

1AD takes control in Kosovo

Story and Photos by
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CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo – Command of Kosovo Force’s American Sector was passed from the 1st Infantry Division to the 1st Armored Division in a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, June 20.

1st Infantry Division Assistant Division Commander for Support Brig. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez handed the NATO flag to KFOR Eurocorps Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Juan Ortuno, who in turn handed it to 1st Armored Division Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver Brig. Gen. Randal Tieszen, signifying the division’s take over of KFOR’s American Sector in Kosovo.

The ceremony took place on Camp Bondsteel’s gravel parade field against the backdrop of Kosovo’s broad Sharri Mountains. NATO soldiers stood in formation beneath their nations’ flags, amid strains of military music played by the 1st Armored Division Band.

Sanchez reflected on the 1st Infantry Division’s impact in Kosovo since their arrival.

“Only if you stood on this ground one year ago and scanned the horizon could you possibly measure the impact our soldiers have had on the peace and stability of Kosovo,” said Sanchez.

The 1st Infantry Division’s 2nd Brigade deployed to Kosovo with Task Force Falcon, the nickname given to U.S. forces assigned to KFOR under Brig. Gen. Brantz J. Craddock. Task Force Falcon entered the war-torn province of Kosovo on June 12, 1999.

The Task Force grew into the Multi-National Brigade (East) composed of forces from eight nations—Greece, Poland, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Jordan, Lithuania and the United States. Headquarters for the task force were established at Camp Bondsteel, near Urosevic.

KFOR was tasked to keep the peace in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’s Kosovo province in accordance with the terms of the Rambouillet Peace Accord.

Initially MNB(E) monitored and verified the withdrawal of Former Republic of Yugoslavia forces in accordance to the Military-Technical Agreement. The brigade later took on the demilitarization and transformation of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Various units of the 1st Infantry Division rotated through Kosovo as part of the NATO-led KFOR.

Prior to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo suffered from the effects of ethnic cleansing, Sanchez said.

“There is no doubt that we have a long way to go to ensure lasting peace, but soldiers have brought this province those first rays of hope and stability in a very short period of time,” said Sanchez.

“We have not saved every life, nor eliminated suffering, but that does not mean we have not tried, or that we should not continue to strive for that goal.

“Ultimately the final solution rests upon the willingness of all the people of Kosovo to commit themselves to tolerance and maybe some



Lt. Gen. Juan Ortuno, Commanding General, KFOR/EURO CORPS, conducts the Transfer of Authority of Task Force Falcon and the Multinational Brigade (East) between Brig. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, 1st Infantry Division Asst Div Cdr (Support), and Brig. Gen. Randal Tieszen, 1st Armored Division Asst Div Cdr (Maneuver), by symbolically transferring the NATO colors from Sanchez to Tieszen.

day to a multi-ethnic society. No one should tolerate violence,” said Sanchez.

“Under the leadership of the 1st Infantry Division, Multinational Brigade East, and Task Force Falcon, we (the Army) have laid the groundwork for success,” said Sanchez.

Some of the successes include significantly reduced violence, peace talks between Serbs and Albanians, establishment of municipal governments, villages alive with daily activity and reconstruction of homes, roads and businesses, said Sanchez.

“All of these are small steps,

but one must take the first step in order to reach our destination, and together we have taken the first steps to a peaceful Kosovo,” said Sanchez.

“We are trained, we are ready, we are disciplined and we are committed to maintaining a safe and secure place for all Kosovars to live, work and grow,” said Tieszen.

“We are dedicated to the United Nations’ efforts to establish effective civil administrations and encourage and develop economic progress in the region.”

“Life here can improve if we work together,” said Tieszen.