

***Roto 15 / Mission Closeout Team
TFBH Camp Black Bear, VK
Contracts Management Cell***

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With the eyes of the world on Kabul, and rightly so as they're doing great work over there, it seems we (as in those closing out Op PALLADIUM) are not getting much press of late. Kind of like playing for the "B" Team at the Beaver Cup. So, just to let you know that the rumors of our demise, though undeniable a certainty, remains a tad premature.

There are approximately 270 troops still working hard here in BiH. Our task, to close out OPERATION PALLADIUM. While we will not be the last Canadian presence in this country we will certainly be the last as we have come to understand it. Op BRONZE is a whole new kettle of fish, but that's another story.

From an Engineer perspective, while relatively few in numbers we have branch members employed in both contract and project management, operating within the Ops cell, leading and conducting Engineer closure tasks and performing the DCO function. A truly ubiquitous lot considering our small numbers. Most of us are either from 1ESU Moncton or from JSGHQ Kingston.



While relatively few in numbers now, there was a time when the countryside was fair bristling with Engineers. The home to a good deal of those Engineers during Op PALLADIUM was CML (Camp Maple Leaf) located near the village of Zgon. The closure of CML is now near complete with only a small number of closure tasks remaining. The teardown and removal of what had become known as "Beaver Lumber" was a particularly poignant moment and a sad reminder of the losses incurred during this Op.



With CML closed out, our last Canadian stronghold will be here at CBB (Camp Black Bear) located in the suburbs of Velika Kladusa or more commonly referred to as VK. Closure ops have been slowly picking up speed here as well and are just beginning to hit their stride. It is anticipated that before Christmas 2004 there will no longer be any remnants of a once very large Canadian presence within any of the old camps located across the North Western confines of Bosnia-Herzegovina.



While it may sound sad and indeed it is, as those who help to close out the mission can attest. Many friends have been made over the course of this long running mission. A large number of locals have called our camps home, dependant on our support and accustomed to the security we provided. The tears and sad looks seem to multiply as the inevitable draws closer, a touching tribute to the hearts and souls we have made a difference to. But not all is sad, there are signs of growth everywhere in the country and peace has certainly arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina. To be sure the price has been high, as attested by the list of names engraved on the memorial that adorns the HQ building at VK, and while there remains a huge gap to span, Canadian Military Engineers everywhere can hold their heads high knowing their Branch has been a large part of the success in the resurgence of peace in the Balkans.