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Operation Silver Sabre shows full force of multinational capabilities



Left: Kosovo Force helicopters fly over a crowd riot control exercise, Nov. 20, 2015, which served as the culminating event of Operation Silver Sabre, a three-day training event for KFOR, Kosovo Police, European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and NATO Operational Reserve Forces at Camp Vrelo outside Pristina, Kosovo. **Right:** German KFOR Soldiers hold the line against unruly U.S. Army role players. (Photos by Ardian Nrecaj (left) and Lt. Col. Gilbert Buentello (right))

By Sgt. Erick Yates

Multinational Battle Group-East

When a peaceful demonstration erupts into a violent protest, local authorities and international peacekeeping forces will work together to quell chaos and protect safety.

This was one of the messages of Operation Silver Sabre, a massive multinational exercise held Nov. 18-20 at Camp Vrelo outside Pristina, Kosovo.

In the three-day exercise's culminating event, members from the Kosovo Police, European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, Kosovo Force and NATO Operational Reserve Forces came together in unified response to a crowd of unruly role-players.

Silver Sabre is a biannual training event for the forces serving in Kosovo, regularly testing and refining the security professionals' ability to ensure a safe environment throughout Kosovo. In addition, this iteration of Silver Sabre welcomed more than 120 multinational soldiers from NATO's ORF to augment the combined crowd riot response.

Facing airborne tires and Molotov cocktails, the forces from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Portugal stood strong, working alongside their partner agencies to hold their line against the role players. As the crowd grew, the ORF soldiers arrived on the scene to provide further assistance.

With the ORF serving as the fourth tier in a generally three-tier emergency response structure in Kosovo, Silver Sabre tested the participants' abilities to communicate across organizations in order to perform a seamless operation.

"This event was KFOR's Super Bowl," said U.S. Army Capt. Jonathan Laton, who planned Silver Sabre in his role as a Multinational Battle Group-East operations officer. "This is putting every piece we have into the mix to execute a plan, and to highlight the things that we do well."

"Silver Sabre incorporates KFOR, EULEX and the Kosovo Police," he said, "and the ORF's participation is significant because it's the first time they've come to Kosovo in a couple years. They've been training in Kosovo for a couple weeks, and [Silver Sabre] was their main focus."

This year's exercise featured realistic scenarios, and emphasized the combined participants' ability to communicate between and relieve one another in the middle of an operation.

"We tried to make this educational and practical," Laton said. "These forces train on crowd riot control all the time, so Silver Sabre focused on the things we don't get to do all the time, with everybody training together in one place."

Silver Sabre began with two days of round-robin training to give the multinational soldiers a com-

mon framework in fire phobia, crowd riot control, communications equipment, explosive ordnance disposal, and casualty evacuation.

This iteration of Silver Sabre was unique because it also included active-shooter response training led by MNBG-E's Military Police unit, Laton said.

This training set the stage for future training events between KFOR and the Kosovo Police, in order to prepare more police officers to respond to dangerous situations.

Elements from the training sessions were incorporated into Silver Sabre's final face-off between the role players and peacekeeping force.

After three hours of intense confrontation, the multinational Soldiers expressed relief and excitement as they wrapped up one of the year's biggest training events. KFOR's leaders acknowledged that all participants had put forth a strong effort throughout Silver Sabre.

Italian Maj. Gen. Guglielmo Luigi Miglietta, the KFOR Commanding General, said that forces supporting KFOR will continue to hold events like Silver Sabre in order to be prepared to support Kosovo's law enforcement institutions.

"We have to be ready to intervene to ensure a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all of the people of Kosovo," Miglietta said.

Speaking the Same Language: English students in Kosovo visit Bondsteel for a day

By Sgt. David I. Marquis

Multinational Battle Group-East



Over the last four months, volunteers from MNBG-E have been teaching local teens to speak and understand English, as part of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language course.

Outside Camp Bondsteel in Ferizaj, Kosovo, the Soldiers have spent their off-duty time preparing students to take the TOEFL test. Those students had the chance to visit Camp Bondsteel on Nov. 1, to see how their teachers live and work during their mission in Kosovo.

The TOEFL test gauges a student's understanding of English at the university level for individuals whose first language is not English. In this case, the students are native Albanian speakers, which is the majority language spoken in Kosovo.

During their visit to Camp Bondsteel, the students were fully immersed in an English-speaking community for the first time in their lives and were required to put all of their English-speaking skills to use.

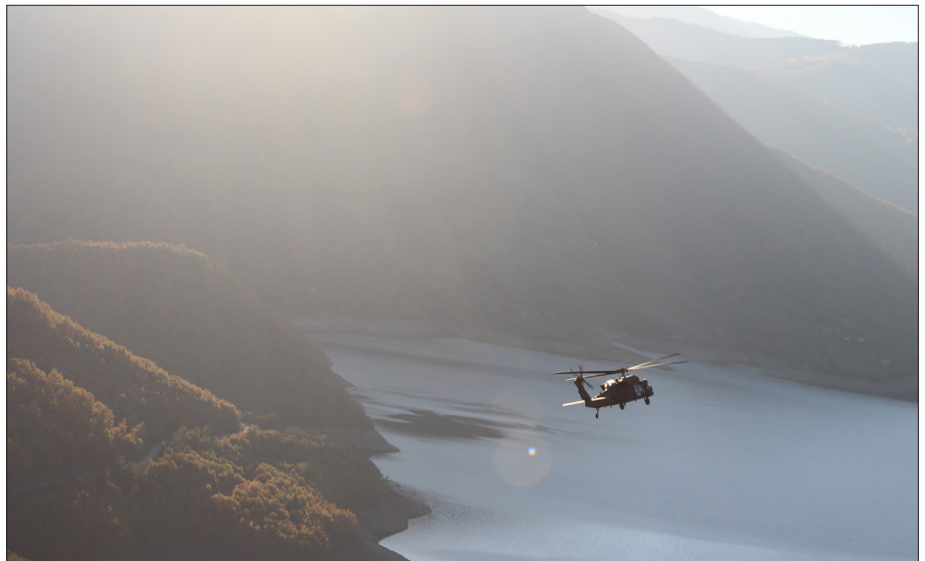
More than 30 visiting students were able to see the how service members live during their deployment. Additionally, they were able to see the different facilities available on Camp Bondsteel, such as the hospital, which several students were excited about because they are studying to join the medical field.

"This is the first time in my life I've seen an American hospital," said Donita Vata, one of the TOEFL students who is studying medicine at Pristina University. "I've seen them on television, but I always thought those kinds of hospitals were just in the movies. Now that I've seen it, I know they are real. It was so inspiring."

Ilirija Ferati, a TOEFL student studying engineering at Pristina University, said that between the TOEFL class and meeting American KFOR Soldiers on Camp Bondsteel, her English-speaking skills have greatly improved.

"I get to talk to people here who don't know Albanian, so I have to make up sentences for them to understand me," Ferati said. "I like socializing and talking to Soldiers."

The Soldiers hosted the day's event in order to share pieces of American culture that they've shared with the students. Service members have been learning about Kosovo's culture during the deployment, and wanted to give part of the community a similar opportunity.



A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, part of the MNBG-E Task Force Hurricane, soars through Kosovo's mountains during a Nov. 1 flight. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. William Evola, 1-169th Aviation Regiment)



Polish soldiers assigned to the MNBG-E Forward Command Post act as violent protesters during a Nov. 5 crowd and riot control exercise at Camp Nothing Hill. The exercise allowed the U.S. Army and German Maneuver companies to rehearse combined response to a violent crowd (Photo by Sgt. Erick Yates)



U.S. Army Capt. Mike Mazie (left) squares off against Chief Warrant Officer 3 Tony Higgins during an evaluation in close combat fighting led by Hungarian army soldiers, Nov. 6 at Camp Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny. The 20-hour program also include Muay Thai and knife fighting. (Photo by Sgt. Erick Yates)

