
LESSON 9

CASE STUDY: BOSNIA

Introduction

Purpose This lesson provides an important, contemporary case study--Bosnia--against which OOTW theory and concepts can be seen operating in the "real world."

Why Study Bosnia? As a peacekeeping case study, Bosnia highlights the relationship among war termination, political and military objectives, and the achievement of U.S. national interests.

Relationship to Other Instruction This lesson provides a practical case study on Third World warfighting, unconventional doctrine, small wars, and insurgency-counterinsurgency.

Study Time This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require about 2.5 hours of study.

Educational Objectives

Aspects of the War	Discuss the historic, religious, and cultural aspects of the war in Bosnia.
Military Roles	Analyze the military roles of the U.N., NATO, and the U.S. in the conflict. [JPME Area 3(a)]
U.S. Participation	Analyze the U.S. participation in Bosnia in terms of mission and the end state. [JPME Areas 1(b) and 3(d)]
Problems	Discuss the operational and tactical problems facing IFOR peacekeepers in Bosnia. [JPME Areas 3(a) and 3(b)]
Issues	Evaluate the issues of NATO command, mission creep, peacekeeping, peace engagement, moral leadership, and the Weinberger Doctrine.
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/b/0.3 3/a/0.5 3/b/0.3 3/d/0.3

Discussion

Historical Background

Bosnia has a tradition of anarchy dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, it was the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand by Serbian nationalists that triggered World War I. In this same mountainous terrain, Axis forces were unable to dislodge Tito's partisans during World War II. After Tito's death, Yugoslavia dissolved into warring factions, torn by ethnic and religious hatreds that resurfaced after hundreds of years.

The conflict that erupted in Bosnia in 1992 can be seen as part of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The conflict has revolved around two competing views of Bosnia--the first as a united multi-ethnic society; the second as a state partitioned along ethnic lines.

Attempts by Bosnia's neighbors, Serbia and Croatia, to expand their borders at the latter's expense using their fellow nationals in Bosnia as a springboard have been a key factor in the conflict.

At the same time, Bosnia's patchwork settlement among its three main communities (Bosnian Moslem, Serb, and Croatian) made the targeting of civilian populations a necessity if partisan based on ethnically-pure zones is to be achieved. This has led to "ethnic cleansing" and other atrocities on a scale not seen in Europe since the end of World War II, which helped prompt the U.N., NATO, and a reluctant United States to become involved militarily.

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Discussion, Continued

Operational Environment

The operational environment is set against a background of steep, tree-covered mountains which limits the effectiveness of heavy mechanized and close-air support operations. These geographic disadvantages are compounded by cultural ones. As in Somalia, with its 13 clans, the identity of a single enemy is obscured because of a triple threat from Serbians, Croats, and Moslems.

In the past, the struggle was a mixture of conventional and unconventional warfare, combining heavily armed regular forces (tanks and artillery) with roving bands of militia from neighboring Serbia and Croatia. These unconventional forces laid ambushes, planted mines, and staged hit-and-run attacks on vulnerable outposts and supply lines. In addition, the warring factions deployed on familiar territory, and many contained seasoned combat veterans.

The following international implications impacted upon the conflict:

wRussia's Orthodox Christianity and history of Pan-Slavism made it a traditional ally of the Serbs.

wThe Croats, on the other hand, served as cavalry in the Habsburg Empire and have retained cultural ties with Germany.

wFinally, the Muslim descendants of the Ottoman Empire were supported by both moderate and radical Islamic countries like Turkey and Iran as well as by Mujahadin gunmen.

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Discussion, Continued

Politico-Military Challenges For the United States, Bosnia continues to present several politico-military challenges. On the theoretical level, it provides a model for the Clausewitzian Trinity. Even if the U.S. military accomplishes its mission in Bosnia, the other two legs of the trinity (government and people) remain divided over continuing involvement after the initial end state has passed. Indeed, there is still confusion about the original mission and legitimate U.S. military concern over "mission creep" and the arrest of war criminals. Bosnia therefore raises some disturbing parallels with previous U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia.

Moreover, with the draw-down of U.S. forces in Bosnia, remaining U.S. ground personnel are more vulnerable. No hostile faction in Bosnia could defeat the U.S. contingent on the conventional battlefield; however, it could inflict casualties through small-scale ambushes or terrorist attacks to draw media attention. By targeting these critical vulnerabilities (casualties and the media), they could reach the U.S. center of gravity--public opinion--and force a premature U.S. withdrawal.

Bosnia also revives the constitutional issue of the President's right as Commander-in Chief to deploy U.S. troops abroad without Congressional approval. At the heart of the intervention though, is the issue of morality vs. the national interest. Is the United States, as the world's only superpower, morally obligated to prevent genocide? Or should U.S. troops be placed in harm's way only when vital national interest is at stake as the Weinberger Doctrine advocates?

Dayton Agreements With termination of the war in late 1995, focus shifted to a negotiated end state whose objectives are embodied in the Dayton Agreements. IFOR, led by the U.S. contingent, were the key element in implementing the provisions of the accords.

The complex operational environment sets U.S. interests against the background of difficult terrain, severe demographic dislocations, divergent fractional objectives, significant armed elements (including heavily-armed regular units), and the political influence and direct involvement of neighboring Serbia and Croatia.

Required Readings

Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings wClinton, William (President). "America Must Choose Peace." *Defense Issues*, Nov. 1995. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-. This address states that America has a duty to help implement the peace agreement we brokered in Bosnia.

wMalcolm, Noel. "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure." *The National Interest*, Spring 1995. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-. Malcolm states that what he sees as failure in our Bosnia policy is the result of false assumptions about the causes of the conflict.

wPerry, William (Secretary of Defense). "Deployment of the U.S. Troops With the Bosnia Peace Implementation Force." *Testimony before House Committee on International Relations*, Nov. 1995. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-. Secretary Perry's testimony before House Committee on International Relations on the deployment of troops to Bosnia.

wJoulwan, George A. (Gen). News Briefing, Sept. 1996. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-.

wSummary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. U. S. Department of State, Oct. 1995. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-.

wKaplan, Robert D. "Catch the Bad Guys." *Washington Post*, July, 1996. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-.

wLorenz, F. M. (Col) USMC. "Stay the Course." *Armed Forces Journal*, Nov. 1996. Find this reading in the *Operations Other Than War (OOTW) Readings*, Annex H, pp. H- to H-.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The readings listed are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information about topics in this lesson that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

wEspin, Barth and Per Erik Solli. "Implementing Peace: Some Reflections on the Early Days of the Dayton Year." *CSIA Workshop*. Boston: JFK School of Government, Harvard University, 1996.

wCigar, Norman L. *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995.

wJoint Pub 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*.

Issues for Consideration

America Must Choose Peace	How did President Clinton justify the deployment of U.S. troops to Bosnia in his "American Must Choose Peace" statement? Do you agree or disagree with the President's position?
Statements	Review the statements of the former Secretary of Defense Perry and General Joulwan and the State Department Summary of the Dayton Peace Agreement with regard to the following: the reasons for ground deployment, the size and structure of the force, prior training, the IFOR mission, ROEs, exit strategy, follow-on force/mission, force protection, and mines and weather.
Bosnia and the West	What position does Noel Malcolm take in his article "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure"?
War Criminals	In your opinion, should IFOR forces hunt down and arrest condemned war criminals in Bosnia? How would such actions relate to "mission creep"?
Peacekeeping Experience	Has the Bosnian peacekeeping experience been a success so far? Is there an appropriate exit strategy? How long should IFOR and U.S. forces remain in Bosnia?
