

## **PARTICIPATION OF BULGARIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (SFOR/ALTHEA)**

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1995, the United Nations peacekeeping force in Former Yugoslavia (United Nations Protection Force – UNPROFOR) was reflagged under the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), which took responsibility for peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In implementation of the Dayton Agreement, in less than a year IFOR managed to separate the three warring factions, which had been at war for over 42 months; it provided support and assistance for the conduct of elections; and ensured the return of more than 230,000 refugees. IFOR's mandate expired on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1996, when its responsibility for the security in Bosnia and Herzegovina was taken over by SFOR.

Engineer, transportation and mechanized platoon and a force protection company from the Bulgarian Army were contributed to the SFOR. The 36-strong engineering platoon contributed to SFOR was placed under the command of the Dutch contingent from June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997, to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001; the Bulgarian and Dutch military personnel were engaged in repair and construction of public buildings and roads.

The transportation platoon participated in the logistic group HELBA / BELUGA from June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1998, to January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001, to the strength of 26 personnel and 10 wheeled vehicles. The tasks carried out by the Bulgarian military personnel included transportation of materiel, humanitarian aid, fuel, and structures used in building permanent bridges to replace makeshift ones.

Seven military servicemen responsible for the civil-military cooperation were deployed at the SFOR Headquarters from August 1998 to the end of the operation.

The 38-strong mechanized platoon and the accompanying equipment were attached to the Dutch contingent on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001. They were engaged in operational tasks involving patrolling, checks and duty rounds at checkpoints.

The force protection company attached to SFOR HQ, to the strength of 149 personnel and the accompanying equipment, engaged in the operation on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2002. The company was responsible for the protection, defence and pass control of the SFOR Headquarters located at Camp Butmir, Sarajevo.

An official ceremony of handing over peacekeeping duties from NATO-led SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU's military operation EUFOR (Operation ALTHEA) was held on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo

The key military tasks performed by Operation ALTHEA include: maintaining safe and secure environment in B&H; implementation of the Dayton Agreement; asserting ethnic tolerance; facilitating the return of refugees; assisting the establishment of common state institutions; providing support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and relevant authorities, including the detention of Persons Indicted for War Crimes (PIFWCs), etc.

The operation is of key importance with regard to the stabilization of the situation in the country and the establishment of common state institutions. The implementation of the plan for the transformation of the EU military contingent participating in the operation was

completed at the end of August 2007, resulting in reduction of the contingent's strength to 2,100 personnel. In February 2009, EUFOR was 1,600-strong.

Pursuant to a decision of the National Assembly, the Bulgarian military contingent continued contributing to the stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina; at present, the Bulgarian Armed Forces participate in Operation ALTHEA with a 120-strong contingent, comprising a light infantry company protecting the Headquarters of the Operation; a National Support Element; a Liaison and Observation Team (LOT); and staff officers at the Operation Headquarters.

More information about the missions is available at:

IFOR: <http://www.nato.int/ifor/ifor.htm>

SFOR: <http://www.nato.int/sfor/index.htm>

ALTHEA: <http://www.euforbih.org/eufor/>