

40th Engineers *for* KFOR Builds Foundation ROTATION

Story and photos by
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FREJUS, France – While sending the first of its two brigade-sized elements into Kosovo to continue to build the peace, the 1st Armored Division had already begun preparing soldiers for its next rotation in May.

Located 20 minutes from the Mediterranean at Camp Le Coq, the complex of buildings and computers comprised the network of 22 different European nations that underwent “Cooperative Lantern,” a Partnership for Peace exercise held amongst the rolling limestone mountains, hills, vineyards and stucco mansions in France’s Cote d’Azur region.

Assigned to participate in the exercise in southern France, the 40th Engineer Battalion paved the road to success in preparation for their upcoming mission in Kosovo this coming December.

Cooperative Lantern looked similar to a U.S.-run Warfighter computer exercise. It combined computers and a script covering different situations arising between the fictitious former warring factions, such as mass-grave discoveries, violations of the zone of separation, terrorist activities and environmental sabotage. Each situation challenged the leadership to get all participating nations to work together toward a solution and bring peace to the fictitious former warring factions, Gondor and Runivia.

The 22 nations comprised two peace-keeping brigades in the exercise scenario.

Each of the two brigade-sized com-

mand posts for the exercise was set in new, French-made, command and control containers. Each container had built-in desks, map-board walls, phones, computers and communications equipment.

The 40th Engineers role-played as a U.S. Engineer battalion assigned to participate in enforcing the peace between two new territories that had split apart under a United Nations Security Resolution.

Their mission was to support the commander of the Multi-National Brigade - North, run by the Dutch 43rd Mechanized Infantry Brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Herman Bokhoven.

The importance of working in this multi-national peace-support environment paid off according to the 40th Engineer commander, Lt. Col. John D. Jordan. “We’re seeing how other nations work and what their capabilities are,” Jordan said. “We’ve also showed our capabilities and built their confidence in us. We have a great corps of NCOs who carry a lot of responsibility and take charge... very capable.”

Explaining his goals in the exercise and how they would support Bokhoven, Jordan stated, “First, we wanted to get good training and showcase our capabilities.” Those capabilities included engineer recon, engineer operations and terrain products to support the commander. “It keeps our skills sharp,” added Jordan.

“This exercise gave me a headstart for KFOR 2B,” said Staff Sgt. Shawn A. Harris, an intelligence specialist for the 40th Engineers. “It also gave me a good foundation for understanding

peace support operations.” Harris added that, “U.S. enlisted soldiers can do great work, tough work and it was a good opportunity for team building.”

Maj. David A. Masterson, the 40th Engineer Battalion operations officer, started planning for the exercise in August and attended planning conferences in October and February. The 40th brought a German Army partnership officer, 1st Lt. Michael Trees, of the German 320th Pioneer Battalion with them to participate in the exercise. “We thought it would make a great show of partnership and it added another dimension to the training,” said Masterson.

Having already served once in Kosovo, Trees worked in the 40th Engineer cell helping in operations. “I understand PSO exercises and they reinforce experiences I had in Kosovo,” stated Trees.

Besides encapsulating six months of events into six days of training for the exercise, Cooperative Lantern was the first 24-hour PFP exercise. “We behaved exactly as the battalion would in any 24-hour operation,” said Masterson.

The 40th Engineer crew, 50 percent officers and 50 percent enlisted soldiers, had the opportunity to work with Slovenian, Latvian, Dutch, Italian, Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Danish, Romanian, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, German, Hungarian, Czech, Estonian, French, Lithuanian, Moldovan, Polish, Slovakian, Swiss and British soldiers.

“This was a great experience, and we’ll have a chance to see these sorts of things in the mission rehearsal exercise in the fall and later in Kosovo,” said Masterson.



Soldiers of the twenty-two nations that participated in Cooperative Lantern carry their respective flags during the opening ceremonies at Camp Le Coq, France.