



NATO  
OTAN

NATO  
in the Balkans

# briefing

FEBRUARY 2005



Bosnia  
and  
Herzegovina



Kosovo

## Bringing peace and stability to the Balkans

“Euro-Atlantic integration is a realistic goal for all countries and entities in the Balkans”

**A**lmost exactly nine years since NATO deployed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina in what was the Alliance’s first peacekeeping operation, that mission was brought to a successful conclusion.

When the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) left Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004, its departure reflected the improvement in the security situation in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region in recent years. It also heralded deeper security cooperation between the Alliance and the

European Union, which deployed a new peacekeeping force and took responsibility for many important security tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the years since NATO’s intervention, the prospects of the Balkans and its peoples have changed almost ►



beyond recognition. Whereas war or the threat of war hung over the entire region, today the likelihood of a return to large-scale hostilities is almost unthinkable. Whereas the Balkans appeared politically to be headed in a very different direction to the rest of the European continent,

today Euro-Atlantic integration is a realistic goal for all countries and entities – in large part as a result of the security presence that the Alliance has provided.

Today, both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro – target of a sustained NATO air campaign only just over five years ago – are candidates for the Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* aspire to NATO membership and are

already contributing personnel to NATO operations beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. And neighbouring countries – Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia – have become NATO members, thereby extending Europe's zone of stability in and around the region. Indeed, even before the hand-over in Bosnia and Herzegovina it had been possible to reduce the number of NATO-led troops in the Balkans to around 25,000 – little more than a third of the number deployed in 1999 – some 7,000 of whom were in SFOR. ►

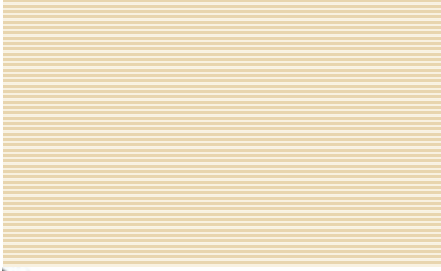
## Working with Partners

A useful by-product of NATO's engagement in the former Yugoslavia has been the experience of working together with Partners. Over the years, the NATO-led operations in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have benefited greatly from the presence of Partner militaries from Europe and beyond. In the course of the best part of a decade, soldiers from a large number of Partner countries have become accustomed to working alongside their NATO counterparts, learning how the Alliance operates in complex and difficult circumstances. This, more than any other single factor, has been critical in improving relations and building confidence and understanding between military forces,

which until the end of the Cold War formed hostile alliances confronting each other across a divided continent.

For seven years between 1996 and 2003, Russia provided the largest contingent of non-NATO peacekeepers. Ukraine has also provided significant numbers of troops within the framework of the joint Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalion. Other significant non-NATO troop contributors include Finland and Sweden and generals from both these countries have commanded sectors in Kosovo. Although most non-NATO countries that contribute troops to the Alliance-led peacekeeping operations belong to the

Partnership for Peace programme and come from Europe, several troop contributors are from other continents and some have no formal relationship with the Alliance. Jordan and Morocco, which participate in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, have contributed peacekeepers to SFOR and KFOR. Egypt, also a Mediterranean Dialogue country, and Malaysia have contributed peacekeepers to SFOR and IFOR. Argentina has contributed peacekeepers to both SFOR and KFOR and the United Arab Emirates has contributed an especially large contingent to KFOR.



“NATO remains committed to building long-term stability throughout Southeastern Europe”



To be sure, challenges remain that should not be underestimated. Serbia and Montenegro’s international rehabilitation may only become irreversible when it has met all the requirements for PfP membership, including surrendering the most notorious war crimes suspects on its territory, and is admitted into the programme. The future political status of Kosovo has not been resolved and a robust international security presence remains necessary. And stagnant economies undermine even the most determined international peace-building efforts.

In recognition of ongoing threats to stability, NATO remains committed to building long-term stability throughout Southeastern Europe. Indeed, the successful termination of SFOR does not spell the end of NATO’s engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Rather, it is an important step in the evolution of the Alliance’s security presence in the region.

Even now after the European Union deployed its force, EUFOR, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO has retained its own military headquarters in the country. Whereas the European Union is responsible for ensuring day-to-day security, NATO is focusing primarily on defence reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, preparing the country for PfP membership and eventually for Alliance membership.

The NATO Headquarters, which is headed by a one-star US general with a staff of around 150, is also working on counter-terrorism, apprehending war-crimes suspects and intelligence-gathering (see box *Future engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina* on page 4).

Cooperation between the European Union and NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in accordance with a package of arrangements known as “Berlin Plus”. The term is a reference to the fact that the 1996 meeting at which NATO foreign ministers agreed to create a European Security and Defence Identity and make Alliance assets available for this purpose took place in Berlin. In practice, the arrangements seek to avoid unnecessary duplication of capabilities between the two organisations and to ensure that they work together hand in glove.

The strategic commander of the EU mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina is NATO’s Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, who is also the most senior EU officer and is based at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. The chain of command runs from an EU cell at SHAPE through another EU cell at Allied Joint Force Command Naples, which was responsible for SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the Kosovo Force (KFOR), to ensure



that the missions operate seamlessly together. Contingency plans exist for NATO to provide over-the-horizon forces if required.

EUFOR derives its mandate from a new UN Security Council resolution and has an initial strength of 7,000, that is equal in size to SFOR. This compares with an initial NATO-led force, the Implementation Force or IFOR, of 60,000 more heavily armed

and equipped troops that deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995. IFOR had a one-year mandate to oversee implementation of the military aspects of the peace agreement: bringing about and maintaining an end to hostilities; separating the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska; transferring territory between the

two entities according to the peace agreement; and moving the parties' forces and heavy weapons into approved storage sites. These goals were achieved by June 1996.

## Future engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Even after the deployment of EU forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO remains engaged in the country and committed to its long-term future, though the nature of its engagement has changed. The Alliance has retained a military headquarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the political side of the Alliance's engagement has increased at the same time as its operational side has decreased. The European Union is responsible for ensuring

day-to-day security and NATO is focusing on defence reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and preparing the country initially for membership of the Partnership for Peace and eventually of the Alliance itself. The NATO Headquarters, which is headed by a one-star US general with a staff of around 150, is also working on counter-terrorism, apprehending war-crimes suspects and intelligence-gathering.

## Intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina

IFOR deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina following negotiation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. A key factor in bringing the warring factions to the negotiating table at that time and ensuring the success of the peace talks, in which Alliance representatives were actively engaged, was NATO's earlier military intervention. The Alliance waged its first air campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina against Bosnian Serb forces in 1995. The Operation, *Deliberate Force*, lasted for 12 days in August and September, helped shift the balance of power between parties on the ground and persuade the Bosnian Serb leadership that the

benefits of negotiating a peace agreement outweighed those of continuing to wage war.

NATO's decisions to intervene militarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina and then to deploy IFOR in 1995 were extremely controversial at the time (see box *Crossing the Rubicon in Bosnia and Herzegovina* below). Many analysts and media commentators portrayed the Bosnian conflict as a quagmire out of which the Alliance would never be able to extract itself, arguing that NATO should continue to focus exclusively on collective defence. In the event, the Alliance adapted its operating procedures to become an extremely effective peacekeeper, building up

invaluable experience in IFOR and SFOR for missions elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia and the world.

The model for EU-NATO cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.\* There, NATO handed responsibility for its peacekeeping mission to the European Union in April 2003 but retained a presence in the country that remains there to this day assisting the Skopje authorities with defence reform and providing support to other NATO-led missions in the Balkans.

The Alliance originally deployed a military force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* ►

## Crossing the Rubicon in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the scene of many "firsts" for NATO and decisions taken in response to events in Bosnia and Herzegovina have helped shape NATO's evolution since the end of the Cold War. The Alliance first used armed force

in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 28 February 1994 when it shot down four Bosnian Serb warplanes that were violating the UN-imposed flight ban. NATO also launched its first air campaign, Operation *Deliberate Force*, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in

August and September 1995. And NATO first deployed a peacekeeping force, IFOR, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995. The Alliance's adaptation and learning process was especially evident in the way in which peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina under IFOR and later SFOR evolved and fed into the approach adopted when KFOR deployed in Kosovo in June 1999. Moreover, experience acquired in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains extremely relevant as NATO moves beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.



in August 2001 to oversee the voluntary disarmament of ethnic Albanian rebels who had taken control of large swathes of territory in the west of the country. This step was a key pre-condition for a peace process to get underway as set out in the Ohrid Framework Agreement. A NATO crisis-management team had earlier helped negotiate a cease-fire with the rebels and persuaded them to

support peace talks. (See box on Operation *Essential Harvest* on opposite page).

A factor contributing to the unrest in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* in 2001 was instability in neighbouring Kosovo, the province of Serbia and Montenegro that has been under UN administration since 1999. While conditions have improved in Kosovo in recent years, the province remains tense. Moreover, the threat of an eruption of violence, as happened in March 2004 when NATO deployed additional forces and Alliance-led peacekeepers were obliged to use force to maintain order and protect beleaguered Serb communities, is very real. For this reason, NATO is maintaining a robust military presence with some 17,500 troops in KFOR. The initial KFOR deployment in June 1999 was some 50,000 troops.

Since Kosovo's status remains unresolved, the NATO mandate in the province – which is derived from UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and a Military-Technical Agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav Army – is greater than in any other Alliance-led mission. NATO's initial mandate was to deter renewed hostility and threats against Kosovo by Yugoslav and Serb forces; to establish a secure environment and ensure public safety and order; to demilitarise the Kosovo Liberation Army; to support the international humanitarian effort; and coordinate with and support the international civil presence. Today, the Alliance is seeking to build a secure environment in which all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origins, can live in peace and, with international aid, democracy can begin to grow.





## Operation *Essential Harvest*

In 2001, NATO, in close cooperation with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, helped head off civil war in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* through timely, intelligent and coordinated intervention. At the request of the Skopje government, then NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson dispatched a crisis-management team to negotiate a cease-fire with the so-called National Liberation Army (NLA), an armed group of ethnic Albanian rebels which had taken control of large swathes of territory in the western part of the country. At the time, the very survival of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* was at stake.

Implementing a key lesson learned from the experience of KFOR and SFOR, NATO worked closely with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe from the political level down to the field, and the three organisations presented a unified international stance to both sides of the conflict.

The NATO team succeeded in helping to persuade the NLA to agree a cease-fire and to support the ongoing political negotiation process, which culminated in the 13 August Ohrid Framework Agreement. In the wake of this agreement, NATO deployed a force of 4,000 troops in Operation *Essential Harvest* to over-

see the NLA's disarmament. Over the next 30 days, close to 4,000 voluntarily surrendered weapons were collected at several designated points. By early October, the task was complete and the NLA had ceased to exist as a structured armed organisation. After completing *Essential Harvest*, NATO retained, at Skopje's request, a follow-on force of several hundred military personnel in the country to protect civilian observers tasked with monitoring the re-entry of the state security forces into former crisis areas. In April 2003, NATO handed responsibility for this operation to the European Union.

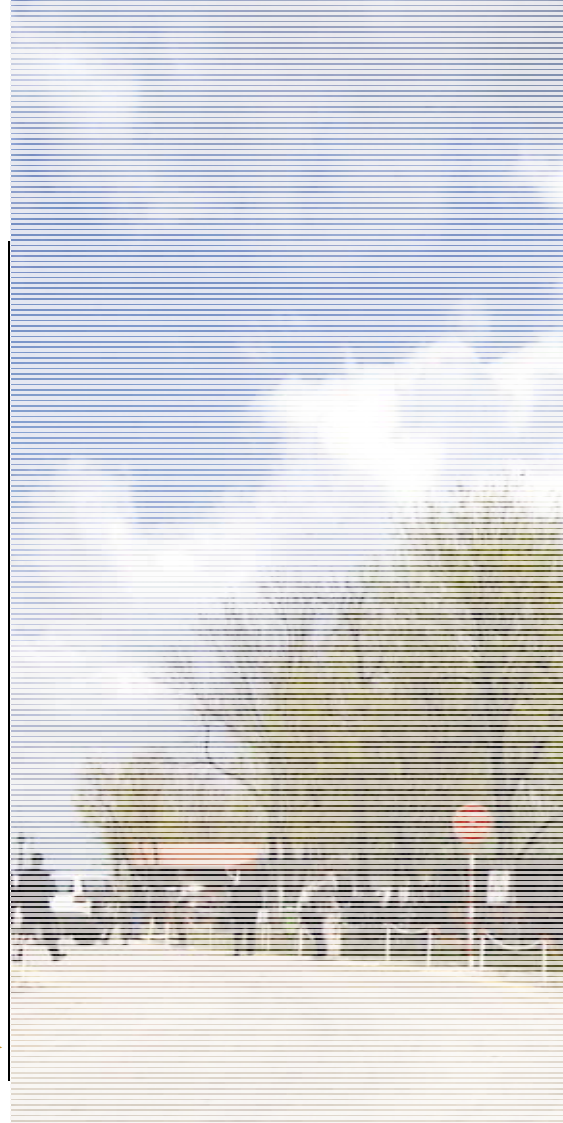
## Intervention in Kosovo

NATO intervened militarily in Kosovo in March 1999 to halt a humanitarian catastrophe and restore stability. The Alliance's air campaign, Operation *Allied Force*, lasted 78 days and followed more than a year of fighting within the province and the failure of diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict (see box *Combating ethnic cleansing in Kosovo* below).

Although the 1999 air campaign was waged against Serbia and Montenegro, relations between Belgrade and the Alliance had improved to such an extent in the intervening period that then Secretary General Lord Robertson was able to

visit Belgrade in November 2003 on his farewell tour of the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, Serbia and Montenegro has formally applied to join the Partnership for Peace programme and has even volunteered forces to serve in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

The turnaround in relations between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro is probably the most spectacular security-related development to have taken place in the former Yugoslavia since the 1999 Kosovo campaign (see box *Relations with Serbia and Montenegro* on page 11). To Serbia and Montenegro's credit, ►



## Combating ethnic cleansing in Kosovo

NATO launched an air campaign, Operation *Allied Force*, in March 1999 to halt the humanitarian catastrophe that was then unfolding in Kosovo. The decision to intervene followed more than a year of fighting within the province and the failure of international efforts to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means. By the end of 1998 more than 300,000 Kosovars had already fled their homes, the various cease-fire agreements were systematically being flouted and negotiations were stalled. Two rounds of internationally brokered talks in Rambouillet, France, in February and March 1999

failed to break the deadlock and exhausted diplomatic avenues. At the time, autonomy for Kosovo within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, guaranteed by the presence of a NATO-led force, could have been assured. Accepted by the Albanian delegation, the proposal was rejected by Belgrade.

Despite strains, the Alliance held together during 78 days of air strikes in which more than 38,000 sorties – 10,484 of them strike sorties – were flown without a single Allied fatality. After first targeting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's air defences,

NATO gradually escalated the campaign using the most advanced, precision-guided systems and avoiding civilian casualties to the greatest extent possible. Target selection was reviewed at multiple levels of command to ensure that it complied with international law, was militarily justified, and minimised the risk to civilian lives and property. Having intervened in Kosovo to protect ethnic Albanians from ethnic cleansing, NATO has been equally committed to protecting the province's ethnic Serbs from a similar fate since the deployment of KFOR in the province in June 1999.





“The Alliance’s decisions to intervene in the former Yugoslavia were courageous, principled and far-sighted”

the country has made progress in the field of defence reform in the recent past. Belgrade has been participating in a tailor-made Security Cooperation Programme with NATO since 2003, consisting largely of Alliance-sponsored workshops designed to inform Serbs and Montenegrins about Euro-Atlantic security structures and the Partnership for Peace. It has cooperated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, most notably in the surrender of former President Slobodan Milosevic. But that cooperation has waned during the past year and one key requirement must still be met: Belgrade has to deliver

the most notorious indicted war criminal that it is harbouring – Ratko Mladic – to the ICTY.

The incentive to meet NATO’s requirement is the potential assistance that Belgrade can look to in the Partnership for Peace. NATO is already assisting neighbouring countries in security-sector reform with, among other initiatives, programmes aimed at retraining military personnel to help them adjust to civilian life and at converting former military bases to civilian uses. The benefits of Serbian and Montenegrin membership of the Partnership for Peace to NATO and the international community are also considerable, ►



as it would be difficult to rebuild long-term security and stability in the region without Belgrade as a constructive partner.

Like Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina has also made great progress in defence reform in the recent past. The country's security architecture at the end of hostilities in 1995 – which consisted of three rival armed forces – was not conducive to long-term stability. As a result, NATO and other international organisations have worked together with the various Bosnian authorities to reform the country's defence structures, policies that bore fruit in 2003 with the creation of a single state-level Defence Ministry.

As NATO's engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina changes in the months and years ahead, the Alliance will work together with Bosnian authorities to maintain the pace of reform. In addition to implementing the defence-reform programme, Bosnia and Herzegovina must also demonstrate that it is cooperating to the best of its ability with the ICTY, including at the very

least providing information and support to assist in the apprehension of Radovan Karadzic, before it is able to join the Partnership for Peace.

Despite many unresolved issues in the Balkans, it is clear today that the Alliance's decisions to intervene to halt fighting in the former Yugoslavia were courageous, principled and far-sighted. They have enabled people of all ethnicities to aspire to a better future for themselves and their families. And they have provided the essential pre-conditions for the development and growth of civil society. However, the job is not yet finished. While respective roles and responsibilities may change, the European Union, NATO and other international actors must continue their effective partnership for as long as it takes to make reconstruction and stabilisation in the region self-sustaining and irreversible.

• For more on IFOR, see [www.nato.int/ifor/ifor.htm](http://www.nato.int/ifor/ifor.htm)

• For more on SFOR, see [www.nato.int/sfor/index.htm](http://www.nato.int/sfor/index.htm)

• For more on KFOR, see [www.nato.int/kfor/index.htm](http://www.nato.int/kfor/index.htm)

• For more on NATO's role in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,\* see [www.nato.int/fyrom/home.htm](http://www.nato.int/fyrom/home.htm)

\* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

## Relations with Serbia and Montenegro

The turnaround in relations between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro is probably the most spectacular security-related development to have taken place in the former Yugoslavia since the 1999 Kosovo campaign. After Serbs and Montenegrins rejected former President Slobodan Milosevic in elections and forced him to accept defeat with street protests in October 2000, Belgrade's new democratic government set a very different foreign policy course. The new cooperative spirit was immediately reflected in the way that Belgrade worked together with the Alliance to defuse an ethnic Albanian insurrection in southern Serbia during the winter and spring of 2000 and 2001. Moreover, since then Belgrade has generally pursued pragmatic and constructive policies towards the Alliance, even at times of heightened tension such as during the upsurge in violence in Kosovo in March 2004.

In June 2003, Belgrade formally applied for membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Since then, military officers and civilians have been participating in NATO orientation courses. These aim to provide participants with a basic knowledge of the Alliance as well as an introduction to crisis-management issues, peace-support operations and civil-military cooperation. During a visit to the United States in July 2003, then Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic announced that Serbia and Montenegro was willing to participate militarily in ongoing peacekeeping missions, specifically in the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan. Indeed, relations between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro had improved to such an extent by November 2003 that then Secretary General Lord Robertson was able to visit Belgrade on his farewell tour of the former Yugoslavia.

Serbia and Montenegro has made progress in the field of defence reform in the recent past and has cooperated with the ICTY, notably in the surrender of former President Milosevic. However, that cooperation has waned during the past year and one key requirement must still be met before the country is admitted into the Partnership for Peace. Belgrade has to deliver the most notorious indicted war criminal that it is harbouring – Ratko Mladic – to the ICTY.





## Impact of Balkan operations on NATO

While NATO has clearly had an enormous impact on the Balkans, the Balkans has had almost as great an impact on NATO. The deployment of IFOR in December 1995 was the Alliance's first military engagement on land and contributed greatly to reshaping its post-Cold War identity. Indeed, since the Alliance first became involved in the former Yugoslavia, NATO has changed almost beyond recognition.

In retrospect, it appears logical that the Alliance should move beyond collective defence and develop its crisis-management capabilities. In the first half of the 1990s, however, this was extremely controversial and generated heated discussions within the Alliance. Even in the early days of IFOR, many Allies were concerned about the dangers of "mission creep", that is the tendency

to take on more and more tasks perceived as better performed by civilian actors. Rapidly, however, it became clear that there could be no military success in isolation. If the overall peace-building effort failed to produce conditions for a stable and lasting peace, this would be perceived as much as NATO's failure as that of the civilian agencies. This helped forge closer links between the peacekeeping force and its civilian counterparts, including, for example, developing a doctrine for civil-military cooperation. By the time KFOR deployed in 1999, these lessons had been learned and were reflected in the broad mandate given to the force from the outset.

NATO's capabilities and expertise to manage complex peace-support operations have been greatly enhanced during the past decade, primarily in

response to the wars of Yugoslavia's dissolution. Still more significant, attitudes to operations beyond Alliance territory and even beyond the Euro-Atlantic area have been transformed. Whereas it took close to three-and-a-half years of bloodshed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a year of fighting in Kosovo before NATO intervened to bring these conflicts to an end, the Alliance became engaged militarily in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* in 2001, at Skopje's request, to prevent an escalating conflict degenerating into full-scale civil war. Indeed, increasingly, as in Afghanistan, NATO is deploying in support of the wider interests of the international community to help resolve deep-rooted problems and create the conditions in which the various peace processes can become self-sustaining.

\* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

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NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 1110 Brussels - Belgium, web site: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int), e-mail: [natodoc@hq.nato.int](mailto:natodoc@hq.nato.int)