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## NATO-Stabilization Force

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### **NATO-Stabilization Force**

The NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) was established in 1996 following the successful implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (established in Paris in December 1995) by NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR).

IFOR carried out the military aspects of the peace accord in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Following the completion of this one year military task, in December 1996, NATO Foreign and Defense ministers agreed to establish "a reduced military presence"—SFOR—to maintain and stabilize peace.

Current tasks performed by SFOR include the deterrence or prevention of new hostilities, the promotion of a safe environment for the peace process, and most notably, a mine awareness course for physicians.

The mine situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is estimated to include 30,000 mine fields containing 1,000,000 mines—approximations that may be on the low-end. The Mine Coordination Cell (MICC), a department of SFOR that works with the United Nation's demining branch, employs civilians who collect information on this situation and produce mine field maps upon request.

The MICC also includes military personnel specializing in mine instruction. These instructors organize mine awareness courses for SFOR personnel and other people living or working in mine affected regions.

British WO2 Geordie Howe, a MICC mine awareness instructor, said, "Mines are not only a concern for military but for everybody working in [Bosnia-Herzegovina]."

Most recently, MICC led Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), a group comprised of health professionals, scientists and concerned citizens, through mine awareness instruction. According to Laura Vollen, M.D., director of PHR Bosnia Projects, PHR provides technical assistance for mass grave exhumations and helps to identify the bodies of missing people.

PHR's search for mass graves leads it into open fields, creating the need for mine awareness.

The typical MICC mine awareness session includes instruction on indicators of mined areas, mine types, the effects of mine accidents and the necessary reactions to mine incidents. However, SFOR instructors are capable of adapting the sessions to specialized organizations.

Canadian WO Brock Durette, a MICC instructor, said, "We are very flexible. We can adapt the course contents, place and time to each necessity. If an organization wants a mine awareness course they just have to phone us."

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