



BH MAGAZINE | JULY 2016 | FREE



# EUFOR LOTs - your neighbors





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### Answer the questions below

# 20 prizes to be won!

You are invited to send your answers until 20 August 2016 to: [TEME@eufor.europa.eu](mailto:TEME@eufor.europa.eu)

This competition is not subject to legal recourse. A EUFOR T-shirt and an USB stick will be awarded to the 20 correct answers drawn from the ballot.

1. How many LOT houses EUFOR has in BiH?
2. Which countries are involved in LOT mission in BiH?
3. What is the main task of the LOT's?

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**ISBN 978-92-824-2740-8**  
**doi 10.2860/22325**

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**Printed by:** AMOS GRAF d.o.o., Sarajevo  
This magazine is not for sale, it is not a subject of taxation according to SOFA signed in Wright Patterson Air Base, Dayton, Ohio, USA – 21 November 1995



## Editorial

Dear readers,

It is a great privilege to present a new issue of TEME – magazine. I hope that it will inform you about the activities of the European Union Forces (EUFOR) in BiH, and other international organizations working on behalf of BiH's comprehensive progress towards a wider Euro-Atlantic integration.

EUFOR has been busy with involvement in several projects throughout BiH. Two main strands have been the very important Mine Risk Education and promotion of the good work undertaken by the Liaison Observation Teams (LOTs) located in your localities.

I feel it fundamentally important that your young people are reminded of the dangers of this silent sleeping danger, my LOTs are delivering education to these children who are about to have extended Summer Holidays where they may be more vulnerable to this hazard. These young people were not present during the war and need this awareness. The EUFOR Joint Military Affairs (JMA), Mines Information and Coordination Cell (MICC) and Counter Mines Section continue to work in conjunction to reduce this risk. Good cooperation with BiH Mines Action Centre (BHMACE), instructors from the Armed Forces of BiH (AFBiH) as well as NGOs working in this field will combine to ensure success.

The LOT Houses are your opportunity to stay in touch with EUFOR throughout the entire country including Federation of BiH and RS. There are 17 LOT Houses currently served by 7 different Nations. Community engagement is key and a sure sign of our commitment to BiH giving my command team an appreciation of situational awareness for a safe and secure environment and to stay in touch with you.

Our cooperation with the AFBiH continues through our Capacity Building and Training programmes and we continue to support the Ministry of Defence of



Commander EUFOR

BiH and our International Partners in their efforts to reduce the surplus of weapons and ammunition through "Tehnička Radionica za Održavanje Municije" (TROM) in Doboj supporting Project Explode by the disposal of obsolete weapons and ammunition.

The next EUFOR Exercise "Quick Response 16" will take place in Manjača in autumn 2016. The main aim of the exercise is to once again demonstrate the ability of EUFOR to rapidly deploy its reserve forces, and to practice Peace Support Operations (PSOs) with the Armed Forces BiH. EUFOR will therefore continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with your Armed Forces to ensure they are well supported in achieving their objectives.

I hope that you enjoy reading this magazine and that it helps you to understand the broad range of activity currently underway. The LOT Houses are there for you and with your help we can maintain a safe and secure environment.

Hvala,

**Major General Friedrich Schrötter**

## EUFOR Events

### New Chief of Staff European Union Force

Brigadier General Albert Sáfár (Hungarian Air Forces) recently assumed the post of Chief of Staff of EUFOR Headquarters Sarajevo. General Sáfár joins EUFOR from a previous appointment in Hungary. With extensive aviation and senior staff Headquarters experience, since 2011 he held the appointment of Hungarian Air Chief of Joint Forces Command (JFC) / Deputy JFC Commander.

Brigadier General Albert Sáfár graduated in Kilián György Aviator College as a Second Lieutenant. He joined the Hungarian Air Force in 1984 as a MiG-23MF pilot of the 47th PÁPA Air Wing until 1992. After different wing level pilot positions he attended Zrínyi Miklós Defence University where he graduated in 1995. After that he was appointed Chief of Air Gunnery Service at 47th PÁPA Air Wing. He served at 47th PÁPA Air Wing until 2001 as a Fighter Squadron Leader and as a Deputy Wing Commander. In 2001 he was appointed to a new position at the Air Force Command of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF).

In 2006 he attended the Air War College in the United States of America for the duration of one year. After returning to Hungary, he was appointed to the Joint

Force Command HDF as Air Force Senior Advisor. In 2010 he was promoted to Chief of Air Operations and Training Department of Joint Force Command HDF and in 2011 he was appointed Air Chief of Joint Forces Command/Deputy JFC Commander. He has a total of 1,600 flying hours and has flown L-39, MiG-21, MiG-23 and L-159 type aircrafts.

Brigadier General Sáfár has been decorated with various medals and decorations such as the Pilot Service Medal in Gold and Merit of Service Medal in Gold.

As the incoming Chief of Staff EUFOR, Brigadier General Albert Sáfár said: "In working to meet the important objectives of the EUFOR Mission, we will ensure the continued development of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains our key objective. However, the need to maintain a Safe and Secure Environment for all in BiH will continue to be a key function of our role."

General Sáfár stated.



**Brigadier General  
Albert Sáfár**

### Opening of a new Mine Action and Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Training Centre in Rajlovac

The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) recently opened a new Mine Action and Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Training Centre in Rajlovac Barracks. The ceremony was attended by officials of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the AFBiH, and guests from the International Community based in BiH. This included the new Commander of the European Union Force, Major General Friedrich Schrötter and key members of the HQ EUFOR Staff.

The Centre will conduct training in humanitarian demining and the destruction of unexploded ordnance, and will significantly assist institutions in BiH to continue dealing with the demining challenge.

"The Centre will contribute to the process of clearing the areas still covered with landmines, and will provide the



higher level of safety for the citizens and the economic development of BiH. The ambition of the MoD and the AFBiH to establish a regional center for South East Europe and ensure it is recognised as an International Competence Centre for NATO and its Partners, is being achieved", said the AFBiH Minister of Defence, Marina Pendeš. The Minister of Defence thanked the governments of Norway, Italy, France and USA, as well as the UNDP, for their great contribution to establishing the Centre.

## European Day celebrated in Sarajevo

The European Union Special Representative (EUSR), His Excellency Mr Lars-Gunnar Wigemark and the Commander European Union Force, Major General Friedrich Schrötter invited honored guests to a EUFOR led ceremony to mark European Day in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This event took place outside Army Hall in Sarajevo on Monday 9 May.

The parade consisted of military personnel from EUFOR and Armed Forces (AFBiH), and the AFBiH Band. This highlighted the close cooperation between the EU and BiH, EUFOR, its Troop Contributing Nations and the AFBiH, and the mutual support and respect that exists between them in working together for peace, security, stability and a more prosperous future. This event was attended by the BiH Minister of Defence, Mrs Marina Pendeš, AFBiH Chief of Joint Staff, General Anto Jeleč, and VIPs and delegates from BiH and the EU, as well as the representatives of many other nations.

The event comprised of a ceremony outside Army Hall in Sarajevo, a fly-past by helicopters from EUFOR and AFBiH and the laying of an EU wreath. "EUFOR forms an important part of the EU's support to BiH", stated H.E. Mr. Lars-Gunnar Wigemark. "The focus of this event was the *EU's support for Bosnia and Herzegovina – Past, Present and Future*". Alongside Euro-Atlantic integration, EUFOR's contribution in further developing



**Commander EUFOR and the EUSR greet the BiH Minister for Defence, Mrs Marina Pendeš and AFBiH Chief of Joint Staff, General Anto Jeleč**

the capacity of the AFBiH, and our role in supporting a continued safe and secure environment, highlights our ongoing support of BiH's development and stability for a peaceful future", Commander EUFOR Major General Friedrich Schrötter stated.



**EUFOR's Multinational Battalion (MNBN) is marched on to parade**



# International Community in promoting safe and secure environment

On 19th of May 2016 Major General Friedrich Schrötter visited the military unit "Tehnička radionica za održavanje municije" (TROM) in Doboј to witness the important work that the AFBiH conduct in support of destroying obsolete ammunition as part of Project "Explode".

The presence of surplus ammunition in BiH could become a direct risk to human security, but also constitutes a financial and administrative burden for the AFBiH. As part of the Defense Reform in 2007, the AFBiH defined the size, structures, unit location and equipment required for prospective use of ammunition, weapons and explosives. Large amounts of ammunition, small arms (rifles and pistols) and heavy weapons were not of use anymore and therefore remained as surplus.

In February 2013, the International Community including key players – OSCE, UNDP, NATO and EUFOR, USA, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, NPA - Norwegian Peoples Aid, based on an initiative of the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe and EUFOR ALTHEA Operation Commander General Sir Alexander Richard David Shirreff, agreed on a common goal and programme for the treatment of ammunition, weapons and explosives. The most important point was the common finding that ammunition and explosives should be treated according to international standards and a life cycle management for them should be established.



**Destruction of unsafe ammunition at the AFBiH "May 3rd" Barracks in TROM Doboј**

**898 tons of ammunition and weapons were destroyed in 2013, 1,168 tons in 2014, and 1,927 tons in 2015.**

Alongside other members of the International Community, EUFOR provides expert advice in the framework of its Capacity Building and Training programme, and works in support of BiH in order to build their capacity to manage the excessive stockpiles of ammunition and weapons.

Project “Explode” funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by UNDP, strongly supports the TROM team to tackle this challenge. “We have excellent cooperation with the MoD BiH for several years already, regarding this issue, but some other related activities as well, such as labeling and inventory on weapons and ammunition stockpiles”, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Project Manager, Mr. Slobodan Bošković said.

Deputy Commander of the Support Command of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH), Brigadier General Gojko Knežević said that this project is of a great importance for them, given the amount of ammunition that is very old, and dangerous. “So far enormous results have been achieved, and we are looking forward to continue this cooperation with all organizations which support this project”, he said.

“Thanks to the EUFOR Capacity Building and Training Division, and its special assistance for weapons and ammunition, today we got nine trained personnel who know now how to treat weapons and ammunition. Now they will be able in the future to train other members of the AFBiH to perform these tasks” the Manager of the TROM Doboje, Colonel Savo Aničić said.



**Deputy Commander of the Support Command AFBiH Brigadier General Knežević, Commander EUFOR Major General Schrötter and UNDP Project Manager, Mr. Slobodan Bošković**

EUFOR’s Mission Operation ALTHEA and other International Community partners will continue to assist both Ministry of Defence BiH and AFBiH. This consists of technical advice and subject matter expert support, in order to build the capacity of the Armed Forces of BiH, and to manage existing excessive stockpiles of ammunition and weapons. EUFOR also strives to ensure that a continued Safe and Secure Environment is maintained.

“The disposal of ammunition requires not only good guidance for the effective disposal, it also requires a realistic plan – directed and managed by the AFBiH. The EU Special Representative to BiH, EUFOR, and the International Community assist to further development best standards to deal with this challenge in the safest and fastest possible way”, Commander EUFOR Major General Friedrich Schrötter said.



## 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Strategic Committee for Weapons, Ammunition and Explosive Ordnance

In order to analyse and improve activities aimed to solving the issue of surplus weapons, ammunition and explosives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 12th session of the Strategic Committee for Weapons, ammunition and explosives, hosted by the Command of EUFOR in BiH, was held in the Hall of Armed Forces in Sarajevo on Monday - June 13 - 2016.

Other participants of the twelfth session of the Strategic Committee, were permanent members of the Strategic Committee including representatives MoD and the Armed Forces of BiH, Office of the Special Representative of the EU to BiH, OSCE Mission to BiH, UNDP, NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo, Embassies of the United States, Switzerland, Austria, and Sweden.

BiH still has a substantial amount of unstable military ammunition. A large part of this was poorly stored and maintained. The presence of unstable ammunition

in BiH could cause public safety concerns, and is potential risk to a Safe and Secure Environment. It also constitutes a financial and administrative burden to the AFBiH. The governance and overall control of arms depots, and weapons inspections remains firmly with the competent authorities of BiH. However, it is in the interest of everybody concerned that management and disposal occurs following a safe and secure process.

Commander EUFOR's opening remarks highlighted a recent tragic accident in India at an explosives store and a short video of the incident was played to the conference. He said: "Tragic accidents such as this serve to remind of the importance of our role here today to address the dangerous situation which currently exists in BiH with regards to safe storage and destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition. We can never allow an incident like this to happen here. We international partners continue to support the Ministry of Defence

and Armed Forces BiH to resolve this critical public safety issue. Our main focus should be ensuring that the inventory is 100% followed by destruction, stock reduction and proper life cycle management and storage of retained stocks."

Project "Explode" activities include: destroying high hazard ammunition and complex weapon systems, supporting the Armed Forces of BiH in the reduction of military ammunition stockpiles to manageable quantities, conducting training for senior military officers to build their capacities, and implementing infrastructure upgrades to improve the safety and storage conditions of military weapons and ammunition storage depots. The Project is also implemented in partnership with the BiH Ministry of Defence, the EU Special Representative to BiH, the UNDP, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The session was chaired by the BiH Minister of Defence Ms. Marina Pendeš.

After the conference there was an opportunity for a short press statement by the BiH Minister of Defence Ms.

Marina Pendeš and Commander EUFOR Major General Friedrich Schrötter. BiH Minister of Defence Ms. Pendeš, who chaired the session, said: "In comparison to the first five months of last year when we destroyed circa 600 tons, in the same period this year we have already destroyed circa 900 tons." She went on to say, "I hope BiH will continue this intensity of work."

Commander EUFOR emphasised that the great progress of the MoD and AFBiH was done to date, but he also asked for even more engagement and better results. "Let us all stay really focused and engaged on our priority aim to make BiH a safer and more secure place to live. I look forward to us working together today to make real and tangible progress towards making BiH a safer place to work and live. We will continue supporting the MoD and AFBiH in further development of procedures for storage and also infrastructure and through joint efforts improve the SASE in BiH, which is our common interest.

EUFOR will continue to assist, both the Ministry of Defence and AFBiH with technical advice, and subject matter expert support, within means and capabilities", Major General Schrötter concluded.



**Commander EUFOR and the BiH Minister of Defence during the press conference**

# EUFOR Liaison Observation Teams - a story of success



On 2nd December 2004 the European Union launched a military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission was named "EUFOR - Operation Althea" (which refers to the Goddess of Healing in Greek Mythology) and to ensure continued compliance with the provisions of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), or Dayton agreement as it is more commonly known.

Since then, Operation ALTHEA has reconfigured a couple of times in light of the improving security situation and especially the increased capacities of the domestic Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs)

in maintaining the Safe and Secure Environment (SASE). The LOT Houses were a means of gradually reducing a large military presence without, at the same time, losing the means to get an idea of the situation throughout the country. LOT Houses were established in the municipalities and communities where the liaison officers were living and working.

EUFOR Liaison Observation Teams main mission is to enable EUFOR Headquarters to monitor the general situation across BiH, and to support the development of the SASE.

EUFOR has 17 Liaison and Observation Teams (LOT) Houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina which act as the “Eyes and Ears” of EUFOR. They are in touch with Local Authorities and the population as well as other agencies in BiH, in order to raise awareness of local issues. The teams provide information to the EUFOR Headquarters in Sarajevo through the LOT Coordination Center (LCC) there.



A map with the LOTs and their area of responsibilities in BiH



- ➔ **The Liaison teams are small military units, whose main mission is to act as a link between the operation and the civilian society**
- ➔ **The Liaison teams monitor different subjects – i.e. the political or inter-ethnic situation**
- ➔ **The Liaison teams provide information when needed about the local institutions that the citizens may need**

All members of the EUFOR mission – 21 contributing nations, are working towards a common set of goals in order to assist BiH. This does not depend on nationality, race, religion, gender or background. From the beginning, in 2004, Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs) are a characteristic feature of EUFOR. Their number has varied over the years, reaching a number of 17 houses today.

## **LOTs members feel the pulse on the ground and assist in maintaining a peaceful and safe environment**

LOTs are stationed all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. They live in a community with the local population, keeping contact with the local authorities and citizens. TEME team has visited seven LOT Houses whose countries provide troops for EUFOR and serve as members of the Liaison Observation Teams.

What is the mission of LOTs and what does it look like to live amongst the citizens of BiH and have direct contact with the authorities are questions to be answered by members of the LOT House who have gained a rather unusual but above all rich and interesting experience.



## LOT House Novo Sarajevo Slovakia

Members of the Slovakian LOT Novo Sarajevo  
and interpreter Ms. Elma Duraković

The first visit of TEME magazine to the LOT House of Novo Sarajevo was very pleasant. We were warmly welcomed by Major Michael Košina, Commander of the LOT House, which is the only EUFOR LOT House in the capital and the largest city of BiH.

The task of the LOT members is to win both the hearts and minds of the local population. It is important to have that skill, the art of talking by winning hearts, connecting with people on a very personal but also professional level. Major Košina explains the daily work of his team, and how functions on a daily basis: "As you know, EUFOR retains its presence throughout BiH through Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs). Our LOT House exists since 2011. We are in touch with the local authorities and the population as well as other agencies in the country to monitor the general situation across BiH, in order to be aware of local

issues that could affect the security situation", Major Košina explains the importance of LOTs presence in the country, and adds: "Our country provides 24 soldiers to the three LOT Houses: Novo Sarajevo, Foča and Višegrad. The LOT House Novo Sarajevo area of responsibility consists of 11 municipalities around Sarajevo City – 8 from Federation of BiH, and 3 from Republika Srpska, and this is really a huge area", Major Košina emphasizes. Due to the fact that most government institutions, company residences, embassies are situated in their area of responsibility, we may say that the schedule they follow every day is hard but very successful.

Daily routines are a big part of the Liaison and Observation Team's live. "Physical training is very important for every member. Afterwards we do morning briefings with interpreters, prepare the



activities in accordance with our weekly plan, monitor the events, and in the evening we do process our reports to the LCC, in HQ EUFOR. The social activities are reserved for the evening time”, he says.

When interacting with the local population, or the authorities’ representatives, the impressions are always positive: “Sarajevo is beautiful town, and somehow we feel privileged for being so fortunate to be here. From our daily informal meetings, during patrols, or our usual activities, we can conclude that people we meet are very kind, and open minded. Sometimes we receive a request for donations, or projects sponsorships, then we direct people where to go, or whom to contact for help. The Slovakian Embassy also helps, and implements granted projects in both entities”, Commander of the LOT House of Novo Sarajevo, Major Košina says.

Occasionally, as he explains, there are days when they have to deal with more demanding activities. Therefore, they have to process flexible working plan activities and many times to reschedule their plan with the aim to cover all their activities.

Preparing meals at LOT Houses is a usual part of LOTs daily life. However, what makes their House special, as Major Košina says, is the fact they have the best



**LOT House Novo Sarajevo**

Area of responsibility, 11 municipalities around Sarajevo City: Novo Sarajevo, Center Sarajevo, east Novo Sarajevo, East Stari Grad, Ilidža, Hadžići, East Ilidža, Stari Grad, Novi Grad, Ilijaš and Vogošća.

chef among all EUFOR LOTs. His name is Warrant Officer Vladimir Pupava, “He is able to prepare delicious, mostly Slovak national meals for all other members. Due to that, we are satisfied and really happy, because it really helps me as LOT Commander to command LOT members while discharging tasks which LOT Novo Sarajevo has to face every day.”

We finish our visit to LOT House Novo Sarajevo, and continue a trip to Zenica. It is time to meet new EUFOR LOT House members and challenges they face with.

Since its foundation, the Slovak Republic has been actively participating in political and military measures of the International Community in seeking a peaceful solution to conflicts, and already in 1997 started to contributing militarily to stabilizing the peace in BiH. The country joined the European Union in 2004. The Commander of the LOT Coordination Center (LCC) comes from Slovakia – Mr. Miroslav Lajčák and so is tennis champion Martina Hingis, former World No.1

Population: 5.4 million

Capital city: Bratislava





**Members of the Turkish LOT Zenica and interpreters Mr. Eşef and Mr. Salih**

## LOT House Zenica Turkey

Turkey is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest of the 21 troop contributing nations who provide soldiers to EUFOR Operation Althea. Turkish personnel hold key positions within HQ EUFOR, provide one of the 2 companies that form the Multinational Battalion, and also have the largest number of the Liaison Observation Teams in BiH: 5 LOT Houses in Zenica, Zavidovići, Travnik, Jablanica and Livno.

“We closely cooperate with both the local population and authorities, but also with the international organisations operating in the same area. And this is very important – exchanging information that helps providing assistance for keeping a peaceful and safe environment”, says Lieutenant Colonel Ali Kiliç, Commander of the LOT House in Zenica. This LOT House exists since April 2005. The areas

There are 10 municipalities in LOT Zenica AOR. Five of them are in Central Bosnia Canton and other five are in Zenica-Doboj Canton: Zenica, Kakanj, Vareš, Visoko, Breza, Vitez, Busovača, Fojnica, Kiseljak and Kreševo.

The Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs) have been created twelve years ago. Although the number of troops and the LOTs had been reduced through the years thanks to the improving security situation in the country, EUFOR retained the capability to support peace and security. This multinational EU Force is formed from soldiers from 21 contributing nations. 16 are members of the European Union with additional 5 contributing troops from Turkey, Chile, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Switzerland.

of responsibility are 10 municipalities from two Cantons, Central Bosnia Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton.

“In our LOT House we have six persons, among which four are responsible for liaison and observation and two for force protection. We are divided into two LOTs who, together with our interpreters, conduct the daily tasks, such as meetings with key leaders in area of our responsibility, then the patrols, while the force protection team stays on duty in the house. At the end of the day, we prepare our daily and situation reports for LCC, and the Headquarters”, Lieutenant Colonel Ali Kiliç says and points out that all of this wouldn't be possible without his two interpreters Eşef and Salih who accompany the teams every day.

Lieutenant Colonel Kiliç believes that the liaison with the population, and gaining their hearts and respects is a big challenge for all of them, but also the main reason for the LOTs presence in BiH. "We have daily interaction with the local population. Our work is based on creating trust with all groups and communities regardless of their ethnic background in order to improve the security situation. We carry out some humanitarian aid activities within the scope of civil-military cooperation, and we do conduct them in an open, transparent, and neutral way in order to avoid any misunderstanding. Frequently we attend different celebrations and social activities, and all of this helps us to be recognised as EUFOR but also Turkish soldiers, and this is something that local citizens and authorities respect", Commander Kiliç says.

Concerning the Mine Risk Education conducted by the LOTs, the Commander emphasizes the importance of these classes, since the mine threat still exists in BiH. LOT House Zenica conducted many important projects in support of the local communities. One of the greatest was the construction of the Turkish Park, implemented in 2013, whose value was 120 000 EURO. They also implemented projects to renovate several primary schools, and one of the last projects was the reconstruction of the Primary School of Vitez, in which they invested around 300.000 EURO.

The LOT House from Zenica is the first LOT House founded in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war. Commander Kiliç emphasizes the importance of



**Lieutenant Colonel Ali Kiliç, Commander of the LOT House in Zenica**

the LOTs within the EUFOR structure: "Through our continued commitment and strong will, we are the crucial component of EUFOR for ensuring preservation of the Safe and Secure Environment (SASE) within BiH. We are totally aware that we are the representatives of world peace as an inseparable part of the European Union Forces", he concludes.

We thank our hosts, both Turkish military personnel, including interpreters Mr. Eşef and Mr. Salih who were extremely warm, kind and hospitable, and offered us coffee, tea, and Turkish delights.

Turkey is not a member of the EU, but it is the second largest of the contributing nations within EUFOR. ● For more than 2000 years Istanbul was capital of three empires: Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. Istanbul is the only city in the world located on two continents – Europe and Asia. ● Turkey's Istanbul Tunnel is the world's second oldest underground railway-it began operation in 1875. ● Istanbul's Grand Bazaar or Kapalı Çarşı is the world's oldest and biggest malls: it dates to 1455, has 64 streets, 4000 shops, 25.000 workers. ● Two of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world are in Turkey: Temple of Artemis at Ephesus and Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. ● Turkey the sixth most-visited tourist destination in the world. ● Turkish cuisine is one of three most diverse cuisines in the world, along with French and Chinese. ● Tulips, the symbol of Netherlands, originate from Turkey.





## LOT House Tuzla Austria

**Austria is the country that provides the largest number of troops in EUFOR mission. The first Austrian LOT House opened in 2007 in the eastern part of city of Tuzla.**

The country provides 24 soldiers to the three LOT Houses: Tuzla, Brčko and Bratunac. One of their main tasks is to improve liaison between EUFOR, the local population, BiH authorities and other organisations working in their area of responsibility. This is achieved by obtaining a clear picture of the social and economic situation and by gathering public information, focused on local attitudes.

The LOT House from Tuzla covers municipalities from both BiH entities. As the Commander of LOT Major Matthias says, they start each day with a morning briefing that is used to inform the whole staff about events that occurred the day before the teams go out on meetings, monitoring, patrols and Mine Risk Education training. "The latest news and

EUFOR has played a role in all positive developments in BiH, and throughout the years transferred many responsibilities to the local authorities. Although the security situation in BiH continues to be calm and stable, EUFOR still retains its presence and visibility throughout the country through the liaison and observation teams.

the agenda for the current day are subjects of this briefing. After that, we do our job and meet citizens in order to improve our picture of the situation in the country, that we usually call "situational awareness". This picture consists of the current mood, situational concerns, projects, festivals etc", he says and emphasizes how important is to stay up to date on developments which could affect inter-ethnic relations in BiH. "Besides that, the mine situation also demands a permanent observation. Concerning our spare time, we use it to organize our daily life, to shop groceries, improve our fitness level, which is mandatory for soldiers, and maintain contact with our families", Major Matthias says.

Austria entered the EU in 1994. The country joined the peace operations in BiH at the beginning of 1996, and since then plays an important role in maintaining peace and security in the country. The command of EUFOR has been vested by Austria for 8 years already. The current High Representative of BiH is an Austrian diplomat, Valentin Inzko.



**Members of the Austrian LOT House from Tuzla during the meeting**

Consistent cooperation and engagement by all social levels within a population are essential for a sustainable positive impact from the LOT concept in BiH. "To meet different kinds of people", as the LOT House Commander Major Matthias explains, "is something that makes their job very interesting, but also provides them with a very good overview on the country's situation. We meet politicians, farmers, shop owners, hunters, etc. Special attention is given to the pupils and teachers whose schools are in vicinity of mine fields. We are aware that also the Red Cross, Armed Forces of BiH and schools themselves are doing this kind of education, and the collective education has a very good impact", he says.

Within the Austrian Civil-Military Cooperation Department (CIMIC) program, a number of projects could be realised so far, such as the kindergarden's

renovation in Bratunac, Srebrenica and other towns. All of these were funded by private and corporate donors from Austria. However thanks to the LOTs cooperation with local authorities and people, different projects were identified which will have a positive impact on future generations in their area of responsibility.

The LOT House commander points out that the members of his LOT try to give their best to contribute to the EUFOR mission. "We give our best for a brighter future of this country. Working and living here are both very interesting and a great opportunity for personal development, the future of BiH is the reason why we are here", he concludes.

After we thanked the Austrian LOT members for their kind reception, we embarked on the next story which brought us to Banja Luka.

Austria was once the center of a huge empire - the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which for centuries ruled a large part of Europe. ● Today it is a federal republic consisting of nine federal provinces, with 8.6 million inhabitants. ● The Austrian flag is one of the oldest national flag in the world. It dates from 1191. ● Austria has a rich cultural heritage and Austria has given the world many famous classical music composers, including Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Anton Bruckner, J. Strauss, Mahler as well as the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. ● 19 Austrians have been awarded a Nobel Prize, including seven in Physiology or Medicine, four in Chemistry and three in Physics.



# LOT House Banja Luka Chile

Our next story took the Teme team to Banja Luka, the second largest city in BiH, and the largest city in the Republika Srpska. The Liaison and Observation Teams are stationed all over BiH, but only in Banja Luka there are two – the LOTs whose members belong to the Chilean and Romanian contingents participating in EUFOR Althea. Chile is the only South American country within EUFOR whose military personnel has been present in BiH since 2003.

The Chileans arrived in 2003, together with the British contingent, to help in Banja Luka's Metal Factory and in weapon-harvest operations. To be a part of the peacekeeping mission BiH was an important international role and also was something that made them feel honoured.

At the beginning of its engagement in BiH, Chile had LOT Houses in Banja Luka, Prijedor, Sanski Most and Bosanska Gradiška. Today's Chilean LOT House in Banja Luka, covers the city and its surrounding municipalities, such as Bosanska Gradiška, Srbac, Derventa, Kozarska Dubica, Kostajnica, Novi Grad, Krupa na Uni, Prijedor, Oštra Luka and Sanski Most.

LOT Houses are the bridges between civilian and military area, between governmental and non-governmental organizations. They take part in the important task of providing mine information for the local population, especially for children. Chilean people are proud, honoured and enthusiastic to be here, provide as much help as they can to the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Being part of the EUFOR mission is a great honor, as the members of the Chilean LOT House in Banja Luka emphasize. After the mission in Haiti, Cyprus, the Middle East, Israel and many other countries, coming to BiH is something new for them. What does it mean to be 14,000 kilometers away from their home country and serve in the peacekeeping mission of the European Union? - we asked the Commander of the Chilean LOT House in Banja Luka, Major David Mora Meynet: "Showing EUFOR's presence is a significant activity for us. To be in BiH, which is quite far from our home, is an excellent opportunity to experience the country and the people as well. In order to achieve the mission objectives, the Chilean LOT from Banja Luka strives to win the minds and hearts of the population, with a very close and warm relation and partnership with them, in order to identify the Chilean spirit of friendship. It makes me happy to see, that people after suffering a lot in this country are very kind and open minded". The main reason to participate in a mission so far from homeland is the international cooperation. The LOT Commander says that Chile is very proud to be in BiH as the only Latin-American country closely working together with other EUFOR troops. "We try to maintain a close relation with the local authorities and mainly local community leaders, to make it easier for them to entrust their needs". As soldiers of the only South American country in the mission, Major Mora says that the population of BiH perceive them as friends and unique soldiers who want the best for this county without reward.



Chile –the South American country that was once ruled by the Incas, the country of Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda, the land of volcanoes, fjords, lakes and the driest desert in the world Atacama, a country that lies at the foot of snow-capped Andes and extends along the coast of the Pacific, with many islands of which the best known is this of Robinson Crusoe's.



**Interpreter Ms. Svjatlena Lazić with the Chilean soldiers stationed in Banja Luka**

LOT House operation requires efficiency, good military, political and social skills: "The people here are very friendly to us. It is amazing to see when someone invites you for a cup of coffee, conversation, or social events. We try to help as much as we can with all our capabilities and this is something we will continue to do. In cooperation with the Social Protection Office we try to organise ourselves in the best way in order to improve the life of those in need. For example, we have a great relationship with the "Branko Ćopić" branch school in the nearby Krupa na Uni municipality. This is a place where the teacher does her best effort to give the children a better future. Due to the efforts of the children and their teacher, this branch school won the heart of our team and we are constantly visiting them to stay in touch, to give them a smile by bringing some small gifts, school supplies or surprises in order to encourage them", he says.

For Lieutenant Acuña this is the second time in a mission in BiH. He says that this is a great and very important experience. Besides the opportunity to

practice with other nations, armies, which is very interesting, they are also ambassadors who promote their country in Europe and BiH. "I am positively surprised how much the people know about my country, many speak Spanish language, and watch famous TV series. After the mission many of us will come back with our families to visit this beautiful country", he says.

"Our job is to feel the pulse of the population here. For that we go out every day for patrols, speaking with the people through the interpreters. Safety of the local population, especially children is one of the highest priorities of EUFOR. That is why our team assisted by local trainers provides the civilian population with necessary information about the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance", Lieutenant Acuña Eudardo says and adds "We have learned a lot from people of BiH, about their culture, tradition, but also about the European Union. It has been a very good experience for us to work with 20 different countries. We are proud to say that Chile is a recognised, trusted and honoured nation in the military missions, including EUFOR "Althea", he concludes.

In addition to their professional efforts to secure peace in the country, members of this friendly, albeit distant country, are happy to be able to contribute to BiH in this way.

### **Dobra – a member of the Chilean team**

The first contact of Dobra the dog with Chilean troops was in 2004, when they took over the LOT House from British soldiers. She is very sociable and kind to all who live in the LOT House. She is meek and has unparalleled patience, considering that every six months there is a new rotation and she must meet bond with new members. Although some people don't like dogs, Dobra always knows how to win people's hearts and minds. Today Dobra is not as agile and fast as she was in her younger years as she is already 16 years old.



Members of the  
Romanian LOT House in Banja Luka

## LOT House Banja Luka Romania

Romania is the country that provides 16 soldiers to the two LOT Houses, in Banja Luka and Cazin. The Romanian LOT House in Banja Luka was established in 2007. Its area of responsibility consists of 10 municipalities as follows: Banja Luka, Kneževo, Laktaši, Prnjavor, Čelinac, Kotor Varoš, Mrkonjić Grad, Jezero, Šipovo and Kupres.

The Commander of the Romanian LOT House in Banja Luka, Lieutenant Colonel Marian Anghel, explains the daily life: "We start at 7.00 with the morning activities, briefings and presentation of the plan for the current day. Each patrol leader informs the Commander about the mission that his patrol will accomplish during the day, and the objectives that he has in mind", he explains. Commander Anghel points out that during the briefing, they present the latest news and information from media, OHR, OSCE and, of course, EUFOR: "Every afternoon

we consult the latest inputs from the Headquarters. Concerning the fact that we are operating in a permissive environment, where the threat level is rather low, I, as a Commander, strongly encourage my subordinates to go out and interact with local population".

As the LOT House Commander continues to explain, the main contact line with the local population is through the personal meetings that the teams are conducting. Some of these meetings are scheduled while others are ad-hoc meetings. "We have the walk-in duty also for the unexpected persons who want to get in personal contact with members of EUFOR. We are very pleased to host our guests, to drink a coffee, or tea with them". However, the Commander Anghel observes that one of the best ways to interact with the population is through the Mine Risk Education (MRE) classes. "We try this year to cover all the

schools from our area. We focus more on the schools from the vicinity of the former confrontation line. Our intention is to give 64 MRE classes by the end of 2016. This is an excellent opportunity to get in touch with the youngest members of the BiH society. I have to admit that after each class, children take pictures with EUFOR members. This behavior of the children tells me that my team is doing a good job”, LOT Commander Anghel proudly says.

In the LOT House there are also two female members. One of them is Lieutenant Camilia Malinovski. This is her first mission in BiH: “I always knew I would become a soldier. At 14, I entered the military high school, and then the academy. Participating in military operations fulfils my career. People are very proud and are very nice to us, although daily life is challenging for them. I am glad that we have good cooperation with everybody”, says Lieutenant Camilia Malinovski.

Asked what makes his LOT House special, Lieutenant Colonel Anghel responds: “If I would use the term “special” it would mean that we, as a team, would



have a big ego, and this thing is not relevant in military action. Most of the times, when military rulers put their ego in front, the battles were lost. So, from this perspective, I would say that we are not special, we just do our job. EUFOR mission Althea has the purpose to support the healing process of a country”, the Commander of the LOT House Banja Luka says.

- Romania joined the EU in 2007. This country has a population of a little over 19 million.
- The name "Romania" comes from the Latin word "Romanus" which means "citizen of the Roman Empire."
- Romania not only has rich gold resources but also hosts Europe's only museum dedicated to gold.
- Bucharest was the first city in the world illuminated by oil lamps (1895).
- The jet engine used by modern airplanes was invented by Bucharest-born inventor Henri Coanda.
- Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci was the first to achieve a perfect routine and get the first score of 10.00 in the history of gymnastics, during the Olympics in Montreal (1976).
- The real Dracula (Vlad Draculea) nicknamed Vlad Tepes was a Romanian prince and military leader. Count Dracula - the Vampire - was created by Irish writer, Bram Stoker in 1897.
- Romania has the most beautiful waterfall in the world - Bigar Cascade Falls.
- The Romanian language is 1,700 years old.
- The Romanian Palace of Parliament in Bucharest is the second largest building in the world, next only to the Pentagon in the United States.



## LOT House Doboj Poland

“After the reveille at 6.00 and conducted morning briefings taking place at 8.00 including all staff and interpreters, we are ready to carry out LOT’s tasks”, explains the newly appointed LOT Commander, Captain Maciej Goreclei, who welcomed us very kindly and went on to say: “Our teams mostly conduct planned meetings and monitor some important events. In the afternoon, there is another briefieng during which the commander is informed about the situation in the AOR. In the evening, the reports are written and sent to the LOT Coordination Centre. After that, the workout in the gym and running are the most popular activities in the evening. This is what our daily activities look like”.

Polish LOT House in Doboj has been operating in BiH since 2008. Their Area of Responsibility (AOR) covers 10 municipalities: 6 of them are located in the Republika Srpska: Doboj, Modriča, Brod, Petrovo, Teslić, Stanari, and 4 municipalities are located in the Federation: Usora, Doboj Jug, Doboj Istok, and Tešanj. Poland entered the EU in 2004.

As Captain Goreclei emphasises, the LOT’s are obliged to monitor the situation by conducting meetings with municipalities’ mayors, IC representatives, religious leaders, village leaders and other people they meet on the streets. “We do plan approximately five meetings per week. In addition, LOT’s performing vehicle patrols that show EUFOR’s presence. If anything important happens, we have our own cell phone database, and thanks to our interpreters we imidiately gain information from the appropriate authorities.”

The City of Doboj and its surroundings were most affected during the floods in BiH in May 2014. At the time, EUFOR has been providing humanitarian assistance to the BiH authorities, and supporting the population during the emergency. Liaison Observation Teams were continuously monitoring and assessing the crisis situation with the Armed Forces BiH Civil- Military Cooperation (CIMIC) teams to draw up task lists which were then prioritised.

Unfortunately, floods caused landslides which unearthed around 120 000 unexploded landmines. This is the reason why schools in LOT Doboj Area of Responsibility became a priority for Mine Risk Education (MRE) planning. Each year 3 instructors from LOT Doboj carry out approximately 60 MRE's.

Regarding the most important projects aimed to support the local community, LOT House Commander Goreclei reminds that last year the Polish Operations Commander, General Marek Tomaszycy, handed

over a fire-fighting equipment to the Territorial Fire Brigade from Doboj. "The humanitarian aid included motor pumps, foam nozzle, gloves, shoes, special clothing, flashlights and helmets. We hope that this close cooperation between both sides and especially this aid will positively influence the tasks performed by the Fire service in Doboj. We try to put the people in liaison with those organisations which can help them. This is what we can do, and this is how many projects were implemented in the Area of Responsibility especially regarding the renovation of some schools", Captain Goreclei says.

All the LOT members agree that people in BiH especially in Doboj area, are very open minded, communicative, and that the country is beautiful. We are glad that people are pro-European oriented", the LOT Commander, Captain Maciej Goreclei concludes.

- Poland is a country with more than 38 million inhabitants. In the capital city Warsaw live around two million people. In 2004, Poland became a member of the European Union.
- Famous people come from Poland - the composer and pianist Fryderyk Chopin and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, Pope John Paul II.
- Poland is one of the countries where the national drink is vodka. It is known for its liquor mead (miód pitny), and various types of beer.
- Poland is the 6th most populous and the 6th largest of the European Union's 27 member states.
- The name "Poland" originates from the tribe "Polanie" which means people living in open fields.
- Poland is world's biggest amber exporter.
- Poland boasts 17 Nobel Prize winners. Marie Curie (born Maria Skłodowska, 1867-1934), the first and only Nobel laureate in two different sciences and first female professor at the Sorbonne University.
- Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus was the first person to propose that the Earth was not the center of the Universe.





**Swiss LOT House Mostar members and their interpreter Ms. Šendro Zijada**

## LOT House Mostar Switzerland

Since November 2004, Switzerland has been participating in peacekeeping operations in BiH. It is one of five partnering nations who contribute to the EUFOR Althea mission. 16 officers and non-commissioned officers, among them two female officers, currently form Liaison and Observation Teams (LOT) in Mostar and Trebinje.

LOT Houses enable EUFOR to maintain a presence throughout BiH, acting as the eyes, ears and point of contact for EUFOR when interacting with the local population. The LOT is a group of soldiers who live not in military camp but in civilian accommodation among the people providing the dynamic, responsive and locally-based 'public face' of EUFOR. In Mostar, situated in the middle of one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, the Swiss national flag flies from a LOT House. Captain Urs Luescher, the Commander of the Suisse LOT House says how proud he is that Switzerland also actively participates in the stabilisation of this country. From his experience gained in previous missions, he understands very

Switzerland being a neutral country, its army does not take part in armed conflicts worldwide. However, since 1953 it has been part of several peacekeeping missions around the world, and in BiH it has been involved for 12 years already.

well that building mutual trust and respect with the local community are absolutely essential part of this job. Among 17 lot houses, two of them are run by Switzerland - one in Mostar and the other in Trebinje, each consisting of 8 people in both cities.

The two teams under his command Captain Luescher named as "Software and Hardware sides", according to the tasks they perform. All the members of his team have university degrees in philosophy, history, economic, social and political sciences, archeology, ethnology, geography. For sure, the Swiss LOT House personnel are the most educated EUFOR LOT. "Our main mission is to collect information by liaising with the local population and institutions as well as the international communities in order to help with an up to date picture of the security situation. The civilian background of my staff allows them to make easier contact with different people: university deans, professors, farmers, businessmen, with whom

we share the information, exchange experience and give some advice”, he says.

The old town of Mostar and the Old Bridge are the symbols of reconciliation, the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious communities. Although two decades after the conflict some of the town’s scars are still visible, Captain Luescher remarks that despite this, it is amazing and impressive to see how optimistic people can be. International military presence over the past years in BiH have been a significant prerequisite for the return of thousands of BiH asylum seekers and refugees also from Switzerland to their country of origin. “And this is something positive. Being in touch with local authorities and the population as well as other agencies in BiH, LOT members try to raise awareness of local issues.

The Swiss LOT House is located in a residential

area of Mostar. Although its members are visible and present everyday around, supported by local interpreters, Captain Luescher remarks that there are many who don’t know they are still here. “People know about us in the schools when we run the MREs for the youngsters. The efficient work of the LOT is based on the patrolling, meeting with population and authorities, the visible presence of the international community and the help as much as the military personnel can. We hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to progress toward a better future for all the people of this country”, the Commander of the Mostar LOT House, Captain Urs Luescher concludes.

Our visit to the beautiful city on the Neretva River and our friendly colleagues from the Swiss LOT ended with savouring chocolate, one of the most recognisable Swiss national brands.



Switzerland has been named the world’s happiest country in a survey of 158 nations. • It is one of the richest countries in the world and also always at the top of different rankings measuring the quality of life. • Switzerland has been an independent country since 1499. There are 26 cantons in Switzerland, each of which acts as a state, with its own constitution, legislature, government and courts. Switzerland has a population of about 8 million. • Switzerland is also known as Confoederatio Helvetica – which explains the abbreviation CH. • CERN (the European Organisation for Nuclear Research) is the world’s largest particle physics laboratory. • With its lakes, rivers, mountains Switzerland is the Europe’s most beautiful country. Switzerland is the only country with four national languages - German, French, Italian and Rumantsch. • There are numerous things related to Switzerland that attract people like Swiss watches, music festivals, cheese and chocolates. • The wristwatch was invented by Patek Philippe in 1868. • Switzerland has interesting history and is also known for world welfare organizations that mostly either started in Switzerland or have their Headquarters.

Over the years EUFOR has carried out its mandate to assist the country and people of BiH in creating a safe and secure environment - as its primary mission, and one which will continue as long as there remains a requirement to do so. The LOT concept is proven as a success story in the process of normalization in BiH. Liaison and observation teams play a significant role in this process with their open and transparent approach towards the people of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. Whilst there is still some work to be done, the initial steps have been taken towards EU membership, a goal which can only bring benefits to this country and its people – prosperity, economic improvement, a safe and comfortable life. EU Forces together with the International Community and as a part of the European Union family will continue to work to provide a brighter future in BiH.



# Interview with the German ambassador H.E. Christian Hellbach

**Germany is one of the most important partners of Bosnia and Herzegovina in foreign affairs. Bilateral relations have developed steadily since diplomatic ties were established in 1992. This country was closely involved in efforts to promote peace and after the Dayton Agreement has been engaged in BiH in a variety of ways, such as the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board (PIC SB), in the framework of economic cooperation, and in the past by providing its troops for the EU military mission (EUFOR) and the EU police mission (EUPM). Germany has invested a lot of resources in economic development, culture and humanitarian aid projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and all these years has been a strong political advocate of a European perspective for BiH.**

German Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina, H.E. Christian Hellbach, talked in an interview for the magazine "Teme" about the new EU approach towards BiH, expressed views on the country's path to EU membership, stressing the need for Bosnia-Herzegovina to press ahead in its efforts to align with European standards especially after submission of a formal application for EU membership. As he emphasised, the active German diplomatic

engagement will continue until BiH assumes its rightful place in a European family.

The British-German initiative, which subsequently resulted in the EU Reform Agenda as Mr. Hellbach stated, was very important because intended to unblock the process of EU-integration and allow for speedy reforms in order to tackle the most burning social and economic issues. "We aimed to end years of



**British and German Foreign Ministers  
Hammond and Steinmeier**

waste and stagnation, we urged politicians to sign up to substantial reforms and offered BiH the opportunity to make progress towards EU membership. BiH has submitted an application for EU-membership. This is good news. But a lot remains to be done! Not only on socio-economic reforms but also regarding rule of law. More than one year ago Bosnian politicians committed themselves to reforms closely linked to the Compact for Growth and Jobs. The main focus is on the labor market, social security systems, the rule of law and the fight against corruption. State and Entity Governments started implementing some of the reforms contained in the reform agenda that was agreed in July 2015. The last EU-country report on Bosnia and Herzegovina asserted that BiH is back on the reform track. However, being on track doesn't mean that the finish-line is close, a lot remains to be done".

Ambassador Hellbach pointed out that in the last few weeks, there has been significantly more discussion about economic and social reforms than before. However, he said, "BiH has to fight unemployment, improve the business-climate, make social security systems just and financially sustainable, reform public administration, consolidate public finances and impose the rule of law. The socio-economic situation of many citizens of this country is anything but easy. That is precisely why change is needed. More of the same won't do the trick. And reforms need to come quickly. People have no time to waste.

They need jobs, security and justice now, not in twenty years. Those who hold the reins in this country must work for the people – not for the good of the EU or any EU member state. They must implement reforms which are in the best interest of all BiH citizens. And they must act fast. But there is no such thing as a free lunch. Transformation won't happen if you don't roll up your sleeves and work to make it happen. It might be painful for some, but many will benefit, most importantly future generations. We will continue to support all those BiH leaders who initiate and implement real reform – not those who merely deliver lip service!"

**"The path to the EU membership will be a long and difficult, but it is important that it has started"**

After years of delay, BiH has officially applied on 15 February to join the European Union. Ambassador Hellbach considers that submission of the membership application is an important step for Bosnia and Herzegovina. "We take it as a renewed self-commitment by the country and by its leaders to implement the reforms necessary on the path towards EU-membership. We'll hold them to their promise. Poverty, unemployment, lack of social cohesion and corruption cannot be overcome by submitting an application. Only courageous and sustainable reforms will do the job. EU-integration is a process and the submission of BiH's membership application is just one step in this process. If Bosnian political leaders want the application to be successful, they must move on with reforms now. And they must deliver on promises made before the application. Success is not in the hands of the European Union. It is in the hands of BiH's leadership".

Talking about difficulties, obstacles and challenges that BiH will encounter in the process of accession negotiations, Ambassador Hellbach points out the personal and party interests, corruption, artificial division, lack of coordination, sometimes also lack of engagement and expertise. "Not to forget pessimism

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and resignation which seem to prevent people from asking for change. Another obstacle on the way ahead is lack of rule of law. Honestly, I am appalled by the scale of open and unveiled pressure that is being exerted on courts and prosecutors. The rule of law and a free and functional judiciary are at the very heart of European values and key conditions for EU membership!"

### Steps towards EU membership



Bosnia and Herzegovina now has a status of a potential candidate country for EU accession. This means that on the one hand the country is interested in joining the Union and on the other hand that there is interest on behalf of the Union in the country's accession.

Although BiH has not yet been affected by the refugee crisis, unlike neighbouring countries, in the coming period it could happen. Ambassador Hellbach thinks that the refugee crisis is a challenge of tremendous proportions. "Given the large number of

conflicts in our neighborhood, the stream of refugees seeking protection in Europe will not abate in the foreseeable future. Actually, there are many reasons to believe that we are facing a global phenomenon we cannot avoid by building walls around Europe or simply ignore. Let us not forget that our prosperity depends on our integration in an open world. We can't have the cake and eat it! Also, the refugee crisis affects everyone in Europe, and it is a challenge that strikes at the very heart of European values, namely humanity and solidarity", he said.

The German Embassy supported numerous programs and projects in BiH as part of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. All these projects, as the Ambassador Hellbach emphasises, serve two principal goals which are closely interlinked. "First - giving the people in BiH a perspective for a prosperous and stable future, and second - assisting the country on its path towards EU membership. In the economic field, we aim to strengthen the private sector and promote bilateral trade as well as investment.

In the run-up to the Paris Climate Summit, we engaged in a large climate diplomacy project, involving 120 students or "young climate potentials". In the field of development cooperation, we generally operate through "GIZ" (German International Cooperation) and the development bank KfW, focusing mainly on SME-development, support to local Government, professional education, public administration reform, renewable energy, energy efficiency and water management", Ambassador Hellbach said and added that the Embassy is also active in reconciliation projects such as "In Mostar, we supported an ecological project that successfully brought school classes from various ethnicities together. We also support micro projects that target less privileged groups of BiH society such as women, children and disabled persons".

In the cultural sector the Embassy supported a large variety of projects, ranging from theatre plays and modern dance to heavy metal performances. "Several

sports projects (e.g. the very successful goalkeeper training camp with national goalkeeper trainer Enver Lugušić) aimed at bringing young people from different ethnicities and parts of the country together. As in previous years, the Embassy supported efforts to protect cultural heritage, namely the restoration of artwork inside the Miščina Mosque in Sarajevo”, Mr. Hellbach said, and pointed out that one of the most important projects supported by the German Embassy in 2015 is also a donation by Germany who contributed more than 2 million Euros securing and destroying surplus ammunition as well as humanitarian mine and ordinance clearance projects. Regarding the main goals of the German Embassy for next year, Ambassador Hellbach said:

“Like in 2015, we will focus together with our partners in - and outside the EU on supporting BiH’s efforts to move closer to the EU and implement the reforms that are necessary to secure a more prosperous and stable future for the people of BiH.

Our cultural work will focus on the promotion of the German language, projects for persons with disabilities, and support for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage such as a Roman mosaic, uncovered during archeological excavations near Skelani. Germany will continue to support BiH in its efforts to secure and destroy surplus ammunition and clear land-mines and unexploded ordinance”, Ambassador Hellbach concluded.



## Let children live a free and happy life!

Mines, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and cluster munitions are the greatest danger to human life after the war. Twenty one years after the end of the conflict in BiH, the country still faces the problem of a high level of mine contamination. Despite the efforts made and significant improvements in mine action management, mines still represent one of the main obstacles for the safety of citizens and economic and social development of BiH, especially affecting the tourism.

Although a great deal of work has been invested in the process of identification and clearance of mine contaminated areas, they still can be found almost all over the country. Leftover mines pose a major threat to all people, but particularly those living in rural areas that are in constant danger from this evil which continued to claim lives. After the conflict, 1,500 people fell victim to mines and UXO in BiH. Year by year, the number of victims has been reducing and the reason for this positive trend is the fact that the people in BiH are increasingly being included in mine awareness programs, especially in the risk areas.

EUFOR is often seen as being responsible for the mine clearance in this country, however it is not. It were always the local authorities who hold this responsibility, however EUFOR and its 17 Liaison Observation Teams (LOTs) with some 54 trained and accredited Mine Risk Education (MRE) Instructors, deliver the lectures for local communities all over BiH.





### **EUFOR Mine Risk Education in BiH schools**

“EUFOR contributes to the BiH Mine Action Strategy by conducting MRE throughout BiH. The aim of the MRE is to reduce the risk of landmines and UXO for humans and to make BiH a safer and more secure place. And this is why MRE is one of the main EUFOR efforts in BiH. The EUFOR LOT Houses in cooperation with the BiH Armed Forces are teaching MRE for BiH schools with the aim to inform children about the mines and UXO’s danger”, said Major Horst Unterrieder from EUFOR Joint Military Affairs.

The EUFOR MICC (Mine Education Coordination Centre), and the LOT Houses are credited with a major role and contribution to different aspects of mine risk education. Over 250,000 people attended

the educational program over the past years, which is certainly a remarkable number.

On 21st April 2016, the Slovakian LOT House from Novo Sarajevo Municipality, together with the EUFOR MICC team, and the AFBiH members, organized a Mine Risk Education (MRE) lecture for pupils in “Alija Nametak” Primary School in Sarajevo. The children had an opportunity to see how much of the local area is still contaminated with mines and what happens when touching the mines.

“These lectures are very useful thing for the small children, pupils, but also for adults. Our team from Novo Sarajevo Municipality does about 12 MRE’s per month. Thanks to the MRE, there are not so many incidents like before, and this is a big success for all of us. However, some children still have to learn there is a threat, and how to deal with it. It is a real pleasure for us to be able to help BiH population in such a way. Therefore, EUFOR teams are looking forward to visiting many other schools throughout the year, with the aim of educating the children in BiH communities as to the danger of landmines and unexploded ordnance”, said Tibor Petriček from the Slovakian LOT House in Novo Sarajevo Municipality, who provided the lecture for children.



Analysis of mine accidents show that the highest number of incidents has been recorded in the early fall and late spring, when the current farm, agricultural works as well as collecting firewood are more prevalent. In addition, one of the biggest causes to the risk of the population is collecting recyclable materials that have certain economic values. MRE's main aim is through education and information to raise awareness of the population, reduce the number of victims and draw attention to the long-term mine threat. "The aim of EUFOR is to educate as many people as possible, including children as the most vulnerable category. Everybody must learn how to live and behave with the threat of mines and UXO" said Džejna Skopljak, Mine Risk Education (MRE) Manager from EUFOR's Mine Information Coordination Cell.

For Zaim Pleh from the AFBiH Demining Battalion, this was not the first time participating in a lecture for children organised by EUFOR. "We are all aware that the danger from mines is still very real in BiH, and that all national structures must be involved to deal with the landmines problem. It will take many decades to clear these explosive devices. Therefore it is essential that children in, or returning to, communities affected by mines, receive education about the risk of mines and UXO such as rockets, grenades and mortars shells that are in their areas. This MRE alerts children to the dangers in mined areas, how to avoid these dangers and how to encourage others to do the same", said Zaim Pleh who, together with his colleague Izet, instructor from the Slovakian LOT House, in a creative way attracted the attention of the youngsters.

"20 years after the war, unfortunately, we still have a problem with mines in our country. Although we do process this topic in class, however, we are very pleased that the instructors of EUFOR and the BiH Armed Forces are here today. It is important that we all know that we live safely only if our children learn to

It is estimated that in 9,185 locations of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still around 120,000 mines and UXOs. The suspect area is 1,176.50 km<sup>2</sup>, which poses a threat to 540,000 people, or about 15% of the population.

cope with new and unfamiliar situations, to respond appropriately and that the caution becomes a style of behavior", said the school teacher, Ms. Aida Tatić.

Many mine and UXO casualties are children therefore, it's especially important that children are aware of the danger. The most effective way to prevent casualties is to clear the minefields for good, but mine risk education can help make children's lives safer. Ena, Džejla and Emin were listening carefully to the lecture of our instructors, and told us what they have learned: "We must not go to the places that we know are mined, we must not approach unknown objects nor touch them, we have to inform adults if we see mines. We learned, too, that the mines move and that due to the flooding they can be found at any place and at any time!", the children from the elementary school "Alija Nametak" from Sarajevo said.

For a long time, mines will continue to pose a threat in BiH. Therefore, continuous education on mine dangers is essential to avoid having victims. The safety of children must not only be one of the most important goals for EUFOR MICC, but for the whole society.

Eufor's Mine Awareness instructors are there to help and support. They provide lectures on mine risks in schools across BiH. You will learn how to protect yourselves and your friends and family from landmines and other UXO and what to do if you encounter one.

**If you want the  
Mine Risk instructors to visit your  
school, contact MICC at [micc@eufor.europa.eu](mailto:micc@eufor.europa.eu)**





# TOGETHER FOR YOUR SAFETY *for school*



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