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ALUMNI PROFILE

MAJOR FREDRIK A. HOLST

(working with the Stabilization Force in Northern Bosnia)

by Gillian A. Brady

Fredrik Holst, a 1996 graduate of the LL.M. program at WCL is currently serving as a civil military cooperation officer with the Stabilization Force (SFOR). He is currently stationed in the Nordic Polish Brigade, one of the biggest units in the U.S. led Multinational Division (MND) in Northern Bosnia. Before he came to WCL, Holst was an information officer with the UN in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He received his law degree from the University of Stockholm, Sweden.

Immediately after his graduation from WCL, Holst returned to Sweden and worked briefly at a law firm before he was recruited by the Legal Department of the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters in Stockholm. As legal advisor for the Swedish Armed Forces, he worked on various humanitarian law issues. For instance, he traveled to Vienna for a workshop on the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, an area the Legal Department feels is considerably important, but that has been neglected in the past. He also took part in the planning of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) Exercises, which are designed to implement joint training exercises with NATO countries and other countries involved in the PFP program. The purpose of these joint training exercises is to prepare different countries to cooperate in future peace support missions. Holst prepared Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), one of the basic legal documents used between nations participating in the joint exercises.

In December 1997, Holst was selected for the position he currently holds, which involves him in a variety of issues. As well as being an SFOR officer working on civil and military cooperation (CIMIC) matters, Holst also works as deputy legal advisor to the Commanding General of the Nordic Polish Brigade. In this capacity, he gives advice on military operational issues, military discipline, and claims against the military. In his capacity as a CIMIC officer, he works mainly with democratization

issues. As an SFOR officer, Holst supports the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has the mandate of promoting Bosnia-Herzegovina's transition to a stable democracy. Holst attends regional meetings with major international organizations such as the OSCE, Office of High Representative (OHR), UN Civil Affairs, and the UN International Police Task Force on implementation of election results. During the meetings, these groups discuss how certain municipalities have complied with their obligations after elections have taken place.

Another part of the democratization process is the enforcement of respect for basic human rights principles. The main areas of concern in this arena are the right to return, right to property, freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination, due process of law, and security of persons. Holst attends Human Rights Working Group Meetings with the major International Organizations in the area. Security of persons is one of the greatest concerns at the moment. Local police, especially in so-called hard line areas, harass, intimidate, and even beat civilians based on their political views, religion, or ethnicity. SFOR can provide impartial doctors upon request from the International Police Task Force, who are dispatched to civilian victims of police brutality in order to collect evidence that many local doctors are afraid to document or report.

According to Holst, freedom of movement exists, but the division of Bosnia into two entities, Republika Srpska (RS), and The Federation, consisting of the Bosniak/Muslim and Croat sections has



Major Holst at the joint Swedish-U.S. base "Camp-Caisson" (Sierra base) near Gračanica, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

created some problems. Freedom of movement is hindered by the fact that the police from one entity tend to stop vehicles coming from the other side. SFOR reports on checkpoints, which are illegal if they are set up for longer than 30 minutes. The mere presence of SFOR forces is often enough to discourage the setting-up of checkpoints.

Holst has also seen evidence that internally displaced persons and refugees are returning to their homes, albeit slowly. After the ethnic cleansing many people are reluctant to return, either because they fear a repeat of the previous violence or because their homes have been destroyed or are being occupied by another family. SFOR supports UNHCR trying to encourage and support returnees.

Landmines also continue to pose a serious problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Holst, leaving the tarmac is never safe, as unexploded mines are still scattered throughout the country. SFOR does assist the local authorities in removing landmines, but due to their extensive use, the process is arduous and time consuming.

For Holst, the most satisfying aspect of working in Bosnia-Herzegovina is seeing

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that the ravages of war have not eliminated hope for some, especially the younger generation, which is benefiting from improved infrastructure and greater freedoms. The problem, however, as Holst sees it, is the imbalance in support given to each entity. The Federation has benefitted greatly, as approximately 95% of all aid has been given to them, whereas Republika Srpska has received only 5%. This has created huge disparities in the standards of living, salaries, education, etc. between the two entities, which, if it continues, will fuel further conflict and could ultimately threaten stability in the region. In the same sense, Holst reports, the U.S.-led "Train and Equip" program, which has provided supplies, weapons, and military expertise to The Federation only, has exacerbated feelings of resentment and unfair treatment toward Bosnian Serbs.



Major Holst and Mrs. Elisabeth Rehn, UN Secretary General's Special Representative

Holst fears this unequal allocation of wealth and services could eventually lead to further conflict.

In March of this year, Fredrik returned to WCL to attend the War Crimes Tribunals Conference. During his visit he also gave a presentation

entitled "Bosnia Update: An Inside View of Civil-Military Cooperation." He is currently continuing his work in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and will remain there until July. 🌐



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Without taking time to deliberate, Judge Elliott concluded the two-day non-jury trial by finding that each defendant was guilty as charged of illegal re-entry and sentenced all of them to the maximum penalty of 6 months in federal prison and a \$3,000 fine. He offered each defendant the opportunity to have the fine waived if they promised never to re-enter Fort Benning, but none of the defendants accepted the offer. The defendants were ordered to return home until space became available in federal prison, at which time they would be required to report to begin serving their sentences. One of the defendants, Father Roy Bourgeois, the founder of SOAW, has already spent three years in prison as a result of sentences imposed against him by Judge Elliott.

In March, 1998, Major General Carl F. Ernst, the Commanding General of Fort Benning, sent letters to the hundreds of people who "crossed the line" at the November 16, 1997 protest and were charged with criminal trespass. In the letter, he informed the recipients that they had failed to appeal their exclusion orders within seven days of issuance and, as a result, they had waived their rights to present evidence on their

behalf and disprove the allegations against them at a hearing. The letters further stated that the recipients were banned from Fort Benning for a period of five years from the date of issuance. These terms were different than those

Closing the SOA, despite cited violations of human rights involvement and increased public disapproval of the school's track record, has proven a formidable task.

imposed by the original exclusion orders that the protestors received on November 16. The original orders excluded the recipients for a period of only one year, not five. SOAW lawyers recommended that letter recipients respond immediately by writing back to the Fort Benning commander in order to question the legality of the change of terms and to allege a violation of the recipient's due process rights.

Closing the SOA, despite cited violations of human rights involvement and increased public disapproval of the school's track record, has proven a formidable task. Several U.S. legislators,

including Representative Joseph Kennedy of Massachusetts and Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois, have called for its closing and have introduced bills in both houses that would cut its funding. No vote has been scheduled yet on either HR 611 or S138. In March 1998, the Annual General Meeting of Amnesty International voted on a resolution that called for the SOA's closing. On April 26, 1998, 1300 protestors marched in Washington, D.C. as part of a lobby for the proposed legislation to close the SOA. While Americans were participating in the D.C. vigil, there were simultaneous vigils at U.S. embassies in 12 Latin American Countries.

The message about the SOA, therefore, appears to be spreading worldwide. Considering the increasingly stringent military policy regarding SOA protestors in the U.S., such global support is of growing significance. The question remains, however, whether the closing of the SOA would be nothing more than a symbolic gesture. The U.S. military has the ability to continue teaching torture and human rights violations if it so chooses. Therefore, the right of Americans to protest and demand information about U.S. military training techniques may be a more effective weapon against the SOA than the mere closing of a compound. 🌐