

SERVICE IN KOSOVO



AUGUST 2014 VOLUME XVIII, ISSUE VI
MNBG-E MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SPIES TRAINING

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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.



A group of five U.S. Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, 504th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, train on the Special Patrol Insertion and Extraction System (SPIES) at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, July 18. SPIES is used to rapidly insert Soldiers into a hostile area where helicopters cannot land. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

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AYCOCK HANDS OVER KFOR RESPONSIBILITIES, REFLECTS ON KFOR DUTIES

Story and photos by Maj. Mike Wallace,
MNBG-E PAO

The current Chief of Staff for Kosovo Forces (KFOR), Brig. Gen. David N. Aycock, turned over his duties to incoming Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Michael Lee Scholes during a multinational ceremony at Film City in Pristina, June 24. The ceremony was attended by local Kosovo dignitaries and leaders in KFOR, including the commander of KFOR, Maj. Gen. Salvatore Farina and the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson.

Farina spoke at the ceremony and commented how much of an influence and perspective that Aycock had during his time as chief of staff to KFOR. After the short speech, Aycock was awarded the NATO NON Article 5 Medal by Farina, then awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal by Ambassador Jacobson.

The Lisbon, La., native spoke afterwards, looking back fondly on his time spent in KFOR in Kosovo and regretting leaving KFOR for this end of tour, but admits that the opportunities in his career so far have been due to his being a combat engineer.

The 1978 Homer High School graduate joined the Army because he was looking for something to belong to and be a part of a group of comrades—to be a part of a bigger team.

“Right out of high school I drove an oil truck for a transportation company,” says Aycock. “I knew then that I had to find another calling in life if I wanted to grow bigger than my rural La. roots were trying to limit me to.”



During his change of responsibilities ceremony, Brig. Gen. David N. Aycock reflects on how the KFOR mission is so much different and an honor for U.S. Soldiers to participate in during their careers.

Since then, the awardee of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and many other awards has spent time in Central America, Afghanistan and served in Desert Storm.

“Every duty position I’ve filled, whether active duty, or in the Guard, has been a tremendous learning experience in life, social and career lessons; and this helped prepare me for this KFOR mission,” said the former 1980 enlistee to the La.

Army National Guard

Aycock refers to lessons learned, and how he would evolve those lessons, such as when he was the Director of Military Support at the La. Joint Force Headquarters, or the chief of staff for the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to his current assignment in KFOR, for example.

“My position as chief of staff for KFOR was tremendously different than my time at the NGB,” he said. “At each level of my assignments,

I learned so much. For example, when I was at the La. Army National Guard, I learned all we had to accomplish to get our forces in Louisiana ready for missions; then, at the bureau, it was a task for all National Guard units throughout the United States—the challenges were always different, and so were many of the solutions.”

“KFOR was even more radically different than all of the other assignments—due to the international aspect,” says Aycock. “There have been more than 30 other countries that have been contributing to the safe and secure environment in Kosovo, and each of them learning from each other on how each country’s social, military and political machines operate doctrinally and what makes each of them tick.”

Aycock says it is a rare opportunity and a great learning experience for a U.S. Soldier to serve on NATO missions. “NATO,” he claims, “is a big beast and very rigid in its bureaucratic processes which poses challenges for the neophyte—especially the language challenge.”

Even though the official language for NATO operations is English, Aycock says that everyone picks up language idioms from each other. “I’m sure that my American La. ‘twang’ was a challenge for my fellow KFOR members, as it was a challenge for me to pick up on the Italian, Greek, Turkish, German and other language injects I learned here. But, at the end of the day, I don’t think of my operations officer as being Turkish, or my plans officer as being German—I think of them as comrades and brothers and sisters in arms that are doing a real and necessary mission in keeping a stable environment in Europe. I am

grateful to have had the opportunity to serve alongside them.”

Aycock holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from La. Tech University, and a master’s degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He likes to hunt, fish, read, ride motorcycles, and he is an avid firearm enthusiast. He is the son of Don and Gerry Aycock of Athens, La., and he now

currently lives in Springfield, Virginia, with his wife of 28 years, Margaret. She has been an intensive care unit nurse and is now a case manager at the Fort Belvoir Hospital. They have two children, Emma (20) who is now a student at Virginia Tech; and Kenneth (18) who will be attending the University of South Carolina this fall.



Brig. Gen. David N. Aycock (middle) is congratulated by KFOR commander, Maj. Gen. Salvatore Farina for Aycock’s time as chief of staff for KFOR. Farina had just awarded Aycock the NATO NON Article 5 Medal.



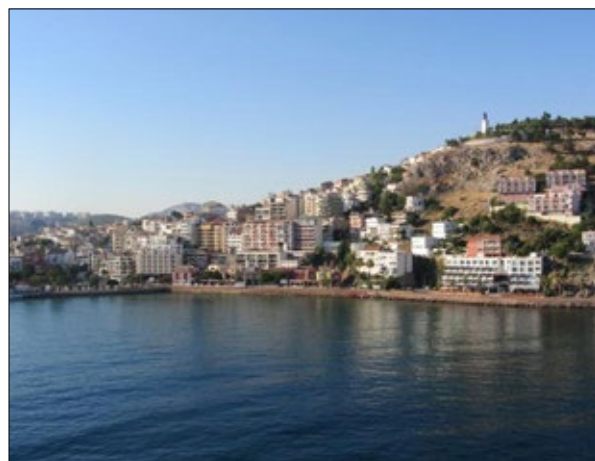
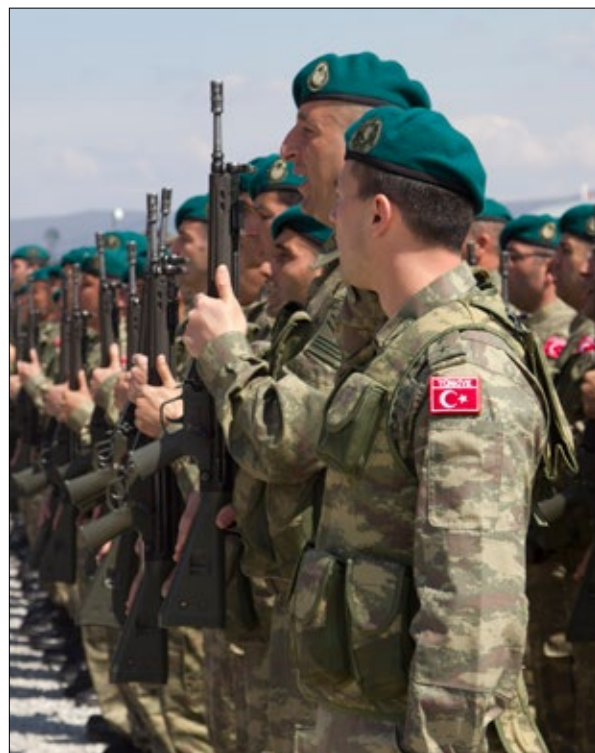
Turkey

Located in Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia (that portion of Turkey west of the Bosphorus is geographically part of Europe), bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Georgia, and bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, between Greece and Syria.

President: Abdullah Gul
Independence: 29 October 1923
Capital: Ankara
Currency: Liras
Official language: Turkish

Turkish Armed Forces is comprised of Turkish Land Forces (Turk Kara Kuvvetleri), Turkish Naval Forces (Turk Deniz Kuvvetleri; includes naval air and naval infantry) and Turkish Air Forces (Turk Hava Kuvvetleri). Soldiers must be 18 years of age for voluntary service; 21-41 years of age for male compulsory military service. Women serve in the Turkish Armed Forces only as officers; reserve obligation to age 41

Information taken from CIA Factbook



AST BALKANS DONATES BUILDING TO FIRE STATION IN KOSOVO

Story and photos by Sgt. Cody Barber,
11th Public Affairs Detachment

Area Support Team Balkans, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, Kosovo, donated a building to a local fire department here, July 8.

The fire station received the building from the Camp Bondsteel team, as part of a process to put non-essential buildings into the hands of people and communities in the Bal-

kans region.

"This project is part of a larger project to help communities in Kosovo to improve their capacity for humanitarian response and disaster preparedness," said Tracey Ann Jacobson, U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo. "When [the building] became available, we knew that in Skenderaj there was a need for more capacity."

The building was disassembled at Camp Bondsteel and the building materials were transported north over 30 miles to the town. The municipality of Skenderaj was responsible for the pick-up, delivery and set-up of the building. Additionally, it is responsible for the sustainment and proper use of the building for the long term.

Della Hodges, AST Balkans Director, said this is just one of the many buildings that have been donated to

the Balkans area.

"We have donated over 300 buildings to Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia," she said. "It has been a success story in taking in what is no longer needed at Camp Bondsteel by the U.S. Army, and putting it to good use elsewhere."

Limon Geci, Skenderaj Fire Station chief, said receiving the building will greatly improve the capabilities for his firefighters.

"Before, we had to store the fire trucks in an unsafe location," said Geci. "Now the trucks will be stored in the new building and we will be able to react faster and safer."

When the ceremony concluded and the sign above the building door was unveiled, Geci was very thankful that his fire station received the donated building that could ultimately help his crew save lives.



Firefighters stand in front of their newly donated building at the Skenderaj fire station, July 8. Area Support Team Balkans, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, donated the building as part a process to help communities in Kosovo improve their capacity for humanitarian response and disaster readiness.

MNBG-E'S AVIATION COMPANY REACHES FOR RECORD-SETTING MAINTENANCE

Story by Capt. Kevin Sandell,
11th Public Affairs Detachment

It was an uncommon sight in Kosovo. Eight UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters soared in a formation above the Kosovo countryside, June 28.

While significant, the flight was only achievable through the higher efforts of 45 aircraft repairers and technicians within the aviation maintenance company for Multinational Battle Group-East's Southern Command Post, who worked tirelessly to ensure the battle group's helicopters are consistently maintained.

For the company commander, the special flight was an opportunity to recognize the unit's accomplishments in boosting the readiness of all assigned aircraft.

"Our goal coming into this deployment was to improve the readiness rate of the aircraft, streamline parts ordering and have aviation assets available to the commanders as much as possible," said Capt. Curtis Rubendall, commander of B Company, 248th Aviation Support Battalion, Iowa Army National Guard. "The flight was the culmination of planning and execution of maintenance by the flight companies and our company to have everything aligned to make it possible."

The maintenance company is headquartered in Boone, Iowa, and is comprised of power plant repair, sheet metal, prop and rotor, quality control, technical supply, production control, avionics and ground support equipment sections.

Rubendall said since the helicopters are a frequently-used asset throughout Kosovo, their upkeep is critical, and it is their responsibility to provide safe aircraft to each of



Six of eight helicopters take off in formation from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, June 28, 2014. Soldiers with Multinational Battle Group-East's Southern Command Post worked tirelessly to ensure all the battle group's helicopters were mission capable. (Photo by Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

the two flight companies.

"Our company's role is to provide the SCP's flight companies safe, mechanically sound aircraft to conduct their missions," Rubendall said. "Our goal is [also] to provide a high-quality product to the commanders that enable them to execute every mission that is required of MNBG-E and the SCP."

The helicopters mechanics have exceeded many key milestones that were achieved by their Kosovo Force predecessors. B Company

has increased the percentage of flying hours, an hour allocation that aviation units can fly, by over 17 percent from previous rotations. They also have to balance keeping aircraft mission capable when other aircraft are in phased maintenance, a process called bank time. The company's record in balancing mission-capable aircraft with aircraft in maintenance has also increased nearly 35 percent.

To accomplish their mission, the aviation mechanics and technicians

must often work demanding schedules, in some cases, 24-hour shifts. Staff Sgt. Alton Poole, maintenance noncommissioned officer-in-charge, said typical days vary based on the workload.

"The workload is sporadic at times. However, the team maintains a relatively high operation tempo throughout the week considering the flying program," said Poole, an Ames, Iowa, native. "There are days the Soldiers conclude maintenance early, but that is usually after putting in 14 to 16 hours of work the day prior."

Poole added challenges do exist, however, in supplying the repair parts needed for aircraft maintenance, and that a simple missing part can make-or-break the rigorous company maintenance schedules.

"We are sometimes faced with the challenge of acquiring the proper parts and tools necessary to perform a task. [It] becomes a challenge when there is a mission that [requires] the aircraft, but either the tool or equipment needed is not available," Poole said.

Being in Kosovo, in a land locked region, does present certain challenges for parts supply, but the unit works through those issues by persistent maintenance checks by the Soldiers, Poole said.

Master Sgt. Anthony Aspengren, the company first sergeant, credited his unit with having a dedicated team of Soldiers whose selflessness is always evident.

"I am very proud to be a part of an outstanding organization. [The company] has a rich history of ex-

cellence. Our Midwest hard-work ethic has always helped us with our success in providing safe and reliable helicopters for our customers," Aspengren, a Boone, Iowa native, said.

Deploying to Kosovo and seeing firsthand the impact of their mission on the Kosovo people, Poole said it is an honor to be part of the larger picture in Kosovo, and he appreciates the gratitude shown throughout the region.

"It's not about me. I am more than grateful to have an opportunity to assist," Poole said.

Rubendall echoed the feeling, and said the company's mission ensures safety and security throughout Kosovo and ultimately helps the Kosovo people.

"Here you can meet the people that it affects the most. Hearing their stories, knowing that what we're doing here has some meaning and affects so many is an experience that you can't help but be proud of," Rubendall said. "It is an honor to be a part of a mission that ensures the safety of a people and will allow them better opportunities to make a brighter future for themselves."



Soldiers with B Company, 248th Aviation Support Battalion, Iowa Army National Guard, conduct removal of components and conduct inspections while performing a Phase Maintenance Inspection I on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, July 8. (Courtesy photo)



Antiterrorism Awareness



- Learn the indicators of terrorist activity
- If you see something suspicious, report it to the Military Police or local law enforcement

See Something — Say Something



Help protect our Army community

Always Ready, Always Alert
Because someone is depending on you



ACCEPTING GIFTS: RULES TO REMEMBER

As you near the end of your deployment in Kosovo, you may find yourself in the age old tradition of farewell gift-giving with your employees and co-workers. Although such gift giving may seem entirely innocuous and innocent, there are some pitfalls and snares you should be aware of. All government employees are subject to regulations that set forth rules concerning gifts. If unaware, these rules may be potential traps for unethical behavior, especially in a work-place that emphasizes teamwork between government personnel and contractor employees. For government contractors, giving gifts to federal employees can result in fines or even jail time. Every contractor should understand and follow the government's rules on gifts.

The Main Rule: In general, a government employee should

LEGAL

not, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept a gift from: a prohibited source or a gift given because of the employee's official position. A prohibited source under 5 CFR

2635.203(d), is any person who: (a) seeks official action by the employee's agency, (b) does business or seeks to do business with the employee's agency, (c) conducts activities regulated by the employee's agency, or (d) has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.

Like most rules, however, there are exceptions to the general rule.

a. \$20/\$50 Exception: The most common exception is the \$20/\$50 rule. Government personnel may accept unsolicited gifts if they are not cash and are valued at or under \$20 per source, per occasion. The aggregate limit from a single source is \$50.00 per calendar year.

b. Personal Relationship Exception: Another exception permits government personnel to accept gifts clearly motivated by personal friendship. When using this exception, it must be clear that the motivation for giving the gift is a personal relationship and that the contractor employee, not the contractor business, is paying for the gift. Evidence of a qualifying personal relationship includes interactions that extend beyond the workplace over an extended period of time, and evidence of friendships that existed prior to the relationship in the workplace. Remember, the rule of thumb: if the relationship did not exist prior to working together,

it probably does not qualify for the personal relationship exception.

c. Items that are not Considered Gifts: Modest food and refreshments, greeting cards, and items of intrinsic value intended solely for presentation are not considered gifts and may be accepted. Additionally, awards and prizes given to competitors in contests or events are also excluded from the definition of gift.

Rules Concerning Gifts from Foreign Officials: DoD Employees (including members of the uniformed services) may accept gifts of "minimal value"—having a retail value in the U.S. of \$350 or less, if the gift is given and received as a souvenir or mark of courtesy from a foreign government (including foreign army). If more than one gift is given at the same presentation from the same donor, the value of the gifts must be aggregated and again cannot exceed \$350. In fact, gifts from different officials of the same foreign government presented at the same time must be aggregated. However, if gifts are from different governmental levels (e.g., national, state, local, and municipal), aggregate the levels separately. Gifts received at separate presentations, even on the same day and/or from the same foreign official, are separate gifts.

Finally, be aware of the disposition of prohibited gifts. If a government employee receives a gift that is prohibited under the ethics rules, the employee must return the gift or pay the donor the market value. The safest course of action when dealing with any kind of gift is to seek legal advice from the CJA Office located in Admin Alley at Camp Bondsteel, building 1330C, 3N, DSN 4575.



MNBG-E SOLDIERS FLY HIGH WITH SPIES TRAINING

Story and photos by Capt. Kevin Sandell,
11th Public Affairs Detachment

Suspended from a rope at 100 feet in the air, five Multi-national Battle Group-East Soldiers outstretched their arms and gave a thumbs-up, signaling they are okay. With their adrenaline flowing, the Soldiers were flown in a “racetrack” flight pattern around the

camp in a rare training opportunity none of them would soon forget.

Soldiers with 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, who comprise the battle group’s Forward Command Post, learned the intricacies of the Special Patrol Insertion and Extraction System, or SPIES, during a hands-on training event

at Camp Bondsteel, July 18. SPIES developed as a means to rapidly insert or extract a reconnaissance patrol from an area that does not permit a helicopter to land.

“Initially, when you get hooked in and the helicopter starts to rise up, the wind is blowing on you pretty hard. You feel the adrenaline and

you’re feeling pretty excited, but I was ready to go. I was ready to get up there,” said Sgt. Ryan Owens, an infantryman with 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, and a first-time participant in the training.

Created during the Vietnam War era, the system allows Soldiers on patrol the opportunity to rapidly infiltrate further behind enemy lines

while providing elements of surprise and stealth to reconnaissance elements. The squadron’s Long Range Surveillance (LRS) Company commander said SPIES is only used in extreme circumstances in covert operations where speed is essential.

“It’s basically a non-standard method of getting Soldiers out of high-risk areas in a way that any adversary really wouldn’t expect,” said Capt. Daniel Stephens,

commander of C Company, 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment. “It affords us the opportunity to send Soldiers farther behind enemy lines to assume greater risk in putting them in more dangerous areas and then pulling them out of areas.”

For over 40 infantrymen and cavalry scouts in the training, the look of fear or anxiety was not readily visible. Well-trained in their role as the quick reaction force for any crowd and riot control events arising in eastern and northern Kosovo, the Soldiers were excited to participate in the unique instruction, Stephens said.

“We’ve been fulfilling our Kosovo requirements, which is very critical, but it was a good opportunity to get the Soldiers back into their

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A group of five U.S. Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, 504th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, train on the Special Patrol Insertion and Extraction System (SPIES) at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, July 18. SPIES is used to rapidly insert Soldiers into a hostile area where helicopters cannot land. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



core competencies conducting LRS operations,” Stephens, a native of Brewster, New York, said. “I think with infantry Soldiers, they tend not to convey some of their anxieties, but I know there was definitely a lot of excitement in having the opportunity to do something that most Soldiers don’t get to do.”

Certified at the U.S. Army’s Air Assault School at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, two of the company’s SPIES masters emphasized safety throughout the exercise, ensuring conditions and equipment were flawless before anyone rode the rope. Staff Sgt. Anthony Ambriz, an infantryman in C Company and one of the SPIES masters on the ground, said safety is paramount to any insertion or extraction exercise.

“The first thing is safety. There’s so many different safety hazards we have to mitigate as a SPIES master,” Ambriz, a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, said. “We have to make sure nothing bad happens of course.”

Ambriz added stringent control measures are in place, including a SPIES master in the helicopter who maintains eye contact at all times with the SPIES master on the ground before taking off, and during any flight operations. The trainer on the ground ensures Soldiers hooking up to the rope are secured and all equipment is precise. Staff Sgt. Luis Aponte, another SPIES master, said the safety process is multifaceted.z

“We make sure their safety line is secure, they did all the proper knots, all the harnesses are put on to standard and ensure all the carabineers are locked to the rope. We also check the rope so it isn’t tangled with the Soldier,” said Aponte, a native of Willimantic, Connecticut. “On the way up the SPIES master on the ground to the SPIES master



A group of five U.S. Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, 504th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, train on the Special Patrol Insertion and Extraction System (SPIES) at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, July 18. SPIES is used to rapidly insert Soldiers into a hostile area where helicopters cannot land.(Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Sandell, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

inside the aircraft is communicating.”

Training for and possibly applying SPIES in a real-world situation, allowed Soldiers like Owens to gain familiarity with the system while giving them a tool to use as LRS Soldiers in the Army.

“It’s really neat to know that we can call upon SPIES if need be, to infiltrate or extract,” said Owens, a Tryon, North Carolina, native. “Especially being within a LRS unit, it’s something really neat to have in your tool bag.”



Minnesota National Guard 133rd Airlift Command troop labor start renovations on the Oglin Elementary School in Croatia (photo by Capt. Magen McKeithen, 627th CCT).

HUMANITARIAN CIVIC ASSISTANCE IN CROATIA

Courtesy story

The 627th Contingency Contracting Team from the 903rd Contingency Contracting Battalion in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is currently deployed supporting a rotational deployment to the Area Support Team (AST) Balkans at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

The team supports various contracting missions, including a project supporting a Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA) mission renovating an elementary school in Oglin, Croatia. This HCA mission was a combined and joint effort involving U.S. Soldiers, the Croatian army and the Croatian Embassy to get this project underway.

This collective endeavor took several key players, which included Sgt. 1st Class Della Overton’s contracting expertise in getting the acquired supplies awarded, prior to U.S. troops on ground. Given her acute business acumen, her continuous coordination with the Embassy was vital in overall missing success.

Sgt. 1st Class Overton ensured that the required supplies were provided on time and under budget. As a result of her contracting diligence, and the time constraint of awarding this requirement within 30 days of notification, she saved the 133rd Airlift Command over \$19,000 of required supplies.



U.S. ARMY EUROPE WARRANT OFFICER RETIRING AS ONE OF LAST ACTIVE SOLDIERS WITH VIETNAM SERVICE

Story by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson,
U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs

A foreign view out the window as a Pan Am flight touches down. Richard Nixon's voice crackling from a radio. Olive drab uniforms. War correspondents on TV in black and white. The pungent odors of jet fuel and jungle penetrating the dense humid air. A blue bus waiting on a hot tarmac, its windows caged to keep grenades out of passengers' laps.

Jack Van Zanten remembers these things - and more. When Chief Warrant Officer 5 Van Zanten retires from the Army in November, he will be one of the last Soldiers to leave the active ranks who served in Vietnam.

In April officials at the Army's Human Resources Command said there are still dozens of Soldiers on active duty whose service dates are earlier than May 7, 1975 -- the recognized end date of the Vietnam conflict -- but only Van Zanten and four others have been recognized as having served there.

Van Zanten, a native of Chester, Va., was 19 when he joined the military in 1971. He was assigned to the Army Security Agency and trained for 35 weeks to be a teletype repairman -- a 31J in Army nomenclature. From school it was straight to Southeast Asia.

"In 1972, the war in Vietnam was winding down and most everyone was getting orders for Korea, Thailand or Germany," he said. "There were 10 of us in my graduating class from Advanced Individual Training, and we all came down on orders for Vietnam."

Late that year Van Zanten found himself in a small camp outside Sai-

gon, the South Vietnamese capital, with the 509th Radio Research Field Station.

Van Zanten still recalls most of the assignments he tackled during his several months in country.

"Our first mission was to go to Da Nang and help build a communication center for the Vietnamese army," he said. He remembers the flight there, his first in an Air Force C-130; his team chief, a seasoned sergeant first class from Iowa then on his fifth tour in Vietnam; the

winter monsoons that brought cool weather and more rainy days than he'd seen in his entire life. And, of course, the war.

"At night there would be occasional rocket attacks from outside the perimeter," he said. "There were some AC-119 Fairchild's based in Da Nang that would fly patrols at night, and you could see the tracer rounds as they engaged targets."

It was during this time that Van Zanten started corresponding with Connie, a girl he'd met on a double date to a high school dance. His

date was Connie's friend; hers was the friend's brother. Later, when Jack went to Vietnam, she says the friend's mother asked her to write him

"Back then, all we had was 'snail mail,' and you would get no letters for days or weeks, and then you'd get three to eight letters at a time. We started writing the dates on the back of the envelopes so we would know in what order to read them," she recalled.

Correspondence led to marriage. In September the Van Zantens will



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jack Van Zanten, the U.S. Army Europe senior food advisor and a native of Chester, Va., holds a photo of himself taken in Vietnam in 1972. When he retires from the Army this year, he will be one of the last Soldiers to leave the active ranks who served in Vietnam. (Photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson, U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs)

celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

Shortly after New Year's 1973, Van Zanten was sent back to Saigon. When he got there he heard he had orders for Augsburg, Germany, but because he couldn't be located the orders were cancelled. Instead he went to Vint Hill Farms Station in Virginia.

In 1975 he was discharged from the Army, but he returned to uniformed service -- this time with the Army Reserve -- in 1978. He trained as a food service specialist and climbed the ranks to sergeant first class before he began to consider becoming a warrant officer.

Connie says that when Jack shared the idea, she volunteered to put together his application, tackling the mass of paperwork with a typewriter and carbon paper.

"I cannot tell you how many times the packet came back with red ink and I would have to re-type all the paperwork," she said.

In 1987, Van Zanten was accepted into the warrant officer program. He finished a year later. The following year he entered the Active Guard and Reserve program, and served at several duty stations before being selected for active duty in the Regular Army in 1996.

Since then Van Zanten has been deployed twice more to a combat zone, to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and 2004. Connie said those times have been hard, but they have been lucky -- and grateful.

"Separation is very stressful ... and I thank God that Jack has always come home

in one piece," she said. "There are too many families that have suffered either great injury to their loved ones, or worse, lost their loved ones."

Nearing retirement, Van Zanten says he's proud to be where he is today. As U.S. Army Europe's senior food advisor, he is responsible for 19 dining facilities across the USAREUR footprint.

It's plain that Connie is proud of him, too. She's quick to brag on his achievements: promotion to Chief Warrant Officer 5, being named Army Food Advisor, and earning his master's degree 36 years to the day after his high school graduation.

"Jack never gives up," Connie said. "He is an inspiration to so many younger Soldiers and civilians... and he tells them to never give up, that it is never too late."

"He is my hero," she said.

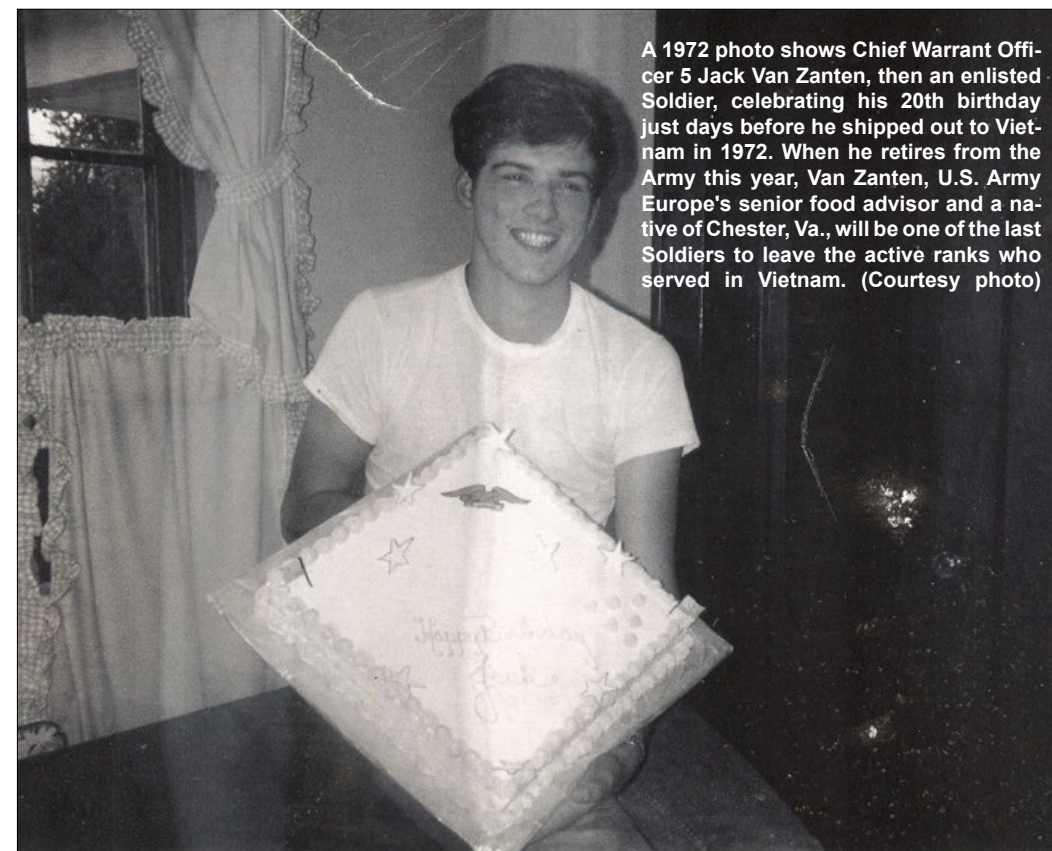
"Van Zanten is a legend in the food

service community," said 1st Sgt. Irving E. Cockrell of USAREUR's Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion Operations Company. "I read about him many years ago, and when I realized that we would be working together, I was honored."

"I look up to Van Zanten as an Army father," Cockrell added. "He motivates me by doing everything that the Army asks of him and he emulates the Army's values, which has inspired me in my duties as a first sergeant."

As Van Zanten prepares for retirement after 40-plus years, he says he knows that whatever the future holds for him, he is a better person because of his long stint in the Army.

"It's a different Army today than it was in 1972," he said. "From the haircuts to the uniforms, it has all changed. But I would not have missed it for the world."



A 1972 photo shows Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jack Van Zanten, then an enlisted Soldier, celebrating his 20th birthday just days before he shipped out to Vietnam in 1972. When he retires from the Army this year, Van Zanten, U.S. Army Europe's senior food advisor and a native of Chester, Va., will be one of the last Soldiers to leave the active ranks who served in Vietnam. (Courtesy photo)

133 MARATHONS AND COUNTING...

Story by Sgt. Cody Barber,
11th Public Affairs Detachment

Most people can't say they have ran a single marathon in their lives but for one Multinational Battle Group-East (MNBG-E) Soldier, he can say he has ran 133.

To call Lt. Col. Edward Keller, MNBG-E Effects Cell officer-in-charge, an avid runner is an understatement; he finished his most recent marathon in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, during his current deployment to Kosovo.

The 52-year old Keller joined the U.S. Army Reserves in 1983, following his father's footsteps who served in the military in the Pacific Theater during WWII. He has childhood memories of meeting with his father at a bus stop, having to run alongside his dad to keep up with, which he says could have been an influence to his running ability.

Keller ran his first marathon, the Dallas White Rock Marathon, Dec. 4, 1982, one week before his 21st birthday.

"In my junior year of college, I was looking at Reserve Officers' Training Corps at North Eastern University, in Tahlequah Oklahoma," the Topeka, Kan., native said. "As a function of preparing for basic training and officer candidate school, I started running long distances, which led to the completion of my first marathon."

He continued running marathons well into his military career, participating in the first ever marathon course in Iraq during combat operations and completing another two



Lt. Col. Edward Keller sits and waits for a marathon in Skopje, Macedonia to begin, May 11. Completing the marathon tallied his total count to an impressive 133 marathons. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

while he was there.

Stride after stride, Keller pushes his body to the limit during every marathon and says that he compels himself to keep his eyes "on the ball."

"Life is a journey and keeping yourself fit, challenging yourself and taking your body and soul to the limit is what a marathon is about,"

said Keller. "It's what life is about."

Running a marathon for him is a way to challenge not only himself, but also the people around him. Keller's personal best for completing a marathon is 2 hours and fifty-five minutes.

"It has been my standard to not expect subordinates to have to stay fit if I am not maintaining a high level

of fitness," said Keller. "The marathon is a indicator and a challenge to colleagues to join me in the efforts to train and then complete a marathon."

His father is one of the reasons Keller still runs and after most marathons he would call his father in Topeka to show him the medal for completing a marathon.

"After finishing the Skopje Marathon, I video-called him and showed him the finisher's medal and he said it was, 'the highlight of his day,'" Keller added. "I routinely call my dad to let him know how I have done on several of the marathons."

His father isn't the only reason he runs, however. His wife, Jennifer, is a constant motivator that pushes him through every gait.

"While I am running I think of my wife and the smile on her face I would see at the finish line," said Keller.

Jennifer has always admired her husband's commitment to running and for her it's always a thrill to watch him cross the finish line.

"It's always such a relief when I finally see him after having no contact all day," said Jennifer. "I am very proud of him and support his pursuit of more marathon medals as part of a healthy lifestyle."

When he isn't running in a marathon or on active duty, Keller works as a detective for the Topeka Police Department where he has put his ability to run long distances to good use. For the last 18 years, he has helped raise money for the Special Olympics in the Law Enforcement Torch Run.

In past years, he served at the National Guard Bureau, where one of

his tasks was to serve as the National Guard marathon coordinator for both Kansas and Oklahoma, preparing teams for the National Guard Bureau's qualifier marathon.

He plans to keep on running as long as he can and his commitment to his family, the Topeka police department and Army National Guard are what motivates him to continue

competing.

"They provide me with the strength and dedication to put the running shoes on, head to the starting line and demonstrate my commitment each time to succeed in what a lot of people consider a herculean task of running 26.2 miles," said Keller. "I consider myself fortunate to be healthy enough to compete."



Lt. Col. Edward Keller Competes in the Skopje Marathon, May 11, with a smile on his face. Completing the marathon was his latest finish in a series of 130-plus marathons completed around the world. (Courtesy photo)

S.I.K.

SERVICE IN KOSOVO

Photos



MULTINATIONAL BATTLE GROUP-EAST SOLDIERS PARTICIPATE IN A COMBAT LIFE-SAVER COURSE AT CAMP BONDSTEEL, JULY 3. THEY HAD TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO SIMULATED CASUALTIES WHILE TAKING FIRE FROM OPPOSING FORCES ARMED WITH PAINT-BALL GUNS. (PHOTO BY ARDIAN NRECAJ, MNBG-E PAO)

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SOLDIERS FROM KFOR MULTINATIONAL BATTLE GROUP-EAST, THE KOSOVO SECURITY FORCE, AND OTHER UNITS PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND DANISH CONTINGENT (DANCON) MARCH, HELD JULY 12 NEAR CAMP NOVO SELO. SEVERAL HUNDRED PARTICIPANTS MARCHED IN EITHER A 25KM OR 50KM ROAD MARCH FOR TIME. (PHOTO BY SGT. CODY BARBER, 11TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DETACHMENT)



KFOR MULTINATIONAL BATTLE GROUP-EAST SOLDIERS CELEBRATE AMERICA'S BIRTHDAY AT CAMP BONDSTEEL, JULY 4TH. SOLDIERS PARTICIPATED IN MULTIPLE EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE DAY WHICH INCLUDED A FORMAL CEREMONY, 5K RUN, A COMMANDERS CUP SPORTS TOURNAMENT AND A BBQ WHICH WAS OPEN TO ALL EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES. (PHOTO BY SGT. CODY BARBER, 11TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT)

AVIATORS AND SOLDIERS WITH KFOR MULTINATIONAL BATTLE GROUP-EAST'S SOUTHERN COMMAND POST FLEW IN A "MULTI-SHIP" FORMATION, JUNE 28, TO HIGHLIGHT AND RECOGNIZE THE SCP'S MAINTENANCE COMPANY AND OTHER AVIATION SOLDIERS WHO WORKED TIRELESSLY TO ACHIEVE A 100% "GO" FOR ALL AIRCRAFT. (PHOTO BY CAPT. KEVIN SANDELL, 11TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT)



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KEEPING SOLDIERS SAFE AT WATER PARK

Story by Ardian Nrecaj,
MNBG-E PAO

U.S. Soldiers deployed to Kosovo often have an opportunity to take different trips organized by Area Support Team-Balkans Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR). Recently, MWR organized a trip to a water park in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

But before the trip takes place Task Force Medical (TF Med) Preventive medicine team conducted a water safety inspection of the water park.

Staff Sgt. Erik Serrato, TF Med preventive medicine noncommissioned officer, explained that it is their job to make sure the water is

safe for Soldiers to swim in.

"Bacteria tends to grow lot faster in the water, so we are just making sure that the chlorine level is good to kill the bacteria and that there is no risk for Soldiers to come here and enjoy themselves," said Serrato.

Serrato added that they conducted chlorine and PH readings at the water park, but they also took water samples back to the laboratory at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

"Generally the PH level should be between 7 and 7.8, and the water [at the park] meets that safe PH level. For the chlorine residual for the pool, we generally want it to be between 1 to 4 as a guideline, and here they reach that safe level," said Serrato.

Jay Debose, MWR entertainment and sports specialist, explained that it is important to have trips where Soldiers can have fun and relax.

"The reason we have these trips is for morale and recreation. We try to make sure Soldiers have a good time while they are deployed," said Debose.

Debose explained that he has been to the water park a few times, and it is a fun place to go.

"They have water slides, a lazy river and it's a real chill place to hang out. They have a nice snack bar and food court where soldiers can eat, relax and enjoy the summer time," added Debose.



Staff Sgt. Erik D. Serrato and Spc. Jordan Holloway, Task Force Medical preventive medicine, conducted chlorine and PH readings at the water park, in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, July 18. (Photo by Sgt. Cody Barber, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

LAST LOOK

The American flag drifts in the wind outside one of the barracks at Camp Bondsteel with the sun setting in the background. (Photo by Pfc. Carino, Denwill Ross, 268th Brigade Signal Company)

