

Long lost brothers cross paths

at CAS

Story and photo by Pvt. Benjamin Z. Etzioni
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CAMP ABLE SENTRY, Macedonia – Upon his arrival in Macedonia, he surveyed the area, searching for a face. It was a face he had not seen in almost two years. It was a face remarkably similar to his own.

As Task Force Falcon 2A departed and Task Force Falcon 2B arrived, many soldiers met up with friends from their past, other soldiers from their own units and even people from their hometowns. One 1st Armored Division soldier actually bumped into his identical twin brother.

“I did not know he was going to be here at the same time,” said Spc. Yves M. Roelina, a truck driver with 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Service Battery. “I had hoped and prayed for it, though. When I saw his face through the window of the bus, I was overjoyed.”

The reunion of Spc. Roelina and his brother Capt. Joel M. Roelina, a chaplain with the 71st Corps Support Battalion, 3rd Corps Support Command, had been a long time coming and the first time the two brothers had seen each other in uniform.

“I knew Yves was going to be deployed here,” said Capt. Roelina. “We contact each other three to four times a week. I was just down here for a short trip but I had hoped it would coincide with Yves’ arrival.”

According to both of the twins they have shared a special bond throughout their lives. From grade school through college, they always earned the same grades. They even used to make the same mistakes on their college exams



The Roelina brothers, Capt. Joel M. Roelina (left) and Spc. Yves M. Roelina (right) were reunited at Camp Able Sentry during 1st Armored Division’s transfer of authority between Task Force Falcon 2A and 2B.

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- Spc. Yves M. Roelina,
4th Bn., 27th Field
Artillery

even though they were seated many rows apart.

With Capt. Roelina stationed in Bamberg, Germany, and Spc. Roelina stationed in Baumholder, Germany, the brothers always do their best to check in and watch over the other’s family while one is deployed or at a training exercise.

The brothers were born in Britain. Capt. Roelina became a U.S. citizen when he married an American. Spc. Roelina married an American a while later and has not yet become a citizen. They first

arrived in America in 1984 when they enrolled at Texas A&M University.

“We have always known that we would come to the States and serve the American Army,” said Capt. Roelina. “It is our mission in life to do the Lord’s will and serve this country. We will never go into private business. Whatever we do, we will serve this country. Our parents raised us to believe in the Lord. It was the Lord’s word that brought us to America and to join the Army.”

According to Spc. Roelina, both brothers, age 34, intend to have long careers in the Army. Spc. Roelina has been in the Army for a year and a half. Capt. Roelina has been in the Army for three years. They are doing what they can to get stationed closer together. But for the time being, they will settle for the near daily phone calls or letters and the occasional surprise meetings in a foreign land.

Family smiles for the camera

Story and photo by
Spc. Rebecca F. Deuel
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BAD KREUZNACH, Germany – The conference room filled with giggles as Kerry and Joni Renew watched their dad, Warrant Officer Louie Renew, of 501st Military Intelligence Battalion try to explain where the Christmas presents were. He motioned up and down, back and forth and finally broke into a huge grin, shrugging then laughing. His wife, Jody, watched the whole scene with amusement. This was not a typical family get-together. The girls and their mother had gathered around a conference table to talk to dad who was on a big-screen television, and televised remotely by satellite from Kosovo.

“A telephone call is great, but being able to see him sometime makes you feel a little more closer,” Jody said, smiling to her husband on the big screen television. “They [Kerry and Joni] were really excited when I told them that they would actually be able to see him on TV and talk to him at the same time.”

Historically, the majority of deployed service members have kept in touch with their families via letters, e-mail or the occasional telephone call. Today, 1st Armored Division soldiers and their families now have high-speed commercial Internet and Video Teleconferencing (VTC) services to stay in touch, according to Jim Condon, senior manager for Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Europe (SPAWAR) in Stuttgart, Germany.

Cyber Cafes, as they are nicknamed, are facilities developed by SPAWAR and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) that implement

voice, video and data networks for communications to and from the Balkans, according to Condon. This system of networks, known as MWRNet, was implemented in March. This service was made available to 1AD soldiers and their families during the KFOR 2A rotation and is now open to the KFOR 2B rotation soldiers and families.

“It’s one of the best things we can do for the families,” said Warrant Officer Larry Mims, 501st MI Bn. VTC liaison officer at Camp Bondsteel, during an VTC-assisted interview. “The looks and expressions on the soldiers’ faces when they walk out of here... I get a joy just watching them. It makes the time here seem not so bad.”

Sgt. 1st Class Steven Blevins, 501st MI Bn. family liaison representative, agreed wholeheartedly with Mims. “The kids love it... laughing and smiling and

having a good time,” he said. Blevins added that the families have a sense of relief when they leave the sessions, as well. “The families like it because they can see their spouses. They can see how they’re doing, rather than just talk to them and ask them how they’re doing.”

Zilpa Oseguera, Bad Kreuznach Army Community Service deployment specialist and Outreach Program manager introduced the VTC system in place at the Bad Kreuznach ACS office. “I am just really excited about this program,” she said.

“I almost can’t wait for when we have another VTC,” Renew said during a teleconference interview. “Being able to see them has a very special meaning to me. It’s a tremendous morale booster to be able to do this with my family.”

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- Warrant Officer Louie Renew,
501st MI Bn., Kosovo



Jodi Renew (center) catches a kiss blown to her by her husband, Warrant Officer Louie Renew. Jodi, Joni (left) and Kerry (right) used the video teleconferencing system to visit with Renew over Christmas weekend in Bad Kreuznach.