whether our families are watching or not, they are affected by our actions. Are we being a good example for our families? Are we being men and women of integrity?

Psalms 127:3-5 reads, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."

When asked about the future, Tommy Lasorda once said he planned to work for the Los Angeles Dodgers even after he's dead, according to the Houston Chronicle March 6, 1996. He put it this way, "[I] told my wife to make sure the Dodger schedule is posted on my gravestone so that maybe someone comes by, sees it, and decides to go see a game." We will all leave a legacy of some type. What type of legacy will you leave?

U.S. Army Chaplains celebrate their 226th birthday in Kosovo

Story by 1st Sgt. Kerry Miller
358th MPAD

"Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition" was made famous by Chaplain Howell Forgey on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, as he encouraged antiaircraft gunners blasting away at the enemy during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Chaplains have stood beside soldiers through gunfire and peace, rain or shine for the last 226 years. Gen. George Washington stated, "The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger."

On July 27, chaplains from throughout KFOR were joined by Brig. Gen. Bill David, Multinational Brigade East commander, to fellowship and celebrate the 226th Birthday of the US Army's Chaplaincy.

The Army's Chaplaincy was officially recognized by the Continental Congress on July 29 1775, and on the same date in 1986 it was official changed to the Chaplain Corps Regiment.

"The Chaplain's Corps is the first Corps of the United States Army," said David. "It's even older than the Infantry."

The roles of soldiers have changed throughout history, but the Army Chaplains have not.

"The Chaplain's mission is to provide religious support to a larger, more diverse population of soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Charles Ferrell, Task Force Falcon's Chaplain Assistant.

Throughout history, the way chaplains have performed their mission has kept up with the changing needs of the Army, from having voluntary assistants, to creating a Chaplains Assistant job title in the early 1950s, to the organization of the Unit Ministry Team currently used in the Army today.

"Members of the Chaplains Corps have followed troops from Yorktown, to the sands of low Jima, across the 38th parallel, through the rice paddies of Vietnam, under the blackened skies of Kuwait, and to civil-war-torn villages of Kosovo."

-- 1st Sgt. Kerry Miller

"There have been times when chaplains carried weapons," said Chaplain Len Kircher Task Force Falcon Sr. Chaplain. "This is only one of the small changes throughout the history of the Chaplains Corps."

Members of the Chaplain's Corps have followed troops from Yorktown, to the sands of Iow Jima, across the 38th parallel, through the rice paddies of Vietnam, under the blackened skies of Kuwait, and to the civil-war-torn villages of Kosovo. Chaplains have been in every aspect of the U.S. Military including the front lines.

"More chaplains were killed in World War I by percentage than infantrymen, " Kircher said.

One of the most famous incidents during World War II involving chaplains occurred on a troopship. On Feb. 3, 1943, a torpedo from a German submarine hit the Dorchester, which was carrying 904 men across the North Atlantic to England. Four of the 678 "lost in action" were Army chaplains, all lieutenants; Clark V. Poling, George Fox, John P. Washington and Alexander D. Goode, (two Protestants, one Catholic and one Jewish).

They heroically gave their life jackets to others, offered prayers of support, rigged rafts and then, in the face of death, held hands and prayed together as they went down with the ship. Their act captured the public's admiration and the chaplaincy's spirit.

The effect of chaplains and their assistants on the morale and well being of World War II soldiers was immeasurable. They lived and worked with their troops and provided strength, courage, help and consolation. Chaplains earned 2,453 decorations during WW II and 77 were killed.

The history of the Chaplains Corps is a history of great challenge, yet it is also a history of great opportunity. The future promises even greater challenges and opportunities.

So remember, wherever you go as a soldier there will always be a chaplain standing next to you, and his Boss on the other side.

2-502nd builds community bonds

Story by
Sgt. Gary Peterson
358th MPAD

Soldiers exit their vehicles and quickly take security positions around a schoolyard in Mogille/Mogila. These soldiers, armed with their weapons, stand on the lookout prepared for anything. Local children, full of curiosity, begin to gather at the entrance.

A sergeant, standing guard in full battle rattle at the gate, looks down at the gathered children of mixed ethnicities and says with a commanding voice, "Would you like to learn a new dance?"

Sgt. Eric McNamara, an infantryman from A Company of the 2-502nd Infantry Regiment, then began to teach the smiling children how to "raise the roof," and dance the "salsa dance." This was all part of a dedication ceremony for a new school playground donated by A Company of the 2-502nd Infantry Regiment to Mogille/Mogila.

"This is the first of 15 to 20 playgrounds that are going to be built throughout the Vitina Municipality," said Cpt. John Cox, A Company commander with the 2-502nd Infantry Regiment.

Cox said the playground equipment was donated to Mogille/Mogila to stand as a symbol that KFOR is vigilant in ensuring that Mogille/Mogila and other communities throughout the municipality are good places to live.

Both Mayors spoke of a continued peace and cooperation with each other and KFOR.

"We thank KFOR for making this playground possible," said Zoran Krcmarevic, one of Mogille/Mogila mayors. "I hope that this cooperation can continue in the future."

"This playground and this school bring us one step closer together," said Baftiar Arifi, Mogille/Mogila other mayor.

After speeches of peace and friendship given by Cox and the two mayors of Mogille/Mogila, both mayors cut the ribbon tied around the new equipment. All the children were then invited to go and play on the equipment.

Without a thought to what ethnic background their friends were, the children played together on the new equipment.

"This will serve as another sign to help bring the communities together," said Cox.

Sgt. Eric McNaman and Spc. Mark Bovenstein, both soldiers of A Company, 2-502nd Infantry Regiment, lead the local children of Mogila/Mogille in a new dance as part of a ceremony for the new school playground.

Educational plan and GI Bill can show you the money

Story by
Spc. Engels Tejada
358th MPAD

Wondering what to do with all the dough you are making in Kosovo? Well, besides purchasing that new ride or making the down payment on the crib of your dreams, you can also make an investment that will simply keep on giving.

Through an additional military benefit program, soldiers who qualified and have the Montgomery GI Bill are now capable of investing up to $600 into an educational plan, and get back as much as $5,400.

According to Byron Johnston, educational services specialist at Camp Monteith, the program was approved by congress in the fall of 2000, and it works as follows:

For every $20 the soldiers put into it, they get an extra $5 per month for the duration of their GI Bill. That is to say, if a soldier has not used any of his GI Bill, and he invests $600 into the program, in addition to the $650 he will get monthly, he will also get an additional $150. If the solider uses all 36 months, he will get a total of $5400 from the $600 he invested originally.

But suppose the solider has already used some of his GI Bill. Say he used nine months. Then, if that solider invests $600 into the program, he will get $4,050 back in addition to his normal GI Bill benefits, or $150 per month for 27 months.

While soldiers are encouraged to invest as much as possible, so long as they have more than four months left of their GI Bill benefits, it is not required that they invest all $600. Johnston said soldiers can invest as little as $20 if they so wish, but he reminds the soldiers that once you put the money in, you can only get it back by using the GI Bill.

According to Johnston the program was designed to be as simple and helpful as possible.

"It's really simple to enroll in the program," said Johnston. He explained that soldiers only need at most one hour of their time to get going. First, soldiers should see their education specialist, who will help them to fill out the proper form: DD Form 2366. Second, soldiers are directed to the finance office, where they arrange to make the payments.

"It takes me about ten minutes to explain the programs to the soldiers," said Johnston. "After that, it depends on how long the line at the finance office is," he added jokingly.

The program was created to add to the list of benefits that the military offers today for those pursuing an education, because "in our military, a more educated soldier is a better soldier," said Johnston.

"It's a way that the government can give more benefits to the soldiers. If you give them education, you increase their earning power. You can give them a bonus, and they'll spend it; but if you give them education that will increase their earning power, they will get more money (in the long run)," he said.

Soldiers who have the Veterans Educational Assistance Program are encouraged to transfer their benefits to the GI Bill by the Oct. 1 deadline so that they can also take advantage of the program.

Those who are serving at Camp Bondsteel can visit their education center and speak to Nancy Ray, and those at Monteith can speak to Johnston. Soldiers at the remote sites can request the visit of either representative through their chain of command.

So put a little bit aside from the pot of gold you are making, and in the end, you'll end up with a much larger fortune.

Nancy Ray leaves a legacy of education

Story and photos by
Maj. Norman Johnson
358th MPAD

Each morning between 4:00 and 4:30 a.m., Nancy gets up to start her work out. Her routine consists of either a run for an hour or weight lifting in the South Town Gymnasium. This routine may be familiar to many, but Nancy is 57 years old and she continues to exercise at least six days a week.

"I love running and I will continue to do it as long as my legs hold out," said Nancy Ray, Education Services Director for Task Force Falcon. "It's healthy for me. I encourage everyone to do something healthy for themselves daily."

Nancy has been running since 1981. She has competed in at least 19 half marathons (13 mile runs) since that time. Some of her marathons have taken place in Budahpest, Hungary; Istanbul, Turkey; at the Dead Sea in the Sinai, Germany, and Soto Cano Honduras.

"While in the Sinai, I also did a mini-triathlon consisting of swimming, biking and running," said Ray. "It took a lot of effort and training to accomplish."

At Camp Bondsteel, she has completed at least 12 ten-kilometer runs up radar hill, a grueling 12.2 percent grade that rises 149 feet in just a short quarter mile.

As Nancy gets older, she has a different perspective on running and some advice for those who will follow in her footsteps. She says she used to be competitive, but "now I run for fun, enjoyment, health and to just be with the soldiers. It's okay if you get behind so long as you finish the race."

After 17 months as the education director at Camp Bondsteel, Nancy will complete her assignment on Aug. 21. She will take a three and a half week vacation with her husband whom she hasn't seen in six months, and then she is back to work as the new education director for Task Force Eagle in Bosnia.

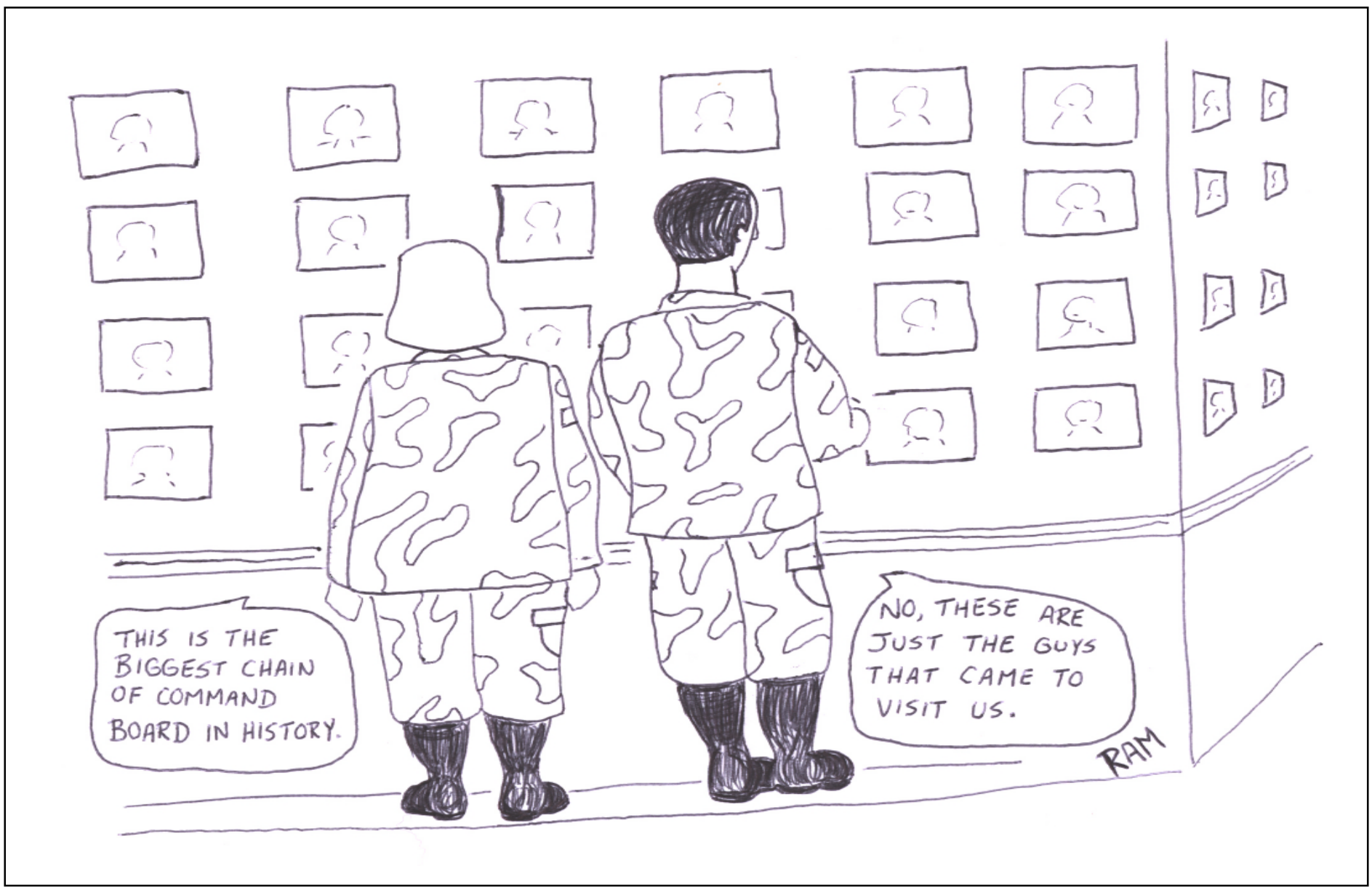
"I enjoy being with the soldiers in these remote areas because you become close with each other," said Ray. "There is a camaraderie with the military. I love it."

Nancy has served as the education director in Soto Cano, Honduras, the Sinai, in Bad Kruenachs, Germany, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo for the last ten years. She has been a civil servant for the U.S. government for 32 years and she has no plans of retiring anytime soon.

"I can retire anytime I want, but I feel so young and I want to keep going," said Nancy. "I enjoy being with soldiers, they make your time so treasurable."

From all of the soldiers here at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, we would like to say farewell Nancy, you will be missed. May God's speed be with you.

Nancy Ray, Educational Services Director for Task Force Falcon, smiles as she helps soldiers.



TFF soldiers battle on the soccer field

Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson

Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Constatino, light equipment platoon sergeant from B Company of the 37th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne), sustains a minor collision during the game.

Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson

Spc. Andrews Kyere, a patient administration specialist at Task Force Medical Falcon from the 399th Combat Support Hospital, makes a break for the goal during the soccer game against the Bushmasters. Task Force Med Falcon took the lead early scoring in the first minute of the game, but couldn't hold on and lost at the last minute 3-4.

Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson

Everyone holds their breath as Sgt. Schimelpfening, a preventive medince techinican at TFMF from the 399th CSH, takes a shot at an open net.

Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson

above: Staff Sgt. Adan Cavazos, the NCOIC of veterinary services and keeper for TFMF just misses a well placed corner kick by the Bushmasters.
right: Cpt. Yvonne Ivanov, the officer in charge of the physical therapy and forward for TFMF runs after a lob toward the goal.

Photo by Spc. Marshall Thompson