

Perspectives lecture focuses on Bosnian peacekeeping operations

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Lt. Col. Mark Viney, the director of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, gives a lecture on the

role of 1st Squad, 4th Cavalry Regiment's role in Bosnian peacekeeping. Photo by Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos

Jan. 21, 2011 -- Mass graves, mud and snow, and overwhelming fire power are among the memories that Lt. Col. Mark Viney, director of the Army Heritage and Education Center, shared during a firsthand account of his unit's role in the Bosnian peacekeeping mission, Viney recounted the story of the 1st Squadron "Quarterhorse", 4th Cavalry Regiment role as part of the Perspectives in Military History series Jan. 19 in Ridgway Hall.

Throughout his lecture Viney brought to the audience's minds the sights and smells that he and his men lived with. He recalled how a fellow Soldier, having just returned from providing security at the mass graves that littered the countryside, burned his uniform because that was the only way to rid himself of the stink of death.

“There is something about mud that is different from dirt or snow. It is demoralizing. It gets into you,” he said.

In 1992, the newly independent nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina began a three-year civil war between the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats for supremacy. The war ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord in Dec. 1995.

In Jan. 1996, Viney’s unit, as part of the first-ever ground operation conducted by NATO, deployed to Bosnia for 11 months. The "Quarterhorse" played a pivotal role in the effort to mend the nation and uphold the peace.

During the 1990s, the American military was involved in peacekeeping and stability operations which was an entirely different animal than they had trained for during the Cold War, according to Viney. What set Bosnia apart from other peacekeeping operations such as Somalia, was that combat units were used to enforce the peace.

“One of the reasons we were successful in Bosnia is because the NATO Soldiers had overwhelming mass and fire power,” said Viney. “In stability operations mass is just as important as in combat. This was one of the lessons we learned in Somalia.”

The lessons of Bosnia contributed to the professional development of those leaders who would lead combat and stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, he said.

“I don’t think we could have done what we are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan if we hadn’t first done it in Bosnia. We accomplished what they said was impossible,” said Viney.

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Wed, March 16, 2011

"Military Transformation: The Japanese Army during the 1920s and 1930s" (<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/newsarticle.cfm?id=112>)

Perspectives in Military History Lecture Series with Dr. Edward Drea

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