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Full Text:

TUZLA, Bosnia--A cold wind from the hills blows through this war-ravaged city. Snow and ice are on their way, and for U.S. troops in this remote corner of Europe, so is another lonely winter far from home.

That wasn't supposed to be. When President Clinton sent U.S. troops to Bosnia last year, he said they would be home by this Christmas. But in a televised statement from the White House last month, the president said U.S. troops would be staying for at least one more year.

"Bosnia," said the president, "still reaps a bitter harvest of hatred" so the United States must stay to keep Bosnians from slaughtering one another once again.

History of Hate

Bosnia is a small country (about half the size of Pennsylvania) that was torn apart between 1992 and 1995 by a brutal civil war among its three main ethnic groups--the Bosnian Serbs, the Croats (KROH-ats), and the Muslims. Each group has its own religion, culture, and way of life--plus a history of hating the other groups that goes back hundreds of years.

The main difference between Bosnia's ethnic groups is religious. Most Serbs belong to a division of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Muslims, of course, are followers of Islam. And Croats are mainly Roman Catholic.

In 1992, when Bosnia declared itself independent of Yugoslavia, Muslims controlled the government. Fearing Muslim domination, Bosnian Serbs revolted and attacked government forces. The Croats then entered the conflict--fighting both Serbs and Muslims in a three-way battle for control of the land.

The fighting expanded in 1993 and in 1994. Large parts of Bosnia were turned into killing fields. The war, fueled by age-old hatreds, became more than just a war between armies. It became a war in which women, children, and the elderly were targets as well. All sides took part in "ethnic cleansing," the process of killing or driving all people of one ethnic group away from conquered territory.

During the fighting, the worst in Europe since World War II (1939-45), dozens of villages and towns were burned to the ground. More than 200,000 people were killed, many in mass executions. Thousands of others were crippled or wounded. Almost 2.8 million of Bosnia's 4.4 million people fled their homes.

The Paris Peace Treaty

On Dec. 14, 1995, representatives of the three ethnic groups signed a peace treaty in Paris, France, as President Clinton and other world leaders looked on. To make sure that the treaty would be honored, NATO sent 60,000 peacekeeping troops--20,000 of them from the United States--to Bosnia

According to the terms of the treaty, each of the ethnic groups is assigned a part of Bosnia under a loose federal government. The U.S. peacekeeping force, now at 14,000 troops, is stationed in northeast Bosnia. (See map on page 1.)

U.S. troops in Bosnia are under orders to fight back with overwhelming force if they are attacked. The troops are equipped with about 150 tanks and 250 other armed vehicles. In addition, more than 70 Apache and Kiowa attack helicopters patrol the skies over the U.S. sector in Bosnia.

A U.S. fleet of naval ships, with attack planes, is also stationed off the coast in case extra firepower is needed.

So far, the peace treaty has held. But it is clear to President Clinton and other leaders that it has held only because troops are there to enforce it. Last month, U.S. troops moved in when Muslim refugees traded gunfire with Serb police. The U.S. soldiers simply overwhelmed both sides with helicopters and tanks to stop the fighting.

How Long Will They Stay?

How long will U.S. troops have to stay in Bosnia?

The president says his goal is to withdraw U.S. troops no later than June of 1988, but critics who want U.S. troops withdrawn say the troops will have to stay much longer. Floyd D. Spence (R--S.C.) said that "the presence of a significant military force in Bosnia will be necessary for many years."

How does the president answer his critics? By pointing out the importance of keeping peace in Bosnia and preventing a resumption of a war that could spread throughout Europe. In his White House speech, the president said: "The United States cannot and should not try to solve every problem in the world. But where our interests are clear and our values are at stake, where we can make a difference, we must act and we must lead. Clearly, Bosnia is such an example."

RELATED ARTICLE: Consider This...

The United States, like Bosnia, is a nation composed of different ethnic groups. But, unlike Bosnians, Americans in modern times have not resorted to war or "ethnic cleansing." Why have different racial and ethnic groups been able to live

in relative peace in the United States? Why haven't ethnic groups been able to do the same in Bosnia? As an American, what advice would you give to a Serb, Croat, or Muslim about how to live together in peace?

RELATED ARTICLE: Bosnia

BACKGROUND

What has happened in Bosnia in the last several years has its roots in the birth--and death--of Yugoslavia. Modern Yugoslavia dates from the end of World War I, in 1918, when a new nation rose from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian empire. It was called the nation of the South Slavs, or Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and other smaller nations.

During World War II, Yugoslavia was occupied by the Germans, who fought against Communist guerrillas led by Josef Broz, known as Tito. After the war, Tito ruled Yugoslavia with an iron hand. But after Tito's death in 1980, the country began to fall apart--a process that was swiftly completed with the fall of Communism in Europe between 1990 and 1992.

Here is a short chronology of what has happened since:

1991--On June 25, Croatia and Slovenia proclaim independence from Yugoslavia.

1992--On March 3, Bosnia's Muslims and Croats vote for Bosnia's independence. Vote is boycotted by Bosnia's Serbs. On April 6, most European nations recognize Bosnia's independence; war breaks out between rebel Serbs and Bosnia's government.

1994--In March, the United States succeeds in sponsoring an agreement to end the Bosnian war between Muslims and Croats.

1995--On January 1, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian government sign four-month truce, mediated by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. On November 21, Serbs, Croats and Muslims reach a peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio. On December 14, a formal peace treaty ending the war is signed in Paris, France with major world leaders, including President Clinton, looking on.

1996--On November 18, the United States and other nations sign an agreement keeping their peace-keeping troops in Bosnia for another 12 months.

WEB RESOURCES

Here are the top world wide web sites dealing with Bosnia.

- * Christian Science Monitor: [http:// www.freerange.com/csmonitor/](http://www.freerange.com/csmonitor/)
- * Info About Bosnia: [http://www.helsinki.fi/\[similar\]tervio/info.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/[similar]tervio/info.html)
- * Bosnia Help Page: [http://tux.music.asu.edu/\[similar\]john/bosnia/Bosnia_Help-page.html](http://tux.music.asu.edu/[similar]john/bosnia/Bosnia_Help-page.html)

- * Bosnia Virtual Field Trip: [http:// geog.gmu.edu/ gess/jwc/bosnia/bosnia.html/](http://geog.gmu.edu/gess/jwc/bosnia/bosnia.html/)
- * Dept. Of Defense Bosnia Link: <http://www.dtic.dla.mil/bosnia/> (for all the latest updated news about U.S. troops in Bosnia)

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