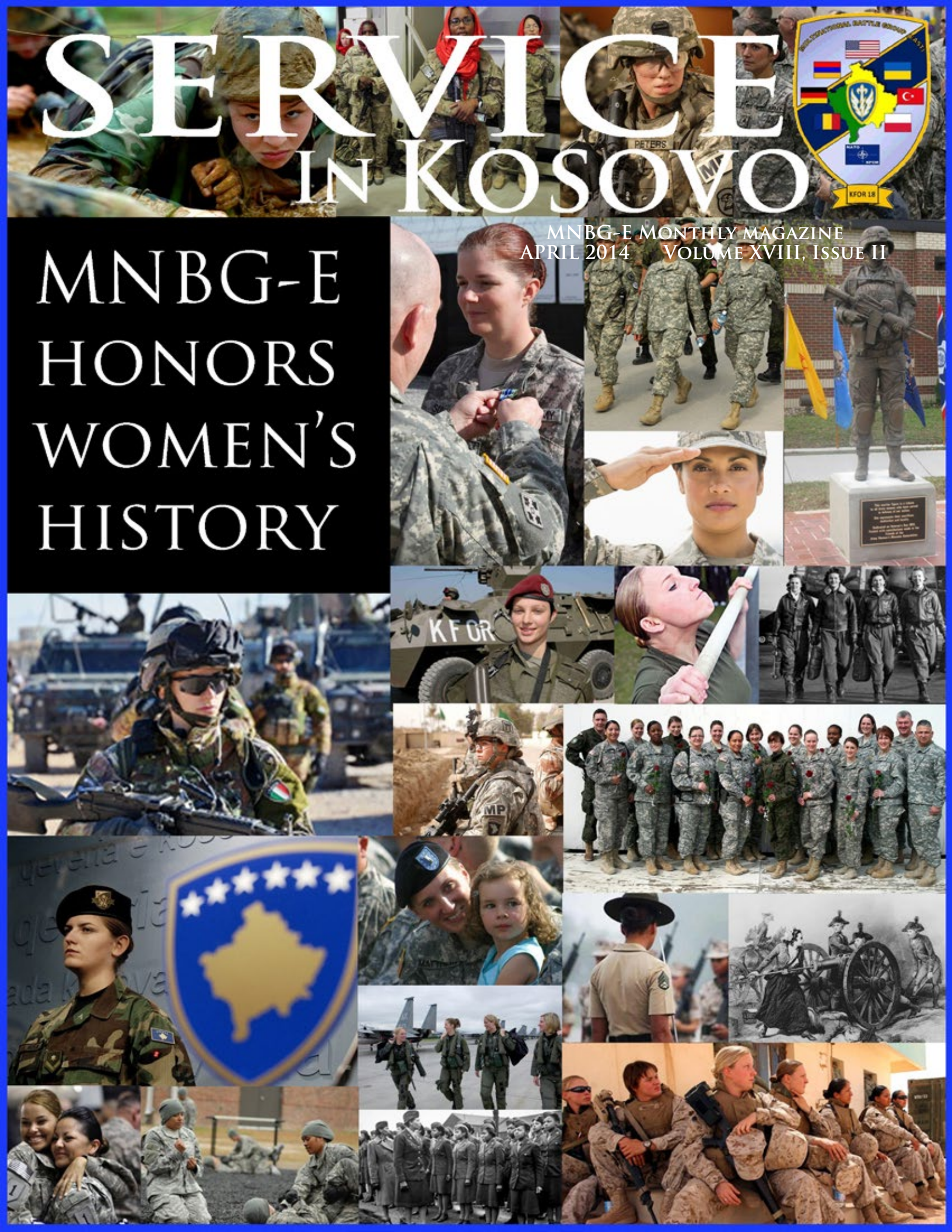


MNBG-E HONORS WOMEN'S HISTORY



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Service in Kosovo Magazine welcomes commentaries, articles and photos from readers. Submissions should be sent to the editor at mnbgeast@gmail.com by the 20th of each month and include details such as the who, what, when, where and why of the photos. Please include the person's name, rank and contingent of who took the photos for photo credit. MNBG-E reserves the right to edit any submissions.



Cover Photo: A collage of various women serving in the military around the world in celebration of women's history month. (Photo illustration by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Burger, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

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MN BG-E CMDR

On behalf of the Soldiers and leaders of the 504th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, I would like to express our happiness and excitement in joining the KFOR and MNBG-E team as part of the United States Military's KFOR-18 rotation. The Soldiers and leaders of the brigade conducted training over several months for this mission; first, at our unit's home in Fort Hood, Texas; then at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany in January; and finally for two weeks in February as we conducted handover training with the Soldiers of KFOR-17 for the 13 February MNBG-E HoTo.

As a result of all of our training and, also, our time in conducting the hand over process, we understand our role and are committed to KFOR's mission in support of the peoples of Kosovo. The Soldiers of the Brigade look forward to serving with our Multi-National Partners, both in the Battle Group and in KFOR, and with the representatives of the Institutions in Kosovo to include the Kosovo Security Organizations as we meet the challenges that lay before us.

KFOR's mission to provide the citizens of Kosovo with a safe and secure environment has remained constant since 1999. The Soldiers of the Battle Group look forward to upholding the proud record of service established by the Soldiers, from many different countries, who have served before us and have set the conditions for us to successfully continue that mission. In our short time here, we have had conducted multiple missions with KTM, MSU, EULEX, the JRD's and the many other organizations that work and serve in Kosovo. Our experience with all of these people, units, and Nations has made us very



comfortable and confirmed our expectation that our nine month deployment will be a formative experience for all our Soldiers and one on which we will look back with pride.

"More together"
Col. Charles T. Hensley





COMKFOR CONDUCTS HIGH LEVEL TALKS

Courtesy Story and Photo

The Kosovo Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Salvatore Farina, received Maj. Gen. Jeronim Bazo, Chief of the General Staff of the Albanian Armed Forces, for the first time at KFOR headquarters in Pristina, March 19.

This meeting is part of the agenda of the high level talks conducted in line with the Military Technical Agreement, known as the Kumanovo Treaty. It was fifth high-level meeting undertaken by COMKFOR having visited Belgrade, Tirana, Skopje, and Podgorica in the last five months and having received in KFOR HQ also the Chief

of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces in January.

COMKFOR meets on a regular basis with various countries bordering of KFOR area of responsibility, namely Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Farina and Bazo spoke about the situation in the Balkans with specific reference to Kosovo and about the importance of cooperation in order to enhance the security situation in the region.

COMKFOR underlined the improvement on the security situation after the April 19th Belgrade-Pristina agreement and confirmed the continuous effort of the NATO mis-

sion to contribute to safe and secure environment and freedom of movement creating the necessary condition to help and support progress.

Farina thanked Bazo for the outstanding contribution of the NATO Albanian staff officers to the KFOR HQ and underlined their great professionalism.

During his visit to COMKFOR, Bazo took the opportunity to meet members of the Albanian Armed Forces participating in the mission in Kosovo.

Following the visit both COMKFOR and the Albanian general highlighted the fruitful outcomes of the meeting.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Ukraine



Located in Eastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea, between Poland, Romania, and Moldova in the west and Russia in the east. Most of Ukraine consists of fertile plains (steppes) and plateaus, mountains being found only in the west (the Carpathians), and in the Crimean Peninsula in the extreme south.

President: Oleksandr Turchynov

Independence: 24 August 1991

Capital: Kyiv

Currency: Hryvnia

Official language: Ukrainian

Ukrainian Armed Forces consist of Ground Forces, Naval Forces, and Air Forces. 18-25 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service; conscript service obligation is 12 months for Army and Air Force, 18 months for Navy.

Information taken from CIA Factbook.





They ain't gonna eat themselves!

KFOR 18

W A F F L E
H O U S E

Sundays (0700-1100) at the Lift
Hangar.





A CONVENIENT TIME TO DO YOUR TAXES

“*Death, taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them.*”

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With The Wind*.

Although Ms. Mitchell's statement is mostly accurate, she was entirely unacquainted with our resident tax expert, Sasha Sokolovski. Mr. Sokolovski actually makes filing taxes very convenient. It is worth your time, money, and sanity to come see him.

As you may know, we are in the middle of the tax season. Below are a few pointers to help you make sound and educated decisions about your taxes:

When Are Taxes Due?

Taxes are due 15 April 2014. However, deployed U.S. Soldiers are eligible for an automatic extension of 180 days after their release from deployment. Additionally, when a Soldier is deployed during any part of the tax season (1 January – 15 April), the 180 day extension is increased by the number of days deployed during that period. For example, if you arrived in Kosovo on February 1, your total automatic extension will be 180 days plus 74 days (28 in February + 31 in March + 15 in April). This extension is automatic, so no action is required by the Soldiers. If a Soldier utilizes the automatic extension, they need to print “COMBAT ZONE” on the top of their return when they do file. The IRS may subsequently ask for a copy of the Soldier's orders.

What If I Want My Tax Return

Filed Now?

Eligible U.S. Soldiers, retirees, and contractors have the following options for tax preparation prior to April 15:

- Tax services will be provided at no cost by the Legal Assistance Office Tax Center on a walk in basis, or you may schedule an appointment. Due to high volume or complex tax returns, you may be asked to leave your tax information with the Tax Center for later pickup.

- Tax services are provided primarily at Camp Bondsteel, but the legal staff visits Camp Novo Selo and Pristina/Film City at least every other Wednesday. Look for postings and information from the command at Camp Novo Selo and Pristina/Film City for more information, or call DSN 4575.

- If your spouse or family member intends to file your taxes at home, you should complete IRS Form 2848, which is a power of attorney for taxes. The Legal Assistance Office can assist you with completing this form.

What Should I Bring To My Appointment At The Tax Center?

The Tax Center is here to assist you in submitting a complete and accurate return. To do so, Soldiers need to bring the following information and documents:

- Social security number for yourself, spouse, and any dependents. It is important that names be spelled exactly as they

appear on social security cards.

- All W2s (showing income earned), and 1099s (showing interest, dividends etc.) and any other IRS forms or documents showing income of any kind. This includes interest from savings accounts and interest bearing checking accounts.

- If you would like your refund direct deposited, you will need your financial institution's name, routing number, and account number. The easiest and most accurate way to provide this information is through a voided check.

- You will need a completed IRS Form 2848 from your spouse if you intend to file a joint return without the presence of your spouse. The Tax Center can assist you in completing this form.

- Any adjustments, credits, or itemized deductions must be accompanied by receipts.

Additional questions? Contact any of the Tax Center staff with questions at DSN 4575



MULTINATIONAL SOLDIERS CONDUCT AERIAL RAPID RESPONSE TRAINING

Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber
11th Public Affairs Detachment

When a civil disturbance happens in Kosovo, soldiers have to be ready to react within a moment's notice and Multinational Battle Group-East troops train to do just that.

Armenian crowd riot control troops and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 285th Aviation Regiment, North Dakota National Guard, conducted aerial rapid response training on Camp Bondsteel, March 12.

The training was part of a week-long process to give both U.S. and Armenian soldiers the skills necessary to quickly and safely load and unload from UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

"We will initially start out with cold load training which means the rotors aren't turning," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Sheldon Atwood, a pilot with 2-285th. "We will do that a couple of times under cold load and then the next time will be a hot load, where the rotors will be turning. The guys will then load on and we will take them on a flight."

Atwood expressed that having the training and knowledge is instrumental to being able to react quickly in case that a real world event occurs.

"If they are comfortable with getting on and off the aircraft, that really makes things easier when it comes to real world mission," said Atwood. "You don't want to be doing the training at that time."

Armenian Army platoon leader, Capt. Avetisyan Slavik, said that the training was very important for his troops.

"Much of my troops have never

been on a helicopter," said Slavik. "We would like to make sure that everybody feels good about (flying on a helicopter) and will not be afraid in the future."

The training was not only beneficial for the Armenian troops but for the U.S. troops as well, said Atwood.

"The pilots were trained on multinational operations because there is a lot of planning and coordination that goes into it," added Atwood. "The crew chiefs get trained on how to deal with passengers and insuring the safety of the passengers while loading and unloading them."

Atwood explained that doing the training with Multinational counterparts is a great opportunity.

"We enjoy it and I think they enjoy it," said Atwood. "It's something different seeing the way that they train and how they operate so I



Armenian crowd riot control soldiers buckle up on a UH-60 Black Hawk during a hot load training exercise on Camp Bondsteel, March 12. The training was to help familiarize troops on how to safely and quickly load and unload from a helicopter in full riot gear.

think it's a win-win for everybody."

The training concluded at Camp Novo Selo, which is the primary area of responsibility for the Armenian CRC troops during civil disturbances.





SHARPTM
SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT RESPONSE & PREVENTION

A voice unheard is an Army defeated

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

April 2014

Speak Up!



Stand up and join the call to destroy this
insider threat. Together, we can be the
force behind the fight.



PreventSexualAssault.Army.Mil

Join in the conversation: #PreventSexualAssault, #SAAM, #SpeakUp

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. During SAAM, we strive to raise awareness and promote the prevention of sexual violence. The Department of Defense states, "SAAM provides an annual opportunity to reinforce our commitment to strengthening the professional climate across the armed forces where the cultural imperatives of mutual respect and trust, team commitment, and professional values are reinforced to create an environment in which sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not condoned, tolerated, or ignored."

We, as members of the Multinational Battle Group-East, belong to a team nested into many other teams. As such, we must work together with common purpose and initiative to accomplish our mission. The scourge of sexual assault and sexual harassment -

harassment hurt members of the team, and when one suffers, the whole team suffers.

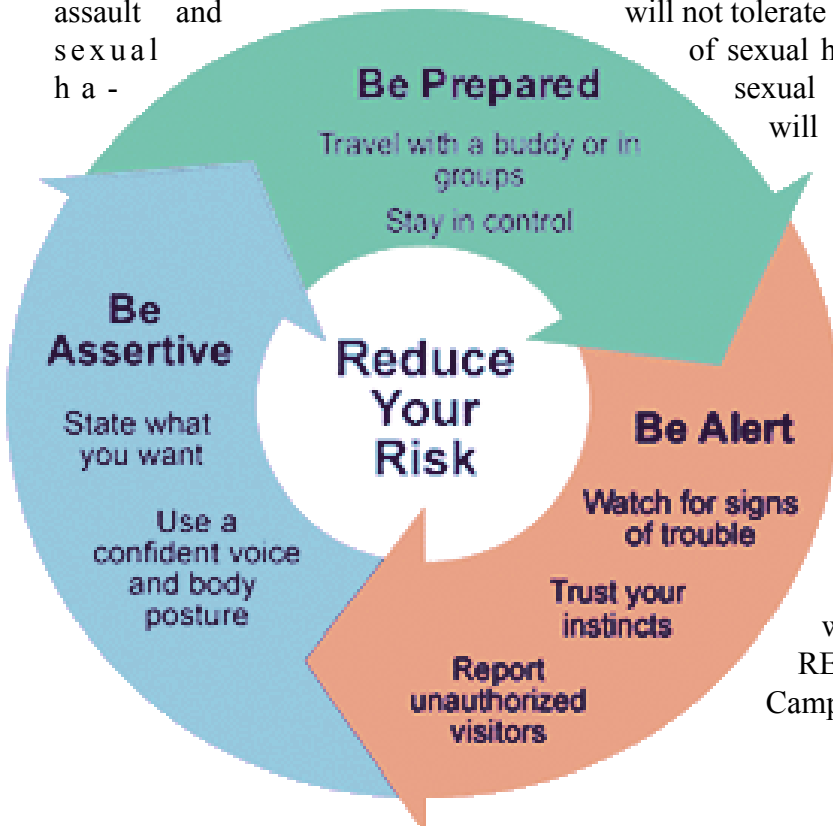
SAAM is an opportunity to be proactive in the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault. It is an opportunity for a Soldier to encourage his/her battle buddy to report a sexual assault that he/she may feel uncomfortable coming forward. It is an opportunity to discuss factors that contribute to an environment being conducive to sexual harassment and sexual assault. It is an opportunity as a unit to show our commitment to each and every Soldier in MNBG-E that they can be confident that they operate and are part of a team that will not tolerate any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault and will act appropriately in the face of reports.

MNBG-E will be conducting a SHARP Stand-down this month, in conjunction with USA-REUR's R2C Campaign. Leaders

will engage Soldiers on the SHARP program and encourage constructive discussion on how to prevent incidents or hostile environments. We encourage our Soldiers to spread the word and the SHARP program to their families.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault have no place in our Army. SAAM is an opportunity to not only highlight the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault, but to also highlight the successes of the program and the successes of sexual assault survivors. MNBG-E leadership are committed to the SHARP program and will continue to provide Soldiers with the best training, resources, and response we can provide.

1st. Lt. Danielle C. Mallard-Camillo
MNBG-E Victim Advocate



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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Women have served in the United States Army since 1775. They nursed the ill and wounded, laundered and mended clothing, and cooked for the troops in camp on campaign; services that did not exist among the uniformed personnel within the Army until the 20th Century. Women are an invaluable and essential part of the Army. Currently, women serve in 95 percent of all Army occupations and make up about 15.7 percent of the Active Army. Women continue to have a crucial role in current operations and their sacrifices in this noble effort underscore their dedication and willingness to share great sacrifices. Over the next couple of pages, we celebrate women in uniform.



First Lt. Janill Castillo, a native of Bronx, N.Y., serves as the commander for Multinational Battle Group - East EOD detachment in Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. Her team is part of the 759th EOD Company, based in Fort Irwin, Calif.

'NOT JUST AN EOD OFFICER'

Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Burger
11th Public Affairs Detachment

Their job is one of the most dangerous and thankless in the U.S. Army. Famously depicted in the movie, "The Hurt Locker," explosive ordnance disposal technicians often risk their lives to save the lives of countless others. They are brave, bold, sometimes reckless and a little crazy.

And she is not only one of them; she's their leader.

First Lt. Janill Castillo, a native of Bronx, N.Y., serves as the commander for Multinational Battle Group-East EOD detachment in Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. Her team is part of the 759th EOD Company, based in Fort Irwin, Calif., and has a

unique mission here, which is much different from the typical missions EOD technicians have while deployed.

"Our mission here is to legitimize the [Kosovo Security Forces] EOD as an [unidentified explosive ordnance] response team here in Kosovo," she said. That means helping train multinational EOD teams and, if the need called for it, responding to ordnance uncovered from the Kosovo War.

The 26-year-old Castillo's job is similar to military police, civil affairs teams, and female engagement teams that already have females serving on the frontlines of combat.

Castillo, a graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in chemical engineering with a concentration in biotechnology, joined

the service as an enlisted soldier. She later went to Officer Candidate School and Basic Officer Leaders Course, where she learned about the EOD field.

"I thought it was a great opportunity to serve my country in a positive way and go into a field that most people do not choose," she said.

Although this is her first deployment, Castillo understands the importance of being a female commander in such a dangerous and male-dominated career field, especially with the recent focus on women in service.

"It's a rewarding field, especially for a woman. It's a challenge to go in to a predominately male field and become their leader, but once you fully understand the field, you get a lot of respect. It's a good feeling

to know that women can execute such a high position in EOD,” she said.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense recently notified Congress of the Army’s intent to open 33,000 service positions this April that were previously closed to women. These positions do not include jobs in the 14 military occupational specialties that are currently closed to women, said Col. Linda Sheimo, chief of the Command Programs and Policy Division at the Directorate of Military Personnel Management, Army G-1, in a press release, Jan. 24.

This means many women will have opportunities to work in fields like Castillo. She however, doesn’t believe the transition will be a problem if everyone just does his or her job.

“Being a woman and a leader, your troops want to see you get out and get dirty with your soldiers. You

have to show them you’re a soldier and I have to show them that I’m not just [a female] EOD officer, I’m an EOD technician and I can do their job if I have to.”

Her philosophy seems to be working too, as she has had nothing but success working with her team over the past year.

“They are a great bunch of guys. They are very loyal and respectful and we always execute any mission that comes our way,” she said.

“It’s great working with her. Since I’ve been an EOD tech longer, I help her with EOD stuff and she helps me with being a leader. There’s never been an issue with her being a ‘female.’ We only ever see a soldier,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Wohlrabe, from Grand Rapids, Minn., and detachment noncommissioned officer in charge.

Castillo will spend the next nine months deployed in the Balkans re-

gion and although there have been many titles given to her since deploying, like commander and EOD technician, there is one she is still uncomfortable being called.

“It’s funny, but I don’t consider myself a role model. It would be an honor if any woman considered me that and if they want to go into a combat field, all I can say to them is pursue whatever goals you have in life,” Castillo said.

As the Army begins to make this transition to open more career fields to women, Castillo’s parting advice isn’t only to the females who will transition in, but to the leadership who will be dealing with the change.

“There will be challenges, but if the chain of command supports those integrating into these fields and gives them the opportunities to excel, things will work out,” she said.



U.S. Army First Lt. Janill Castillo, a native of Bronx, N.Y., supervises training at the EOD detachment on Camp Bondsteel Feb. 25. The 26-year-old is part of few careers that already has females that have been on the front lines of combat.



Female Soldiers on the KFOR Multinational Battle Group-East battle staff received a rose to commemorate their achievements as women in the military. (Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Mike Wallace, MNBG-E PAO)



U.S. Army Spc. Katherine Lane, a military working dog handler with 615th Military Police Company and a native of Franklin, Va., searches a suspicious vehicle with her military working dog during a training event on Camp Bondtseel, March 18. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

WOMEN SERVICE

A female Portuguese soldier rides a rescue hoist up 75 feet to a hovering UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, March 11, at Camp Slim Lines, Kosovo. The MEDEVAC company at Camp Bondsteel conducted rescue hoist training with Hungarian and Portuguese Army medics. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



MEN'S IN KOSOVO



U.S. Army Spc. Courtney Gonzalez, an Aviation Operations Specialist with Utah Air National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 211th Army Aviation Regiment and a native of Salt Lake City, flies on a Blackhawk helicopter during a multi-national training flight in Kosovo March 8. (photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

LIFEBLOOD OF THE ARMY: NCO LEAD

Story and photos by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell
11th Public Affairs Detachment

Fuel is the lifeblood of military operations and the job of controlling fueling operations is a vital one. As noncommissioned officer in charge of all fuel at Camp Bondsteel, U.S. Army Sgt. Christina Dafney-Pressley recognizes the impact that her trade has on missions. Every day, she toils in the morning sun, ensuring fuel operations on the camp are nothing less than perfect.

If not, equipment, vehicles and human lives could be at risk.

"Fuel is a big part of military operations," the 28-year-old sergeant said. "No fuel means you can't really go anywhere, so it's good to be able to provide a service to everybody, that everybody utilizes."

Dafney-Pressley enlisted in 2003 as an Army human resources specialist. The native of Taylorsville, Miss. changed jobs to petroleum supply specialist after her first deployment to Iraq. Currently assigned to the 504th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, from Fort Hood, Texas, she serves as the contracting officer representative for Multinational Battle Group-East in Kosovo.

Although this position is normally reserved for senior Army logisticians, it was Dafney-Pressley's reputation as a hard-working NCO that got the brigade's logistics section to take notice of her skills.

"I witnessed her in action at [the U.S. Army's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany] and saw how responsible and committed she is. I knew she was perfect for this position," said Master Sgt. Amy Friendly, MNBG-



U.S. Army Sgt. Christina Dafney-Pressley (right), contracting officer representative for KBR fueling operations, speaks with a fueler at the Camp Bondsteel "fuel bag farm" during refueling operations, March 20. Dafney-Pressley serves as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the fuel point, and is responsible for over \$500,000 worth of fuel on a weekly basis.

E logistics NCOIC. "There were critics that felt only a sergeant first class could do it, but I never once doubted her ability to handle the position."

Arriving truckloads of fuel must

receive rigorous testing before Dafney-Pressley gives it a seal of approval for delivery to the camp's customers. The fuel's quality must be flawless and held to exact government standards. Army helicop-

S BONDSTEEL'S FUELING OPERATIONS

ters loaded with faulty fuel, for example, could crash, killing or seriously injuring the personnel on board.

"Nobody wants to be the one that is under investigation for an aircraft malfunctioning for fuel," Dafney-Pressley said. "I never ever want that to happen, but that's a big responsibility and that's the most important thing for me; making sure that the aircraft's fuel is on spec more than anything."

Although dollar values fluctuate depending on aircraft and usage forecasts, on average, Dafney-Pressley is responsible for more than \$570,000 worth of diesel, aviation fuel and gasoline per week.

While this is her third deployment, it is her first working as a petroleum supply specialist. Many of the civilians Dafney-Pressley works with on a daily basis through Kellogg,

Brown and Root (KBR) have years of experience working fueling operations -- experience she says aids her in learning the trade.

"I have a good crew with KBR, and a lot of them have fuel backgrounds," Dafney-Pressley said. They've made it a stress-free tour for me."

Celebrating the accomplishments of women in service has gained traction in the Army with the recent announcement to open more military specialties to women. Dafney-Pressley thought the influx of female Soldiers entering into previously-closed military occupational specialties is inspiring and historical. She said she is fortunate to serve in an organization where women fought for fairness and added she loves the military, which allowed her to do a lot of things never imagined in the civilian world.

"The women now who are going out and breaking barriers is awesome, and it's given us hope," she said. "It's not just the senior (NCOs), but the (Advanced Individual Training) soldiers who are going into those jobs that were once restricted to males. They're breaking barriers as well and I commend them."

Dafney-Pressley added she feels most females across the military just want to be recognized for their capabilities and not their gender. For her personal goal, she plans on achieving the highest ranks in the NCO corps.

"With the women in the past fighting for equality and the right to be judged off their work versus their gender afforded me, and other females, to reach that level of first sergeant and sergeant major, which is great," she said.

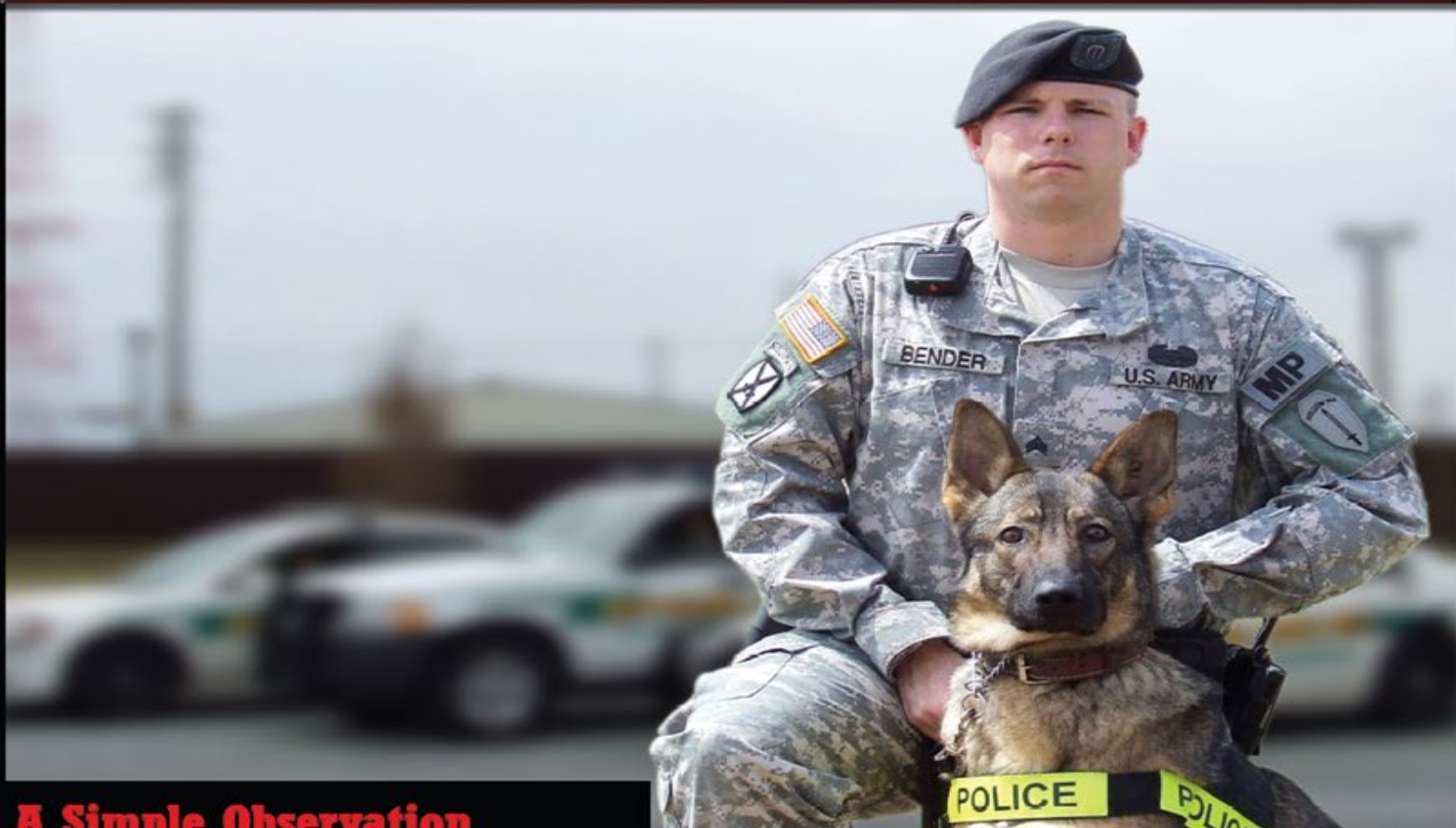


U.S. Army Sgt. Christina Dafney-Pressley, contracting officer representative for KBR fueling operations at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, stands next to a JP8 jet fuel blivet, that is capable of holding nearly 50,000 gallons of fuel. Dafney-Pressley is responsible for over \$500,000 worth of fuel on a weekly basis.

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<https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/605757>

TERROISMIS “EVOLVING THREAT”

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Daniel Cole
U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs

In March 2011, a gunman attacked U.S. Airmen at Germany's Frankfurt International Airport. While the anniversary of that attack has just passed, U.S. Army Europe antiterrorism officials are using that tragic incident to help illustrate terrorism's "evolving threat."

The Army is spotlighting the evolving threat as its current anti-terrorism theme to educate members of the U.S. forces community against what they describe as a more innovative, opportunistic method of planning and carrying out attacks than people may consider conventional terrorist methods.

Antiterrorism experts say the evolving threat often centers on a "lone wolf" attack, a recent form of terrorist attack involving individuals who work on a much smaller scale and without specific guidance from organized terror groups to assault local targets. These smaller-scale attacks require less planning and coordination, and create fewer indicators that could alert others that an attack is imminent.

On March 2, 2011, one such "lone wolf" targeted a group of U.S. Airmen on a bus parked at Frankfurt Airport. The attacker approached an Airman standing outside the bus, engaged him in conversation, then shot and killed him. Entering the bus, he killed the driver and wounded two other Airmen. He then held his pistol to the head of a fifth Air-

man, but when the weapon jammed the attacker fled the scene. He was quickly subdued by an Airman, a civilian airport employee and German police officers.

Antiterrorism officials say the airport shooting shows how the evolving threat is transforming terrorism with a shift away from the traditional "al-Qaida type attacks." Because these smaller events require much less planning and attract less attention, the experts say, they can be carried out in a more nonchalant manner that gives the attacker greater opportunity to target members of the U.S. forces community.

In spite of the nature of these smaller attacks, USAREUR antiterrorism officials say there are still ways people can lower their risk of becoming victims of terrorism.

"Countering the evolving threat requires more individual efforts through continual vigilance, reporting suspicious activity, and practicing individual protective measures," said Jessica Bittle, a force protection specialist in USAREUR's Antiterrorism Division.

Some simple ways people can protect themselves include:

- * Be aware of their surroundings and the actions of others around

REPORT



SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

them

- * Reporting suspicious behavior
- * Not dressing or acting in a way that makes them stand out from local citizens or brands them as Americans or members of the U.S. forces community
- * Removing stickers and other items from their vehicles and belongings that indicate they are Americans or members of the U.S. forces community
- * Not wearing uniforms while traveling on public or commercial transportation (except taxis).

For more information and resources for combating terrorism, personal protective measures and reporting suspicious activity, visit the USAREUR vigilance web page at www.eur.army.mil/vigilance or the USAREUR Antiterrorism Division's "Stay Safe" Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Stay-SafeAntiterrorism>

Celebrating

“Month of the
Military Child”



Everyday Heroes!

A HISTORIC MOMENT IN ALBANIA

CHAPLAIN

In keeping with the free exercise of religion tradition established in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, U.S. Army chaplains Maj. Thomas Gorrell and 1st Lt. Mark Hart coordinated for a group of Soldiers to visit a historic event in Tirana, Albania March 9.

Before sunrise, 16 Soldiers from Camp Bondsteel loaded into three vehicles and began their journey to Tirana. It would take them nearly four hours to get to their destination, and their drive would present exquisite panoramas of lofty mountains, steep cliffs, and beautiful waterways. Albania is a strikingly beautiful country. Yet it was

not the scenery that motivated these Soldiers to take the long trip. These Soldiers wanted to be a part of history.

The Church of Jesus Christ organized its first stake in Albania, which is also the first stake in the Balkan region. Hundreds of Latter Day Saint members from Albania attended the meeting along with about 50 members from Kosovo. It was a special and exciting meeting for those in attendance. A “stake” is comparable to a deanery in the Catholic Church or a diocese for other Christian denominations.

The term “stake” was used by the prophet Isaiah. He described the latter-day Church as a tent that would be secured by stakes (see Isaiah 33:20; 54:2). Because the Church does not have a paid clergy there must be a sufficient amount

of leaders willing to take on major and time consuming responsibilities before a stake can be created. The newly organized Albanian Stake will help oversee and support the 13 congregations and the ever increasing missionary, family history, and humanitarian work in the Country.

This was a historic event not only for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but for all of Albania as it demonstrates their true religious freedoms.

Today, religion is flourishing and growing in Albania. According to a 2011 census, about 60% of the population adheres to Islam and about 17% practices Christianity. One of those Christian denominations is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ sent its first missionaries into Albania in 1992 and since that

time about 2,500 Albanians have joined the Church. There are now 13 LDS congregations in Albania and three Family History Centers. It is this progress that lead to the historic meeting the Soldiers from Camp Bondsteel wanted to attend.

On the return trip to Camp Bondsteel, the Soldiers were able to experience the city of Tirana and a stop to the Adriatic Sea. It was the icing on the cake for a very historic day.



EOD SOLDIER TESTS FOR TEAM LEADER CERTIFICATION

Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber
11th Public Affairs Detachment

The day wasn't just another training day on Camp Bondsteel for U.S. Army Cpl. Kevin Levine, but a day that was meant to test his abilities and define his future as an explosive ordnance disposal technician.

Levine is a technician assigned to the 759th EOD Company, based at Fort Irwin, Calif., and underwent part of an EOD certification process, March 18, designed to prove that he is ready to lead teams of EOD Soldiers.

The San Diego native took what he has learned through training and other team leaders over the years and applied them to the challenge he was facing today, which was reacting to a possible vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

"I took it one step at a time," said Levine. "I dissected for what it was and it's not super difficult as long as you're thinking about how to take care of it as safe as you can."

The certification consists of multiple events an EOD Soldier has to accomplish while senior leaders evaluate how a situation is handled; all bringing different problems an EOD Soldier may face as a team leader.

"There's not really just a one through 20-step [process]," said Levine. "There are just multiple problems you have to run to get your certifications, but it does bring me that much closer though, because that's one less thing I have to do."

"Once you are certified as a team leader, you'll be expected to handle any situation you may come across," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Wohlrabe, the Multina-



U.S. Army Cpl. Kevin Levine, an explosive ordnance disposal technician assigned to the 759th EOD Company and a native of San Diego, carries a device that aids in defeating an improvised explosive device during a training scenario on Camp Bondsteel, March 18.

tional Battle Group-East EOD detachment noncommissioned officer in charge. "Whether it is chemical, bio-hazard, radiological, VBIED's, or a suicide vest, there are a lot of different scenarios."

Wohlrabe added it is such a rigorous process becoming a team leader because leaders will have subordinate Soldiers and they will look to the team leader to make the right calls and ensure their safety.

“We want to see that he has the right thought process and skills to be able to handle a situation,” said Wohlrabe, a Grand Rapids, Minn., native. “[Team leaders] are the guys on scene that are overall responsible on the scene until the explosive hazard is taken care of and we have to make sure he is able to do that on his own.”

Validating a Soldier as an EOD team leader is an important task for the EOD field, Wohlrabe continued, because it allows senior leaders to share their knowledge while training future Soldiers to take their spots.

Levine successfully cleared the

VBIED obstacle, immediately impressing some of his supervisors.

“He did a great job. On a scale of one to ten, he’s right up there at a nine,” said Staff Sgt. Richard Caracci, a team leader with the 759th.

“He’s done everything remotely that he can and he has followed all the step-by-step procedures that he has been taught in school and in training.”

When the training concluded and the hazard was taken care of, Levine found himself one step closer to earning his certification and, ultimately, to achieving his final goal of becoming an EOD team leader.

U.S. Army Cpl. Kevin Levine, a native of San Diego, and Spc. Kevin Johnson, a native of Huntington Beach, Calif., both explosive ordnance disposal technicians assigned to the 759th EOD Company, talk about what they see through the robot’s ‘eyes’ during a training scenario on Camp Bondsteel, March 18. The training was part of a certification to see if Levine is ready to become a team leader.



U.S. Army Cpl. Kevin Levine, an explosive ordnance disposal technician assigned to the 759th EOD Company and a native of San Diego, uses a Vice-Grip to help him open the back of a vehicle during a training scenario on Camp Bondsteel, March 18. Senior leaders watched and evaluated the steps he used when dealing with the improvised explosive device, during a validation process to become an EOD team leader.



S.I.K.

SERVICE IN KOSOVO

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U.S. Army Spc. Christopher Sonnier and Sgt. Aaron Adam, Soldiers with F Company, 2nd Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment, load a simulated casualty onto a stretcher during the hoist rescue training at Camp Slim Lines, March 11. They trained Hungarian and Portuguese Army medics on medevac procedures and hoist rescue techniques. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



Milisav Bontic, a firefighter for Kellogg, Brown and Root, leads the team as they prepare to enter a building during a live fire exercise on Camp Bondsteel, March 21. The firefighters simulated responding to a room blaze during the one-day training event. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ricky Perez, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

photos

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Soldiers with 268th Brigade Signal Company visit the Gracanica Monastery to familiarize themselves with the area in Kosovo. (Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Denwill Carino, 268th BSC)

Using the robot's 'eyes', Soldiers from the 759th explosive ordnance disposal Company peer into the vehicle to try and locate an explosive device during a training scenario on Camp Bondsteel, March 18. The Soldiers used the robot to remotely open the doors of the vehicle so they didn't have to put anyone in harms way. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



LAST LOOK

Millisav Bontic, base firefighter, subdues an indoor blaze during a live fire exercise on Camp Bondsteel, March 21. The firefighters train regularly to stay proficient in responding to possible fire incidents to ensure the safety of Soldiers and civilians on the base. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ricky Perez, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

