Liaison Monitoring Teams take the pulse of Kosovo

By DAMASO REYES

AmNews European Correspondent

LUBLJANA, Kosovo - Staff Sgt. Rex Prowse is looking for shepherds. One would imagine, that in this rural part of Eastern Kosovo that would be a routine activity. But when the government through the hillsides towards the local animal market, there were plenty of sheep roaming the hills inimitably, attacking shepherds in tow. But Prowse was looking for ethnic Serbian shepherds and he was having little luck. List in hand he approached the local farmers he encountered during his patrol and asked them if they knew how to reach a shepherd on the list—are they still producing wool? Where do they live?

It might seem somewhat strange for a soldier to wander the countryside in search of sheep, but that is exactly the main role of the Monitoring Teams (LMT) take on in order to better understand and assist the people they are charged with protecting.

One of the greatest challenges a peacekeeping force faces is staying aware of the changing mood of the local population. In a highly factionalized and ethnically mixed place like Kosovo, actions can be misinterpreted, reactions can quickly spread, and adversaries of peacekeeping forces as an occupying army bent on oppression. Not long ago, the nations that make up the international Kosovo Force (KFOR) began creating LMTs in order to break down the barriers that separate the troops from knowing the population. These small teams of soldiers don’t ride around in Humvees, they take small SUVs or cars; instead of wearing full body armor and helmets, they sport only their uniforms. Most importantly they spend time in the small towns and communities that make up most of this rural province, meeting with farmers and local townpeople to ask them not only what they need and want but what they think about what KFOR is doing and how it is being interpreted by their neighbors.

Staff Sgt. Prowse was looking for shepherds on a warm autumn day as part of a USAID project that was due to begin in a few months. Local farmers had been producing wool but had stopped because of a lack of buyers. The project will fund a new market for products and additional income. Air in all projects run in the American-administered sector, getting all ethnic groups to participate is seen as crucial, which is exactly the reason why an American sergeant was roaming the hills of Kosovo in search of Serbian shepherds.

1st Afro-Colombian congresswoman speaks in New York City

By KAREN JUANITA CARRILLO

Special to the AmNews

During the final leg of her monthlong visit to the United States, Zulia Mena Garcia, the first Colombian congressional representative specifically elected to protect the interests of Afro-Colombians, spent two days in meetings and speaking engagements in New York City.

While in New York, Mena spoke at a Global Afro Latino Caribbean Initiative (GALCI)-sponsored discussion at the Caribbean Cultural Center/African Diaspora Institute on Thursday, November 3, and was also a featured guest at The Africa Report’s Thursday, November 3, event, “The Africa Report: Africa – a focus on the future,” in the Matter Murallo and Errol Maitland.

At both events, the former congresswoman emphasized the importance of the current Afro-Colombian movement for national recognition.

“People here don’t have much idea about the Afro-Colombia – and what they do know, it seems they get from CNN,” Mena said during an interview with The Africa Report. “So there’s just a basic disconnect with the reality of what’s going on in my country.

I came to the U.S. to talk about the Afro-Colombian movement – what it was like in the past, and what’s going on there now.”

Mena was elected to Congress in February 1994, after conducting a mere monthlong campaign for office. She has been re-elected four times.

“I came to the U.S. to talk about what KFOR is thinking about, what the troops are seeing in order to gain more information about the local population’s perspective,” Mena said.

Significant reduction in measles cases and deaths in Africa

By JOTI POIRIER

Special to the AmNews

The TIME Magazine Global Health Summit was launched last week in New York, gathering Measles Initiative partners to announce the progress made in reducing measles deaths, and all Measles Initiative partners to achieve a common goal to reduce measles deaths.

In 2001, the UN Foundation joined the American Red Cross, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and WHO to form the Measles Initiative. Since then, over 160 countries have joined to announce the progress made and 2004, measles infections dropped 60 percent,” said Dr. Jim Yong Kim, director of WHO. “This is a major public health achievement,” said Dr. Lee Jong-Wook, World Health Organization (WHO) director general. “It is the result of the hard work and dedication of the government of priority countries with high measles deaths and all our Measles Initiative partners to achieve a common goal to reduce measles deaths.”

Ted Turner also announced a $20 million commitment to the Measles Initiative over the next four years, bringing the UN Foundation’s support to more than $57 million since 2001.

“We hope these funds will mobilize more partners and supporters to help in this cause,” Turner said. “The Measles Initiative has had tremendous success in reducing measles deaths, and we can’t stop now. Going forward we must build upon the Initiative’s accomplishments in Africa, and expand our activities into other measles-ravaged areas such as Asia.”

The Measles Initiative’s efforts over the years have enabled tremendous progress in fighting measles. “Between 1999 and 2004, measles infections dropped 60 percent,” said Dr. Jim Yong Kim, director of WHO. “This is a major public health achievement,” said Dr. Lee Jong-Wook, World Health Organization (WHO) director general. “It is the result of the hard work and dedication of the government of priority countries with high measles deaths and all our Measles Initiative partners to achieve a common goal to reduce measles deaths.”

The Initiative has saved more than a million young lives.”

In African countries where health conditions are extremely poor, living conditions are very difficult and access to health care is minimal, measles is the leading cause of death among children, before HIV, tuberculosis and malnutrition. For children living in precarious conditions, with already unhealthy bodies, measles is just one more assault. One of the most highly contagious diseases, measles can be easily contracted by children who come in contact with carriers because it is carried in the air, one of the reasons some in Uganda call it “Akwap,” which translates into “disease of the air.”

The Measles Initiative’s
**Kosovo**

(Continued from Page 2) them,” said Sgt. William Ehnes of the California National Guard and an LMT squad leader based at Camp Monetaich, “it’s much easier for the local population to talk to you if you’re not carrying a M16 and have kevlar and vests on,” he added, pointing out the differences between the LMTs and the patrols that he had been a part of before.

Where a regular patrol squad might drive through an area and occasionally talk to residents, the LMTs have begun something else as well: they give inhabitants of a community a face and a name that they will see and hear on a continuing basis.

**Garcia**

(Continued from Page 2) only in skin color but white in thinking.”

After she was elected, Mena said her priorities were getting collective title to land tracts in Chocó and an African education system. The subject of changing Colombia’s educational system so that it reflects the nation’s various ethnicities (an does not solely emphasize the nation’s cultural heritage from Spanish is the cause for change,” said Mena. “It’s a shame she is going to split worked together for their chosen candidate.

Former president candidate U.S. Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) introduced legislation to honor Parks with a statue in the U.S. Senate. Kerry said that even after her death, America should be reminded of her legacy.

“Her way to keep her legacy alive is going to be in the schools. Our schoolchildren, families, members of Congress and the presi...