

Fires in Kosovo Relevance in Peace Support Operations

By Lieutenant Colonel Kevin P. Stramara
and Majors Michael W. Griffith and Patrick M. Antonietti.

Every soldier on patrol in Kosovo will have the ability to call for and receive fire support.

Danger 6, Major General John P. Abizaid
Commander, 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), Kosovo

"Dateline—Bright Sky I, 29 December 1999, Kamenica, Kosovo. As a Russian Kosovo Force BTR-80 [armored personnel carrier] occupied its position at Checkpoint 36 near Kamenica in this predominantly Serbian area, the BTR hit a mine placed in its routine position. Albanian extremists recently had mined roads in an attempt to limit the mobility of Serbian Kosovars and force them to leave this part of the war-torn province for Serbia.

"This attack followed the death of a US Special Forces liaison sergeant on 16 December who had hit a mine moving between two predominantly Serbian towns in the Russian sector of Kosovo..."



The commander of Task Force (TF) Falcon and Multinational Brigade-East (MNB-E) wanted an immediate response to the mining of a Russian checkpoint. He ordered a Paladin live-fire demonstration to show task force resolve and unity and demonstrate interoperability between Russian and US forces.

TF 1-6, US forces in Kosovo (US-KFOR) Force Field Artillery Headquarters, providing direct support (DS) fires for TF Falcon (see Figure 1 for task organization), moved a firing platoon from B Battery within range of Check-

point 36. After coordinating with Russian liaison officers (LNOs), the battery commander led his platoon into position, and Special Forces observers occupied observation posts overlooking the checkpoint. Tactical satellite (TACSAT), FM and digital communications were established among TF Falcon headquarters, the observers from the KFOR Special Operations Command Coordination Element (SOCCE), the TF 1-6 tactical operations center (TOC) and the battalion jump TOC established at Camp Monteith to provide forward command and control.

The commander of 1-6 FA, the *Swift and Bold* battalion, moved forward into the Russian sector with the battery to coordinate with the Russian commander on the ground. The S3 moved forward with the jump TOC, and the battalion executive officer took control of the main TOC at Camp Bondsteel.

The brigade fire support officer (FSO) operated from within the TF Falcon TOC with Special Forces and Russian LNOs. Q-36 and Q-37 Firefinder radars from E/151 Target Acquisition Battery (TAB), Minnesota Army National Guard, provided redundant coverage across the area of operations. Airspace clearance was established through TF Falcon G3 Air and the KFOR headquarters in Pristina.

Within hours, the TF Falcon fire support team had completed its essential fire support task (EFST): "Provide illumination fires over the mined checkpoint to dissuade further action by Albanian extremists against Russian forces in the USKFOR sector and demonstrate TF Falcon unity, interoperability and resolve." US SOCCE observers directed the firing of 30 harassment and interdiction illumination rounds over Russian KFOR checkpoints for three and one-half hours.

Although measuring the effects of these fires is difficult, it can be surmised that fires played an integral role in reducing mine strikes as no additional mine strikes occurred in the Russian sector in the next six months. This article outlines the relevance of fires for peace support operations as shown by their application in Kosovo and the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) for clearing fires and securing firing units.

Why use fires in Kosovo? Although every peace support operation is unique and has its challenges, the environment in Kosovo was unstable and complicated by the political situation and continued ethnic tensions. In the first six months of the US presence in Kosovo, 15 times as many violent acts occurred in Kosovo as had occurred in Bosnia in the same time frame. Some speculated that this high level of violence was because "they weren't tired of fighting yet" like they were in Bosnia. No matter the reason, TF Falcon had to operate in a dangerous environment.

Demonstrations of military capabilities and interoperability became a critical method to dissuade Albanian and Serbian extremists from perpetrating violence. After the TF 1-6's first mis-

sion in support of the Russians, live artillery fires became a viable way to affect the entire spectrum of operations—tactical, operational and strategic—to provide a safe, secure environment in Kosovo.

The key to planning and using fires in this peace support operation was to establish a viable purpose for the fires in support of TF Falcon operations. KFOR fires had a variety of purposes, but the basic task of fire mission processing remained the same. (See Figure 2.)

Bright Sky Operations. Bright Sky Operations were initiated when the TF Falcon commander ordered TF 1-6 to conduct harassment and interdiction illumination fires in the Russian sector of MNB-E. These fires served a dual purpose: To deter future attacks by demonstrating presence and demonstrate TF Falcon unity and resolve to support the Russian members of MNB-E.

Approximately one week later, again in the Russian sector, TF 1-6 FA conducted a second operation to further demonstrate unity in MNB-E. This operation led to a discovery: Serbian radio operators observing the illumination rounds in Kosovo transmitted reports about the fires. This discovery led to a second purpose for fires: To generate signal intelligence (SIGINT) collection to allow TF Falcon to identify communication nodes in its area of responsibility (AOR).

This purpose generated the next four Bright Sky Operations (see Figure 3). The *delivery* of these fires allowed a myriad of collection assets (TRQ-32, Guard Rail and TRQ-17) to *detect* possible hostile activity within MNB-E. From the *assessment* of this intelligence, the TF Falcon commander further *decided* when, where and how to use artillery fires. Clearly, this information proved valuable at all levels.

A bombing of a Serbian church in the town of Cernica led to a third purpose for Bright Sky Operations: To prevent extremist activities from unhinging peace negotiations. Albanian extremists attacked and destroyed the only Serbian church in this ethnically mixed and volatile village to deter Serbian leaders from planned talks with Albanian moderates. These talks had been negotiated by the TF 2-2 IN commander and were critical to reducing tensions in the area.

After the church was bombed, the 2-2 IN commander requested illumination fires two days before the next scheduled

• Camp Bondsteel

(East of Urosevac, Kosovo)

- Task Force Falcon TOC
- TF 1-6 FA (-) DS TF Falcon
 - HHB/1-6 FA
 - A/1-6 FA
 - C/1-6 FA
 - Svc/1-6 FA
 - E/151 TA (-) (1x Q-36, 2 x Q-37)
- TF 82d EN (-)
- TF 709th MP (-)
- TF 1-1 AV

• Camp Monteith

(Near Gnjilane, Kosovo)

- TF 1-63 AR
- TF 2-2 IN
- TF 1 - 6 FA (-) DS TF Falcon
 - FSE TF 1-63 AR
 - FSE TF 2-2 IN
 - B/1-6 FA
 - Section 1/E/151 TA (1 x Q-36)

• Urosevac, Kosovo

- TF 1-187 IN (Relieved TF 3-504 IN, March 2000)
- C/3-320 FA (OPCON TO TF 1-6 FA for Firing)

Legend:

- AV = Aviation
- AR = Armor
- DS = Direct Support
- EN = Engineers
- FSE = Fire Support Element
- HHB = Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
- MP = Military Police
- OPCON = Under the Operational Control of
- Svc = Service Battery
- TA = Target Acquisition
- TF = Task Force
- TOC = Tactical Operations Center
- IN = Infantry

Figure 1: Task Force Falcon Organization

meeting between the Albanians and Serbians. The fires were to deter another night bombing attack during the critical days before the meeting and demonstrate the presence of KFOR patrols in the area. Again, specific effects are difficult to ascertain, but the meeting did occur between the Albanian and Serbian parties and no further violent attacks occurred after the illumination fires near the destroyed church.

Another use of artillery fires in Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo was to demonstrate USKFOR capabilities. A number of the Bright Sky Operations were executed across the AOR with multiple targets, firing units and observers. These operations showed the

fires available to TF Falcon and the potential might of its combat power.

Firing units occupied positions on and off base camps. Occupying firing positions “in sector” served to deter further aggressive action by both Albanian and Serbian extremists and sent a strong signal to the Albanian and Serbian political leadership that TF Falcon was a viable, ready combat force.

Illumination fires routinely supported countermortar operations conducted by TF 2-2 IN and TF 1-63 AR. These were planned overt operations conducted in conjunction with specific covert operations to deter further attacks by Albanian and Serbian extremists. Potential hostile mortar firing areas were illuminated while scouts or other maneuver forces observed entrance and exit routes and the target area. These operations also included the 120-mm mortar platoon from TF 2-2 IN to provide additional illumination coverage over potential hot spots.

Another purpose for fires in this peace support operation was to demonstrate interoperability between NATO forces. Fires were planned and executed in support of Spanish, Polish, Italian, Greek and Dutch forces operating in MNB-E. These fires were in addition to the fires in support of the Russian elements operating near Kamenica. The fires also allowed TF Falcon to conduct invaluable training with the militaries of these countries.

In Kosovo, indirect fires became an integral part of every operation and could be relied upon to support soldiers on patrol.

Clearance of Fires. In Kosovo during KFOR 1B, TF Falcon integrated fires fully into operations because of TTP developed to reduce the possibility of collateral damage and civilian casualties. (KFOR “1B” stands for the first

- Demonstrating unity and resolve in portions of the area of responsibility controlled by the multinational force.
- Supporting signal intelligence collection.
- Demonstrating Task Force Falcon’s presence and capabilities.
- Validating platoon and company fire plans in support of mounted and dismounted patrols.
- Demonstrating interoperability with NATO forces.

Figure 2: Purpose of Fires in Task Force Falcon Operations

year of operations in Kosovo with the second unit for a six-month deployment—in this case the 1st Infantry Division.)

Initially, all airspace up to 10,000 feet could be cleared locally by the TF Falcon commander. However, in December 1999, the KFOR commander allowed the clearance only to 3,000 feet without direct coordination with KFOR headquarters. This change limited the ability of artillery to fire in the AOR as most of the targets and hot boxes required trajectories above 3,000 feet.

To facilitate more responsive fires and smooth the execution of pre-planned Bright Sky missions, TF Falcon established restricted operating zones (ROZs) that could be implemented quickly in the event of an emergency mission or in support of pre-planned missions. When in effect, no rotary- or fixed-wing aircraft could enter the ROZ without approval from TF Falcon. This coordination requirement allowed MNB-E to use fires during certain time frames with positive airspace control.

For pre-planned missions, TF Falcon sent ROZ requests to KFOR headquarters 72 hours before the mission. Bright Sky Operations then were cleared for execution during pre-approved time frames to deconflict airspace within the MNB-E AOR. KFOR notified all other MNBs of the ROZ and ensured all rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft were clear of the area through the air operations center (AOC). Internal to TF Falcon, the G3 Air ensured all MNB-E aircraft were clear of the ROZ through normal air control procedures. Therefore, the pre-planned mission could be executed, once the ROZ was in effect and properly disseminated.

However, positive command and control of all aircraft entering KFOR airspace routinely proved difficult. Missions were often delayed due to the inability of other MNBs to ascertain the location of their rotary-winged aircraft and, at times, due to flight patterns of airborne intelligence collection assets, such as Guard Rail or the Hunter unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). Decon-



Task Force 1-6 FA supported the Multinational Brigade-East (MNB-E) in Kosovo.

fliction of these assets and their airspace led to delays, and at times, the target location or trajectory of the illumination rounds would have to be altered.

For example, if an aircraft was to remain above 7,000 feet, the target previously planned for high-angle fire to avoid collateral damage may have to be recomputed and cleared (or in some cases relocated) for low-angle engagement to keep the trajectory of the round below 7,000 feet. This detailed airspace management could only be accomplished through close coordination among the TF Falcon fire support element (FSE), G3 Air and KFOR headquarters.

Although KFOR headquarters retained approval authority to fire high-explosive (HE) rounds, the TF Falcon commander had illumination (nonlethal) approval authority. Therefore, the TF could use illumination fires more efficiently and responsively due to no requirement for KFOR approval.

The key to planning fires in this peace support operation was the development of the "hot box." This area is a pre-cleared area around a pre-planned target designed to limit collateral damage yet facilitate clearing and executing timely fires.

Using the automated deep operations computer system (ADOCS) and satellite imagery, TF Falcon selected targets near potential hot spots in the AOR. These target areas did not contain any buildings or structures that could be damaged by the flare, spent projectile

or canister of an illumination round.

Before firing, the target area and hot box would be cleared of personnel, often by TFF combat observation lasing teams (COLTs), or maneuver task force fire support teams. Additionally, observers photographed each area to ensure no structures were in the area that had been built after the intelligence imagery had been produced. So, through imagery and "eyes-on" observation, the target area was clear of personnel and potential collateral damage.

These TTP permitted routine, responsive engagement of targets during operations. This technique was highly successful. KFOR 1B fired more than 1,400 illumination rounds in support of TF Falcon operations with no collateral damage.

Coordinated Fires and Nonlethal Effects. In essence, executing artillery fires in peace support operations uses doctrinal methods to move, emplace and fire artillery. However, due to the varying threats a firing battery can face, the coordination required to move a battery into a position area (PA) in support of an operation is more complicated. Different agencies, to include psychological operations (PSYOPs), civil affairs, engineers, military police and public affairs, are employed to gain the full effects of the fires and ensure coordinated action across TF Falcon.

PSYOPs were used in support of pre-planned operations to affect the attitudes of the local populace with regards to both the illumination targets and the firing positions of the howitzers. Pamphlets and leaflets were distributed to the local populace in the target area and near the battery positions to gain the full effect from the firing.

Leaflets described the firing as a demonstration of TF Falcon's firepower and that the task force was helping to develop a safe and secure environment for all Kosovars. Battery PAs were chosen to enhance the informational effect of the fires, such as locations between Serbian and Albanian villages. PAs were planned near potential hot spots to deter potential belligerents who could observe the firing of the howitzers.

Public affairs often were used to capture the battery presence mission for not only military channels, but also for publication in open source Falcon publications, such as the “Falcon Flier.” These articles highlighted the combat capability of TF Falcon and showed the local populace that the task force was making every effort to ensure peace and stability in Kosovo. Public affairs detachments were sent with both the firing batteries and observers. Their photos and articles proved invaluable in telling the story of the successful application of live fires in peace support operations.

Battery Security. Battery PAs also were deconflicted with known minefields and areas with unexploded ordnance (duds). For potentially hazardous areas, engineers were coordinated to proof the PA, and each PA was verified through the mine action center at TF Falcon headquarters. If an area was to be used for a second or third operation, then it was monitored more closely and mine detectors were used to clear a path into the PA from known KFOR routes. This coordination ensured the security of the battery in its PA.

Additional security concerns were alleviated through constant coordination with TF Falcon G2, maneuver TOCs and civil affairs detachments. Before moving outside the base camp, the battery commander verified the latest in-

formation on potential demonstrations along his route or near his planned PA, potential hostile areas or reports of terrorist attacks and the general attitude of the local populace toward KFOR. He also coordinated his occupation with the local quick reaction force (QRF) and maneuver company commander in charge of the sector.

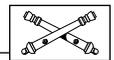
Unique peace support requirements, such as determining market days and other potential traffic congestion along routes, ensured smooth movement. Movement times were often adjusted to avoid known market opening or closing times and other planned demonstrations or local celebrations. This avoided the potential for accidents during the battery’s movement and the possibility of unexpected crowds forming around the battery, once it was in position.

Conclusion. On 20 June 2000, 1-6 FA was relieved by 2-3 FA, 1st Armored Division, as part of KFOR 2A. During KFOR 1B’s deployment to Kosovo, TF 1-6 conducted 16 Bright Sky Operations in support of TF Falcon and fired more than 1,400 rounds.

Artillery fires met the TF Falcon commander’s intent and served a variety of purposes in support of MNB-E. (See Figure 3.) Fires influenced the situation across the operational spectrum. Tactical actions, such as firing illumination, generated operational or

strategic intelligence and demonstrated tactical and operational interoperability and US and KFOR resolve.

The superb leadership and training of Redleg NCOs and soldiers and their ability to execute complex, decentralized missions were instrumental in the success of these fires. These same magnificent soldiers also conducted force protection and security operations on two base camps and checkpoint operations and provided medical and other humanitarian assistance missions. However, their primary task remained to provide indirect fires in support of TF Falcon’s mission to maintain a peaceful, stable environment for all Kosovars. Mission accomplished—*Swift and Bold*.



Lieutenant Colonel (Promotable) Kevin P. Stramara, while in command of the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery (1-6 FA), part of the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) headquartered in Germany, served as Commander of TF 1-6, part of Kosovo Force (KFOR) 1B during Operation Joint Guardian. Currently, he is a student at the National War College, Fort McNair, Washington, DC. He previously served as the Deputy Fire Support Coordinator (DFSCOORD) for both the 1st Infantry Division and 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), the latter at Fort Stewart, Georgia. Also in the 3d Division, he was a Brigade Fire Support Officer (FSO) and Battalion Executive Officer (XO) for 1-41 FA.

Major Michael W. Griffith was the Operations Officer for 1-6 FA and served in KFOR 1B. He now is the 1st Infantry Division Artillery Assistant S3. Previously, he was a Firing Battery Trainer at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, and Commander of A Battery, 1-41 FA in the 3d Division at Fort Stewart. He also was a Company FSO, Platoon Fire Direction Officer (FDO), Platoon Leader and Task Force FSO in the 5-41 FA, part of the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Germany.

Major Patrick M. Antonietti was the XO of 1-6 FA during its rotation to Kosovo. He now serves as the Assistant FSCOORD for the 1st Division. He previously had served as a Brigade FSO in 1-6 FA and Company FSO and Platoon Leader in 2-5 FA, then part of the 1st Division (Forward). He was a Battalion FSO and S1 before he commanded B Battery, all in 2-8 FA, part of the 7th Infantry Division (Light), at Fort Ord, California; he also commanded the 7th Division Headquarters and Headquarters Company at Fort Lewis, Washington, before the division’s inactivation.

Task: Provide 155-mm illumination fires to Multinational Brigade-East (MNB-E) forces throughout the sector.

Purpose:

Bright Sky I & II—To demonstrate Task Force Falcon capabilities, resolve and unity following a mine strike in the Russian sector.

Bright Sky III—To deter smugglers from importing illegal weapons that might be used against the Kosovo Force (KFOR) or Kosovar civilians.

Bright Sky IV—To deter smugglers in Task Force 2-2 IN sector and prevent extremist activities that may unhinge the negotiation process.

Bright Sky V, VI, VII, VIII—To facilitate the collection assets abilities to locate hostile forces operating in the MNB-E area of responsibility.

Bright Sky IX and X—To demonstrate Task Force Falcon’s resolve and interoperability in support of the 18th Polish Air Assault Battalion and the Greek 501st Mechanized operations.

Bright Sky XI—To dissuade “Mad Mortarmen” operations in coordination with Task Force 2-2 Infantry.

Bright Sky XII—To demonstrate Task Force Falcon’s unity and interoperability by firing for the Italian Task Force Gran Sasso.

Bright Sky XIII, XIV and XV—To demonstrate Task Force Falcon’s unity and presence by firing for the 18th Polish Air Assault Battalion.

Bright Sky XVI—To demonstrate the capabilities of 2-3 FA, 1st Armored Division, in the transfer of authority.

Fires for R&S—To provide fires in support of Task Force Falcon’s reconnaissance and surveillance operations and presence patrols.

Figure 3: Essential FA Tasks (EFATs) for Fires in Kosovo