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## Vice President Biden visits troops at Camp Bondsteel during tour of Balkans

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**CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo** -- U.S. Vice President Joe Biden visited troops here May 21 to boost morale and show support for the Kosovo Force mission.



SPC DARRIEL SWATTS

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden poses for a picture with Soldiers currently on duty at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, during Biden's visit with the Kosovo Force, May 21.

Biden's visit here was the last stop on a three-day, three-country trip to the Balkans.

Upon his arrival here, Biden met with Brig. Gen. Keith D. Jones, commanding general of the U.S.-led Multi-National Task Force East, and then followed that meeting with a meet-and-greet with KFOR Soldiers.

“You're the most visible, most vital symbol of our sense of justice and compassion that could possibly be demonstrated to the rest of the world. You're the embodiment of our deep-seated ethic of selflessness and sacrifice,” said Biden. “You know you're serving shoulder-to-shoulder with our NATO forces that are here; partners from Armenia and Greece, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania and Ukraine. You show the world, and you continue to show the world, what happens when nations resolve to stand together to defeat tyranny and to build free societies.”

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As the father of a National Guard Soldier serving in Iraq, Biden told the group of primarily Guard troops that today's Guard is important and relevant to today's military.

“Without the National Guard we would not be able to conduct the war in Iraq, we would not be able to conduct the War in Afghanistan, and we would most certainly not be able to conduct the efforts being made here,” said Biden. “There’s an old saying that goes, ‘This is not your father’s National Guard.’ It’s an integral part of every Army operation, and it’s impossible to deploy a large force of the United States military without the National Guard.”

Biden also remarked on the importance of the KFOR mission and highlighted the changes that have taken place in the region.

“I look at the progress made since my first visit, and much of it has been attained, first and foremost, by American leadership, backed up by the courage and hard work of NATO military forces like all those standing with you here today,” said Biden.

“We dreamed of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. But the one missing piece of that puzzle remains the Balkans,” said Biden. “Here in Kosovo ... you’re providing Kosovars the security they need, and the space they need, to build an independent, democratic, and most importantly multi-ethnic, state that has never existed in this part of the world.”

“You’re literally building a free, vibrant, productive society from the ground up,” he said, praising the troops' efforts alongside nongovernmental and international donor organizations whose work is changing the lives of the Kosovars.

Some of the Soldiers who heard Biden’s speech said they were impressed that Biden took the time to personally come to Kosovo to thank them for what they are doing.

“We have his support while we’re here promoting freedom, and it was a very encouraging thing for him to come out here to let the troops know in person our vice president, on behalf of our president, is behind us,” said Sgt. 1st Class Maria Weaver.

“It’s an honor to see the administration take time to visit us to show their appreciation,” said Spc. David Noriega of the California Army National Guard. “The speech was very nice to hear that they appreciate our sacrifices and our family that they are sacrificing as well.”



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