

GUARDIAN EAST



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KFOR hands Camp Cabra land back to local landowners outside Zubin-Potok



KFOR leaders and local landowners and leaders prepare to perform a ribbon cutting in order to symbolically hand a former KFOR facility's land back to its civilian owners, Dec. 21, 2015, in Zupce. The site, formerly known as Camp Cabra, was closed due to the region's improved security situation and KFOR's operational needs. Military engineers spent several months restoring and improving the land before officially handing it back to civilian landowners. (Photo by Sgt. Erick Yates)

By Sgt. Erick Yates

Multinational Battle Group-East

U.S. Army and Swiss Soldiers assigned to NATO's Kosovo Force peace support mission held a ribbon cutting ceremony Dec. 21, in Zupce, to mark the changeover of land from KFOR back to its local owners.

The site had been known as Camp Cabra, a KFOR facility used since 2011 as a staging base for small elements of KFOR Soldiers. Due to an improved security situation in the area, Camp Cabra is no longer needed by KFOR, and the personnel have been stationed to other existing KFOR facilities.

During the ceremony, KFOR Soldiers from Switzerland and the United States thanked local landowners and leaders, and presented them with certificates of appreciation before formally ending KFOR's use.

"It is quite an accomplishment that citizens in the Camp Cabra area have been able to work on resolving their issues, allowing KFOR forces to take on a more streamlined role of making sure a safe and secure environment is being maintained," said U.S. Army Col. Chris Selvey, the deputy commander for MNBG-E.

Selvey added that KFOR's local Swiss Liaison Monitoring Teams would continue to work with the community in the future. In addition, it was made clear that the release of Camp Cabra must be

seen in the context of the review of KFOR posture throughout Kosovo, to enhance its overall effectiveness. To be more specific, the return of the land to the original owners shouldn't be considered as a sign of the NATO disengagement from the area. On the contrary, this move will allow for the unfixing of a considerable amount of soldiers, previously involved in static tasks inside the camp. Therefore more personnel will be made available for mobile activities, such as motorized patrol, consequently increasing the presence and surveillance in the region and contributing to improve the overall security situation.

Before the changeover could happen, a two-month land restoration project took place that involved U.S. and Swiss KFOR Soldiers working together to restore and improve the site.

U.S. Army Maj. Joel Pierce, the senior engineer assigned to MNBG-E, said he worked with the Swiss LMTs in order to coordinate with the land owners and local municipality.

"It was a great feeling to be part of a major engineering project here in Kosovo," Pierce said. "Not only did we remove the camp, but we also reshaped the land in a way that left it better than we found it."

Pierce was also responsible for the project's budget and operational planning, and worked with U.S. contractors and Area Support Team-Balkans.

Pierce said the project's biggest challenge was inte-

grating budget and timeline with landowners' needs.

U.S. Army Maj. Samuel King, MNBG-E's deputy logistics officer and a licensed engineer with a background in road and highway infrastructure, with also instrumental in the project's completion. Pierce and King are both Army National Guard officers with civilian careers outside their military duties.

"With Pierce and King working on this project, the command was able to highlight the fact that two citizen-Soldiers used their civilian expertise on this critical mission," Selvey said. "They made it possible to take this task to another level of reconstruction."

During the ceremony, Pierce thanked the landowners for their patience during the restoration process and introduced Swiss Lt. Col. Sebastian Neuhaus, the chief of operations assessment for Joint Regional Detachment-North, to speak on their behalf.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the land owners for a very good collaboration," Neuhaus said. "I would also like to thank the LMTs, and my American colleagues for their outstanding work in all the efforts involving this project."

Selvey emphasized KFOR's dedication to its mission throughout Kosovo.

"The appreciation we have for the citizens allowing us to use this land, has allowed the KFOR forces to make sure we have a safe and secure environment in this area of Kosovo."

Hungarian troops lead Spartan 300 fitness challenge in Kosovo



Polish Army 2nd Lt. Konrad Bednarski, assigned to MNBG-E's FCP, performs a box jump during the Spartan 300 Fitness Challenge, Dec. 19 at CMLT, Kosovo.

Story and photo by Sgt. Erick Yates

Multinational Battle Group-East

Hungarian soldiers deployed as part of NATO's Kosovo Force peace support mission hosted the Spartan 300 Team Workout Challenge, an advanced fitness competition for U.S., Polish and Portuguese soldiers, Dec. 19, 2015, at Camp Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, Kosovo.

The challenge, coordinated by Sgt. Ferenc Radoczi, a Hungarian Soldier assigned to Multinational Battle Group-East's Forward Command Post, brought the multinational soldiers together to build camaraderie and compete against one another in an activity that transcends languages and borders: physical fitness.

The competitors on each team pushed through 300 brutal repetitions of seven fitness challenges that included pull-ups, deadlifts, kettlebell snatches and push-ups.

"This was definitely a good experience to have the opportunity to get together with soldiers from other forces and combine building relationships with conducting friendly competitions," said Spc. Steven Webb, a North Carolina National Guard Soldier from the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 252nd Armor Regiment, out of Fayetteville, N.C.

Webb also said that preparing for and competing in the event was tougher than it looked.

Once the competition was completed, the soldiers were recognized for their team and individual efforts during the challenge.

Overall, the challenge went well, said Radoczi, who was happy with the turn-out of volunteers who supported the event.



Polish soldiers assigned to Multinational Battle Group-East's Forward Command Post conduct fire phobia training, Dec. 14, 2015, at Camp Slim Lines in Pristina, Kosovo. The training, held to ensure troops are prepared to respond to situations that threaten a safe and secure Kosovo, was led by Hungarian army soldiers that are part of the Kosovo Force Tactical Reserve Maneuver Battalion. (Photo by Ardian Nrecaj)

Editor's Note: Ardian Nrecaj, a contractor with Camp Bondsteel and the MNBG-E Public Affairs Office for over a decade, has moved on to new opportunities outside of KFOR. Please join our team, and our many U.S. KFOR predecessors in wishing him and his Family the best of luck in their future endeavors. They will forever be a part of our Multinational Battle Group-East and Old Hickory Family.



Greg Delawie, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo, serves a hearty Christmas meal to Sgt. Jason Givens, Dec. 25, 2015, at Camp Bondsteel. Givens is part of the 30th ABCT headquarters. Delawie and his family visited with troops throughout Kosovo during the holiday. (Photo by Sgt. Gina Russell)



A German soldier sprays a National Guard Soldier from Alpha Company, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 252nd Armor Regiment, out of Fayetteville, N.C., with simulated pepper spray during a crowd riot control training exercise Dec. 10 at CMLT, Kosovo. (Photo by Sgt. David I. Marquis)



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