



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA





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Bosnia and Herzegovina is a Balkan state slightly smaller than West Virginia. Like West Virginia, the country has many undeveloped rural areas and a high unemployment rate. Driving out of Sarajevo, the capital city into the mountains, the countryside is dotted with small farming communities, beautiful mountain overlooks and a winding river that serves as a vacation spot for many in the city. In 1984, the Winter Olympics were held in and around Sarajevo. The Olympic Village and its venues are now in ruin.

To understand Bosnia and Herzegovina, one must first understand its history and the long-term ethnic rivalries that exist within the region. In a small alley in the middle of downtown Sarajevo, the shot that kicked off the first World War was fired. Franz Ferdinand, the archduke of Austria-Hungary and his wife, were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist who was a member of the Black Hand — a military group seeking Serbian dominance — as they drove through the city. Today, a museum, a street marker and the bridge that Princip jumped off after shooting the Archduke are quiet reminders of the long-term struggle for ethnic dominance in the region that remains today.

Following World War II, the Balkan states of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro became part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1980, when the Yugoslavian President, Josip Broz Tito died, the nationalism, which sparked World War I, reared its ugly head and threatened to tear the country apart. With the rise of Slobodan Milosevic as a powerful leader in the country, the long-held peace between the Serbians in Bosnia and Croatia and Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians began to crumble.⁰¹ In 1991, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia declared their independence, sparking a war with the Serb-dominated Yugoslavian Army backing Serbian separatists against the Croatian forces. The region was split along ethnic lines with the country's 4 million people divided: 44 percent Bosniaks, 31 percent Serbs and 17 percent Croats. On March 3, 1991, a referendum was held to form a new government. The ethnic Serbs boycotted the referendum, which sparked the worst ethnic cleansing since World War II.

The Bosnian Serb forces backed by Milosevic began a bombardment of Sarajevo, as well as other Bosniak towns forcing out Bosniak civilians. In the beautiful mountains overlooking the city of Sarajevo, snipers took watch over the city, pinning residents down, shooting them at will. Nina, a young woman who now works in the Bosnian government, was just 14 when the snipers began firing on the city. Her family was trapped. They went days without food or water. Going out of their home meant risking death. The people, much like the beautiful buildings in the historic city, which are still riddled with bullet holes, are marked by the war. But for those in Nina's generation, there is a growing consensus that hate based on ethnicity will only hinder their country and their people.

The internal war continued unabated through the mid-1990s, with the rest of the world watching and refusing to act. From 1991 to 1995, it is estimated that some 100,000 people were killed. In March 1994, the Bosniaks and Croats signed a treaty creating the Bosniak Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On Nov. 21, 1995, all of the parties came to the table

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in Dayton, Ohio, and signed The Dayton Peace Accords that “retained Bosnia and Herzegovina’s international boundaries and created a multi-ethnic and democratic government charged with conducting foreign, diplomatic and fiscal policy.”⁰² Also recognized was a second tier of government composed of two entities roughly equal in size: the Bosniak-Bosnian Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian Serb-led *Republika Srpska*. The Federation and RS governments are responsible for overseeing most government functions. Additionally, the Dayton Accords established the Office of the High Representative to oversee the implementation of the civilian aspects of the agreement. The Peace Implementation Council at its conference in Bonn in 1997 also gave the High Representative the authority to impose legislation and remove officials, the so-called “Bonn Powers.” An original NATO-led international peacekeeping force of 60,000 troops assembled in 1995, and was succeeded over time by a smaller, NATO-led Stabilization Force. In 2004, European Union peacekeeping troops replaced SFOR. Currently EUFOR deploys around 600 troops in theater in a security assistance and training capacity.”

The Bosniak/Croat Federation holds about 51 percent of the land, while the *Republika Srpska* has the remaining 49 percent. Population wise, the country has 48.4 percent Bosniaks, 32.7 percent Serbs, 14.6 percent Croats, with the estimated population of 3,867,055 people as of July 1995. With a nod to its

population, the country has three official languages, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Its population is 40 percent Muslim — the majority of whom are Bosniaks, 31 percent Orthodox and 15 percent Roman Catholic.

The current government is a federal democratic republic and Sarajevo remains its capital. The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina is complex. There is a three-member presidency, with a president coming from the three main ethnic groups — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbians. The presidents are elected by a simple majority every four years. A president can serve two terms, and after waiting a four-year period can be re-elected. Every eight months, a member of the Presidency become the Chairman of the Presidency and serves as the Chief of State for those eight months. It then rotates to the next President in line. The cabinet also rotates, with the Council of Ministers being nominated by the council chairman and approved the state-level House of Representatives.

The legislative branch is a parliamentary assembly known as the Skupstina and consists of the House Peoples (*Dom Naroda*), which is comprised of 15 seats, which again are divided down ethnic lines, with each

01
The bridge that Gavrilo Princip jumped off after firing the first shot of World War I.

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An overlook of colorful Sarajevo and the beautiful expanse of mountains that surrounds the capital city.

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Sarajevo comes alive at night with lights setting the historic buildings aglow as people enjoy the exciting nightlife the city has to offer.

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THE PEOPLE, MUCH LIKE THE BEAUTIFUL BUILDINGS IN THE HISTORIC CITY, ARE MARKED BY THE WAR



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01 A woman enters an apartment building riddled with bullet holes in Sarajevo.

02 The remnants of a building torn apart by rockets.

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03 A banner marks the 20 year anniversary of the end of the fighting.

04 A World War II memorial in Sarajevo's city center is marred by bullet holes.

05 A Catholic Church lit up at night in old Sarajevo.

06 An inlaid marker divides the spot where two cultures that helped shaped Sarajevo merge.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY SFC JESSE BELFORD

holding three seats. Members are also elected every four years. The state-level House of Representatives is known as the *Predstavnicki Dom* and consists of 42 seats, with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina holding 28 seats and the Republika of Srpska holding 14.

The military of Bosnia and Herzegovina is growing and becoming more professional. Known collectively as the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is divided into the Army of BIH, the Air Force and Air Defense and the Tactical Support Brigade. It is an all — volunteer military,

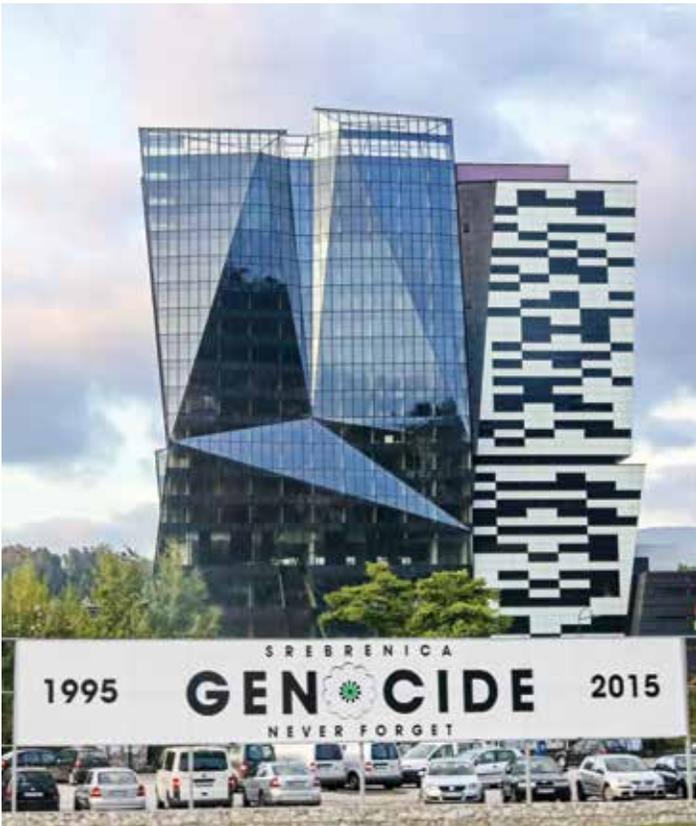
Some of the major problems facing the country today are its lagging economy and “brain drain,” which is defined as the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector or field for another usually for better pay or living conditions. The country has an unemployment rate of more than 40 percent, with nearly 51 percent of the working population holding low-paying, service industry jobs. The top economic priorities for the country are integration in the European Union, strengthening the fiscal system, reforming public administration, membership in the World Trade Organization and building a dynamic, competitive private sector, as government spending is roughly 40 percent of the gross domestic product.⁰²



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Transnational problems impacting the country included internally displaced people who were caught up in the war. The flow of Islamic fighters through the country and illicit drug trade, with the country being a major transit point for heroin headed to Western Europe. It is also plagued by corruption within the complex government. **SW**

NOTES 01. <http://www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide>, accessed 15 November 2015. 02. CIA World Fact Book.



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CMSE BiH

A small team working behind the scenes makes a big impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

BY JANICE BURTON

You have only to walk down the streets of Sarajevo to understand the impact the members of the Civil Military Support Element, 92nd Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), 95th Civil Affairs Brigade is making in Bosnia.

As members of the team enter stores or restaurants (accompanied by the staff of *Special Warfare*, they are immediately recognized. The owners and staff members quickly move toward them, hands outstretched to welcome them. The conversations between the members of the team and their Bosnian hosts flow easily. There is laughter and there is a legitimate exchange of information. Developing that relationship is at the heart of what the CMSE does when it is deployed forward in support of the U.S. Embassy Country Team.

While in country, the team is assigned under Chief of Mission authorities. The team's authority to operate in country comes from the Chief of Mission. In Bosnia, the Ambassador is very supportive of the CMSE's work.

The members of the team have made a concerted effort to not only make themselves an integral part of the country team, but also an integral part of the community. At the embassy, members of the country team speak highly of the team and the impact they have had. They are quick to work with the team to develop new projects and plans and to follow-up on previous projects. The Ambassador understands and supports the mission of the team, as do other members of the country team.

The team's footprint is small, but the impact is huge. Because the team works and lives in Sarajevo, they are more attuned to the political and cultural sensitivities of the area. This allows them to accomplish more. They do more analysis, which allows them to tie what the teams are doing on the ground with the vision of the country team. The CMSEs are a low-threat element. They do not step on anyone's toes and work well with the interagency. The goal of the team is to nest their efforts with those of the country team overall and with their interagency partners.

Currently the team is focused on a few programs that build capacity within the Bosnian security forces, while also building the confidence of the populace in the security forces. For many years, the Bosnian security forces were segregated with Bosnians serving in one unit, Croats serving in another and Serbs serving in yet another. In order to build a national identity, it is important that the people in the various communities see that there is one force and it is comprised of people of various ethnicities who can work together to build a national identity. Today, units that were formerly segregated are integrated. If the commander is a Bosniak, then the command sergeant major is Croat or a Serb. The men who serve under them are also integrated and have developed a healthy respect for each other as teammates and as neighbors. The team pointed out one police commander who has 60 officers all from different backgrounds as the ideals. They noted that the commander made it a priority to ensure his force



reflected the population it serves. “Those are the commands we want to work with because they set the standard,” said the CMSE team leader.

To continue building this partnership and the trust of the community, the CMSE had to be careful to ensure that at the outset of training it was offered to all, not just one ethnically segregated unit. They also ensured that training was held on neutral ground, and that classes were integrated from the get go.

Three unique programs, complemented with donations of supplies to schools, are the backbone of their training programs: Tactical Trauma Management, the Students to First Responders and First Aid for Teachers.

To get the programs under way, the members of the CMSE held a coordination meeting with school directors and the chief of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovena Civil-Military Cooperation Battalion to discuss the proposed programs and to donate needed supplies to the schools. The supply donation was presented on Oct. 7, which highlighted the cooperation between the U.S. Embassy, the schools and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovena. The supplies were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development at the request of the previous CMSE team. The project had a dual impact. First and foremost, it improved the education standards in the affected schools; second, it supported economic develop-



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01 Members of the CMSE talk to a local military partner about the Student to First Responder event.

02 A CMSE team member assists teachers with CPR practice during a First Aid for Teachers event.

03 Children get hands-on with police equipment during a Students to First Responder event.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS



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01
Children take turns shooting water from a firetruck during a Student to First Responder event.
 U.S. ARMY PHOTO

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In 2014, heavy rains caused devastating flooding and over 2,000 landslides in the Balkan region. Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia were hardest hit as the River Sava and its tributaries reached their highest level in over 150 years.

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ment and third, it made it harder for outside influencers to co-op the people of the village because they no longer felt disenfranchised.

Following the donation of supplies a series of events were held that further built the relationship between the populace, the government and its agents.

Sept. 21-30, 2015, the CMSE, along with the medic team and the 92nd Civil Affairs Battalion Medic Team held a Tactical Trauma Management course at the Sarajevo Special Support Unit. The goal was to increase the capacity and interoperability between the Special Support Unit, the Sarajevo canton, the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the State Investigation Protection Agency. Working in conjunction with the International Investigative Training Assistance Program, the team brought together 20 members of the SSU, 20 members of the Armed Forces, five members of the SIPA and two members from the Special Police Unit. The SIPA and SPU members served as assistant instructors and assisted the medical team. The training put life-saving skills and techniques into the hands of the police force that will enable them to save lives in the case of a traumatic event. Further, the event built operational relationships, which will, over time, increase cooperation, communication and professionalism in all members of the force without regard to their ethnic background.

On Oct. 12, 2015, the CMSE conducted a First Aid for Teachers program at Osnovna Skola Maglaj Middle School. While the course itself taught primary first aid skills to teachers and armed them with the necessary supplies they would need in such an emergency, it also helped build the relationships between the people of the community and the Bosnian forces. By bringing the training to the community, the CMSE ensured that all teachers were trained to standard and would be able to respond in the case of an emergency. It also demonstrated to the parents that the welfare of their children is important to community leaders.

Following the First Aid for Teachers event, a Student to First Responder event was held. Representatives from each of the essential services — EMS, fire departments, police departments, etc., — came together to set up static displays for the children and spent the afternoon getting to know the children at the school and giving the children a chance to see them as more than just a uniform. Children had the opportunity to man the fire hose. They explored the fire trucks and joked with the local police officers. The event helped humanize the authorities as the men and women in uniform spent time getting to know the students.

It was also a great opportunity for the community to get to know the CMSE team. Children huddled around the Americans. They took selfies together, told jokes and even exchanged Instagram and Facebook information. As the parents watched from a short distance away, the children quizzed their American visitors about everything from their families to their favorite sport. The interaction between the students and their parents and the Bosnian and American forces has a long-term effect of showing the stability of the Bosnian government and its ability to meet the needs of its people. **SW**



THE INFLUENCE OF DISASTER RESPONSE

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An in depth look at the Civil Military Support Element in Bosnia & Herzegovina

BY CAPTAIN ROBERT McQUEEN

INTRODUCTION

While disaster response is primarily a lifesaving and catastrophe mitigation effort, it creates an immediate and substantial vulnerability within an environment that can be exploited more rapidly and economically versus a stable steady-state environment. Disaster response is defined as an “aggregate of decisions and measures taken to (1) contain or mitigate the effects of a disastrous event to prevent any further loss of life and/or property, (2) restore order in its immediate aftermath, and (3) reestablish normality through reconstruction and rehabilitation shortly thereafter. The first and immediate response is called emergency response.” A key word that is not included in the above definition is one that is perhaps the most important, influence. The ability for an actor, either state or non-state, to influence the will of a population is

largely based on that actor being able to have an effect on that population’s source of strength or center(s) of gravity. During a disaster, the population’s COG, is far more defined, simplified, and thus easily identified and influenced. Because of this, a fourth desired effect of disaster response actions should be added (4) to gain access into and exert influence over a vulnerable population with the intent to legitimize or de-legitimize an identified power broker and/or government.” It is the influence of disaster response that makes it, although inconsistent, an essential part of combating terrorism and countering violent extremism. This was well highlighted when charitable, social-welfare organizations with ties to radical groups (e.g. *Jamaat-udDawa*) received popular support due to humanitarian assistance it provided to earthquake victims in Pakistan’s Azad Jammu and Kashmir regions.⁰¹

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is the most complicated and dynamic environment I have worked in since joining the military in 2004; the political system is arguably the most complex in the world. While the Dayton Accords (the peace agreement that ended the war) were instrumental in ending an incredibly brutal conflict, it also serves as the founding document for the current political system. The situation that has developed from the accords is incredibly complicated, thus there are three factors that are essential to provide needed context for this paper.

First, the national government is designed to give each of the three opposing ethnicities, Serb (Orthodox Christian), Croat (Catholic), and Bosniak (Muslim), a voice and position within the government. This led to the foundation of a tri-partite presidency and the requirement for each of the three ethnicities to have representation in each of the national-level offices. For example: the Armed Forces of BiH (AFBiH) Joint Staff is comprised of three positions,



the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Chief of Operations and Chief of Resources. Each of the positions must be filled by a general officer of a different ethnicity. The position of Chairman will then rotate between the ethnicities. In truth, the basis of the entire government can be oversimplified to ethnic equality. That is, equality between the three primary ethnicities that took part in the Bosnian War not all ethnicities that currently live in BiH. This not only creates deep ethnic ties within all levels of government it also immediately marginalizes any groups without ethnic affiliation or ties to an ethnic political party.

Second, under a state or “national” government, BiH was divided into two entities, similar to U.S. States, and one district. The Federation of BiH (FBiH), whose population is mostly composed of both Bosniak’s and ethnic Croats and the Republika Srpska (RS), primarily composed of ethnic Serbs and the Brcko District, the construct of which is similar to Washington, D.C., but without the benefits of being a national capital comprise the entities. Both the federation and republic are similar in physical size and population while the Brcko District is less than one percent of the size and population of BiH. To further exacerbate the ethnic divide in the country, the geographic political boundaries are based on the territory held by the two major combatants (Croat/Bosniak and Serb) at the end of the war.

Third, differences in each entity’s government structures have led to drastic differences in the responsiveness and effectiveness of the entity governments. The majority of resources (funding, equipment and trained personnel) exist at the entity level. While the national government may at times contribute additional funding, all programs are instituted

at the individual entity government level. In addition, the entity must request support and declare a state of emergency to receive support from national-level assets. The lack of a cantonal (similar to U.S. county) government structure in the RS has created a more top-down and centrally controlled government structure. The structure has managed to remove a very cumbersome bureaucratic layer that has allowed the RS to be more effective in meeting the immediate needs of its population, particularly during a disaster. This disparity between the entity’s ability to support their populations feeds directly into a rhetoric of militarization and distancing of Bosnia and Herzegovina state actors, primarily in RS, used to destabilize and de-legitimize the national government.

CMSE: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

While serving as a Special Operations Civil Affairs team leader, I have conducted village stability operations in Afghanistan and most recently led the Civil Military Support Element to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Civil Military Support Element Bosnia and Herzegovina (CMSE BiH) is a National Strategic Decision Directive-38 office working under Chief of Mission authority and reporting to both the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché and the Special Operations Command Europe Commander. Under the COM CMSE, BiH worked to enhance the reputation and utility of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the eyes of the Bosnian people. As the only truly integrated, reconciled and functional national institution, the AFBiH has an essential role in countering both the state and non-state actors’ efforts to degrade, distract and capitalize on



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the ineffective Bosnian political system. CMSE BiH worked to support this desired effect through three lines of effort:

- LOE 1: Build and employ AFBiH Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Forces to support applying AFBiH/Ministry of Defense resources to address vulnerabilities created by a gap in BiH Government (Entity and National) essential services.
- LOE 2: Improve capacity within CIMIC enablers (AFBiH engineers, AFBiH medics, EOD) and develop the medical capacity of BiH First Responders to build internal resources and human capital that will increase the ability of the BiH Government to respond to its citizens’ needs in the event of an emergency.
- LOE 3: Increase the disaster response capability of the AFBiH and increase AFBiH/Civil Protection Forces (emergency management/response) interdependence to maximize the use of available resources and demonstrate the utility of the AFBiH.

As CMSE BiH worked the three LOEs, we focused on identifying critical vulnerabilities within Bosnia’s civil systems, both governmental and non-governmental. As vulnerabilities were identified and mapped, CMSE BiH

IN TRUTH, THE BASIS OF THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT CAN BE OVERSIMPLIFIED TO ETHNIC EQUALITY



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In 2014, heavy rains caused devastating flooding and more than 2,000 landslides in the Balkans. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

02
Civil Affairs Team members meet with local government officials to discuss flood relief plans. U.S. ARMY PHOTO



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worked with U.S. Government and international partners to develop relationships and programs that would inject CMSE BiH support into those identified civil systems. This placement allowed us to assess the civil vulnerabilities and determine whether to mitigate or exploit the vulnerability in support of desired end states. Working within the host nation civil systems also allowed CMSE BiH to identify any actors, nodes and networks that are already exploiting the identified vulnerabilities. Having the right access and influence in specific targeted systems is essential to identifying and countering our adversaries in a steady state environment. This placement is particularly essential when targeting the violent extremist lifecycle of recruitment, radicalization, mobilization and action.

Supporting the COM's Integrated Country Strategy, the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché's priorities, and the theater special operations command commander's intent we developed and worked three major focus programs: AFBiH CIMIC, Tactical Trauma Management ; subject-matter expert exchange with the Bosnian Special Police Units; and partnered

with the UN's Developmental Program Disaster Risk Reduction project that provided the necessary placement and access to build the relationships and influence required for us to accomplish our mission. The reputation and influence we developed through these programs were essential in our ability to shape the human terrain during the disastrous flooding that started on May 15, 2014.

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN BALKAN FLOODING

Starting on May 15 and continuing through May 25, 2014, heavy rains caused devastating flooding and more than 2,000 landslides in the Balkan region. Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia were hardest hit as the River Sava and its tributaries reached their highest levels in over 150 years; Bosnia and Serbia were hardest hit with more than 2.6 million people affected between the two countries. Prior to the floods, my team was located in Banja Luka, the RS capital city conducting the second iteration of TTM. When the flooding started, my team along with Banja Luka's entire population was isolated by the

surging waters of the Vrbas River. As my team coordinated with RS Civil Protection Forces and the AFBiH in RS, we fed information to the COM in Sarajevo and the TSOC commander in Germany to determine what U.S. resources could be brought in to support an immediate response. As NATO and EUFOR Althea forces stationed in Sarajevo supported the AFBiH in the immediate lifesaving effort in Bosnia, The Russian Emergency Situations Ministry (EMERCOM) deployed a small high risk rescue force to assist in the response effort in Serbia. Ever ready to seize upon an opportunity to gain influence, the Russians make up for inferior military capability and hardware, by utilizing EMERCOM to gain influence where offensive military operations cannot, thus getting ahead and out maneuvering the U.S. and its allies. Even though EMERCOM only landed a small rescue contingent of 70 personnel, the effect this action had within the Balkan region was immediately noticed, cost effective and unconventional. That action also proved to be an effective tool for the pro-Russian, RS President Milorad Dodik to visit Moscow and



request assistance from Russian President Vladimir Putin. The rapid response from Russia in Serbia and the move by the RS president in favor of Russia caused many Bosnian Serbs within the affected regions to look toward Russia for assistance.

As the immediate lifesaving phase of the response came to a close, the incredible efforts of the AFBiH rescuers were nearly overshadowed by a small Russian contingent in a neighboring country. Even with an influx of \$750,000 of needed equipment donated by the U.S. European Command, more than 800 rescue flights by the AFBiH, EUFOR and NATO, I believe this statement from “The Voice of Russia” sums up a sentiment that was planted effectively among Bosnian Serbs.

“The Russian Federation has been the first country to respond during the dire time of need of the Serbian people with many Serbians dismayed by the almost complete lack of response from the European Union and other countries. EMERCOM continues to deploy equipment and personnel as the magnitude of the devastation begins to grow clearer.”⁰²

Russia deployed significantly fewer resources and successfully capitalized on an opportunity to counter U.S./ NATO influence; Russia also succeeded

in exploiting the regional impact of a natural disaster. As disaster response is different in scope and effectiveness based on the responding countries, the disaster itself may not be confined to a single country’s borders. This variable enables a disaster response, in an equally affected country, to be used as a tool to de-legitimize and potentially destabilize the government of the targeted country. This was the effect that Russia’s response in Serbia had on the struggling Bosnian Government in a time of crisis.

POLITICS, RESPONSE, ISOLATION AND INFLUENCE

As the flood waters receded and the phases of response transitioned from lifesaving and restoring order to reestablishing normality, my team shifted our focus to countering the destabilizing effect of the ongoing Russian response by keeping the lone bright spot in the BiH government response, the AFBiH, actively engaged. The AFBiH were touted, by nearly all Bosnian media, as heroes during the initial rescue efforts; following those rescues they had continued to work tirelessly. Taking on the daunting challenge of cleaning

up the massive damage left by both flood waters and more than 2000 landslides while also supporting thousands of dislocated persons who had been moved to AFBiH barracks and surrounding areas. As the U.S., EU, UN, NATO and numerous non-governmental organizations mobilized to “Build Back Better,” politics and scarce resources began to reign in the momentum that the AFBiH had gained for the BiH Government’s response. Working to maintain some government of BiH momentum in midst of a stalling response, CMSE BiH partnered with AFBiH CIMIC forces and Spirit of America in a small school refurbishment in a centrally located Bosnian village. It was during this project that my team was informed of numerous isolated mountain communities that had received no aid or support from the BiH government or international response since the flooding began.

Central BiH has numerous mountain villages and cities whose isolation and historical ties to the Mujahedeen, who fought on behalf of the Bosniaks during the Bosnian War, have made them a target of current Islamic Extremist recruitment efforts. Based on the increasingly aggressive RS rhetoric for separation



01 Civil Affairs Team members meet with local government officials to discuss flood relief plans. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

of the Bosnian entities and an ineffective BiH government, recruitment efforts in BiH have been extremely effective in drawing BiH youth to join extremist and terrorist organizations' efforts both inside and outside of BiH. The lack of disaster response, by the BiH government, in those isolated areas was not only a weakness in their response effort that could increase the effectiveness of extremist recruitment efforts, it was also an opportunity for CMSE BiH to refocus/highlight AFBiH efforts by directing their effort to the isolated mountain regions.

Working through the FBIH Ministries of Health, the UN's disaster response Health and Sanitation cluster, Austrian Forces Disaster Response Unit and the U.S. Country Team, the team identified five villages that met targeting criteria (proximity, susceptibility, location, addressable disaster related issue). Targeting villages with disaster-created water problems the team partnered with the California-based NGO Waves for Water, which specializes in a decentralized approach to water filtration that is low cost and high impact. Once we gained the needed concurrence from the Office of Secretary Defense - Policy and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, my team was able to execute five minimum cost projects using MFP-11 operational funds.

Utilizing AFBiH CIMIC teams as the primary face of the projects, AFBiH aviation elements to reach the targeted villages, and both CMSE and WfW personnel as the background support for the project we were successful on two levels. By placing the AFBiH in front and utilizing AFBiH aviation we were able to expand their influence, and thus BiH national government influence, into areas that would not have been open to it prior to the disaster. Secondly we were able to build a system that

A WEAKNESS IN THEIR RESPONSE EFFORT COULD INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTREMIST RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

facilitates CMSE recurring engagements with local power brokers in specific targeted areas that were not previously open to CMSE access.

SPEED, SYSTEMS, AND ECONOMY OF DISASTER RESPONSE

From concept development, through the targeting and approval process, and from coordination with external partners to execution of all five projects was in total only 13 days. In a steady state environment, a team can spend months building base relationships and identifying existing civil systems that will provide the necessary placement and access for the team to influence critical vulnerabilities. During a disaster response the personal hesitations, formalities and cultural norms, that often slow the rapport building process, are replaced by the unbridled gratitude that comes from being helped in your darkest hour. This gratitude can provide immediate and lasting influence within the targeted community. Additionally, there is often a lack of systems that provide the needed placement within isolated or targeted communities. Within disaster response there is an opportunity to create a new system that will provide immediate placement and influence with power brokers and leaders within the select community.

In order to reach five targeted communities in less than two weeks my team used \$10,000 from the OPFUND. By the time we conducted a follow up assessment two weeks after initial execution, the program had spread through local leaders to 10 separate villages and more than

25,000 people. In addition the effectiveness of the project allowed us to work with UNDP and USAID to expand the project into both disaster preparedness utilizing UNDP funds and reach seven additional isolated communities funded by USAID. In total \$40,000 were spent on the program, reaching more than 80,000 people, increasing CMSE influence with multiple international partners, and expanding CMSE BiH operations into 13 specific communities across Bosnia and Herzegovina in less than 30 days.

The situation, both politically and on the ground, that was created by a natural disaster allowed for CMSE to expand its influence exponentially in a short time and for a low cost.

CONCLUSION

In my experience U.S. disaster response is based on the question, "Is there a need to apply U.S. resources to the response?" These resources can vary from fiscal to military, but the question comes to need. It is essential that as leaders look at the need to apply resources they look beyond the immediate disaster response. It is absolutely essential to look at how we can use disaster response to reach isolated and vulnerable populations; these populations are current or potential recruitment bases, these areas are the potential safe havens for our adversaries, and the small teams focused on using a disaster response to advance U.S. counterterrorism and counter-violent extremists efforts are the ones that will ensure positive U.S. influence abroad. **SW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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NOTES 01. *Pakistan's Civil Society: Alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism*, Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq and Waleed Ziad, October 2012.. 02. http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014_05_17/Russia-responds-first-to-assist-Serbian-flood-victims-2951).