

## Stabilization Forces - SFOR

### THE EUROCORPS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

The Eurocorps experienced its first commitment in an overseas operation as the soldiers of the Staff and the Headquarters Battalion were deployed to Sarajevo in 1998. On February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1998, the five Member States decided to put a contingent of 150 Eurocorps servicemembers at the disposal of the headquarters of the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR) for an 18-month duration with three successive rotations.

The SFOR mandate started on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1996, the day on which the IFOR (Implementation Force) mandate ended. Since December 1995, the IFOR role had been to restore peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina whereas the SFOR role was henceforth to stabilize peace on the basis of resolution No 1088 of the UN Security Council.



The first Eurocorps contingent arrived there on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998. All deployed servicemembers occupied either staff or HQ support functions. At the end of June, the first contingent stationed in the cantonments of Butmir and Illidza was full, which meant 32 officers, 91 NCOs, 23 soldiers and one civilian.

The primary SFOR mission was to contribute to the security necessary in order to consolidate peace. During March 1999, the NATO air campaign in Serbia and Kosovo as well as the entry of Army troops into Kosovo in June 1999 represented just as many moments of great tension. Besides its purely military aspects, this mission also included an important civil component. During the presence of the Eurocorps servicemembers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, SFOR notably provided the safety of the national elections in October 1998 and a secure Balkans Stability Pact Summit in Sarajevo in July 1999.

The first rotation ended in December 1998. The second and third ones lasted from January to June 1999 and from July to December 1999 respectively. Even a fourth contingent with approximately twenty servicemembers was formed in January 2000 but its main mission was to allow SFOR providing the transition after the Eurocorps personnel had left. The last Eurocorps servicemember was back in Strasbourg on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000.



Apart from the increased publicity the Eurocorps had at media and public opinion level, the SFOR mission gave above all its personnel the experience necessary in order to prepare and execute the KFOR (Kosovo Forces) mission that started in April 2000.