

troopers manning Outpost Terminator remain at their post throughout their six-month tour of Kosovo. Due to local topography and altitude, soldiers guarding Checkpoint 65 also labor in substantially colder temperatures.

Third platoon soldiers point to significant differences in the mission.

"We get direct contact with rural people rather than Gnjilane urbanites," Leibert said. "Their biggest concern is eating.

"We also see Albanians and Serbs interacting every day," added the 23-year-old Houston native. "We don't necessarily see the political activists rioting in Belgrade. We see people coming up to us and saying they're hungry."

"The amount of traffic we get," Land said of the unique challenges his platoon faced. "Due to market days, we have heavy traffic. Keeping the lines moving can be a challenge. People tend to get anxious when they have to wait in line a long time."

According to guard leaders, 3rd Platoon soldiers responded well to the challenges posed by climate and isolation as well as mission.

"They're doing great," Land said. "When they first got here they were a little unsure. But now they've (gotten) into the groove and they're doing great."

"I think it's the most challenging job in Task Force Falcon," Leibert said of his platoon's mission. "So, we're proud to do it."

During daily patrols of the Mucibaba region, 3rd Platoon soldiers frequently encounter villagers and their farm animals.

"It's a different dynamic here," Leibert said. "We can sit down 500 meters from here and drink coffee with someone, and at the same time hear high-caliber gunfire."

"I'm happy the KFOR people are here," said Ramadan Zymberi, a 62-year-old ethnic Albanian farmer who



Pfc. Dustin Drury of Co. C, 2-6 IN, radios for instructions during a patrol of the Mucibaba region of Kosovo near Outpost Terminator.

lives in a small village adjacent to Outpost Terminator. "Now I'm not afraid any more."

Zymberi, along with his wife and 11 children, fled with most ethnic Albanians into northern Macedonia during the war, returning to Kosovo only after the restoration of order.

Zymberi's village, home to between 300 and 400 people before the war, now contains only 96.

While 3rd Platoon guards rural approaches to Checkpoint 65, other troops monitor the streets of Gnjilane, the small city near which NATO forces constructed Camp Monteith.

Denizens of the overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian city do not always welcome visiting Serbs with open arms.

Yet Serbs often journey to Gnjilane in order to visit graves of family members, shop, sell produce or seek medical attention.

On "Serb shopping days," NATO-escorted shuttle buses deliver rural passengers to an Orthodox Church located in the heart of Gnjilane. Serbs exit the buses, conduct any necessary business and re-board shuttles for the drive home. Guards maintain order and seek to prevent, typically through their mere presence, any violent outbreaks.

"We're making sure the Serbs can shop without any hassle," said Spc. Jaine Fisher, an engineer serving as a checkpoint leader. "If we see any problems, we separate them and send them on their way."

According to the Oceanside 8, Calif., native, shifts span the hours of high activity during "Serb

shopping days." Soldiers stand guard at main checkpoints and troops receive briefings on their duties from guard leaders and assistance, if necessary, from Kosovo police.

American guards, typically popular among ethnically Albanians, often win the hearts of Serbs as well.

"I am very satisfied," Savic Gubica, a Serbian woman from the nearby town of Pones, said through an interpreter. "They took very good care of me. I still remember the (medic) who helped me."

After Gubica suffered a gunshot wound during an encounter with ethnic Albanians, an American medical crew transported her to Camp Bondsteel by helicopter for treatment. She fully recovered and emerged from the ordeal a fan of U.S. military personnel.



Troopers from Co. C, 2-6 IN, patrol the rolling hills of the Mucibaba region of Kosovo near Outpost Terminator.