

2-6 Infantry makes presence felt in Kosovo

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CAMP MONTEITH, Kosovo – They are greeted at the door by a man and his wife. As the group moves into the house, the son and daughter join them. They're cordially offered drinks and pastries as they sit down in the living room. They talk about the upcoming winter and the city elections.

This is not a neighborhood visit to the housing area of a military post. It is the part of the daily routine for a squad of soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, as they patrol through the northern sector of Gnjilane, Kosovo, doing their part to

maintain the peace in Kosovo.

The building walls are peppered with shrapnel-damage. The kids' shoes are old and shredded. Every other alleyway has laundry lines strung across the horizon. Some soldiers have a difficult time witnessing such heartache and despair, according to Staff Sgt. Garrick B. Symonds, the squad leader.

"I tell our soldiers on a regular basis not to let it get to them. We are here to do a job," said Symonds. "We go from house to house, talking to the families. We talk with them and find out if they feel they have freedom of movement. Being a minority Serbian in this area can be really difficult."

"While on patrol, we also look for illegal

weapons, wanted persons, illegal [not registered] wood," said Cpl. Ronald L. Byrd, the patrol leader. "We have not had many problems so far. Most families like it when we stop by. They offer us tea and food. When we confiscate wood, we distribute it to the families that need it."

Wood must be registered to prove it has been cut from allowed locations. If the wood does not have the proper tags or markings singed on it, it is considered poached material and is thereby confiscated.

While the sector they are patrolling is mostly Albanian, the soldiers treat everybody the same.

"We are fair and unbiased," said Symonds.

"We listen to anybody who feels unsafe. Our effort and mission that we are trying to accomplish is being accomplished. We are making the situation better. We are making a difference. You can see it."

"We want to get to know certain families so they know what KFOR is all about," said Byrd. "We are providing a safe and secure environment for all people in our sector."

According Symonds, if they were not having such an impact and making their presence felt, the locals would not welcome the soldiers with open arms.

"The locals respect, like and welcome us," said Symonds. "The families and the kids like to see us on the streets. It makes them feel better."



Above: Pfc. Allan C. Finandis discusses safety issues and town politics with a local teenager in front of a graffiti-laced, shrapnel-damaged building. Clockwise from far top left: Many Kosovars greet the daily patrols with smiles and waves. Middle: Cpl. Ronald L. Byrd leads the patrol squad down a Gnjilane alley. Top left: Kosovars are seen moving freely about Gnjilane. Bottom left: Staff Sgt. Garrick B. Symonds is welcomed to Kosovo by one of the younger residents of the town. Far bottom left: Byrd and Symonds discuss the results of one of their in-home visits.