



## TURKEY'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE BALKANS: ASSESSING THE TURKISH MILITARY CONTINGENT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA UNDER THE STABILIZATION FORCE (SFOR) MISSION (1996-2004)

TÜRKİYE'NİN BALKANLAR'DA BARIŞ VE İSTİKRARA KATKISI: İSTİKRAR GÜCÜ (SFOR) MİSYONU KAPSAMINDA BOSNA-HERSEK'TEKİ TÜRK ASKERİ BİRLİĞİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ (1996-2004)

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the activities of the Turkish military contingent in the multinational peacekeeping force SFOR, which was formed under the leadership of NATO and served in Bosnia-Herzegovina between the years of 1996-2004. During the 8-year period, the Turkish contingent fulfilled many duties to ensure a lasting peace and security in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The activities of the Turkish contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina are of interest to scholars for several reasons, but particularly because of humanitarian aid, reconstruction works, health services and activities, which were aimed at ensuring security in the country. This article presents new evidence to support the hypothesis that Turkish aid was welcomed by Bosniak communities because of shared cultural heritage and widespread trust. Turkish troops helped the Bosnians with the funds they formed among themselves, apart from international aid. The health service was provided to local people in the hospital established by the Turkish contingent. An intense effort was made to rebuild the buildings and bridges destroyed during the war. The roads in bad condition were repaired and the settlements were connected to each other. The Turkish contingent carried out information activities in the area where it was operating, about mines and other explosives.

**Keywords:** the Balkans, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian War, Turkey, SFOR

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma NATO önderliğinde oluşturulan ve 1996-2004 yılları arasında Bosna-Hersek'te görev yapan çok uluslu barış gücü SFOR'da yer alan Türk askeri birliğinin faaliyetlerini incelemektedir. 8 yıllık görev süresi boyunca Türk birliği Bosna-Hersek'te kalıcı barış ve güven ortamının sağlanması için birçok görevi yerine getirmiştir. Türk Birliği'nin Bosna-Hersek'teki faaliyetleri, başta insani yardım, yeniden yapılanma çalışmaları, sağlık hizmetleri ve ülkede güvenliği sağlamaya yönelik faaliyetler başta olmak üzere çeşitli nedenlerle araştırmacıların dikkatini çekmektedir. Bu makale, ortak kültürel mirasları ve birbirlerine güvenleri nedeniyle Türk yardımının Boşnak toplulukları tarafından memnuniyetle karşılandığı hipotezini desteklemeye yönelik yeni kanıtlar sunmaktadır. Türk birliği askerleri uluslararası yardımlardan ayrı olarak kendi aralarında oluşturdukları fonla Bosnalılara yardım etmişlerdir. Türk birliği tarafından kurulan hastanede yerel halka sağlık hizmeti sunulmuştur. Savaş esnasında yıkılan binaların ve köprülerin yeniden inşası için yoğun bir çaba içerisine girilmiştir. Bozulan yollar onararak yerleşim yerlerinin birbirleri ile bağlantılarının kurulması sağlanmıştır. Türk birliği görev yaptığı bölgede halkı mayınlar ve diğer patlayıcı maddelere karşı bilgilendirme çalışmaları yürütmüştür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Balkanlar, Bosna-Hersek, Bosna Savaşı, Türkiye, SFOR

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## Introduction

Yugoslavia was a federal republic consisting of different religions and nations. Josip Broz Tito, the first president of the republic, guided and led Yugoslavia's political life.<sup>1</sup> After Tito's death in 1980, a collective presidency was implemented. In this process of transition, conflicts in the economic and political fields between the republics of Yugoslavia increased. With Slobodan Milosevic's election as the President of Serbia in 1989, Serbian nationalism became dominant within the Federation.<sup>2</sup> This situation led to the emergence of ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia and accelerated the process of collapse of the union. A series of civil wars took place in Yugoslavia as the country fell apart. The countries forming the Federation were uncomfortable with Slobodan Milosevic's imposition of a centralist structure on the whole of Yugoslavia. They advocated a weak federation structure in a way that they preserved their independence. This divergence between Serbia and other republics initiated secession from Yugoslavia. First, in 1991 Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. Afterwards, a referendum for independence was held in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 29 February and 1 March in line with the decision taken by the parliament. As a result of this referendum, boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs, Bosnia-Herzegovina became an independent country.<sup>3</sup> On April 5, 1992, the government of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence. The following day, the USA and European countries recognised the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Open conflicts started in the country after the independence decision.

In fact, the United Nations had foreseen the possible conflicts as Yugoslavia was falling apart. Thus, on September 25, 1991, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 713, which imposed an arms embargo on all former Yugoslav territories.<sup>4</sup> However, the Bosnian Serbs were not greatly affected by this decision. Yugoslav Armed Forces, under the control of Serbia, armed the Bosnian Serb militias, which had declared their independence. The Serbs, who were superior in terms of weapons, launched attacks within Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnian

1 Tahir Kodak, "Bosna-Hersek'in Bağımsızlığını Kazanması ve Türkiye (1990-1992)", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, Vol. 34, No 98, 2018, p. 415.

2 Ivo Banac, "Nationalism in Serbia", Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Kemali Saybaşı (eds.), *Balkans: A Mirror of The New International Order*, İstanbul, Eren Yayıncılık, 1995, pp. 149-150., Kader Özlem, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde ABD'nin ve Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikalarının Bosna Hersek, Kosova ve Makedonya Krizleri Örneğinde İncelenmesi", *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No 1, 2012, p. 26.

3 İlker Alp, "1990'larda Yugoslavya ve Bosna Hersek", *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No 1, 2001, p. 14.

4 *United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)*, 25 September 1991, Res. 713, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/713> (date of access: 19.08.2020).

Serbs occupied around 70 percent of the country's territory within a few months with the help of Belgrade.<sup>5</sup>

Upon this, the United Nations Security Council expanded the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), which was established by resolution 743 on February 21, 1992<sup>6</sup> and located in Croatia<sup>7</sup>, to include Bosnia-Herzegovina in June 1992.<sup>8</sup> On May 6, 1993, with a decision taken by the UN Security Council, Sarajevo, Gorazde, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Žepa and Bihać regions were declared as “safe areas”.<sup>9</sup> It aimed to protect these regions from any attack. However, UNPROFOR was not successful in preventing the attacks. NATO had begun to be actively involved in the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and air strikes were carried out on Serbian targets.<sup>10</sup> With the Dayton Agreement signed between the parties on December 14, 1995, the war in Bosnia ended.<sup>11</sup> Following the Dayton Agreement, the Implementation Force (IFOR), a multinational peacekeeping force established under the leadership of NATO, took part in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>12</sup> The main task of IFOR was to ensure implementation of the provisions of the Dayton Agreement. After completing the IFOR mission, which served for a year, it was replaced by the Stabilization Force (SFOR)<sup>13</sup> in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution 1088 dated December 12, 1996.<sup>14</sup> The idea that it would be difficult to maintain peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina without the presence of NATO peacekeeping forces<sup>15</sup> was influential in the formation of SFOR. The main duties of SFOR, which stayed in Bosnia-Herzegovina for 8 years, were to prevent new threats to peace, to encourage a climate

5 Nikolaos Tzifakis, “The Bosnian Peace Process: The Power-Sharing Approach Revisited”, *Perspectives*, No 28, Summer 2007, p. 92.

6 UNSCR, 21 February 1992, Res. 743, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/743> (date of access: 19.08.2020).

7 Ertan Efeğil, *The United Nations Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) A Case Study For Future Peace-Keeping Operations*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ankara, Bilkent University, Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, 1994, p. 22.

8 UNSCR, 8 June 1992, Res. 758, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/758\(1992\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/758(1992)) (Date of access: 19.08.2020).

9 UNSCR, 6 May 1993, Res. 824, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/824> (Date of access: 19.08.2020).

10 James Dobbins et al., *Overcoming Obstacles to Peace: Local Factors in Nation-Building*, Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation, 2013, p. 94.

11 Hamza Preljević, “The Role of the Islamic Community in Peacebuilding in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina: Case Study of East Bosnia”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 19, No 3, Summer 2017, p. 213.

12 UNSCR, 15 December 1995, Res. 1031, “Implementation of the Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and transfer of authority from the UN Protection Force to the multinational Implementation Force (IFOR)”, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1031> (Date of access: 20.08.2020).

13 Patrice C. McMahan, “Rebuilding Bosnia: A Model to Emulate or to Avoid?”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No 4, Winter 2004/2005, p. 573.

14 UNSCR, 12 December 1996, Res. 1088, “The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1088> (date of access: 20.08.2020).

15 Craig R. Whitney, “NATO Urged to Keep Force In Bosnia After Pullout Date”, *The New York Times*, 21 March 1996, Section A, p. 1.

in which the peace process could continue, and to provide support to civil organizations as much as possible.<sup>16</sup>

A Turkish military contingent also served in Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of the SFOR mission. This article examines the activities of the Turkish contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the SFOR mission. Since the first day of the Bosnian war, the Turkish public has closely followed the developments.<sup>17</sup> Turkey felt itself close to the Bosnia-Herzegovina due to historical and religious ties between the two countries.<sup>18</sup> As a result of the Ottoman conquest of the region in the 15th centuries,<sup>19</sup> local people embraced Islam<sup>20</sup> and the Bosniaks adopted the religion of Islam. Muslims living in the Balkans were often called “Turks” regardless of their ethnic identity.<sup>21</sup> Attacks launched by Serbs against Bosniaks were heavily protested in Turkey. The Turks saw Muslim Bosnia as the last remnant of the once powerful Muslim presence in Southeast Europe. They also saw it as their duty to help Muslim communities in distress. As a result of the failure of the Western powers to take effective measures to protect Bosnian Muslims from Serbs<sup>22</sup>, the Bosnian problem became “the most important foreign policy issue” for Turkey between 1992 and 1995.<sup>23</sup> Considering the Ottoman past in the Balkans<sup>24</sup>, Turkey’s decision makers believed that Turkey should adopt an active policy in the Bosnian War. For this purpose, Ankara wanted to contribute to the UN military force that would serve in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The issue of deployment of Turkish troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina under UN command were discussed in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.<sup>25</sup> With the Decision 205 on 8 December 1992, sending Turkish soldiers to Bosnia-Herzegovina was allowed.<sup>26</sup> However,

16 “History of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/docu/d981116a.htm>, (date of access: 20.08.2020), Thomas L. Friedman, “If Not Us, Them”, *The New York Times*, 24 November 1996, Section 4, p. 15.

17 Alida Vračić, “Turkey’s Role in the Western Balkans”, *SWP Research Paper*, December 2016, p. 8.

18 Zehra Eroğlu, *Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Türkiye’nin Balkanlar’a Yönelik Dış Politikası*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ankara, Middle East Technical University, Department of International Relations, 2005, p. 19.,

19 Neşe Özden, “A Few Remarks on the History of Bosnia”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, No 21, 2007, p. 60

20 Cathie Carmichael, *A Concise History of Bosnia*, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 20-21.

21 See. Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans: Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 23.

22 Şule Kut, “Turkish Diplomatic Initiatives For Bosnia-Herzegovina”, Günay Göksoy Özdoğan and Kemali Saybaşı (eds.), *Balkans: A Mirror of The New International Order*, Istanbul, Eren Yayıncılık, 1995, p. 312.

23 William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 202.

24 Birgül Demirtaş, “Turkey and the Balkans: Overcoming Prejudices, Building Bridges and Constructing a Common Future”, *Perceptions*, Vol. XVIII, No 2, Summer 2013, pp. 165-168.

25 *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi (TBMMTD) (Official Records of the Turkish National Assembly)*, Term. 19, Vol. 22, Session. 36, p. 276.

26 Metin Sağsak, *Bosna-Hersek Örneğinde Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin Barış Destekleme Harekâtleri*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ankara, Ankara University, Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü (Institute of Turkish Revolution History), 2013, p. 189.

due to the close relations between Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was believed by the UN that Turkish soldiers could not be “neutral” in their mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For this reason, the UN did not respond positively to Ankara’s will to participate in the UN military forces in the first place.<sup>27</sup>

Turkey made diplomatic attempts to help the Bosnian Muslims. For this purpose, Ankara opened the arms embargo on Bosnia Herzegovina for discussion.<sup>28</sup> While Serbia provided arms support to the Bosnian Serbs, Bosniaks remained in a difficult situation. Turkey asked for the lifting of the embargo or equal implementation of the embargo. Furthermore, Turkey also kept its request to join the UN military force on the agenda. Finally, the desired result was obtained by Turkey. First, 12 Turkish warplanes joined the UN forces. Then Ankara was invited to the “military contribution meeting to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina” on March 8, 1994.<sup>29</sup> Shortly afterwards, on March 23, 1994 UN Secretary General invited Turkey to send troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>30</sup> The Turkish military contingent with approximately 1500 personnel was deployed in the Zenica region in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>31</sup> The arrival of the Turkish contingent to Zenica was met with joy by Bosnian Muslims.<sup>32</sup> In the last month of 1995, after the UN left its military duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina to NATO, the Turkish contingent continued its duty under IFOR. One year later, IFOR handed over the task to SFOR<sup>33</sup> and Turkish soldiers started to continue their duty under SFOR.<sup>34</sup> Turkey supported the SFOR mission with 1 mechanized infantry brigades and 18 F-16 fighter jets.<sup>35</sup>

After SFOR, which served in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1996 and 2004, the European Union Force (EUFOR) would take over the responsibility.<sup>36</sup>

27 Oya Akgönenç Muşisuddin, “Türkler’in Balkanlar ve Bosna’daki Yeni Katkılarına Bir Örnek: Bosna’da Türk Tugayı”, *Yeni Türkiye*, Year 3, No 16, Ankara, 1997, p. 1846.

28 Didem Ekinci, “The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates (1992-1995): A Constructivist Approach”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 6, No 22, Summer 2009, p. 47.

29 Sema Emiroğlu, “Türkiye, ‘Bosna’ya Asker’ Toplantısına Davet Edildi”, *Milliyet*, 17 March 1994, p. 20.

30 Fahriye Emgili, “Bosna-Hersek Trajedisinde (1992-1995) Türk Birliği”, *Güney-Doğu Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No 21, 2012, p. 72.

31 Mustafa Aksaç, *Turkey’s Military Efforts For Peace in The Balkans*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ankara, Bilkent University, Department of International Relations, 2003, p. 29.

32 “Türk Birliğine Sevgi Gösterisi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 9 Temmuz 1994, p. 9.

33 Allison E. Ritscher, *Democratization in Bosnia: A More Effective Role For SFOR*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School, 2001, p. 51.

34 Aksaç, *Turkey’s Military Effort.*, p. 35.

35 See. Steven R. Bowman, *Bosnia Stabilization Force (SFOR) and U.S. Policy*, CRS Report for Congress, 1 September 1998.

36 Mehmet Dalar, “Dayton Barış Antlaşması ve Bosna-Hersek’in Geleceği”, *Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol. 16, No 1, 2008, p. 99.; Peter H. Matthiesen, “EUFOR follows SFOR - risk or chance for Europe?”, *Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 7, No 4, 2004, p. 109.

Within the scope of the SFOR mission, the Turkish contingent carried out many activities to normalize the country after the war. The reconstruction of the destroyed buildings and the repair of the damaged roads were among the activities of the Turkish contingent. In addition to contributing to the specialist repair works throughout the country, providing humanitarian aid to people in need was among the duties undertaken by the Turkish contingent. Health services also provided by the Turkish soldiers. Furthermore, in order to ensure normalization in the country, the collection of illegal weapons that threaten the security in the country was also within the scope of the activity of the Turkish contingent. The Balkans has a special importance for Turkey not only from the political, economic and geographical angles, but also because of its historical and cultural connections with the region.<sup>37</sup> In shaping its political and economic relations with the Balkan countries, Turkey has brought “sharing common history” into the forefront, rather than being the “previous owner” of the region.<sup>38</sup> Being itself a Balkan country, Turkey attaches great significance to its mutual relations with the Balkan countries. Turkey accepts that the international presence, particularly in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, is critical and essential both for the fortifying of the state structures in these countries and territorial stability. In this context, Turkey contributes to all international activities in the region.<sup>39</sup> There are academic studies that analyse Turkey’s policy towards the Balkans and the Turkish contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The difference of this study from others is that this article focuses on the activities of the Turkish military contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina within the framework of the SFOR mission. The activities of the Turkish military contingent in the SFOR mission are examined in detail in this article. In this respect, this article aims to contribute to a better understanding of the topic by adding a fresh perspective to the academic debate. A wide variety of sources are utilized in the article. Official publications providing information about SFOR’s activities in NATO were examined in detail. United Nations documents on the research subject were examined. The article additionally included discussions in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina and SFOR. Newspapers, books and articles on the research topic were also consulted.

37 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa> (Date of access: 15.10.2020).

38 İrfan Kalaycı – Barış Aytekin, “Türkiye-Balkan İlişkileri Üzerine (Geçmişten Geleceğe) Ekonomi-Politik Notlar”, *Avrasya Etüdüleri*, C. 50, S. 2, s. 102.

39 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa> (Date of access: 15.10.2020).

## I-) Humanitarian Aid Activities Provided by the Turkish Contingent in SFOR

SFOR opened Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) centres in every major town in Bosnia-Herzegovina to provide assistance to the local population.<sup>40</sup> In this framework, the Turkish Battalion Task Force (TUBNTF) in Bosnia-Herzegovina formed six CIMIC teams, each consisting of a team leader, an interpreter and a driver. Turkish CIMIC teams supported the SFOR mission in Bosnia by helping refugees and contributing to the rebuilding of civilian infrastructure. In addition to their work in the region, Turkish CIMIC teams created a special humanitarian fund. Soldiers in the Turkish battalion contributed 10 American Dollars each month to this humanitarian fund voluntarily. A meeting was held every month to decide how the money collected would be spent. People who wanted to get help applied to the Turkish battalion in Zenica. Upon receipt of the application, the battalion members visited the applicants and, based on their assessment, decided who to assist.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Turkish CIMIC teams patrolled their areas of duty and noted the needs of the local population. People's requests for help were taken into account at the monthly CIMIC coordination meeting.

People displaced during the war tried to continue their lives despite poor living conditions. Turkish CIMIC teams helped them. In particular, providing assistance to people living in "collective centres" was an important issue. "Collective centres" were places where refugees, who left their homes due to the war, stayed. People who felt insecure in their homeland often moved to these centres with the same ethnic background. The international community provided assistance to these camps, where there were no job opportunities. The goal of the Turkish CIMIC was to enable the people living in the camps to return to their former lives in accordance with the Dayton Agreement. Retired seniors, students, families and unemployed professionals were the residents of "collective centres". These people faced many problems. Especially school age children were among the most affected by adverse conditions. Turkish Battalion Task Force soldiers provided the toys, books and other materials to alleviate the problem experienced by children in "community centres". Turkish CIMIC teams also coordinated

40 Peter Caddick-Adams, "Civil affairs operations by IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia, 1995-97", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 5, No 3, 1998, p. 147.

41 Lt. Col. Sam Burns, "Working hand in hand", *SFOR Informer*, 18 July 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/143/p11a/t02p11a.htm> (Date of access: 03.07.2020).



work with different teams operating in other fields to ensure that the returning process of refugees to their homes runs smoothly.<sup>42</sup>

After its arrival in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994, the Turkish military contingent carried out many aid activities.<sup>43</sup> On May 16, 2000, the Turkish battalion command gifted 35 special wristwatches purchased from Slovenia to students at a school for the visually impaired in Sarajevo. Students at the school thanked the Turkish battalion's gesture with their song and dance performances. Between the years of 1994–2000, Turkish soldiers in Zenica collected money worth 2.5 million German Marks among themselves to help the people of the region. This attitude was appreciated by NATO.<sup>44</sup> In 2004, the total aid money collected by Turkish soldiers among themselves reached 1.8 million Euros.<sup>45</sup> The Turkish contingent also donated more than 2700 German marks to the Visually Impaired Association in Zavidovici and to 200 families in Zenica. A good relationship was established between the Turkish battalion and local people. Especially the Visually Impaired Association and the battalion was in a very close relationship. The battalion provided medical assistance to the members of the Visually Impaired Association. Members of the association expressed their satisfaction for the assistance provided by the Turkish battalion in the region.<sup>46</sup>

Schools were reopened as a result of the efforts of the Turkish contingent. At the Pojske school in the Zenica region, 120 students aged 7–11 attended the classes. The Turkish CIMIC team in Zenica provided furniture to the school within the framework of the list of needs prepared by the school principal. In addition, many school supplies such as colored pencils, exercise books, notebooks, and drawing papers were provided. Aids were not limited to only one school, but also tried to meet the needs of other schools. It was also among the plans of the Turkish battalion to provide computers to high schools in Zenica.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the Turkish battalion established a new computer class in a high school in Zenica. All equipment in the classroom (computers, printer, tables, chairs, magnetic board,

42 Capt Russell Craig, "Turks Aid Collective Centres", *SFOR Informer*, 23 May 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/139/p14a/t02p14a.htm> (Date of access: 03.07.2020).

43 Muğisuddin, *Ibid*, p. 1849-1852.

44 Capt. Knut B. Andersen, "Turkish aid to blind children", *SFOR Informer*, 24 May 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/88/helblind/t000526h.htm> (Date of access: 24.06.2020).

45 "Bosna Halkına, Türk Askerinden 3 Trilyon", *Milliyet*, 22 April 2004, p. 20.

46 Sgt. Michael Maddox, "Community projects", *SFOR Informer*, 16 August 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/94/commpro/t000730h.htm> (Date of access: 25.06.2020).

47 1st Lt. Alexander Barb, "Turks work to help local schools along", *SFOR Informer*, 27 September 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/97/zenica/t000927r.htm> (Date of access: 26.06.2020).



paint, electricity and cables) was provided by the Turkish battalion. The project cost about 30,000 German marks (15,000 Euros).<sup>48</sup>

Another of the aid activities carried out by the Turkish battalion in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to deliver the items left behind by 20 Norwegian soldiers, whose duties ended in SFOR, while returning to their countries. Norwegian Captain Bjorn Lauglo stated that the Turkish soldiers in Zenica were famous for helping refugees. With the help of Turkish soldiers, two truckloads of beds, furniture, wardrobes and some devices were given to those in needs in Zenica. In the statements made by the Turkish battalion, it was welcomed that the Norwegian soldiers left their belongings behind while leaving the country. It was pointed out that such aids contribute to people in financial difficulties.<sup>49</sup>

A tree planting ceremony was held in Zenica on March 4, 2001 with the participation of students and Turkish soldiers. Doboj-Zenica cantonal governor Mugur Herceg, Ambassador of Turkey Ahmet Kamil Erozan and Zenica Mayor Zakir Pasalyc also participated in this event. 500 trees purchased from local suppliers were planted.<sup>50</sup> Governor Herceg stated that the trees would further strengthen relations between Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Governor Herceg also expressed his satisfaction with the participation of Turkish soldiers in the tree-planting event and congratulated the Turkish people for their help. Children from 31 schools in the town of Zenica, assisted by Turkish soldiers, planted their trees. Commemorative coins bearing the name of their school were hung on each tree.<sup>51</sup>

The Turkish contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina celebrated religious and national holidays with the participation of local people and provided various assistance. The Turkish Battalion Task Force provided food aid in its areas of responsibility in Zenica during religious holidays.<sup>52</sup> The aim was to help poor people, especially those who were displaced and living in camps. Thus, it was shown that SFOR supports social life in the country.<sup>53</sup> In addition, 23 April is the day that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was founded in 1920. Every year, people in Turkey celebrate National Sovereignty and Children's Day as a national holi-

48 1st Lt. Alexander Barb, "Turks offer a window on the future", *SFOR Informer*, 11 October 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/98/s98p15a/t001012q.htm> (Date of access: 26.06.2020).

49 1st Lt. Kristoffer Egeberg, "Partnership for help", *SFOR Informer*, 30 May 2001, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/114/p10b/t0110b.htm> (Date of access: 27.06.2020).

50 Aksaç, *Turkey's Military Effort*, p. 39.

51 1st Lt. Francois-Xavier Miller, "The roots of the future", *SFOR Informer*, 7 March 2001, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/108/s108p13a/t01030713a.htm> (Date of access: 27.06.2020).

52 Muğisuddin, *Ibid.*, p. 1851

53 1st Lt. Göksel Çaylı, "Bajram activities for the Turkish Battalion", *SFOR Informer*, 6 March 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/159/p14a/t02p14a.htm> (Date of access: 10.07.2020).

day. National Sovereignty and Children's Day was also celebrated in Bosna-Herzegovina with the participation of students and teachers of 16 schools from Vares, Zavidovici and Zenica. Turkish Battalion Task Force personnel and representatives from other SFOR countries attended this event in Zenica. The program started with a group of 50 people from primary schools in Zenica visiting the Turkish Task Force base camp. 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day was celebrated with various activities throughout the day. The Turkish-Bosniak Association Choir sang songs.<sup>54</sup> The April 23 celebrations were another factor that increased the sincere relationship between the local people and the Turkish contingent. The close relationship between Bosniaks and Turkish soldiers was observed in all areas. Together Turks and Bosniaks rediscovered a rich and shared cultural heritage in music, food and folk culture. Turkish soldiers played folk dances in front of the Atatürk portrait with the participation of local people at the military base in Zenica.<sup>55</sup>

## **II-) Tasks Undertaken by the Turkish Military Contingent in the Field of Health**

The Turkish military contingent, based in Zenica, continued to provide services to the people of the region in many areas within the scope of SFOR. Humanitarian assistance was provided in addition to operational tasks. In this context, the Turkish Battalion Special Medical Unit played an important role. 38 personnel worked in the hospital established in the region. These personnel included 4 doctors, a dentist, a pharmacist, a matron, 5 nurses, laboratories, 7 specialists for surgeries and 20 soldiers for various services. In addition to examining the SFOR soldiers, this medical unit provided health services to about 50 Bosnians every day. According to the statement of Lieutenant Sancar Eke, who worked as an internal medicine specialist in the Turkish Special Medical Unit, there were times when 95 patients were dealt with in one day. In addition, the number of people in need of medical assistance was higher in villages with greater risk of epidemics. Therefore, Turkish Special Medical Unit doctors made visits to the villages once a week. The Turkish Private Medical Unit Hospital was equipped with an operating clinic, a dental clinic room, a recovery room for patients, an x-ray facility and an analysis laboratory. According to the statement of Medical Unit Chief Lt. Col. Celil Özkan, first aid treatment was provided for

54 1st Lt. Göksel Çaylı, "Turkish National Sovereignty Day and Children's Festival", *SFOR Informer*, 5 May 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030505a/t030505a.htm> (Date of access: 18.07.2020).

55 "Turkish soldiers folk dancing", *SFOR Informer*, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/misc/turks/turkdanc.htm> (Date of access: 23.06.2020).

many health problems, from stomach problems to minor injuries. Critically ill patients were referred to local hospitals in Zenica or Sarajevo.<sup>56</sup>

The hospital had a bed capacity of 24 people. About six local patients were treated weekly. In the statements made by the personnel working in the hospital, it was emphasized that they displayed a very careful and humane approach without making any distinction between SFOR soldiers and local patients. As a result of this situation, a good communication was established between Turkish contingent soldiers and local patients. After the patients were treated, they invited Turkish health personnel to their homes. The needed medicines were also tried to be provided by the Turkish contingent. The Turkish healthcare team, who had worked in the region for a long time, gained experience on what types of diseases were common in the region and which medications were needed. In this region, diseases such as rheumatism, hypertension, asthma and pneumonia were common. In cases where the Turkish healthcare team could not provide drugs, they prescribed them to patients and tried to coordinate the procurement of these drugs from local hospitals.<sup>57</sup>

Mobile health services were also provided to those who could not come to the health clinic serving in the Turkish battalion centre and routine checks were made for people in need of assistance. People who could not be treated at home were helped to come to the hospital and provided with the medicine.<sup>58</sup> The Turkish Special Medicine Unit also provided wheelchairs and medical equipment to 25 veterans. Medical support services have been provided to 92,000 needy people since 1994.<sup>59</sup>

### III-) Reconstruction Activities of the Turkish Military Contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina

One of SFOR's missions was to support the return of refugees to their homes in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the war. SFOR engineers were involved in reconstruction projects.<sup>60</sup> In this context, members of the CIMIC team of the Turkish

56 Capt Gjon Vorfi, "The Turkish Special Medical Unit", *SFOR Informer*, 24 December 1997, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/nations/various/turkey/turmed.htm> (Date of access: 23.06.2020).

57 Capt. Vorfi, *Ibid.*

58 Capt. Russell Craig, "Turks Aid Collective Centres", *SFOR Informer*, 23 May 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/139/p14a/t02p14a.htm> (Date of access: 03.07.2020).

59 Aksaç, *Turkey's Military Effort*, p. 39.

60 See. John L. Cirafici, "SFOR in Bosnia in 1997: A Watershed Year", *Parameters*, Vol. 29, No 1, Spring 1999, pp. 80-91.

Battalion Task Force went out and patrolled every day and identified the Bosnians who needed help while rebuilding their lives.

The Turkish Battalion Task Force CIMIC team was in charge of 15 regions. Routine visits were made to these areas by CIMIC teams. CIMIC team members tried to identify the problems in the area, especially damaged houses and damaged water lines. The detected problems were first reported to their commanders by CIMIC team members and then forwarded to international organizations providing assistance. In the statement made by the Turkish task force, the importance of repairing the damages and eliminating the problems in order for people to return to their homes was emphasized. It was also said that TUBNTF in Bosnia was working to ensure this situation. Despite the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, many displaced people had to continue to live in other countries. The Turkish task force sought to provide the pre-war living environment by supporting returns. The Turkish task force also supported the preparation of projects for the reconstruction of destroyed settlements by drawing the attention of international organizations to the region.<sup>61</sup>

Turkish CIMIC teams in Zenica had the opportunity to observe the difficult conditions of the people on site with their daily patrols. These patrols played an important role in the emergence of various community projects aimed at helping refugees return to normal living conditions. In one of these projects, the reconstruction of a war-damaged school in the Lovnica area started. In another project, soldiers in the Turkish battalion raised money to help build a new water tank large enough to meet the needs of the growing population as refugees return to their homes. Engineers in the Turkish battalion also rebuilt many roads to support refugee returns to Lovnica. They spent over 1200 hours repairing the roads in the town.<sup>62</sup>

The municipalities of Zenica, Zavidovici, Vares and Teslic took part in the responsibility of Turkish CIMIC teams. Two basic practices played an important role in the aid works of the Turkish battalion. The first of these was the direct involvement of battalion engineers in all construction work. In addition, each soldier provided support by voluntarily participating in project financing. Tomici Village, located in the Teslic region and divided into two by the Velika Usora River (Big Usora), was one of the places where Turkish soldiers extended

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61 Sgt. Michael Maddox, "Turkish CIMIC team visit", *SFOR Informer*, 2 August 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/93/turkcim/t000730g.htm> (Date of access: 25.06.2020).

62 Sgt. Maddox, *Ibid.*

a helping hand. The region was heavily affected by the war that lasted four and a half months in 1992. The roads were in very bad condition. Most of the houses damaged during the war were not repaired. More than 72 people were planned to return to this village, where 58 people lived at that time. Turkish battalion engineers built 6 bridges on the river, which divides the village into two, and provided support at the transportation point. Major Sezai Büyükdag, the Turkish CIMIC commander, said in his statement that the needs of the local people were determined in contact with them. He also stated that they feel close to the local people because they share a common history with them.<sup>63</sup>

The Turkish battalion also carried out aid activities in the Zavidovici area. The Turkish CIMIC team, deployed in the Zavidovici Municipality building, accepted the applications of the local people, including the complaints and requirements, once a week. Mostly, financial aid, medical care, road and bridge construction were at the top of the lists of needs submitted to the Turkish battalion. The Turkish battalion in the area tried to make sure that people did not feel abandoned. On the Zavidovici hill, Turkish engineers built a 3-kilometer road. This road led to Vucujak, where 80 houses would be built.<sup>64</sup> The Turkish CIMIC team also undertook the repair of a damaged road connecting many small villages to the towns of Kovaci and Zavidovici. Some of the Turkish engineers were assigned to work on this project. This road was important for connecting many settlements to each other so that the children could go to school in Kovaci and the public could access the main road to Zavidovici.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, the Turkish battalion provided school supplies, pens, books, bags and medical aid for students in the Zavidovici district. Turkish CIMIC teams in Bosnia-Herzegovina took steps to increase the economy and agriculture in small residential areas, as well as to return life in big cities to normal as before the war. In this context, Turkish CIMIC teams planted 900 trees in the Zenica Turkish Park and built a fountain in the middle of this park. Restoration of religious buildings was thought to be particularly important to recreate the pre-war environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this context, an Orthodox church founded in 1885 and the Sultan Ahmet III Mosque, inherited from the Ottoman Empire and also known as the “Çarşı Mosque” in Zenica, were restored.<sup>66</sup>

63 Cpl. Jean-Philippe Lavigne, “Imece - a Turkish tradition”, *SFOR Informer*, 3 October 2001, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/123/p08a/t0108a.htm> (Date of access: 28.06.2020).

64 Cpl. Lavigne, *Ibid.*

65 Lt. Col. Sam Burns, “Working hand in hand”, *SFOR Informer*, 18 July 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/143/p11a/t02p11a.htm> (date of access: 03.07.2020).

66 Cpl. Lavigne, “Imece - a Turkish tradition”.

The construction of the “Bridge of Peace” started in mid-September 2001 on the Velika Usora River, which divides a village in Tomici into two. The bridge was opened on November 23, thanks to the efforts of the Turkish CIMIC team and local residents. The bridge allowed families displaced during the war to return to their pre-war homes. In particular, this bridge became a vital building for people in Vidovici, Vjivorak and Toletinjac, located on the other side of the Velika Usora River, to return home. Before the war, there were about 185 houses in the area. The opening of the Bridge of Peace was celebrated with a big ceremony in the village. Despite the heavy snowfall, people came from all sides of the valley and gathered around the bridge and expressed their happiness.<sup>67</sup>

Turkish task force soldiers carried out joint repair activities with soldiers from other countries in SFOR. In this context, Turkish troops on patrol in the region learned that the Maoca Bridge was in bad condition. Later, it was decided to repair the bridge. 10 Turkish engineers from the battalion in Zenica and 18 American engineers from the 648th engineer battalion at the Eagle base spent three days together to rebuild the Maoca Bridge. American and Turkish soldiers worked in harmony. David Henderson, leader of the American engineering team, said in his statement that they hoped to work with the Turks again.<sup>68</sup>

Turkish and Finnish CIMIC teams also worked jointly. They organized joint patrols as part of a four-day program to assist the return process of people who left their homes during the war. Thanks to these patrols, the problems of refugees returning to their homes were observed on the spot. In Ocevlja, the Turkish CIMIC team coordinated efforts to build a large and modern school. Although the school had only five students, it was a necessary step in bringing refugees back to the area. The Turkish CIMIC team also supported the rebuilding of a school with 34 students in Ligatici. The Turkish CIMIC team donated 750 Euros for the construction of the school. In addition, it was announced that another 5.500 Euros would be donated to ensure that the construction of the school is completed.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Cpl. Jean-Philippe Lavigne, “Bridge over troubled water”, *SFOR Informer*, 28 November 2001, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/127/p14a/t0114a.htm> (Date of access: 30.06.2020).

68 1st Lt. Alexander Barb, “Together on the bridge”, *SFOR Informer*, 3 May 2001, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/112/s112p04a/t0105034a.htm> (Date of access: 26.06.2020).

69 Capt. Russell Craig, “Two Nations, One Mission”, *SFOR Informer*, 9 May 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/138/p03a/t02p03a.htm> (Date of access: 03.07.2020).

#### IV-) Contribution of the Turkish Military Contingent to Ensuring Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Turkish soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, apart from repair and humanitarian aid activities, carried out works in order to provide security in the regions where they were assigned. Soldiers of the Turkish battalion undertook the task of monitoring the destruction of illegal weapons at the Zenica steel factory. Thus, it was aimed to prevent the possibility of an armed conflict in the country again.

Local residents handed over their weapons to local police units within the scope of "Operation Harvest". This operation was launched by NATO in March 1998. The aim of the operation was to create a safe environment in the country by collecting unregistered weapons and ammunition from private houses and secret storages throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mass media, such as local radio stations, newspapers, and information posters, were effectively used to get people to hand over their weapons to the authorities. These weapons collected were brought to the factory in Zenica. These weapons, which were later disassembled and melted in furnaces, became unusable.<sup>70</sup> The soldiers in charge of the Turkish battalion tried to ensure that this process was carried out meticulously.

Operation Harvest has been a long-term task. On 27-29 July 2002, the Turkish Battalion Task Force collected the weapons in the hands of the people in Zavidovici as part of the Harvest Operation. Approximately 80 percent of the population of 50,000 in this region is Bosniak. The task was coordinated by the Turkish CIMIC team. Since the people were not obliged to hand over the weapons, a polite language was used towards the local people and the weapons were collected by persuasion. Therefore, the soldiers involved in the operation received special training. Harvest Operation, which took place between 27-29 July, was very successful. As a result of the harvest, a total of 96 rifles, 11 rocket launchers, 28,028 bullets and 707 cartridges were collected. In addition to rifles and ammunition, 949 grenades, 68,700 grams of TNT, 62,550 grams of gunpowder were obtained. 94 mines were also seized in this operation.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, the nationwide information campaign was accelerated to get people to hand over their weapons. In this context, as of February 2003, a total of 1.092 radio and television broadcasts were made. 775 home visits were made and thousands of notices were prepared and distributed to the public. The Turkish

70 Lt. Eric Bouysson, "Weapon Out-processing", *SFOR Informer*, 28 February 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/133/p07a/t02p07a.htm> (Date of access: 02.07.2020).

71 1st Lt. Antonio Ruiz González, "Turkish troops collect and destroy weapons during annual harvest", *SFOR Informer*, 15 August 2002, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/145/p08a/t02p08a.htm> (Date of access: 05.07.2020).



Battalion Task Force carried out Operation Harvest activities in their areas of responsibility in coordination with the local police and the army. Thus, it was aimed to teach the armed forces of the country about illegal weapon and explosive collection methods.<sup>72</sup> On 3, 4 and 7 March 2003, more than 3,000 small arms were destroyed at the Zenica steel factory. Turkish Battalion Task Force soldiers monitored and supervised these activities on the site.<sup>73</sup>

The Turkish contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina was in good relations with the soldiers of other countries throughout its mission. With the invitation of New Zealand soldiers, Turkish task force soldiers participated in the Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day held in Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 25 April 2003. Australia, New Zealand and Turkey, fought in opposite camps during the First World War. In 1915, the soldiers of these countries fought each other for the first time in the Gallipoli Campaign. Thousands of soldiers died from both sides. However, during the war, a friendship started to form between the Turkish and Anzac soldiers. In fact, they were exchanged gifts from time to time between the trenches. On this Memorial Day held in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkish and Anzac soldiers took part in SFOR operations and conveyed the message that peace is most valuable.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, on the one of the Turkey's national holidays, May 19 Atatürk Commemoration and Youth and Sports Day, a friendly football match was arranged between the Turkish and Greek soldiers serving in SFOR. The match was held in Zenica, where the Turkish military unit was stationed. In the comments made after the match, it was stated that the match was important in terms of increasing the friendship between the soldiers of the two countries.<sup>75</sup> The good relations between the SFOR soldiers contributed positively to their joint action against the security problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, Turkish soldiers, along with Polish soldiers, carried out joint patrols in the Vares countryside, which was under the responsibility of the Turkish Battalion Task Force. Patrols were one of the main methods used by SFOR to ensure a peaceful and safe environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The purpose of this joint

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72 Lt. Anne-Claude Gouy, "Ghostburners, from collection to destruction", *SFOR Informer*, 6 February 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/157/p08a/t02p08a.htm> (Date of access: 06.07.2020).

73 2nd Lt. Agustín López Marín, "A dream comes true", *SFOR Informer*, 31 March 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030331a/t030331a.htm> (Date of access: 16.07.2020).

74 1st Lt. Göksel Çaylı, "Turks and ANZACS commemorate together", *SFOR Informer*, 9 May 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030509a/t030509a.htm> (Date of access: 19.07.2020).

75 Maj. Juan A. Pina, "Peace Stabilisers' football match", *SFOR Informer*, 7 June 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/89/football/t000608h.htm> (Date of access: 24.06.2020).

patrol was to visit local residents, talk to them and gather information about their concerns to show that SFOR soldiers are here to support the peace process.<sup>76</sup>

Turkish Battalion Task Force soldiers continued to carry out joint patrols with the soldiers of other countries in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to contribute to the establishment of a lasting peace and security environment. In this framework, joint patrols were held with British soldiers in Maglaj and Banja Luka regions between 12-16 May 2003.<sup>77</sup> Again, in the same month, joint patrols were organized with US soldiers. In particular, it was checked whether people living in rural areas have any problems regarding their security.<sup>78</sup>

Another important threat to security in the country was the mines. During the war, mines were placed in many parts of the country. According to estimates, there were approximately 1 million mines in the country. These mines posed a great danger, especially for children. It was an important issue to warn children of the dangers that mines can pose. In this context, specialist sergeants from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team of the Turkish battalion informed the children about the mines. The Turkish experts, pointed out those mines can be found in fields, next to trees, briefly everywhere. In the mine awareness lessons, different types of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines were demonstrated to inform children. Before leaving the classes, each student was handed out explanatory notes about mines in their own language.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

The Turkish military contingent, which was in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the SFOR mission between the years of 1996-2004, carried out important works for the return of Bosnians to their normal lives after the war. In particular, great efforts were made to enable people to settle in villages and cities that were evacuated during the war. Reconstruction activities were given importance to realize this purpose. Broken bridges and damaged roads were repaired, and the connections between settlements were restored. Symbolic historical buildings of cities were repaired. Efforts were made so that the education of the children was not interrupted. In addition to repairing schools damaged during the war, new schools

76 Maj. Viktor Nikolla, "SFOR's soldiers beyond the borders", *SFOR Informer*, 26 February 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030326b/t030326b.htm> (Date of access: 12.07.2020).

77 2nd Lt. Özgür Cüce, "Joint patrol of Turkish and English troops", *SFOR Informer*, 16 June 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030616b/t030616b.htm> (Date of access: 20.07.2020).

78 Nedima Hadziibrisevic, "Turkish oldies teach US rookies", *SFOR Informer*, 9 May 2003, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/articles/030509b/t030509b.htm> (Date of access: 20.07.2020).

79 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Alexander Barb, "Turkish EOD give school children lessons", *SFOR Informer*, 22 November 2000, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/indexinf/101/s101p11b/t00112211b.htm> (Date of access: 26.06.2020).

were built. The materials required for the education of the children were tried to be provided by the Turkish contingent.

In addition to the reconstruction activities, the Turkish military contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina also attached importance to humanitarian aid activities. With the money they collected among themselves, the soldiers in the Turkish contingent provided assistance to Bosnians in economic difficulties. Furthermore, mobile teams in the Turkish military contingent reached out to people in rural areas and determined their needs. In this way, it was aimed to transfer the assistance to the needy people completely. These aids provided by the Turkish contingent had been an important support for the Bosnian people, who were healing their wounds after the war. In this way, the message was conveyed to them that they were not alone.

The Turkish military contingent also paid attention to the issue of providing health services to the Bosnian people. In this framework, a special medical unit was established within the Turkish brigade. Patients were treated in the established hospital. The treatment and control of people who could not come to the hospital were carried out with the mobile health teams formed. In addition to health services, the Turkish military contingent supported efforts to ensure security in the country in order to strengthen the peaceful climate in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to return life to normal. After the war, the Turkish soldiers carried out important works in its region in collecting and destroying the weapons in the country. Moreover, public awareness was provided against mines in the country. Special information meetings were held in schools for children about explosives. During the 8-year period spent in SFOR, the Turkish military contingent took care to maintain a good relationship with the local people. Turkish soldiers made a significant contribution to the formation of a permanent peaceful environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina by working in coordination with the soldiers of other countries, as envisaged by the SFOR mission. In this respect, the Turkish military contingent successfully completed the tasks assigned to it in SFOR.

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