

Spc. Jessica Abner, 354th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Cat E

Worldwide rap star Coolio made himself a lyrical home on stage at Eagle Base's Peacekeepers Hall. With disc jockey DVS (pronounced Devious) spinning records on the turn tables, and Goast assisting on the microphone, Coolio entertained the soldiers with music from new and previous albums.

Moments after Coolio's stage appearance, the uniformed fans, along with civilians who work on Eagle Base, rush the stage as he called the sound managers to turn up the music. Although the concertgoers range in age, jobs, and taste of music, they seemed to enjoy the hip hop beats Coolio and his crew brought to Eagle Base. Soldiers are not the only ones who benefit from the concert, Coolio said he takes something away from the experience as well.

"I really believe in what I do and I think it really affects people in a positive way. At the end of our lives we are going to have to answer to God and he's going to pull out his book and say 'well what did you do'," said Coolio.

"I want my good stuff to outweigh the bad. So, I'm getting something out of it, too, and I get to see a part of the world that I never saw before."

Being in a danger zone is not something new to the performer. He said he was a little apprehensive about the trip to Bosnia at first but he has been in dangerous situations before. This is Coolio's fourth USO tour, however, it is his first time in Bosnia. He has performed for U.S. troops in Korea, Kuwait, and Europe.

"I'm from Compton and I've been to Kuwait. I feel like I've been in dangerous areas all my life," said Coolio. "Not only that, I believe when it's time for you to go, you have no choice or weight in the matter, so it doesn't matter if I'm home or if I'm performing here."

"I perform for soldiers because they are important. Somebody that's willing to die for someone else is another kind of person," said Coolio. "They are willing to die for me to be able to do the things I do everyday, for my kids to be able to go to school and be free."

He marked the end of his concert with his 1996 Grammy Award winning single "Gangsta's Paradise" and thanked the soldiers for doing their jobs and serving the United States.

The performance received good ratings by the soldiers who said the entertainment gave their morale a boost.

"I'm an old fan but I can't believe people like that perform here," said Spc. Juana Lopez, medical supply, Task Force Med Eagle. "My brother is going to be so happy because he thinks that we are not getting much entertainment over here and that we're isolated. He will appreciate Coolio."

"I thought it was a great time and a lot of fun. The interaction with the crowd was the best, he knows how to put on a good show," said Spc. Steve Connelly, psyops specialist, 13th Psyop Bn. "I'm just grateful that he's able to come out here and do the show, it's a great service and I respect him for it."

Even though Coolio performed on Eagle Base, he and his entourage paid a visit to soldiers at the forward operating bases (FOBs) and Sarajevo. While at those locations, he signed autographs and hung out with the soldiers. Although he wanted to visit all the FOBs, weather and time did not permit a visit to Hilltop 1326. But those who met Coolio appreciated his time.

"It means somebody cares. He comes over here, knows a little about our soldiers and what they are going through, it's really appreciated," said Major Shaun Jones, commandant, 28th Inf. Div.

After the concert, Coolio spent time talking with soldiers and signing autographs. He said if he could tell the servicemembers one thing it's, "Be yourself. Everybody's not a leader and I'm cool with that, if you're not a

leader, then be a good follower. If you are going to be a follower, make sure you got a good leader."

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