

# Bosnia Fact Sheet: Chronology of the Balkan Conflict

*Updated and released by the Bureau of Public Affairs, December 6, 1995*

---

- Strains within Yugoslavia's federated system emerged after Tito's death in 1980. Yugoslavia, an ethnically and religiously diverse federation of six republics and two autonomous provinces, operated under a collective government after his death.
- In the spring of 1990, democratic elections following the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe brought nationalist and independence-minded governments to power in the western-most republics of Slovenia and Croatia as well as in Serbia.
- In June 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence. This set off a brief conflict between Slovenes and the Yugoslav Army and a protracted crisis in Croatia between the newly independent government in Croatia and the Serbian minority in Croatia ("Krajina Serbs"), supported by the Yugoslav military. By the end of 1991, the Krajina Serbs had gained control of nearly one-third of the country.
- In September 1991, in order to stem the fighting, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo against all of the former Yugoslavia. The Secretary General also launched a mediation effort under former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, which led to a cease-fire agreement in Croatia in early 1992 and the deployment of the first UN peacekeepers during the winter of 1992.
- In January 1992, while the mediation efforts were ongoing, the European Community (now the European Union), after considerable internal debate, decided to recognize Croatia and Slovenia's independence. They deferred action on recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina pending a referendum to determine public support for independence.
- In March 1992, voters in Bosnia overwhelmingly approved independence in a vote boycotted by Bosnian Serbs. Almost immediately, the Bosnian Serbs, backed by the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav army, began forcible resistance to Bosnia's independence. By the end of spring 1992, Bosnian Serbs, who had significant military superiority, especially in heavy weapons, achieved control over more than 60 percent of Bosnia's territory.
- In April 1992, the EU recognized Bosnia. The United States, which had declined to recognize Croatia and Slovenia earlier, recognized Bosnia and the other two republics at the same time. All three were admitted to the UN in May. In response to continued Serb aggression, the UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions against Serbia at the end of May.
- During the summer of 1992, as the human rights and humanitarian crisis escalated, the Security Council voted to send UN peacekeepers to Bosnia to facilitate delivery of humanitarian relief. To help assure the safety of humanitarian operations, the UN imposed a "no-fly zone" over Bosnia in October 1992. In April 1993, NATO began to enforce the no-fly zone.

- In December 1992, the United States warned Serbia that the United States would respond in the event of Serb-inspired violence in Kosovo.
- In early 1993, UN peacekeepers deployed to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The United States decided to participate in order to prevent a widening of the conflict. Five hundred fifty U.S. troops, as well as five hundred fifty troops from other nations, remain in the FYROM.
- In May 1993, the UN declared Sarajevo and five other Muslim enclaves "safe areas" under UN protection. NATO agreed in June to use air power to protect UN forces if attacked.
- In August 1993, NATO declared its readiness to respond with air strikes, in coordination with the UN, in the event that UN safe areas, including Sarajevo, came under siege. This decision temporarily ended the strangulation of Sarajevo.
- In February 1994, in response to a Bosnian Serb attack killing 68 civilians in a Sarajevo marketplace, NATO issued an ultimatum that if Bosnian Serb heavy weapons were not withdrawn from UN-monitored exclusion zones around the capital, Bosnian Serb forces would be subject to air strikes.
- In early 1994, with UN-EU diplomatic efforts stalled over territorial issues, the United States began more active efforts to encourage a settlement.
- In March 1994, U.S. mediation produced an agreement between the Bosnian Government, Bosnian Croats, and the Government of Croatia to establish a Federation between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. Fighting between the two sides ceased and has not resumed.
- In April 1994, NATO employed its first air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces to halt a Serb attack on the eastern enclave and UN safe area of Gorazde.
- In the spring of 1994, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany established a five-nation Contact Group, with the goal of brokering a settlement between the Federation and Bosnian Serbs.
- In late 1994, new fighting erupted between the Bosnian Government, anti-government Muslims in Bihac (support by Krajina Serbs), and Bosnian Serbs. NATO responded by expanding the range for air strikes into Serb-controlled Croatia.
- In December 1994, with the help of former President Jimmy Carter, the sides agreed to a four-month cessation of hostilities. When the period expired, fighting resumed, and in May, the Bosnian Serb forces began renewed attacks on Sarajevo and began threatening Srebrenica.
- In the spring of 1995, Bosnian Serb forces responded to NATO air strikes by taking more than 350 UN peacekeepers hostage. Serbia intervened to help negotiate the release of hostages. On June 8, United States and Allied forces rescued a U.S. pilot, Captain Scott O'Grady, who had been shot down over Bosnia on June 2.
- In July 1995, In response to the fall of the safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa, President Clinton insisted that NATO and the UN make good on their commitment to protect the remaining safe areas. The Allies agreed to U.S. insistence on NATO decisiveness at the London Conference on July 21 and threatened broad-based air strikes if the safe areas were attacked again. When the

Bosnian Serbs tested this ultimatum, NATO undertook an intensive month-long bombing campaign.

- In late July, President Clinton decided that the changes on the ground and the new resolve displayed by NATO provided the basis for an all-out diplomatic effort to end the conflict. In early August, he sent his National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, to present a U.S. peace initiative to our NATO Allies and the Russians.
- U.S.-led mediation produced an agreement by the parties to basic principles of a settlement as well as a cease-fire which went into effect in October. Proximity peace talks toward settlement began in Dayton, Ohio on November 1.
- On November 21, the parties agreed to a settlement, which will be implemented following the signing of the agreement in Paris on December 14, 1995.

[end of document]