

A photograph of a military tank. In the upper right, a soldier's head is visible through the turret. The tank's main body is dark and shows signs of wear and rust. A circular light fixture is mounted on the side of the turret. In the foreground, a large pile of crushed rifles lies on the ground. The text 'BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FIGHTS TERRORISM' is overlaid in large white letters on the right side of the image.

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FIGHTS TERRORISM

A Bosnian Armed Forces tank crushes rifles in May 2010 under an agreement to destroy surplus weaponry as a condition of Bosnia's approval of a NATO Membership Action Plan.

# Responding to transnational threats through Euro-Atlantic integration

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On October 28, 2011, a lone terrorist staged an attack on the United States Embassy in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The terrorist act was completely unexpected; the assailant came out of a nearby park and opened fire on the embassy building, shouting radical slogans and demanding the withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan.

The way Bosnia and Herzegovina's security agencies responded to the attack made it clear that the security sector in Bosnia was ill-prepared for such an attack, while reaffirming the country's vulnerability to terrorism. As the culprit moved openly along the main road near the center of the city, firing numerous rounds from an automatic weapon, some 50 minutes passed from the beginning of the attack until he was arrested. Fortunately, only one U.S. Embassy security police officer was lightly wounded and the embassy building sustained only minor damage.

Although Bosnia, in the past 2 1/2 years, has not suffered from terrorist attacks — according to the analysis of the relevant agencies — it cannot be said that Bosnia is safe from terrorism. The U.S. Embassy attack brought certain weaknesses of the Bosnian security system to the surface, particularly the failure to react quickly to the threat. Overlapping jurisdictions had cost valuable time as security agencies tried to determine which agency was responsible. In addition, the unusual modus operandi and visibility of the attack were something Bosnian security agencies had never dealt with before. After an earlier terrorist attack on the police station in the town of Bugojno in June 2010 — using a powerful bomb — law enforcement agencies' response was fast and efficient, and the perpetrator was arrested shortly afterward.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the investigation revealed that the perpetrator had previously drawn police attention by making radical statements. It is legitimate to question whether this person should have been subject to a certain kind of observation, which could have prevented the attack.

Subsequent analysis revealed that the U.S. Embassy assailant had also been known to the police because of his radical positions and actions. This emphasizes the need for law enforcement agencies to change their approach to combating terrorism, i.e. their transition from a reactive to a proactive phase. This transition should be implemented by prioritizing an active exchange of relevant intelligence-security information and creating an efficient joint planning process between domestic and foreign law enforcement agencies.

Bosnia has adopted several legal measures that provide security agencies with the necessary framework for counter-terrorism operations. Transnational security threats, including terrorism, do not recognize national and administrative borders, which necessitates that the response be planned, coordinated and comprehensive. Bosnia takes part in several regional and global initiatives and is committed and dedicated to actively fighting terrorism.



Mevlid Jasarević paces up and down a street in Sarajevo after opening fire on the U.S. Embassy on October 28, 2011. Jasarević was wounded by Bosnian police and arrested. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Professional experience shows that improved coordination between Bosnian security agencies on the national level is one of the first steps needed. The complexity of Bosnia's constitutional structure resulted in the establishment of numerous police agencies.<sup>2</sup> The large number of police agencies does not mean that Bosnia is more efficient at fighting terrorism. The effectiveness of these agencies is reduced by variable competencies among agencies, the slow flow of relevant information and the lack of a common approach or a central gathering and processing facility for terrorism related information. Finding the best approach,



A member of a special unit of the State Investigation and Protection Agency police force takes part in an anti-terrorist and hostage rescue drill in Sarajevo in August 2011.



Then-Deputy Minister of Defense Marina Pendes shakes hands with Bosnian Soldiers in October 2010 after the country agreed to send an infantry unit to join the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan.

aimed at maximum utilization of the various agencies' capacities, is a priority for Bosnia's counterterrorism policy.

The country's Strategy for Prevention and the Fight against Terrorism is a starting point.<sup>3</sup> This document reflects Bosnia's systematic and proactive counterterrorism efforts. The strategy reaffirms that Bosnia recognizes the importance of preventive measures. To bear fruit, these measures need to be implemented daily in a systematic, planned and organized way. In addition, active involvement from as many participants as possible, from many segments of society, is necessary, including representatives of academic and religious communities, law enforcement agencies and citizens. Key preventive measures include raising awareness about the danger of terrorism and disclosing ideological movements that use terrorist activities to achieve their goals. Recently, Bosnia adopted amendments to its criminal code to sanction those who go abroad, or try to, to participate in foreign wars.

The Counter Terrorism Task Force, consisting of representatives of all relevant agencies and headed by the chief prosecutor, was established with the primary task of implementing the Strategy for Prevention and the Fight Against Terrorism. Apart from supervising implementation of the strategy, the task force works to improve counterterrorism capabilities and efficiency. However, the task force faces many challenges, ranging from internal organization to a lack of money. Even though it operates in difficult circumstances, the task force makes important contributions to preventing and combating terrorism and will influence the future direction of Bosnia's efforts in this field.

### Euro-Atlantic Counterterrorism Integration

Terrorism is a serious security threat to Bosnia and other Western Balkan countries; therefore, it is necessary for all countries in the region to cooperate closely. Weapons and other military devices left from past conflicts in the former

Yugoslavia aggravate the problem. Many people still keep weapons and, for different reasons, are not willing to hand them over to law enforcement agencies. This is a challenge for security agencies and enables terrorists to obtain weapons relatively simply. The weapons used in the terrorist attacks in Bugojno and Sarajevo are probably remnants from the war that had been hidden in somebody's house.

Bosnia endeavors to reduce its vulnerability to this security threat through preventive measures,<sup>4</sup> cooperation between security agencies and improved cooperation within the region. Bosnia's efforts to join NATO are especially important. The relationship between Bosnia and NATO dates back to wartime. Many analysts believe that NATO, with Operation Deliberate Force,<sup>5</sup> brought peace to Bosnia.

The Dayton Peace Accords,<sup>6</sup> ending the war in Bosnia, were signed soon after NATO became engaged in the conflict. According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1031, NATO was given the mandate to implement military aspects of the agreement,<sup>7</sup> following which NATO Implementation Forces (IFOR)<sup>8</sup> deployed and started implementing the accords. IFOR was replaced by the NATO Stabilization Force and, following consistent improvement of the security situation in Bosnia, NATO handed security responsibility over to European Union Forces in 2004.

While NATO was actively engaged in Bosnia, the country carried out numerous security sector reforms and expressed a clear commitment to become a NATO member, supported by numerous documents, and official statements and actions. A July 2001 Bosnian presidential statement on the commitment of Bosnia to Euro-Atlantic integration and the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program is an important advance in defense sector reform. And the 2002 Decision of the Presidency on Organization of Defense Institutions clearly emphasizes that commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration and that collective security is the best solution for Bosnia.

Following the 2003-2005 defense reform process, Bosnia established a state Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, with a multiethnic staff, and was admitted into the PfP. Bosnia will continue to reform as it moves toward NATO accession. In June 2009, the Bosnian presidency approved application for a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), which was submitted in October 2009. The application was rejected at the December 2009 NATO meetings because it was determined that Bosnia had made insufficient progress on reforms. However, at an April 2010 NATO foreign ministers meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, Bosnia received conditional<sup>9</sup> MAP status after the Alliance assessed that progress had been made in certain areas (destruction of excess arms and ammunition and the Armed Forces' increased engagement in the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan-ISAF).<sup>10</sup> MAP status was made dependent on registration under Ministry of Defense ownership, rather than under ownership of the Bosniak-Croat Federation or Republika Srpska entities, of military locations suitable for active use.

It was difficult to predict when the MAP mechanism would be unblocked because registration of military assets was a huge political issue in Bosnia. There were expectations that the issue would be resolved by a new government after the 2010 parliamentary elections. While awaiting political decisions on the military assets, the Ministry of Defense carried out numerous preparations (both legal and technical) regarding those assets' registration. During this process, the Ministry of Defense enjoyed active support from NATO staff in Sarajevo.

NATO conditioned the MAP accession, rather than denying it again, because the Alliance recognized Bosnia's progress and wanted to reward the efforts of the Armed Forces in contributing to the ISAF mission. But NATO also wanted additional confirmation of Bosnia's determination and commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. The Alliance wanted to test Bosnian officials' ability to make tough decisions. From NATO's standpoint, registration of military assets to the ownership of the federal Bosnian government and Armed Forces should be confirmation of dedication to Alliance membership.

## Conclusion

Bosnia is not immune to contemporary security threats, but continually works to strengthen capacity to prevent and successfully combat these threats. By making the decisive reforms necessary for NATO accession, Bosnia has built its capacities and become more competent to address security challenges. This is clearly demonstrated by Bosnia's global security efforts in the war against international terrorism and in peacekeeping operations (both military and police), including Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2005 to 2008. Bosnia attaches special importance to peacekeeping operations and combating terrorism, reflected in the Defense Act, which stipulates that participation in collective security operations, peacekeeping operations, fighting terrorism and supporting civil institutions in emergency situations are primary tasks of the Armed Forces.<sup>11</sup>

Everything mentioned so far reaffirms Bosnia's commitment to contribute to international security. Partner institutions, both domestic and international, should be involved in combating transnational security threats. Bosnia's commitment to attaining NATO membership is understandable, given that NATO provides the best framework for protection of national sovereignty and security. Security and defense cooperation are not the only benefits of NATO membership. Other types of beneficial support and cooperation available include catastrophe aid, humanitarian aid and educational support.

NATO membership is very important to combating terrorism because membership implies improved economic conditions and affirmation of democratic values. On the other hand, improving economic conditions would have a direct impact on reducing the possibility of lower-class citizens being recruited into terrorist activities. In addition, as a full NATO member, the Bosnian Armed Forces could exchange relevant intelligence-security information, send its members on joint operations, conduct joint exercises, participate in joint training with other NATO partners and benefit from NATO counterterrorism experience. Full NATO membership would enable Bosnia to develop security capacities in cooperation with Alliance partners and increase involvement in addressing regional and global security challenges.

Although many analysts argue that Bosnia needs NATO more than NATO needs Bosnia, Bosnia is still important to the Alliance. Bosnia is a new partner that has made substantial contributions to international security through participation in international missions. Through its geographic position, it can serve as a corridor to other new NATO candidates (Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo). Bosnia borders NATO (Croatia) to the west, while its eastern neighbor (Serbia), although a participant in the PfP, maintains a traditionally strong relationship with the Russian Federation, which through its energy sector, endeavors to strengthen its presence in the Balkans.

Perhaps the most important reason for NATO to accept Bosnia as a full partner is that the Alliance brought peace to the country. NATO participated in and made active contributions to the security reform process and accepted Bosnia as a partner. In this way, NATO would confirm its essential role and purpose — keeping member countries safe and preserving global peace. □

1. As a consequence of the terrorist attack in Bugojno, one police officer died and many more were injured, while surrounding buildings sustained extensive damage.
2. Bosnia has 16 police agencies at various levels, from national to canton.
3. This document was drafted for the period 2010-2013. The new strategy is being drafted.
4. Amnesty for all the people who voluntarily surrender weapons is in force, i.e., there will be no legal proceedings in the case of these people.
5. Air operation lasted from August 30 to September 15, 1995, and was aimed at destruction of communication systems and bombardment of artillery positions of the Bosnian Serb Army.
6. The Peace Agreement was signed on November 21, 1995, in Dayton, Ohio, USA, and became known as Dayton Peace Accords.
7. Dayton Peace Accords is composed of 11 annexes that cover military, political, and civilian aspects of the agreement, as well as those concerning regional stabilization.
8. Multinational Task Force composed of 60,000 soldiers under the command of NATO Gen. George Joulvan.
9. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization will accept the first Bosnian Annual National Program when all the immovable military assets are registered under Bosnian Ministry of Defense ownership. About 63 locations were evaluated by the Bosnian Ministry of Defense as suitable for further utilization by the Armed Forces.
10. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_62811.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_62811.htm) ( May 18, 2014).
11. Article 4 of the Defense Act (Bosnia Official Gazette number 88/05).