

# Kosovo: The reasons why

By **DAMASO REYES**  
*European Correspondent*

DOBRICANE, Kosovo — The last thing Spc. Fan Zhang of Roland Heights, Calif., thought he would be doing when he signed up for the National Guard would be teaching English to a bunch of teenagers in Kosovo.

“We’re soldiers first, so we were kinda lost,” he said, speaking of his first few times in the classroom. Born in China, Zhang, who just a few years ago was learning English himself, isn’t even an American citizen, yet he is currently applying for citizenship.

“The first thing I thought was that it was a pretty good way to pay for college,” Zhang replied when asked why he joined the National Guard. “I was young, I didn’t have any particular reason, I just thought it would be cool.”

And so Spc. Zhang, along with about a dozen other Californians, made his way to this small town in Kosovo to teach English once a week to children ranging in age from six to sixteen.

Since September 11th and the invasion of Iraq, those joining the armed forces have done so with the knowledge that they very well may be deployed into a conflict area. Gone are the days when serving in the National Guard meant one weekend a month and two weeks a year. The troops currently serving in Kosovo will be deployed for at least a year, with some even volunteering for extended tours.

After three weeks of being embedded with American soldiers, a complex tapestry of motivations emerged behind the desire to serve: some are young people seeking escape from small town life; others are in middle age, earning more being deployed than they would back home. Nearly all the soldiers felt that the mission was essential and that they were needed here though they had obligations back home.

“Freedom and peace, that’s the main thing here,” 1st Sgt. Michael Green of Hilton Head, S.C., responded when asked why American troops are still in Kosovo after six years. “If we leave, I don’t know, they’ll tear each other apart, the different ethnic groups. The hate is still strong here, I believe.”

Green left three children in South Carolina, where he is a truck driver, but he did volunteer to extend his tour, citing both the money and the fact that Kosovo is a relatively safe area, one he has even grown to like.

“This is a long term, ten, fifteen year process,” Maj. Christopher Dantoin, a civil affairs officer from Wisconsin,



**Spc. Zhang carries chalk and an M-16 to class.**  
(Damaso Reyes photos)

said of the rebuilding effort. While KFOR was initially seen as a security force when it was first deployed in 1999, it has also taken on a major role training Kosovars in the functions of government, something which was not encouraged under the decades of commu-

deployed tough, but he said, “I think it’s worthwhile. We represent a country that’s been doing this since the beginning. We have to maintain that status in the world. If we don’t do it, no one else will.”

In many ways Kosovo and the work of the active duty, guard and reserve troops stationed here has been overshadowed by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. A small operation by those standards, with only about 1,500 soldiers, the work the men and women are doing is exactly what those in the Pentagon would like to be accomplishing in those larger theaters but cannot because of the ongoing security issues. In Kosovo soldiers who are mechanics, lawyers, police officers, truckers and doctors back home are building bridges, patrolling highways, and teaching a people to live together and govern themselves. In the six years they have been there, KFOR forces, led by American soldiers, have brought a province that



**Spc. Fan Zhang teaches Kosovar school children English.**

nist authoritarian rule the province endured when Serbia was part of Yugoslavia.

“A lot of times you don’t appreciate what you got at home until you come to a place like this,” said Sgt. Brian Cartwright of Lakewood, Calif. The wife and three children he left back home have made the four months since he was

was on the brink of collapse to the point where it is largely administered by its own citizens.

That mission continues even today as the future status of Kosovo is being determined. When that time comes the work of Spc. Zhang and all the other soldiers serving in Kosovo will come to fruition.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### ZIMBABWE WAR VETS PREPARE TO DEFEND FARMS

June 6 (GIN) - Zimbabwe war veterans, who lead the charge for the confiscation and redistribution of white-owned farms, may now face eviction in a new government sweep against illegal settlements.

Operation Restore Order, intended to clean up urban slums and other unapproved housing settlements, is reportedly preparing to target farms in its next sweep.

The government says the operation is aimed at returning order and normality in urban areas, in addition to putting an end to parallel market trading, which has been flourishing on the back of crippling food shortages.

Several thousand people, mostly in the urban centers, have been displaced in the current cleanup campaign and over 20,000 have been arrested, drawing criticism from the United Nations. On Friday, the UN demanded that President Robert Mugabe stop the evictions, which it describes as a new form of “apartheid.”

Miloon Kothari, a UN expert on the right to adequate housing, said the clearances sought to banish the poor from the capital, Harare, turning it into a preserve of the wealthy classes.

He warned that two to three million people - roughly a quarter of Zimbabwe’s population - could be affected if the eviction drive continued.

“Where do they go back to?” he said. “There is no resettlement being offered, no compensation being offered for the properties that have been destroyed.”

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association warned that its members will fight the security forces if Operation Restore Order is extended to farms.

### ETHIOPIA: HUNDREDS OF COMPLAINTS DELAY RELEASE OF POLL RESULTS

June 6 (IRIN) - Results of parliamentary elections in Ethiopia, initially scheduled to be announced on Wednesday, will now be delayed by

one month after the country’s electoral board received complaints from more than half of the constituencies where elections were held in May, an official said on Monday.

Electoral chief Kemal Bedri told a news conference at the National Election Board headquarters in the capital, Addis Ababa, that the scale of the complaints had necessitated the monthlong delay.

He made the remarks as police arrested several hundred university students at the main campus in Addis Ababa.

The students’ leaders said they were protesting the outcome of the elections, which, according to provisional results, the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front won.

Police officers rounded up the students and took them away in eight trucks. The university was the scene of bloody clashes in 2001 where dozens of people were killed.

The ruling party had won 302 seats and its allies 26, according to the provisional results released so far. Opposition parties won 194 seats in the 547-seat lower house of parliament, up from the 12 seats they won during elections in 2000.

Rival political parties have lodged 61 types of complaints, including gunmen intimidating voters, people being forced to vote for certain parties, ballot boxes being stuffed or disappearing and the number of ballots exceeding those of registered voters.

The elections have been the most competitive in Ethiopia’s history and are a test of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi’s commitment to greater freedom and democracy.

The protests came as lawyers for the opposition went to court to challenge Meles’ May 15 decree banning demonstrations, and his move to put the capital’s police under his direct control.

Six Ethiopian journalists were briefly detained and questioned by police last week over their coverage of the hotly contested elections and their aftermath.

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