

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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Stryker Soldiers commemorate World War II's 'Operation Cowboy' with citizens of Czech Republic

By Spc. Jerry Wilson

2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Public Affairs Office

HOSTOUN, Czech Republic -- The streets of Hostoun were transformed into something from a World War II movie set earlier this month as the city went all out to welcome Soldiers of the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment and honor their predecessors who took part in an unusual operation here in the closing days of the war.

Past and present combined as vintage military vehicles from the Military Car Club of Pilzen (Czech Republic) and the 2nd SCR's Stryker vehicles lined the streets. Residents, many dressed in World War II American military uniforms, gathered alongside troopers from Dog Company, 2nd Squadron, 2nd SCR to celebrate the 64th anniversary of Operation Cowboy.

As the second world war drew to an end, Patton's Third Army and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment undertook the operation that was to be a historic rescue mission to liberate 400 prisoners of war and more than 670 horses, including world-famous Lipizzaner breeding mares taken from the Spanish Riding School in Vienna and kept in Hostoun by German soldiers.

Fearing the horses would fall into the hands of the Soviet Army, a small task force was formed from the 42nd Squadron to drive the horses via an Old West-style cattle drive from Hostoun to Bela nad Radbuzou,



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A boy from the town of Hostoun, Czech Republic explores a Stryker armored vehicle from the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment during events in the town earlier this month in honor of 'Operation Cowboy,' a World War II mission to rescue prisoners of war and valuable Lippizaner horses being held in the region. The Strykers were supplied by 2nd SCR's Dog Company.

which was under allied control. During the operation Pfc. Raymond Manz and Tech 5 Owen Sutton, both of Alpha Troop, 42nd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, were killed by German SS forces while transporting the horses.

In remembrance of these men, and to celebrate the liberation of their people by American forces, an annual pilgrimage is made along the historic route taken by those Soldiers in April 1945.

This year's trip began with the unveiling of a memorial plaque here.

"As commander of Dog Company," said Capt. Scott Brandt, "I feel a special bond to this location and what happened here."

"Dog Company traces its roots back to Troop Alpha in World War II," he explained.

"We are also here to pay tribute to Sergeant Sutton and Pfc. Manz," he continued. "Many of the Soldiers of Dog Company are combat veterans."

"We understand the ultimate sacrifice they made to free this great nation."

After the unveiling and the laying of flowers at a memorial in Houstoun, a motorcade starts out on its journey. The convoy stopped at a small stone memorial in the woods near the town of Rusov that was the site of the Nazi SS checkpoint where Sutton and Manz were killed. The stone structure was dedicated to the memory of both men. The delegation stopped to pay their respects to the memory of Manz and Sutton and lay more flowers in their honor.

"It was Soldiers from this squadron that rescued the allied prisoners," said Lt. Col. Omar Jones, commander of 2nd Squadron, 2nd SCR. "It is truly an honor to be here to pay tribute to these brave men whose sacrifice helped rescue the Lipizzaner and helped the Czech people regain their freedom."



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A pair of Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, prepare to lay a wreath at the foot of a memorial in Bela nad Radbuzou, Czech Republic that commemorates two 2nd Cavalry Regiment Soldiers who died during Operation Cowboy in the closing days of World War II.

“When I think of Sutton and Manz,” Jones said, “I think of two young men far from their homes at the end of many months and years of war.”

“They were there for each other, their comrades, and sacrificed to earn freedom for over 150 prisoners,” he said.

“They also ensured the legacy and culture of the Lipizzaner horses was not lost to the world.”

The motorcade continued into Bela nad Radbuzou, where the trip concluded at a statue dedicated to the memory of Operation Cowboy and the sacrifice of Sutton and Manz. During the ceremony the mayor of Bela nad Radbuzou was presented with a plaque from 2nd SCR commander Col. James R. Blackburn.



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