

Kosovo (1999-present)

After World War II Yugoslavia (formed in 1918 after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) becomes a communist republic under Prime Minister Tito. It is comprised of 6 republics – Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro – as well as 2 provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

1980 – Ethnic tensions begin to flare after Tito's death.

1991 – Slovenia and Croatia each declare independence. Slovenia breaks away with only a minimum of fighting. However, because 12% of Croatia's population is Serbian, Yugoslavia fights hard against its secession for the next four years.

1992 – Bosnia-Herzegovina declares independence. Bosnia is the most ethnically diverse of the Yugoslav republics: 42% Muslim, 31% Serbian, and 17% Croatian. Tension is high and Bosnia erupts into war.

1995 – A fragile peace is achieved and the country is partitioned into three areas, each governed by one of the three ethnic groups.

Serbia and Montenegro form the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with Slobodan **Milosevic** as its leader. The U.S. does not recognize this new government as the successor to the former Yugoslavia.

1996 – In the southern province of Kosovo, militants begin attacking Serbian police.

1998 – **Milosevic** sends troops to the province of Kosovo to stop the unrest. Guerilla war breaks out.

1999 – Peace talks fail and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) threatens to launch airstrikes on Serbian targets. NATO intervenes in Kosovo in **Operation Allied Force** on March 26, and action continues until June 10. NATO-led international peace-enforcement forces attempt to restore stability in what was determined to be a strategic region lying between Alliance member states. According to NATO records, more than 38,000 sorties were flown, without a single Allied fatality.

Security forces (KFOR) totaling over 46,000 military personnel from 39 countries are deployed on **June 12** in **Operation Joint Guardian**, a multinational effort with substantial NATO participation.

NATO forces have been at the forefront of humanitarian efforts in this region. Of particular concern has been the treatment of Albanian refugees and other abuses of human rights during this period of "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated by the Milosevic-led forces.

It has been estimated that by the end of **May 1999**, 1.5 million people have been expelled from their homes in Kosovo. At least 5,000

Kosovars have been executed, and 225,000 Kosovar men are believed to be missing.

New elections are held in **2000**, but Milosevic refuses to release the complete results. Citizens are outraged. A general strike is called. Mobs attack the Parliament building and Milosevic's support diminishes. Milosevic steps down. The United States and the European Union begin to lift economic sanctions, but peacekeeping troops remain in the region.

Given this history, building peace in Kosovo will continue to be a long-term commitment on the part of the international community.



USAID photo

I am voting in honor of my son, Robert M. P. Roy, who is in the U.S. Navy. He was stationed first on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* and now is on the *USS Harry S. Truman*. He was only 18 years old when he went to the war in Kosovo. He was scared but honored to represent the United States of America. He was ready to give up his life.

Janey Rivard, Lisbon



Robert M. Roy