



**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER
AND FORT POLK
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
News Release**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Minnesota National Guard unit and many others to train for Bosnia

Fort Polk, La. – The Joint Readiness Training Center is ready to conduct a Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE) for U.S. troops gearing up to replace American soldiers currently serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The MRE will challenge soldiers of the 34th Infantry Division, Minnesota Army National Guard and scores of other National Guard and reserve units from across the United States.

The 34th Infantry Division, currently headquartered in Rosemount, Minnesota, was activated during World War (WW) II on February 10, 1941. The Division made a good showing at the Louisiana Maneuvers. As the first U.S. Division to be shipped overseas, Pvt. Henke of Hutchinson, Minnesota was credited as being the 1st American soldier to step off the boat in support of the war effort.

The Division participated in six major Army campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The Division is credited with amassing 517 days of continuous front line combat, more than any other division in the European theater. Portions of the 34th Division are credited with over 600 days of front line combat. The Division suffered 21,362 casualties, of which 3,737 were killed. Members of the Division were awarded 11 Medals of Honor and 98 Distinguished Service Crosses.

Currently, the 34th Infantry "Red Bull" Division is ranked No. 1 of the Eight National Guard Division's with regard to readiness indicators. The Division's nearly 11,000 soldiers are located across five states -- Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, Colorado and Michigan. Minnesota is home to the Division Headquarters, located in Rosemount, a southern suburb of the Twin Cities. The First Armored Brigade and its associated Combat Team elements are all in Minnesota. The Air Assault Brigade is headquartered in Iowa. The Division is awaiting assignment of a Third Combat Brigade.

The Division currently has soldiers deployed worldwide with elements in Croatia, Kosovo and a detachment aboard the USS John F Kennedy. The Minnesota Air Assault Battalion had more than 100 soldiers serving on the Title 32 Federal Airport Security mission. Additionally, there are soldiers serving in the Minnesota Border with Canada as part of Operation Noble Eagle. The Division is ramping up for deployments, highlighted by projected assignments to Bosnia; MFO Sinai mission and a Infantry Battalion to Kuwait in early 2004. A slice of the Division Staff just completed Joint Task Force Exercise 02-01 and served aboard the USS Mount Whitney, the Navy's Second Fleet Flag Ship.

The 34th Division boasts a proud heritage of more than 85 years of service to the Army, Nation and state. Perhaps the Division's most noteworthy achievement is its Army-record 517 consecutive days in combat during World War II as part of the North African and Italian campaigns.

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SFOR MRE 2/2/2

THE EXERCISE

About 2,000 soldiers will undergo intense training in peacekeeping operations August 7-15; however, troops will be in the area several days before and after the exercise. The exercise is the culminating, comprehensive training opportunity for units deploying to Bosnia.

The MRE replicates current and possible scenarios in Bosnia. It will include hundreds of role players and exercise support personnel.

Role players will occupy towns and markets throughout the "country," and other support personnel will provide an assortment of challenges to the training units. The role players will replicate a variety of personnel and organizations to include local citizens, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and former warring factions.

BOSNIA DEPLOYMENT

The U.S. is committed to supporting peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina by implementing the Dayton Peace Accords and participating in the NATO-led military force. NATO's aim is to achieve a secure environment to ensure peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina without the presence of a NATO-led military force. From a total of almost 20,000 troops at the height of NATO's Bosnia operations in 1996, U.S. troop levels have steadily decreased as progress continues under the Dayton Peace Accords.

The soldiers set to undergo training at JRTC will become part of NATO's fourteenth iteration of Stabilization Force (SFOR 14). The 34th Infantry Division soldiers will replace the 35th Infantry Division currently deployed to Bosnia as Multi-National Division, North.

PUBLIC REMINDERS

Motorists are reminded that soldiers will be in the area throughout the exercise and many days after. Some roads will be closed on North Fort Polk due to the exercise. Motorists should not go around barricades or travel in restricted areas.

Anyone interested in hunting or fishing on Fort Polk should check first with the satellite Game Enforcement Office located in the portable building adjacent to the Alligator Lake entrance or at the main office located in Building 7654, North Fort Polk. The number is (337) 531-5715 or (337) 531-5255.

For more hunting information, call the toll free information line at 1-888-718-3029. The hotline provides recorded announcements around the clock. Also, a complete list of hunting seasons and other hunting information can be found on the Fort Polk homepage: http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/fpk_hunt/

PUBLIC AFFAIRS LINE

If anyone needs to address complaints associated with this training, please call the Public Affairs Line by dialing (337) 531-1431. Callers are encouraged to leave their name and phone number so Fort Polk can address concerns and respond to individual complaints.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Media interested in covering this exercise should call the Fort Polk Media Relations Office at (337)531-1418 or (337) 531-6134.