

December 2020-January 2021

#124

# EUFOR forum

MAGAZINE



## New EUFOR Commander

In this edition:

EUFOR Multinational Battalion  
and LOT House 2020 Review



**Major General Platzter takes over EUFOR command** 4-5

Major General Reinhard Trischak handed over authority for the mission to Major General Alexander Platzter at a Change of Command ceremony.



**United Kingdom ends contribution to EU Mission** 6

United Kingdom marked the end of its 16 year contribution to EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a flag lowering ceremony at Camp Butmir.



**Father and son, serving together in EUFOR** 12-13

Wolfgang and David Weiß deploy on a foreign assignment together to Bosnia and Herzegovina.



**Police officer in European military mission** 14-15

Interview with Jose MOREIRA, Portuguese Police Officer of the Guarda Nacional Republicana - the Portuguese Gendarmerie.



A very happy new year and warm welcome this edition of the EUFOR Forum. December and January was an exceptionally busy period for the military and civilian personnel in EUFOR. In this issue we bid a farewell to the departing COMEUFOR Major General Reinhard Trischak as well as

welcoming the incumbent COMEUFOR, Major General Alexander Platzter.

Furthermore, we present a yearly round up of the vital activities of the Multinational Battalion, LCC and LOT, Joint Military Affairs and the Department of Public Works all whom have maintained their busy schedules throughout 2020, despite the best efforts of COVID-19. All articles in this edition act as a fitting close to what was clearly been a very busy year as well as a precursor to an equally active 2021.

Your photos and articles really are important to us, so if you want the opportunity to highlight a story then please get in touch at: [euforforum@eufor.europa.eu](mailto:euforforum@eufor.europa.eu). On behalf of the PAO Team, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this month's edition and to you, our readers for your continued support as we look forward to a busy 2021.

**Captain Steve Byrne**

Commander EUFOR  
**Major General Alexander Platzter**  
 EUFOR Public Affairs Chief  
**Lieutenant Colonel Nicolai Tschol**

**Forum Magazine Staff**  
 Editors  
**Captain Stephen Byrne**  
 Layout  
**Mr. Jasmin Zeherović**  
 Photographs  
**WO2 Christian Feusthuber**

Print  
**Reprographics & Courier Service**  
**(HQ EUFOR)**

We also thank  
**EUFOR Multinational Battalion**  
**EUFOR LOT Houses**

The Forum Magazine is produced by HQ EUFOR. It is fully funded by EUFOR, and authorised and published for EUFOR in the area of responsibility. All stories are written by the EUFOR Spokesperson unless stated otherwise.

The Forum Magazine welcomes submissions via e-mail to [euforforum@eufor.europa.eu](mailto:euforforum@eufor.europa.eu)  
 For deadline information phone  
 +387 (0)33 495216; IPN 5216.

Digital photographs should be submitted in JPG format with a minimum resolution of 200 dpi.

The Forum Magazine does not normally return materials and will assume no liability for material submitted.

The contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the coalition governments' defence departments.



**euforbih**

## Driving the Mission Forward

### Major General Alexander Platzer

*It is a great honour for me to be appointed as the Commander of EUFOR Operation Althea and to take command of the longest military operation under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, to date the only EU land operation with an executive mandate.*



*This is a great responsibility and I thank the EU Operation Commander for EUFOR Althea, Lieutenant General Brice Houdet, for having the confidence in me to lead the European Union Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*EUFOR is a strategic EU asset with a stabilizing influence in the region. However, there is still much to be done and I look forward to facing the challenges and complexities ahead, delivering on the UN Security Council Mandate. Under my command EUFOR will maintain its close relationship with BiH security providers, in particular with the the Armed Forces of BiH, to ensure a Safe and Secure Environment for everyone.*

*Major General Trischak has set a high standard in his dealings with local and international politicians. I will do everything in my power to build on the excellent work carried out by my predecessors and proceed with the efforts to reach an acceptable end-state within the mandate and facilitate BiH's way to European integration.*

*The way ahead will not be an easy one, but I am looking forward to drive the mission forward for the good of BiH and its people.*

#### New Commander's Biography

Major General Alexander Platzer was born in Salzburg, Austria, in 1963. Following completion of training in the Theresian Military Academy he was commissioned as an officer in the Austrian Armoured Corps.

Subsequent postings have seen Major General Platzer serve in various operational and strategic positions within the Austrian Armed Forces. He was appointed Head of Planning and Nucleus Staff in the Austrian Land Forces School, commanded the 1st Infantry Brigade.

Additional appointments include Staff Officer in the Austrian Ministry of Defence Organisations Division, Chief of Staff to the Austrian Minister of Defence, Chief of Staff of Land Forces Command and Commander of Joint Support Command. Furthermore, Major General Platzer served as Chief Operations Officer and National Contingent Commander with the United Nations Forces in Cyprus (UNIFCYP).

In addition to his qualifications from the Theresian Military Academy, Major General Platzer's military qualifications include the International UN Staff Officers Course and the Austrian Command and General Staff Officer's Course. Major General Platzer's civilian qualifications include an M.Phil in Political Science from the University of Vienna.

Major General Platzer is married and lives with his wife and three children in Vienna. On 14 January 2021 he took over as the Commander EUFOR in Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Major General Platzer Assumes Command of EUFOR



On Thursday 14 January 2021 Major General Reinhard Trischak handed over authority for the mission to Major General Alexander Platzer at a Change of Command ceremony in Camp Butmir. The ceremony was chaired by the EU Operation Commander for EUFOR Althea, Lieutenant General Brice Houdet.

Major General Trischak has led the EUFOR mission since June 2019 and ensured the operation's continued support to a Safe and Secure Environment in BiH. This includes supporting demining efforts and providing mine-risk education for risk groups; coordinating the disposal of weapons and ammunition left over from the war and creating safe storage conditions and conducting combined and collective training with the Armed Forces of BiH.

While EUFOR Operation Althea under his tenure successfully marked 15 years of cooperation for stability, security and progress in December 2019, the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in spring

2020 required exceptional skills and experience to maintain EUFOR's operational readiness, test contingency plans and at the same time comply with strict preventative measures.



The outgoing EUFOR Commander Major General Trischak said:

**"I am happy that the mission has shown resilience against the impact of the pandemic. EUFOR Althea's presence still makes a difference and in its current**

**composition is more than capable of meeting current and future challenges. The EU member states and non-EU troop contributors remain committed to EUFOR and I wish my successor Major General Platzer good fortune."**



**Major General Alexander Platzer, welcome at the top of the EUFOR family... I know I have your full support to reach our common goal to support a Safe and Secure Environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

**Lieutenant General Brice Houdet, Operation Commander for EUFOR Althea**

Major General Platzer has previously served as Commander of the Joint Support Command and Chief of Staff of the Land Forces Command within the Austrian Armed Forces. He has also served in International Peace Support Operations with the United Nations.

Major General Platzer said: **“It is a great honour for me to take command of the European Union’s military arm in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I will closely cooperate with the BiH authorities in order to proceed to an acceptable end-state within the UN Security Council Mandate and facilitate BiH’s European integration.”**



After a military parade and troop inspection Lieutenant General Houdet, the EU Operation Commander for EUFOR Althea, symbolically handed over the EUFOR flag from Major General Trischak to Major General Platzer. Major General Trischak was then presented with the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy Medal for Operation Althea.

The Change of Command was attended by Minister of Security of BiH, Dr. Selmo Cikotić, Minister of Civil Affairs of BiH, Ms. Ankica Gudeljević, Head of the EU Delegation to BiH and EU Special Representative,

H.E. Dr. Johann Sattler and the High Representative in BiH, H.E. Dr. Valentin Inzko.

## United Kingdom Ends Contribution to EUFOR



On 18 December 2020 the United Kingdom marked the end of its 16 year contribution to EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a flag lowering ceremony at Camp Butmir, Sarajevo, led by COMEUFOR, Major General Reinhard Trischak.

In his speech he praised the UK's unwavering and professional commitment to not only Operation Althea but also to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A commitment, that

began with UNPROFOR in 1992. COMEUFOR said:

*“The UK contribution to EUFOR has been outstanding in terms of commitment, performance and professionalism. It is, therefore, with sadness that we see the departure of UK’s personnel from EUFOR, which reduces the number of contributing nations from 20 to 19. I would like to express my conviction that although now the UK flag is lowered in Camp Butmir, that the*

*UK’s unwavering commitment to the Western Balkans, specifically to a stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina always remains high.”*

Also present to witness the ceremony was the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Bosnia and Herzegovina, H. E. Mr. Matthew Field. In his speech he praised the close relationship between the UK Military and EUFOR. He said:

*“Thank you for acknowledging the UK’s commitment, not just in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also to all the other EU Military Missions around the world. It has been our privilege and our pleasure to serve with you and your staff.”*

The UK Flag was then lowered by the remaining members of the UK Contingent to EUFOR and presented to the Senior National Representative, Wing Commander Vincent Jackson.

by Lieutenant Commander Mark Flanagan



## 13th Anniversary of North Macedonian Helicopter Crash

A ceremony of remembrance was held on Tuesday 12 January 2021 at Camp Butmir to mark the 13th anniversary of a helicopter



crash which claimed the lives of 11 EUFOR personnel from the Republic of North Macedonia.

On 12 January 2008, a military helicopter carrying troops home from the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina crashed near its final destination of Skopje. Tragically, all 11 personnel on board were killed.

Taking part in the ceremony were COMEUFOR, Major General Reinhard Trischak and the Ambassador of the Republic of North Macedonia, His Excellency Mr. Ekrem Ebibi. During the ceremony, soldiers from EUFOR formed an Honour Guard by the memorial stone. Wreaths were laid and eleven candles were lit to signify the lives lost.

## EUFOR`s Turkish Contingent Delivers Medical Donations

Funds raised by Turkey have been used to improve the capacity of two Bosnian Health Care Centers. The Health Care Center in Stolac has been renovated and two Dialysis Machines



Stolac Health Care Center

were donated to the Bugojno Dialysis Center. Another donation was used to renovate the Sanski Most Sana Cinema Hall and Conference Centre.

In addition to these projects, Turkish donations have been used to improve the language centres of three local schools. The total funds donated amount to €252,000. The schools, Municipality of Sanski Most and the Health Care Centers welcomed Turkey`s donation and are always pleased to see teams from the EUFOR LOT Houses in the area.

## 15th Anniversary of Slovakian Air Crash



On Tuesday, 19 January 2021, LCC Chief and the Senior Slovak National Representative Lieutenant Colonel Michal Rázga, together with soldiers of the Slovak contingent, paid their respects to comrades who died during the return flight back from neighbouring operation KFOR in Kosovo.

In the evening of 19 January 2006, an Antonov An-24 aircraft, operated by the Slovak Air Force, hit the tree tops on Borsó Hill near the village of Hejce in northern Hungary. The airplane was carrying Slovak peacekeepers from Kosovo. Of the 43 people on board, there was only one survivor. The crash remains the deadliest in Slovak history and the sadness of this tragedy is increased by the fact that the crash site was only 20 km from Košice airport - the destination of the soldiers returning from their mission.

The Senior Slovak National Representative, Lieutenant Colonel Rázga said: *“Soldiers, our mission finishes with our successful return to our families and military bases in Slovakia. Let this tragedy be the last for many years forward. I wish you safe return back home after successful fulfilment of your operational tasks in the Operation Althea.”* The song “Flying Home (Birds of Paradise)” by Peter, Sue & Marc sounded at the end of commemoration in the Memorial Park at 19.38 hrs.

by Lieutenant Colonel Michal Rázga

## Behind the Scenes and Hard at Work The EUFOR Department of Public Works

Mr. Thomas Lynam served in the Irish Army for 37 years, retiring as Regimental Sergeant Major of the Irish Defence Forces Engineer Corps. During that time he served overseas on 10 occasions in Lebanon, Liberia and 6 tours in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2017 Thomas commenced his current role as Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW). In this month's EUFOR Forum Thomas discusses the functions of the DPW within Camp Butmir.



Mr. Thomas Lynam briefing COMEUFOR on the progress of the new Fire Station

### What are the roles and responsibilities of the DPW?

There are currently 107 people employed in EUFOR Headquarters Camp Commandant DPW Branch in Camp Butmir dedicated to the provision of Real Life Support (RLS) to the mission. The DPW teams cover a wide variety of task within the camp including building maintenance, engineering services, billeting and accommodation services, grounds maintenance, janitorial & cleaning services, maintaining & operating the mission gymnasium, laundry facilities and pest control. During periods of inclement weather, particularly during heavy snow, the DPW are responsible for the removal of snow and ice, gritting and salting the roads and paths. We also provide logistical support to all official EUFOR and NATO Ceremonial Events. In addition, from the 1st of January 2021, following Brexit, DPW has assumed responsibility for the Camp Butmir Dining Facility (DFAC) and Fire Department, gaining an additional 100 personnel to the team.

### What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had upon the workload of the DPW?

Following COM Order for COVID-19, in order to assist EUFOR Medical Services and maintain the mission's operational capacity and following HQ Camp CMDT direction, DPW is responsible to maintain the Isolation and Quarantine Facilities in Camp Butmir, where people who have contracted

COVID-19 or are close contacts are accommodated. Since April 2020 the DPW have continuously ensured that these buildings remain clean, disinfected & maintained in good order daily with the Austrian Medical Cell team.

In addition disinfection of accommodation blocks and the gym is completed twice daily whilst weekly disinfection of mission office locations, NSE, PXs and workshops is scheduled by the team. This task is challenging but continues to be completed to required mission standards. Like all other members of the HQ we look forward to the arrival of vaccinations in Camp Butmir for our civilian personnel.

### What are the Future Tasks/Projects anticipated by the DPW?

In any given year the HQ Camp CMDT DPW has approximately 50 contracts (one time or on demand) to improve the facilities within the HQ, supervised by mission Engineers. Currently, the foremost ongoing external project is the construction of a new Fire Department Station developed to enhance the capacity of our Fire Crews due for completion in Q3 2021. Other funded projects in 2021 include HQ Barrack Accommodation refurbishment; projects that will significantly improve living conditions for military personnel deployed to EUFOR/NHQ and plans are also afoot to renovate the Mostar restaurant. It appears that this team are scheduled to be extremely busy once again in 2021.

## Joint Military Affairs in Focus

Joint Military Affairs (JMA) operates in two main areas. Firstly, to inspect Ammunition/Weapons Storage Sites and Defense Industry Factories in order to fulfill the stipulations set out in the Dayton Agreement and in the Instruction to the Parties. Another aspect of JMA's mandate is to monitor and assist the demining efforts of the BiH authorities and the AFBiH Demining Battalion. By accomplishing these two tasks (amongst others) JMA contributes to the EUFOR's overall situational awareness which in turn serves as an indicator of any potential threats to a Safe and Secure Environment in BiH.

Given the complex subject matter, JMA has experts among its team to deal with the challenges that the aforementioned tasks present. The head of the Arms Control Section is himself an expert on ammunition but in addition he has another specialized Ammunition Expert at his disposal. The same degree of specialization can be found in the Countermines Section, which is staffed with experts on demining and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD).

The most tangible effects of JMA's work are in the area of demining. Whenever a minefield has been cleared the effects are immediately felt by the population of BiH. JMA Countermines work on a daily basis to facilitate and support the demining activities of all the stakeholders by providing know-how and assisting in procuring funds for future projects. For



*In my role as Chief of Joint Military Affairs (JMA) I head EUFOR's efforts in Arms Control and Demining operations. In this role I represent the JMA Branch to the BiH authorities and the Armed Forces of BiH (AFBiH). Prior to my*

*assignment in EUFOR I served a four year tour in NATO's Allied Command Transformation within the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate.*

**Colonel Sven Szabo, Chief JMA and AT SNR**

example, JMA Countermines played an instrumental part in the implementation of the Country Assessment Project which paved the way for the transition from the traditional demining methods to a new, faster and safer demining procedure in BiH.

In order to achieve our objectives JMA collaborates with an array of stakeholders, such as the BiH authorities, the AFBiH and demining NGOs. When our competencies overlap, JMA coordinates and cooperates with Special Ammunition and Weapons Advisor (SAWAD), which is responsible for the destruction of Small Arms and Weapons.

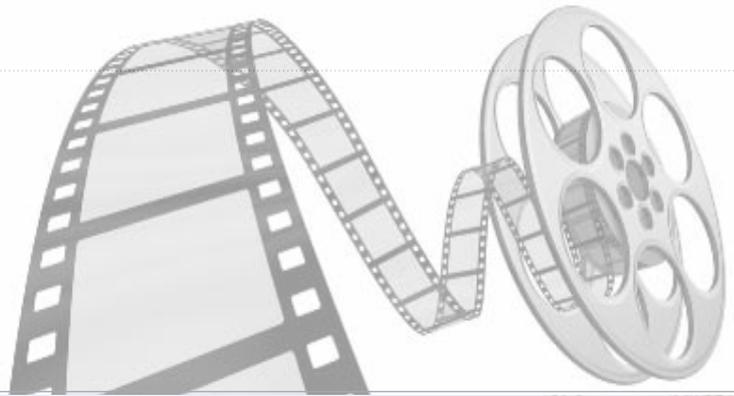


**EUFOR personnel working in close cooperation with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.**



**Mr. Željko Kalinić briefing personnel on demining activities.**

# 3, 2, 1, ACTION!! Mine Risk Education Campaign 2021 in Production



Production is underway ahead of the 2021 Mine Risk Education (MRE) Campaign. This collaborative effort from EUFOR and AFBiH, assisted by Jerko Hanibal the mine dog, aims to help educate the children of Bosnia and Herzegovina as to the dangers of Mines and how to avoid them. The campaign is due to launch in March and will be a national multimedia campaign.



Location: AF BiH Demining Battalion training field in the Rajlovac Barracks, Cameraman Emir Džanan, soldiers Marcel Petrovic from EUFOR MNBN, Marko Nikolić from AFBiH Demining Battalion and Jerko Hanibal, mines search dog.



EUFOR MRE Instructor Kristina Nikolić and Eduardo Gatica from EUFOR LOT Banja Luka (Chile) in the classroom-studio

MRE mines models in the studio



Adi, child actor in the classroom-studio recording



Jerko Hanibal, mines search dog

## Part 4: Switzerland

# Test de Fitness de l'Armée Pour le Recrutement (TFA)

The Test de Fitness de l'Armée pour le recrutement TFA evaluates the physical fitness standard of soldiers in the Swiss Land Forces. It tests explosive strength, core strength, coordination ability and endurance.



All five categories are tested first before conscription to evaluate if the women and men are fit for the Army at all. Then again at the basic military training during conscription and later on when they enter the NCO- and the Officers school. However, when attending an advanced training course or for the evaluation of fitness for deployments abroad, only following three disciplines are tested: Seated ball throw, Test of core strength and Progressive Endurance Test.

### Score

The maximum number of points for each component is 25 points, with the total being 125 points. Soldiers are eligible for awards with a total score of 80 onward. Male and female soldiers use the same assessment for joining the military.



Guidelines	
Component	Description
Seated medicine ball throw	Throw a 2kg medicine ball while seated on a bench against the wall. The distance between the ground impact of the ball and the wall is then measured. This determines the explosive force of the arms.
Standing long jump	Jump forward from the starting mark on the floor. The distance between the rearmost part of your body contacting the floor and starting point will be measured.
Test of core strength	Get into the plank position, forearms supporting your weight. Alternate between lifting your right and left leg up and down (use the rhythm of one second per motion). The duration you can keep doing this without your hips lowering or raising is measured.
Balancing on one leg	First of all, balance on one leg. Ten seconds later, close your eyes. Another ten seconds later, with your eyes still shut, "look up". Your chin must be lifted all the way. The time taken to lose your balance is measured.
Progressive Endurance Test	This is an endurance test similar to the beep test.

### Male and female

	Points	Seated ball throw	Standing long jump	Test of core strength	Balancing on one leg	Progressive Endurance Test (Shuttle track)
Sufficient	7	4.90 m	1.95 m	40 sec.	29 sec.	6:21 (5:12) min:sec
Excellent	20 to 25	7.50 – 8.50 m	2.60 – 2.85 m	190 – 290 sec.	58 – 100 sec.	16:38 – 19:42 (12:15 – 15:30) min:sec

## Father and Son, Serving Together in EUFOR

**Warrant Officer Class 1 Wolfgang Weiß, a Communications NCO, is currently serving with the Austrian Contingent. Wolfgang has previously deployed on nine foreign missions: Once to Cyprus, three times to Kosovo and five times to BiH – a total of 4.5 years.**

**Lance Corporal David Weiß, his son, is serving alongside his father. Three weeks after finishing his conscription in the Austrian Army David was recalled to undertake his first foreign mission here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After this deployment David will begin a Marketing Degree in University.**

**Why did you decide to deploy to Bosnia together?**

**Wolfgang:** I have previously deployed with my other son, Bastian. I suggested to him that he should deploy on a foreign assignment to bridge the gap between his studies and to build up a financial reserve for University. David liked that idea too, and that's how it came about.

**David:** I also liked the idea from the beginning and actively suggested that I deploy on a foreign assignment with my father to BiH.

**How do you like the mission so far?**

**Wolfgang:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic I find this deployment very demanding,



Park in Camp Butmir

sometimes even stressful, primarily due to the shortage of staff and requirement to cope with additional tasks. The support of my family at home is important for me; it is also important to know that I have a son nearby whom I can support using my previous experiences. The camaraderie in the Austrian NSE is also very important to me.

**David:** I find the work very interesting, the support of my more experienced comrades is great and I get along well with everyone. In terms of work, there is a lot to do and because of the COVID situation there are often extra trips and duties which keep me busy.

**What have you liked most about Bosnia so far?**

**Wolfgang:** This country has a lot to offer - you just have to be motivated to look at it! I like to go on hiking tours when possible and I use the my days off to show my son the places and sights that

I have gotten to know on previous deployments to BiH.

**David:** I have liked everything so far. My father has been able to show me many interesting things like the old town of Sarajevo. And we are not that far away from Austria anyway!

**What is it like to work together as father and son?**

**Wolfgang:** It's been great! We don't have much to do together during the working day because we are employed in different departments but we often use our free time together to chat or just have a snack together.

**David:** There are many advantages particularly as my father has already been here many times - he knows his way around and has been able to show me a lot.

**Wolfgang, a few years ago you were deployed with your other, older son. Looking back, how did you find that?**

**Wolfgang:** It's hard to say,



A Trip to up to Jahorina

every operation has its own special charm and individual character depending on the commander, the situation and your comrades. It was a very similar situation at the time. Just like now, after discussing it, my son gladly accepted my proposal to deploy to Bosnia with my unit as a driver for 6 months, bridging the gap between School and University. Uniquely, at that time (2015) there were three fathers deployed to EUFOR with their sons.

### What are your plans between now and the end of your mission?

**Wolfgang:** If possible we'll go skiing a little. In mid-February, we'll go home for our last leave period, returning at the beginning of March. We will rotate home on 25 March 2021.

### Do you want to go on another mission together, perhaps with all your sons?

**Wolfgang:** That is hardly likely, as my elder son will finish his medical studies soon and there are few positions abroad for psychiatrists in the Austrian Armed Forces.

**David:** Yes, its unlikely as I'm about to begin university but you never know! It's good to know that I have a second leg to fall back on if things get tight in my main job!

## EUFOR Command Sergeant Major Sándor Mihály Bogya

The Command Sergeant Major (CSM), on behalf of COMEUFOR, has a primary role in maintaining military order, standards and discipline. Furthermore, in strong collaboration with the Joint Visitors Bureau (JVB), I am responsible for Parade Rehearsals and Ceremonial Honor Guards.



The CSM's main task, after discipline, is to maintain the morale of the troops and operate the NCO support channel. My main goal during this deployment is to build and consolidate this channel in order to ensure that every Soldier understands EUFOR policies, the Commander's intent and to provide our soldiers with an opportunity to present ideas to EUFOR HQ in order to make the mission more efficient and successful.

In Hungary there are senior NCOs at every level of command, from Platoon level to Army HQ. The task of the CSM, as part of the Command Team, is to ensure that all orders are carried out, SOPs are fulfilled, to offer recommendations to superiors in the execution phase of operations and finally to supervise and lead training exercises.

Here in Camp Butmir, after coordination and update meetings I read the new SOPs to familiarize myself with the tasks issued from EUFOR HQ. Following this I tour the Camp, ensuring that I am visible to our soldiers, so if there is an issue, problem or query, they can talk to me and I can then raise it with the necessary authority in EUFOR HQ, thus preventing issues becoming a larger problem and an obstacle or impediment to the mission.

In the near future, I am looking forward to visiting our LOT Houses to discuss their issues and recommendations.

So far I am thoroughly enjoying the roles and responsibilities of CSM and I am looking forward working hard to continue EUFOR's success.

## A Police Officer in a Military Mission

**Chief Sergeant Jose MOREIRA is a Portuguese Police Officer of the Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR) - the Portuguese Gendarmerie. Jose deployed to EUFOR BiH in June 2020, working in the HQ as the Intelligence Collation Specialist in J2 Branch.**

**First of all, can you explain how and why there is only one Police Officer from Portugal is serving in an EU-military mission?**

GNR is part of the European Gendarmerie Force (EUROGENDFOR or EGF), which was created by an agreement signed in 2006 between five members of the European Union: France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands. EGF emerged with the aim of creating a European police force for interventions, training missions or international crisis management. GNR's participation in the EUFOR ALTHEA is not new. GNR has contributed personnel at various stages and currently there is only one position, mine, based in J2.

**Can you describe your career in the Gendarmerie to date?**

In 1996, after completing the GNR Course, I joined the Riot Control Special Intervention Unit. In 1998, after a specialization course, I started working at the Traffic Police Unit.



**Jose on deployment to Croatia in 2018**

Between 2003 and 2013, after another specialization course, I performed roles as head of several criminal investigation bodies of GNR, investigating various types of crime, mainly: theft crimes in residence, robbery in the street, document forging and drugs.

From 2013 to 2014 I was Commander of a GNR Police Station in two locations, with a broad variety of functions. From 2015, until January 2020 I returned to criminal investigation as Head of the Crime Investigation Team for road users, focusing on homicide, physical integrity in a traffic accident and falsification of documentation.

**What are the most remarkable experiences you have had since you started in the Gendarmerie?**

In 2004 as Head of the Criminal Investigation Team we were investigating thefts on public roads. We paid special attention to the fact that the victims belonged to groups of vulnerable people, young people from the community school and elderly people.

After a lot of investigative work we managed to catch the perpetrator in the middle of the road in

a stolen vehicle. After a chase we managed to detain the individual - when he saw that he had no option for escape he left the vehicle to tried and evade us on foot but I managed to stop him, detain him and apply handcuffs.

As we completed the arrest we were surprised that many young people from the community school began to applaud our performance. In the end the perpetrator was sentenced to 9 years in prison.

This was a special moment and I continue to remember this gesture of thanks from the citizens as the greatest and most heartfelt public praise that I received in my entire career to date.

**The Guarda Nacional Republicana is a security force of a military nature in Portugal, with jurisdiction throughout the national territory and in the territorial sea. Due to its nature and versatility, the GNR finds its institutional position in the group of military forces and security forces and services as the only security force with a military nature and organization, characterized as a Public Security Military Force.**



**Jose receiving his EUFOR Operational Medal in Camp Butmir**

**What personally gave you the greatest pleasure in doing your job both at home in Portugal?**

As you can imagine over 25 years there are many experiences and moments that gave me pleasure. All the successful operations I was involved culminated in a feeling of a fulfilled duty.

In short, acting in the best interests of the people and based on respecting the principles of the rule of law, my greatest pleasure as a policeman comes down to the positive feeling of helping others, regardless of their social status, religion, gender or color.

**Is this your first mission as a police officer abroad?**

No, this is my fifth deployment outside Portugal of which I want to point out two: From October 2016 until November 2017 I took part in the Bilateral Cooperation Mission between the Government of Portugal and Timor-Leste to advise and train the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) in Criminal Investigation and in Tax and Customs Legislation.

In 2018, I was appointed to Frontex missions as the stolen vehicle detective officer (SVDO) on the Karasovići-Croatia and Montenegro border.

**How do you like it here at EUFOR so far? and how is it compared to your other missions?**

I haven't lived in a military environment for more than 25 years but I must say that I am enjoying the experience. My degree in Political and Administrative Sciences, combined with my experience in the police service has allowed me to understand the codes of conduct required to work in an environment of international police cooperation.

Furthermore, my experiences working in Timor-Leste made me aware of the physical, intellectual and emotional demands of working abroad in a multinational environment and has given me the ability to deal with a prolonged period of separation from my family.

**What are your plans after this mission?**

For now it is far too early to think that. Professionally, I hope to get a position as close as possible to my last position at home. In personal terms - compensating my family for my absence!



**Jose during his deployment to Timor-Leste in 2016**

## MNBN Yearly Review: 2020

*The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic remain amongst us today. All over Europe we have had to deal with restrictions in our daily life akin to those in wartime. Social contacts are now only made possible via digital media or in very small groups, wearing a mask is becoming everyday life, and entire professional groups cannot go about their daily work. "Lockdown" is the bad word of 2020.*



*Here in the Area of Operations too, we felt the effects of the pandemic. We have to observe similar rules as our families and friends in our home countries.*

*But there is also reason to be happy. Joy about what has been achieved so far in this mission as an MNBN. Joy about the successful team-building and the good co-operation between the Battalion Staff and the Companies. Joy from shared experiences, such as the participation in the Command Post Exercise (CPX), the mountain tour of the highest mountain in Bosnia or the sweaty hours of circuit training in the gym. Joy over the hours we spent together and the comradeship we lived through.*

*I think that we have become a very good team drawn from three different nationalities. And that's what makes us strong and secure.*

**Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Wilfing, MNBN Commander**

### Highlights and Challenges

The Military Parade for the COMEUFOR Change of Command.

Over 100 patrols across the BiH Area of Operations.

The coordination and participation in several honor guards.

Commanding an International Battalion Staff consisting of 40 Austrian, Hungarian and Turkish soldiers at a time that is politically in flux, under the acute threat of the biggest pandemic in 100 years.

Maintaining morale at a time when you may have to go to quarantine the day before you are supposed to go on leave, not being able to sit with your comrades over a leisurely holiday beer is also a matter for the boss, and thus a heavy additional burden.





**On the occasion of the annual review, we asked soldiers of the Multinational Battalion how they like their deployment so far. This are the most common answers:**

**How do you like the assignment so far, and what do you like in particular?**

*Very good in principle. There are restrictions due to the Covid situation, but we can all cope with them.*

*We like it very much. It is good to share experiences, we learn from each other, and when we go home, we will implement that experience in our daily work.*

*Until this mission, we thought it could not be possible that two different armies work together, here we are 19 nations, and it works! We are very impressed by that.*

*In this mission I had the opportunity to see a lot of this beautiful country, and I could meet with good people from other armies we are working together.*

**What has been the most remarkable event so far?**

*There were two: training with the Bosnian army in mixed teams to practice urban warfare and Crowd & Riot control and a wonderful holiday tour across Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*A team competition we did with soldiers of the British Army. We had to master various stations together, and it was very interesting to see how the different armies approached the matter.*

*In the Full Operational Capability (FOC) exercise we performed as a company to show that we are ready for the mission. We trained very hard and at the end of the last day we were exhausted but we were successful, and that made us proud and happy.*



## LOT and LCC Yearly Review: 2020



Meeting with the Sarajevo Red Cross



LOT Team Meets with the Una Sana Canton Authorities

The year 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic brought a dramatic interruption to the normal pattern of life for Liaison and Observation Team Coordination Centre (LCC) and the 17 Liaison and Observation Teams (LOT) across Bosnia and Herzegovina. Gone were the familiar routines, abruptly replaced with the need for flexibility and initiative. Old habits were made redundant and new forms of communication were pushed to the fore.

The LOT network proved to be a priceless asset during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our personnel were able to maintain a limited ability to conduct face-to-face meetings, strictly adhering to social distancing, wearing face masks and liberal use of hand sanitizer. When face-to-face

meetings were not appropriate or physical restrictions between EUFOR and the local population were required, our LOT teams were able to continue providing essential information to EUFOR by utilizing telephone and email communications to maintain contact with their established networks.

Unfortunately, the EUFOR Mine Risk Education (MRE) programme (an excellent avenue to improve cooperation, interaction and friendship between EUFOR and the local communities) had to be suspended due to the inherent risks of COVID-19. Likewise, many yearly commemorations and festive events, an important indicator of the positive relationship between the local authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and

EUFOR, had to be cancelled. Instead, it was necessary to place a higher focus on media monitoring with aim to obtain and disseminate information during this period of limited physical interaction with the local population.

It should be noted however, that the COVID-19 measures presented a great opportunity to test the strength of the relationship between the LOT Houses and their neighbours within the community, developing new avenues of communication and subsequently deepening the positive cooperation between EUFOR and the communities that we live amongst. Life didn't stop in Bosnia during the pandemic, a lot of important events continued to take place throughout the country and the LOT Houses had to use every

**lot houses**

opportunity to continue to engage with the population in a safe and diligent manner.

**LOT Travnik**

Like everywhere, 2020 has been a difficult year for the population in the LOT Travnik area of operations. Thankfully the social and political situation has remained calm in the region. Important religious days like the feast of Saint Ivo and Ajvatovica were celebrated, albeit in line with COVID-19 regulations. Elections were also held peacefully in the region. Generally, people of the Central Bosnian Canton fought the hardships imposed by 2020 hand in hand and it can be assessed as a peaceful year for Travnik.

**LOT Brčko**

From the perspective of LOT Brčko, the situation in their region has remained stable despite the societal impact of COVID-19, with financial difficulties becoming exasperated by the global pandemic. Aside from the constant up and down of infection numbers and the associated restrictions, a positive note was the local elections of 15 November 2020 which were carried out successfully under difficult conditions.

**LOT Cazin**

The year 2020 was particularly challenging in the LOT Cazin area of operation where EUFOR



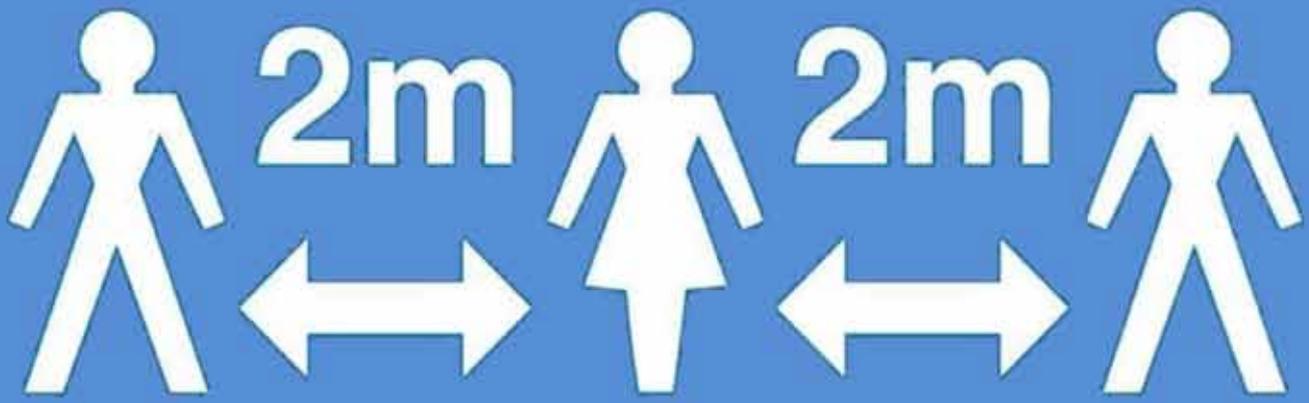
**LOT Team members meeting with Sarajevo police counterparts**

personnel continued to liaise with the relevant local authorities on important issues in the area of operations, migration included. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions disrupted the normal activity of the population in the area. Although significant, the above mentioned challenges did not have a negative impact on Safe and Secure Environment.



**LCC Donations to the Doboj Fire Brigade**

<b>LOT 2020 in Numbers</b>				
Planned Meetings	Cancelled Meetings	Phone Calls	Ad-Hocs	Event Monitoring
1,967	229	1,267	824	498
MRE Seminars	MRE Participants	Walk-Ins	Patrols	Kilometres Driven
139	2,710	15	9,726	1,134,015



SPACE



FACE



HANDS