



KFOR CHRONICLE



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WORLD SKI COMPETITION

EVERYTHING HAS AN END
- ADVICE -
GOING HOME

RESIST THE COLDNESS
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RELIGIONS IN KOSOVO

As the Commander of Contingent 15 Multinational Battle Group – East (MNBG-E) I have the privilege of leading and working alongside very talented individuals while working to help Kosovo progress into a stable and safe place to live. Throughout my deployment, I have had to face many challenges, including the challenges that come with providing a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for the people of Kosovo. The important lesson I have learned along the way is that you can overcome challenges by building relationships.

I learned this lesson early in my deployment when my Army National Guard unit, the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade from Wisconsin, joined U.S. Army soldiers from 13 other military units to form the U.S. contingent of MNBG-E. Even though we are all Americans, we all came from different military and civilian backgrounds which presented a challenge. However, as we trained and worked together during our mobilization we formed a bond that united us into one cohesive unit.

I arrived in Kosovo feeling proud of the unified team I brought with me, but quickly realized I had more relationship building to do. I now had to incorporate my unit with our multinational NATO partners. I feared our cultural and language differences would make uniting difficult, but I soon discovered that we had more things in common than I expected. By finding these similarities and focusing on our

common goals we created a unified team.

Not long into my deployment, rumors began circulating amongst the local populace that the U.S. Government planned to close Camp Bondsteel. I knew I had to put an end to the false rumors, so I invited the media onto Camp Bondsteel to talk to them directly, answer their questions and let them tour the camp. I soon found out that it was the first time the Serbian media had been invited to Camp Bondsteel for such an event. The media gratefully accepted my invitation and thanked me for the opportunity. As a result of the event, I was able to get my message out and begin building relationships with the media and all of Kosovo.

That is when I realized that each unit, organization and agency in Kosovo is a piece of a puzzle that needs to connect through the patient process of relationship building. Once all the pieces connect, a clear picture will emerge.

MNBG-E is only one part of KFOR - a peacekeeping force responsible for providing a safe environment and freedom of movement for all. KFOR cannot unilaterally solve all of Kosovo's problems. Teamwork, time and perseverance play their part, but we must trust in the process. Barricades in the north are a political issue and will be solved through political and diplomatic dialogue.



PICTURE: ARCHIVE

Building relationships will result in the facilitation of greater communication and an opportunity for sustainable stability. MNBG-E will continue to cooperate closely with our multinational partners to safeguard the progress that KFOR has made during the past 13 years and have this grow towards the increased capability of a viable and vibrant self-governing Kosovo. ■

COM MNBG-E Colonel Jeffrey J. Liethen

SOLDERING IN THE SNOW



PICTURES: H. GRIMONPREZ, C. TRÄGER AND F. REICHENBACH

TOGETHER AS ONE



Light snow, heavy snow, driving snow, plummeting day and night-time temperatures; unsparring wind-chill factor; all these harsh freezing conditions meant real winter had arrived in Kosovo. With the entire Balkans caught in the grip of an icy freeze, the severe snow and bitter winter cold meant it was the worst winter in Kosovo since 1984. While dangerous driving conditions were experienced, meters high snow drifts blocked many roads, falling temperatures forced schools to close, and some areas even experienced avalanches. One such, in Restelica proved deadly, claiming 10 lives. All of this meant much disruption to

normal life throughout Kosovo. Notwithstanding the extreme adverse weather conditions, the work of KFOR soldiers had to continue in order for it not to have a negative impact on KFOR operations. With Camp Bondsteel having record levels of snow-fall, in northern Kosovo the raw arctic biting cold was not allowed to hamper those tasks which had to be performed by KFOR. All over Kosovo it was soldiering in the snow time for KFOR troops and they proved they were equal to the challenges presented by the heavy snow storms and the hard winter weather. ■





10 YEARS AGO

TASK FORCE VIKING

A large military operation of KFOR soldiers took place in the more remote areas of the Drenica Valley in the last week of January. Over 500 soldiers from four nations took part in a three-day operation, aiming at areas with a low KFOR presence.

The force that was deployed is otherwise known as Task Force Viking, and is the COMKFOR's operational reserve. It has previously been deployed in Mitrovica and several times at the FYROM/Kosovo-border, the last time being in December last year when it was operational near the Kosovo/Serbia boundary. The Norwegian-led Task Force Viking consists of nearly all the nations in MNB Centre; British, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns, and this deployment was the largest one so far of Task Force Viking.

The aim of the actions in the Lower Drenica valley was mainly a show of force, and a show of presence in areas normally not frequently patrolled by KFOR soldiers. Relatively few confiscations were made, as the main purpose was not



the search of vehicles and houses. However, randomly based searches discovered some forged vehicle registration papers and false license plates. There was a large search conducted in the nearby mines, where a handgrenade was confiscated. "We were able to train our force to deploy in another area and in co-ordinating the co-operation in between the different nations," says Operational Officer Major Rune Karlsen, "Working in a multi-national environment requires training".

Still the main benefactor of the operation was the local community. A number of smaller projects were launched, such as information on the Euro currency transition. Also, apart from a few minor mine clearing projects, several kilometres of road was repaired by the KFOR engineer troops. "Now the roads should be passable for normal vehicles," says Sergeant Goeran Andersen of the Norwegian engineers, "People are very satisfied with the work we do, and it is fulfilling that people appreciate what we do".



STORY AND PICTURES: PIO MBNC

DESTROYING WEAPONS



Since day one, KFOR has spent a lot of manpower and resources on the collection and destruction of weapons and ammunition all over Kosovo. Since the number of items is considerable, several methods of destroying them have been tested. Recently KFOR and a local contractor signed an agreement on further destruction of ammunition and weapons.

The previous Weapon Destruction Programme (WDP) started in April 2000, and lasted until December

2001. The programme has been a success, with 10,365 weapons entering the programme and 8,581 destroyed, so far. With funds in hand, donated by the Netherlands government (EUR 59.405) KFOR signed a new WDP contract with the local company Metal Holding on Feb 6. As a part of the contract, Metal Holding will build a new furnace with the capacity of melting down six tons weapons completely every day, starting late in March 2002.

In addition, the Ammunition Destruction Programme (ADP) has been initiated. The programme started Jan 14 and will be carried out by the same local company. KFOR initiated the ADP in order to make the destruction of ammunition more efficient. "Earlier the Brigades tried to destroy small arms ammunition by using explosives. This was not successful because the ammunition was spread out over a large area," says Norwegian Maj. Gabor Koteles, KFOR Project Officer in charge of the programmes. "The ADP uses a different and easier method. By burning the ammunition in self

made incinerators the ammunition is destroyed completely, and at the same time the metal is used by the contractor in the production of different products."

KFOR has collected more than seven million rounds of small arms ammunition. Using the new method the ADP has the capacity of burning more than 75,000 rounds of ammunition every day. More than three million rounds have been destroyed in the factory south of Pristina by Feb 6, and the six locals working there will be busy burning more ammunition in the future, using the metal for more peaceful products. ■

STORY AND PICTURE: K. ANDERSEN

CAMP BONDSTEEL

At Ferizaj/Urosevac under the Sharr mountains in south east Kosovo, on a 1,000 acre site which involved the flattening of two hill-tops and in-filling in between, is built the largest US military base constructed from scratch since the Vietnam War. It was a Medal of Honour winner, Staff-Sergeant James Bondsteel, who earned his award during an heroic action in the Vietnam conflict which has given it its name. KFOR's Multinational Battle Group East is led by the US Contingent based at Camp Bondsteel. Think big when Camp Bondsteel is ever mentioned and then expand the dimensions of that thought, again and again. The statistics are staggering because Camp Bondsteel is huge, and is a self-sustaining complex and community. It's perimeter fence is 7 miles long and has 15 Guard Towers. It produces its own

electricity, enough for a mid-size city, has an enormous bulk fuel farm and operates its own water and waste water treatment facilities. There is a well-equipped Role Two hospital and a Fire-Station. It currently houses 1,500 personnel in 187 South East Asia (SEA) huts and its dining facility has a seating capacity for 800. It has Sports fields, an in-door fitness gym, Education Centre, Chapel, movie theater, fast-food franchise outlets and a large two-story PX. 8 transportation and 3 US Blackhawks along with 2 Croatian MI 171 helicopters, 2 Swiss Puma helicopters and 1 Slovenian helicopter operate out of Bondsteel in support of the KFOR mission. At its height over 50 helicopters were based here with some 5,000 troops. Now as then Camp Bondsteel remains an impressive military base, facilitating the important work being undertaken by KFOR.



STORY: D. HARVEY

PICTURES: ARCHIVE



KFOR WORLD SKI COMPETITION

First an absence then an abundance of driving snow meant the first ever KFOR World Ski Competition went from a shuddering stop to an electrifying go. Temperatures however plummeted to low but the participants did not, anything but in fact and throughout all four categories the more than 90 participants from 15 contingents eagerly engaged the challenge and the competitiveness was hot. Brezovica Ski Centre in the Strpce/Shterpce municipality played host to the inaugural KFOR World

Ski Competition and the KFOR organising team was marshaled by KFOR Headquarters Support Group (HSG) Commander Colonel John Hamill from Ireland. COMKFOR Major General Erhard Drews in a municipality visit late last year initiated the idea and Trojan work by Colonel Hamill's small administration team put the necessary pieces in place to organize the ski and apre-ski activities. In the event, despite the unfortunate weather conditions, the competition was a highly successful undertaking and

was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Interestingly earlier this month the EU Office in Kosovo presented its master plan for a new Brezovica Tourist Resort which will serve as a blueprint of a year-round tourist development west of the existing ski centre where 230 million Euro will be invested and approximately 3000 people will be employed. ■



STORY: D. HARVEY

PICTURES: H. PREU





PICTURES: H. PREU



WINNERS

Women Competitors

1st place

Andreja Oblak,
Slovenia

2nd place

Sonja Bolliger,
Switzerland

3rd place

Sara Eklund,
Sweden

Male over 40

1st place

Miro Stular,
Slovenia

2nd place

Johann Seer,
Austria

3rd place

Christian Kostel,
Austria

Male 36-45

1st place

Drazen Coric,
Croatia

2nd place

Primož Savinsek,
Slovenia

3rd place

Christian Stüger,
Austria

Male 18-35

1st place

Erich Premm,
Austria

2nd place

Matthias Wolf,
Switzerland

3rd place

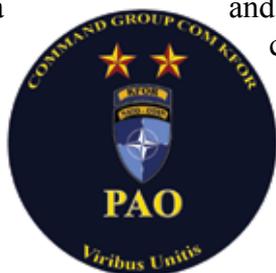
Aljaz Karnicar,
Slovenia



“I fear three newspapers more than one hundred thousand bayonets”

Napoleon Bonaparte

While militaries the world over may once have echoed Napoleon Bonaparte’s reservations about dealing with the media there is today a realisation that modern conflict is as much about public opinion as it is about the destruction of targets. Indeed the very nature of conflicts have changed, battlefields no longer existing exclusively in isolated arenas, many in the very midst of the people. Also changed dramatically is the rapid developments in communications technology. There is a strong understanding now that military public affairs is a



function that contributes to mission success. Military commanders at all levels are putting more and more emphasis on communications.

The KFOR Public Affairs Office (PAO) through its media operations and internal communications is telling and showing the KFOR story. The intensity and development of KFOR’s operations and associated support effort, especially in northern Kosovo has increased dramatically in recent months. This new and significant

operational tempo, reacting to unfolding events, has in turn demanded the need to increase the public’s awareness and understanding of the related incidents which occurred. To successively achieve this effective engagement with the public via the media KFOR PAO relied heavily on mobilizing the structures inherent in its organization and increasing its own internal battle rhythm. The news never sleeps and the PAO is a critical means in contributing towards the shaping of the positive perception management of KFOR.



STORY: D. HARVEY

PICTURES: T. KORDEL, F. MARTIN, F. REICHENBACH AND ARCHIVE



For a journalist trying to grasp the complexities and the fluidity of a situation such as that which currently exists in Kosovo, in the space of a short visit, the work of the KFOR Public Affairs Office is of vital assistance. Intending to convey to a specific Irish audience the security and strategic situation in Kosovo, particularly in light of the long standing Irish Defence Forces commitment to the KFOR mission, some weeks prior to my planned visit I made initial contact with KFOR PAO whose personnel immediately expressed an interest in the project and provided me with briefing notes and other information in order to prepare for my visit.

Nothing matches on the ground experience of the situation in order to provide the most accurate report of the situation in Kosovo, so in addition to arranging relevant interviews with personnel in KFOR HQ, the PAO also arranged a visit north to see an example of the current difficulties in relation to freedom of movement in the

Serb dominated areas of Northern Kosovo. Accompanied by KFOR PAO spokespersons I travelled north to the checkpoint at Zupce 4, north of Mitrovica, where we observed the Austrian and German contingent of the Operational Reserve Force (ORF) in the course of their duties and while on the ground, and during the trip, was briefed openly on the situation and the work of KFOR on the ground. We also observed the stopping of a joint KFOR and EULEX convoy, an indication of the then impasse which KFOR had to deal with.

Stopping later in the city of Mitrovica I was briefed on the situation in the city and also given an insight into the social and cultural divides of the country, which made for most interesting background material. En route back to Pristina, we made a stop at the battlefield of Gazimestan, site of the 1389 battle which holds such a prominent place in Kosovo's history. The PAO also organised access to KFOR HQ and organised the interviews which we requested, and through the course of the next

day and half, provided excellent background material and informal briefings and updates whenever I requested them.

NATO's mission in Kosovo is sometimes referred to as a 'forgotten' mission, which I find strange considering the war's relatively recent place in the Balkan's history of tragic and bloody conflict. KFOR today represent security and stability in the eyes of the vast majority of Kosovars and, through the work of offices such as the PAO, KFOR can enable journalists to provide reports which shine some light on the reality of the situation in Kosovo and also why, over 12 years later, KFOR still represent the backbone of security for the Kosovar state.

Ruairi Kavanagh is an Irish journalist who specialises in security and international affairs. He travelled to Kosovo under the Irish Aid sponsored 'Simon Cumbers Media Fund'. ■

STORY: R. KAVANAGH

PICTURE: H. PREU

NICE TO KNOW

RELIGIONS IN KOSOVO





There are three main religious beliefs in Kosovo, Islam, Orthodox and Catholic. Islam however is by far the system of faith and worship which predominates. Kosovo's religious affiliation corresponds roughly with the ethnic make-up of the population, 90% Muslim, 7% Serb Orthodox, 3% Catholic. It is accurate to say the majority Muslim population has a relaxed observance of their religion, not seeking to chose to define their identity through it. There is tolerance too, to-day, towards and between the different faiths, denominations, and religious communities. Muslims mosques, Catholic churches and Serb monasteries are spread throughout Kosovo, many important ones having Designated Special Status and are much visited. ■





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Albania, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia,
Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia,
France, Germany, Greece, Hungary,
Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands,
Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania,
Slovenia, Turkey, United States

Non-NATO Nations within KFOR

Austria, Finland, Ireland, Marrocco,
Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine

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ADVICE GOING HOME

Words cannot really describe exactly what it feels like to be going home. There are a lot of emotions and in very many ways this giddy, dizzy, light-headed anticipation is the perfect feeling, surpassed only by your actual arrival. Hugs, kisses, smiles, tears, all part of the joyful reunion with loved ones and little ones. After months of separation the missing is over, the return real. It is the moment you waited for, since the moment you left.

As you prepared for your departure so too you can prepare for your return. Only give to those at home the actual approved definite date of return, there is no room for speculation based on your guess-work or hoped-for date. Allow yourself time to re-establish your relationships, remember in your absence your family members have had to, and have got used to, their own routine without you being there. Do not rush matters take time to readjust to finding your place within the family. Respect each other's sacrifices and give credit to one another, it was hard for you being away but it was also difficult for them without you. Lastly, make a conscious effort to plan your free time at home to reactivate your friendships, associations and involvements. Finally, you may well find you have a new appreciation of what's important in life, the time, distance and experiences in the mission area granting you a new perspective to value what perhaps you previously took for granted. One such case in point being, there is a bit more to going home, than simply going home.



STORY: J. PFENNIG

PICTURE: M. TERCHA



Name: Christine Kramer

Rank: OF-1

Nationality: American

Unit KFOR: HQ KFOR

MILITARY EDUCATION:

I enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard in January 2001. I went to Officer Candidate School in 2007 and was commissioned one year later in 2008. This is my second overseas tour of duty, I arrived in-theatre mid-November 2011. I previously served in the International Zone in Iraq from May 2009 to January 2010.

ABOUT THE MISSION:

I am the Aide de Camp (ADC) to KFOR Chief of Staff (COS) at KFOR HQ. IN essence I plan, co-ordinate and deconflict the Chief of Staff's schedule.

FAMILY REACTION:

I am the eldest of six girls, and the only in the military. My parents, mother especially, is naturally concerned for me but is hugely supportive and proud also.

HOBBIES:

I exercise as a life-style choice regularly, play the occasional game of table soccer, and am studying Business and Project Management. I am currently learning German.



Name: Siegfried Pock

Rank: OR-9

Nationality: Austrian

Unit KFOR: HQ KFOR

MILITARY EDUCATION:

I have 38 years service enlisting in the Infantry in January 1974. I was for 10 years an Infantry Platoon Leader and paratrooper, then a small arms and sniper instructor before becoming a marksmanship expert. This is my 9th overseas tour of duty having served previously in the Balkans and the Middle East, in such places as the Golan Heights, Albania, Bosnia and previously in Kosovo. Throughout my home and overseas service it has been the comradeship of my colleagues, the leadership at all levels, and also the maintenance of a humane perspective that has impressed me most.

ABOUT THE MISSION:

I am the Administration Assistant to Deputy Commander KFOR and this appointment makes me responsible for the smooth management of a busy office and for the proper coordination of a full programme of events.

FAMILY REACTION:

I am married since 1979 and we have two children, a boy and a girl, both grown-up.

HOBBIES:

I maintain an active involvement in Badminton, Cycling and Wind-Surfing.

