



The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Unfulfilled Promise

AI-DPC BiH Security Risk Analysis
Policy Note # 04

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PREFACE

This DPC-Atlantic Initiative Policy Note is part of a series of occasional thematic papers which collectively compose the second edition of DPC and the AI's Security Risk Analysis Study. The first edition, published in October 2011, assessed a full spectrum of risk factors: the functionality of government institutions at all levels, political use of conflict rhetoric in the media, police, army, privately-held weapons, private security companies, religious and ethnic radicalism, socio-economic strain, juvenile delinquency and sports violence, and the posture of the international community in BiH.

This second edition assesses these same factors from the vantage point of the present day, including new information previously unavailable to the authors. These papers are not mere updates of the first edition; each Policy Note is a stand-alone assessment of the theme in question. However, where information from the 2011 edition remains relevant, it is included.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH or “the force”) will mark its tenth anniversary in 2016 and stands as a useful reminder of the considerable progress achieved in the first decade following the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. However, the force was assembled just when all other state-building consolidation and reforms began to stop, stall or reverse.. The AFBiH is not immune to the effects of the polarized political environment and its attendant afflictions – patronage and clientelism, short-termism, and a lack of accountability. Furthermore, the Republika Srpska (RS) Government has perennially targeted the AFBiH’s budget for cuts as part of its policy to demilitarize BiH, and thereby further weaken the state.

In addition, in much the same way that Dayton included compromises which have been proven to obstruct the creation of a functional and accountable governance system for BiH, the tradeoffs required to create the AFBiH impedes its integration. In particular, the maintenance of ethnic majority infantry battalions poses a risk in the event of the emergence of further interethnic polarization, as does the (ceremonial) regimental system – originally intended as a containment mechanism for Armija BiH, Vojske RS, and HVO traditions for veterans of these forces, but now being perpetuated by the encouragement of new recruits to join them. Full integration of the force down to the operational level remains unrealized. Furthermore, sources indicate that currying favor with political and religious authorities in pursuit of advancement has become ever more visible in the ranks.

Progress toward the goal of NATO membership, questioned by both the RS Government and more recently by Serb member of the BiH Presidency Mladen Ivanić, has been hobbled by the fact that the ownership of defense property remains in dispute. Resolution of this issue, which would free troops from defending these sites for other duties, is an explicit requirement for the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to be activated. Registration of this property, ruled State property by the BiH Constitutional Court and more recently the Court of BiH, was part of the coalition agreement for the BiH Government, but remains vehemently opposed by the RS.

Despite these considerable impediments, the AFBiH has performed admirably, both abroad in peace support operations (with regular contingents supporting ISAF in Afghanistan) and at home. In the latter case, during and following the May 2014 flood emergency, the AFBiH saved lives and property of BiH citizens throughout the flood affected areas. This boosted morale considerably and connected the force to the citizenry as never before. The AFBiH was the only state, entity, or cantonal official body to emerge with its reputation enhanced through its flood response; all others performed miserably. This disaster response experience also identified deficiencies in equipment, training and preparation which can be remediated to ensure better performance in the future.

Finally, the AFBiH is inducting “new blood” into the officer corps through a British-sponsored program to recruit university graduates. The effort was universally lauded in the author’s interviews as an avenue to further professionalize the force.

In short, the problems identified with the AFBiH are essentially the same as they were four years ago, when the first edition of the DPC/Atlantic Initiative (AI) Security Risk Analysis was published. There is no

expectation that the AFBiH will generate destabilization or initiate inter-ethnic violence. But there is almost universal belief that in the event of such violence, it would collapse along its ethnic fault lines. The AFBiH cannot but reflect the politically-driven polarization which dominates the political arena in BiH.

With these findings in mind, DPC and AI recommend the following to Western governments:

- 1) End the ambiguity on BiH security guarantees: The reduction of EUFOR to a paltry approximately 600 troops has conveyed the signal to politicians and citizens alike that there is no longer a credible deterrent to destabilizing actors, nor a capability to react to unforeseen crises or undeterrable threats. The EU and NATO need to finally state without ambiguity that any attempts to split BiH or initiate interethnic violence will be confronted forcefully.
- 2) Demonstrate steadfast Western solidarity and firmness regarding compliance with legal decisions relevant to defense property: The 2012 BiH Constitutional Court decision on State property has never been the rallying cry it should have been, given the resolution of the RS Government to defy it. There must be concrete consequences for RS Government decision-makers, which can include EU “restrictive measures.”
- 3) Continue long-term support to “new blood” in the AFBiH. The British-sponsored new officer induction program is universally praised. Other donors should consider similar or complimentary efforts to introduce new talent and skills into the AFBiH.
- 4) Provide support for force integration at the company level. Operational unit integration, particularly for units deployed abroad and for newly-inducted officers, is an important goal that needs to be an explicitly defined – and articulated – target for Western assistance.
- 5) Assign experts to assist in procurement, so the defense budget can be wisely spent in a timely fashion. Assistance in developing tenders and due diligence by Western militaries/MoDs would maximize the utility of the limited defense budget and external assistance.
- 6) Provide assistance in planning for natural disasters: An approach similar to the preliminary efforts that were undertaken to remediate serious deficiencies in police coordination should be undertaken for the AFBiH and the wider civil defense architecture in BiH, including the Ministry of Security and entity and cantonal bodies.
- 7) Provide or assist in procuring specialized equipment for civil emergencies, including through regional pooling/collaborative arrangements, focusing particularly on the deficiencies identified in the May 2014 flood emergency: helicopters capable of vertical extraction, firefighting equipment, boats, and specialized engineering equipment.

Introduction and Brief History

The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) is regularly referenced as a signal achievement of the state-strengthening process that reached its apogee in 2005. In psychological terms alone, it was probably the greatest accomplishment in state-building in BiH to date. In 1996, the concept of unifying the belligerent armies into a single command and control structure, radically shrinking the active-duty force to approximately 10,000 and ending conscription, was inconceivable. But a confluence of events and leadership undertaken by both international (OHR, OSCE and NATO in particular) and BiH actors within the scope of the Defense Reform Commission made the establishment of a BiH Ministry of Defense (MoD) a reality by early 2004, and of a unified AFBiH in 2006.¹

Even prior to the unification of the entity armed forces into the AFBiH as an all-volunteer force in early 2006, a joint unexploded ordinance platoon was deployed to Iraq.² Participation in international peacekeeping and peace-support operations has been a focal point of the AFBiH's development, with a Peace Support Operations Training Command (PSOTC) co-located at Butmir with the AFBiH Operational Command (as well as EUFOR and NATO Headquarters).³ AFBiH troops have repeatedly deployed to serve in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, where they have learned valuable skills, operating in unfamiliar environments. The most recent deployment involved troops from the 6th Infantry Brigade, based in Banja Luka.⁴ Such deployments are expected to continue.

BiH is considerably more secure as a result of defense reform and the establishment of the AFBiH. A number of interviewees compared the defense reform process in a favorable light as opposed to the failed process to achieve real police restructuring. As one military professional put it, "Defense reform was NATO-led, with a goal, a strategy to reach it, one voice – destroying the old, building the new."⁵ Yet the political environment in which the Defense Reform Commission operated and the AFBiH was initiated was far more favorable than that in which the AFBiH has been forced to develop – and even then many compromises were necessary to allow it to move forward. Many involved in the process lament the fact that it has not developed further due to political factors within BiH.⁶ But it was far from a "clean slate" process of "destroying the old." One interviewee opined wistfully, "it's not a seed (of future conflict) – it's a flower of the former armies we didn't decapitate when we should have."⁷ Another was blunt: "The Army was a fudge... it just contained [the problem]."⁸

None of those consulted for the first or second editions of this study believed the AFBiH would be an instigator of destabilization in BiH, but the force's reliability – or survivability – under acute stress was widely questioned. This Policy Note attempts to assess the factors affecting the AFBiH and its viability as

¹ *Brochure of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p.5, Available at <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf>

² *Ibid*, p.5.

³ *Ibid*, p.33.

⁴ http://mod.gov.ba/OS_BIH/Aktivnosti/mirovne_misije/Archive.aspx?pageIndex=1, accessed September 20, 2015.

⁵ Interview with international military professional, May 2011.

⁶ Discussions with international military professionals, April-August 2011.

⁷ Discussion with international organization and military professionals, diplomats, June 2011.

⁸ Discussion with international military professional, April 2011.

a professional force under its legal chain of command, especially in situations of ethnic polarization. It also presents how the current climate of political polarization influences the AFBiH and threatens its future.

Force Structure

The AFBiH is not a large military force, even by regional standards.⁹ It is also well below its mandated strength of 10,000 active duty soldiers, 1,000 civilians, and 5,000 reservists.¹⁰ According to senior BiH MoD officials, the current total figure, MoD included, is just over 10,000.¹¹

The law that prescribes the force strength also determines the force composition. These quotas of “constituent peoples” are linked to the 1991 census, with some overrepresentation for Croats vis-à-vis their proportion of the population at that time. The latest publicly available personnel breakdown dates from mid-2015, but the numbers remain exactly the same as in 2011:¹²

Bosniaks: 45.90% or 4,826 persons;

Serbs: 33.60% or 3,533 persons;

Croats: 19.80% or 2,084 persons; and

Other nationalities: 0.70% or 74 persons.

The force structure is divided into operational and support commands.¹³ All command structures are multiethnic – even the monoethnic infantry battalions are subsumed into brigades that include battalions from all three constituent peoples, and there is a requirement that at least ten percent of the units are drawn from other ethnicities.¹⁴ As of September 2015, the AFBiH is structured as follows¹⁵ – the locations of the commands and units are listed in parentheses:

Joint Staff AFBiH (Sarajevo)

Lt.Gen. Anto Jeleč – Chief of Staff

⁹ Bosnia’s military is roughly equal in size or smaller than many NATO and EU members of similar demographic size – approximately 4 million (Denmark, Lithuania, Ireland). Regionally, not only do neighbors Serbia and Croatia (which is only about 20% larger in population than BiH) have significantly larger armed forces (roughly 200% and 100% larger, respectively). Macedonia, which has about half BiH’s population, has a comparably-sized force, with approximately 7,600 uniformed troops. See <http://www.morm.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BELA-KNIGA-NA-ODBRANATA.pdf>, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Brochure of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 24, available at <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf>

¹¹ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015. *The Brochure of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p.24, at: <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf> lists the mandated strength as 10,000 professional soldiers (including officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted personnel), with a reserve of 5,000 troops and 1,000 civilian employees.

¹² Interview with senior BiH MoD official, June 2015; Discussion with international military professional, November 2008.

¹³ An organigram is available on page 21 of the 2015 MoD/AFBiH *Brochure*, available at: <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf>

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 2015.

¹⁵ *Brochure of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2015, p.23-24, available at <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf>

Maj.Gen. Mirko Tepšić – Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations

Maj.Gen. Senad Mašović – Deputy Chief of Staff, Resources

AFBiH Operational Command (Sarajevo)

- 4th Infantry Brigade (Čapljina)
- 5th Infantry Brigade (Tuzla)
- 6th Infantry Brigade (Banja Luka)

Artillery Battalions (Doboj, Mostar, and Žepče)

Air Forces and Air Defense Brigade (Zalužani, outside Banja Luka)

- Air Defense Battalion (Sarajevo)
- Air Surveillance and Warning Battalion (Zalužani, outside Banja Luka)
- Air Forces Support Battalion (elements in both Banja Luka and Sarajevo)

Tactical Support Brigade (Sarajevo)

- Armored Battalion (Tuzla)
- Communications Battalion (Pale)
- Engineering Battalion (Derventa)
- Military Intelligence Battalion (Sarajevo)
- Mine Clearance Battalion (Travnik)
- Military Police Battalion (Sarajevo)
- Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare Battalion (Tuzla)

AFBiH Support Command (Banja Luka)

- Personnel Management Command (Banja Luka)
- Training and Doctrine Command (Travnik)
- Logistics Command (Doboj)

Logistical Support Battalions (Banja Luka, Čapljina, Tuzla, Sarajevo)

AFBiH Missions and the Ongoing Defense Review

According to Article 4 of the BiH Law on Defense, the missions of the AFBiH¹⁶ are limited to the

¹⁶ Law on Defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005, available at: <http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/legal/laws-of-bih/pdf/014%20%20ARMY%20LEGISLATION/BH%20Law%20on%20Defence%20of%20Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%2088-05.pdf>

following:

- a) Participation in collective security operations, peace support and self defence operations, including combating terrorism;
- b) Providing military defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens in the event of an attack;
- c) Assisting civil authorities in responding to natural and other disasters and accidents;
- d) Countermine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and
- e) Fulfilling the international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Article 5 of the Law explicitly precludes using the AFBiH “for political purposes or political partisan activities.”¹⁷ According to one Western military professional, these strictures preclude any activities toward preparation for the ongoing refugee crisis on BiH’s borders, absent a request from the Council of Ministers and a (unanimous) BiH Presidency decision.¹⁸

As this paper was being researched, the effort to finalize the draft Defense Review was ongoing in the MoD. The BiH Presidency requested that this process, initiated in 2011, be completed by the end of September.¹⁹ Seasoned observers believe an extension will be requested, as “the hard part” of the process, “specifying what the Army should look like – size, location, etc.” remains incomplete.²⁰ This exercise is integral to modernizing and “right-sizing” the force – and NATO will review the AFBiH in the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP) in the spring.²¹ There remain disputes “among the three tribes,” as one Western military professional called them, over the size and shape of the force which remain unresolved to date.²² According to one senior MoD official, there was an effort to dismantle the (multiethnic) Tactical Support Brigade, based at Rajlovac.²³ There were also discussions as to whether the AFBiH should maintain its armor force. “The US wants us to give it up²⁴... We can discuss going to more (armored) cavalry – but only with serious antitank capacity.”²⁵ One Western observer noted “the armor’s broken. Nobody is talking about buying new tanks. It costs a lot of manpower and money to keep what they have running. So this is constituency placation (for the Bosniaks)... Bosniaks can’t accept a smaller army without armor... But how to train and equip a three infantry brigade army on €150m/year tops?”²⁶ He added, Serbs of course have the fear of being outgunned. But I always tell them ‘you think the Army is your main problem on that?’²⁷ On the defense against armor, this professional’s view was that the Swedish Cold War model of numerous hunter-killer

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

¹⁹ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

²⁴ Presumably to concentrate on more expeditionary forces. However, given the AFBiH’s territorial defense mandate, abandoning armor would be a hard sell – particularly to Bosniaks.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

²⁷ Ibid.

teams with antitank missiles would be far more cost-effective and flexible.²⁸ From the Alliance perspective, BiH's contributions of infantry, military police, and explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) are valuable.²⁹ He averred that preparation to be able to deploy a full battalion to NATO operations (as is the case with Macedonia), for example, is an attainable goal, if that were the focus of the Defense Review and resulting budget.³⁰ But the primary configuration of the force remains unresolved.

The AFBiH in the Polarized Political Environment

In 2011, DPC and AI reported in *A Security Risk Analysis* that an "undercurrent of division" ran through the AFBiH, despite its design for structural integration.³¹ This finding remains valid, based on subsequent research and interviews. The compromises required to assemble the force from the Federation and Republika Srpska armies – the (ceremonial) regimental system (discussed further below) and nine ethnic majority infantry battalions – created structural impediments to the force's further integration at the operational unit level. But the political climate in which the AFBiH has operated for the past decade has steadily worsened; this has had numerous direct effects on the AFBiH, as well as influencing the environment in which all serve.

The constant scrabble for adequate resources has stunted the ability of the AFBiH to develop its capabilities and equip itself adequately for its designated tasks. "We spend less in percentage of public spending than anyone in the region," according to one BiH official.³² The government of the Republika Srpska, led in 2015 (as in 2011) by RS President Milorad Dodik's Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), has for years sent mixed signals over BiH's potential NATO membership – in the past noting that BiH will not join unless Serbia does and regularly recalling NATO's bombing of Serbs in the RS and Serbia.³³ In late December 2014, Dodik argued that the Serb public was against joining NATO, and that it was unclear whether they believed that entering the EU was a good idea.³⁴ This year in May, contradicting previous statements, he stated he wasn't against NATO membership in principle; it is up to the people.³⁵ In the RS' (unsolicited) report to the United Nations Security Council in May 2014, language in paragraph 59 refers to the AFBiH budget as the most egregious among "unjustified BiH-level expenditures," and notes research showing the major shrinkage of European defense budgets.³⁶ A previous report had

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Azinović, Bassuener and Weber, "Assessing the Potential for Renewed Interethnic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Security Risk Analysis," Democratization Policy Council/Atlantic Initiative, October 2011, p. 32, available at http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/uimages/pdf/DPC-AI_BiH%20Security_Study.pdf

³² Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

³³ "Dodik: NATO je Srbe bombardivao osiromašenim uranijumom i to je neoprostivo," *Kliker*, July 16, 2009,

available at: <http://kliker.info/dodik-nato-je-srbe-bombardivao-osiromasenim-uranijumom-i-to-je-neoprostivo/>

³⁴ "Dodik: Srbi se protive ulasku u NATO pakt, a nejasna je koliko je dobro da idemo I u EU!," *Slobodna Bosna*, December 25, 2014, Available at: <http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/18134/dodik-srbi-se-protive-ulasku-u-nato-pakt-a-nejasno-je-koliko-je-dobro-da-idemo-i-u-eu.html>

³⁵ "Dodik: NATO membership acceptable if people want it," *B92*,

available at: http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2015&mm=05&dd=27&nav_id=94247

³⁶ "11th Report to UN Security Council," Government of Republika Srpska, May 8, 2014, p. 21,

available at: <http://www.bihdaytonproject.com/?p=2586>

further called for the military to be reduced to a peacekeeping detachment and a protocol unit, devolving the rest of its roles to civilian structures under entity control.³⁷ Dodik has openly and repeatedly called for BiH's demilitarization.³⁸

SNSD legislators, particularly MP Dušana Majkić, have called the MoD/AFBiH budget into question. According to one senior MoD official, the practice of operating on continuations from the previous year's budget did real damage.³⁹ Delays in passing budgets and authorizing expenditures also have a negative effect. For example, one interviewee noted acidly "they're going to get beat up again. They just got the authorization to work with their 2015 budget allocation. They can't possibly spend it this year. So they will be attacked for inefficiency... Over half the positions that deal with money are empty. So they'll be in a rush, do crap tenders, end up buying bad equipment."⁴⁰ "Every year they lose money" because of this practice, noted another Western military professional.⁴¹ The net effect has been that the AFBiH has been on a starvation diet since soon after its birth. According to senior MoD officials, discussions are underway as to whether to maintain the AFBiH at its current strength or reduce it. "If we cut the force, the budget gets chopped too."⁴² Interestingly, one voice from within the AFBiH ranks still felt that the actual effort to cripple the force's development exerted by the RS was not commensurate with its rhetoric. "I wonder why RS officials don't act against the MoD and AFBiH," he asked. When the above trends were enumerated, he nodded knowingly, and added "but there is no real pressure from Dodik, others. Did they really accept it, or are they keeping quiet until the right moment?... (the RS Government) doesn't do so much practical against the MoD and AFBiH. They're not under frontal, visible attack."⁴³ Other interviewees noted that their Bosniak AFBiH contacts believed that the constant RS push for defense cuts amounts to demilitarization by stealth.⁴⁴

Nor is the MoD immune from the usual intra-ministerial warfare that afflicts other BiH state bodies, in which party cadres fight to pursue ideological agendas and settle scores. In the previous government, according to one senior MoD official, the SNSD's Deputy Minister, Živko Marjanac, "saw it as his role to prevent the AFBiH from procuring anything. This undermined the system and the force as much as possible... Only one-third of the engineering equipment is operational by peacetime standards."⁴⁵ At the time of writing, Minister of Defense Marina Pendeš (HDZ) is under indictment for falsifying attendance records of an advisor, former Croat member of the BiH Presidency Ivo Miro Jović, who allegedly never

³⁷ "9th Report to UN Security Council," Government of Republika Srpska, May 8, 2013, pp. 11-12, available at: <http://www.vladars.net/eng/Documents/IX%20Republic%20of%20Srpska%20Report%20to%20the%20UNSC.pdf>

³⁸ Demilitarizacija BiH? Dodik za ukidanje oružanih snaga, *Telegraf*, October 8, 2012, available at: <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/370882-demilitarizacija-bih-dodik-za-ukidanje-oruzanih-snaga>

³⁹ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

⁴⁰ Interview with Western official, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁴¹ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

⁴² Interview with senior MoD official, Sarajevo, June 2015.

⁴³ Interview with AFBiH officer, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁴⁴ Discussion with international military professionals, September 2011.

⁴⁵ Ibid. The interviewee hastened to add though that the peacetime standard of "operational" counts discounts much useable equipment: "In a war situation, it's a lot more – a piece of equipment is considered not fully operational if a door light doesn't work."

came to work.⁴⁶ She is also accused of falsifying fuel purchases. One seasoned observer commented that such practices are none too surprising in the institutional culture. “It’s probably dredged up by people she pissed off... I don’t know what’s next... I’m sure she’s being pilloried. I’m convinced she’s guilty – so is everyone else of doing similar stuff.”⁴⁷

Politicization in the Ranks

But respondents note that politicization is not exclusive to the politically appointed civilian positions in the Ministry of Defense. Generalships were viewed by the vast majority of interviewees as politicized. “It’s mostly to key positions in the structure – strategic placement (of loyalists)... Certain positions belong to each ethnic group. Senior staff changes. Everything is fixed. The fight is *within* ethnic groups.”⁴⁸ As an interviewee in 2011 stated, “officers are limited because of their constituent peoples identity. ‘Sorry, this slot is for a Bosniak and you’re a Croat.’ That sort of thing.”⁴⁹ That observer linked this practice to the state’s constitutional structure. Another foreign military professional observed that he’d heard consistently that “if you’re not connected to a (political) party, you don’t get on.”⁵⁰

A troubling phenomenon which seems to be active – and perhaps deepening – is politicization and polarization in the ranks. An AFBiH interlocutor noted with evident repulsion the phenomenon of officers making ostentatious displays of religiosity for personal advancement. For Bosniaks like the interviewee, this was manifest in “more visits to the mosque; officers want to be seen there. Ex-communists fasting, making prayers... It’s *careerism*. They’re doing it for personal advancement. They have *Iftar* (post-sunset meal breaking the fast during Ramadan) in (operational) units.” But he notes this was visible among all three main religious communities/ethnicities. “There is some among all three (groups). Going to mass visibly – get a check next to your name. (There are) links to parties.”⁵¹ The most recent evidence of religious/party patronage in the AFBiH emerged recently when it became apparent that the Ministry of Defense is funding Hajj pilgrimages and Orthodox devotional trips to Greece for some AFBiH members.⁵² One Western observer also questioned the practice of sending ethnic Serbs to supplementary officer training in Serbia, ethnic Croats to Zagreb, and Bosniaks to Ankara; “no other army has segregation like this one.”⁵³

⁴⁶ “Potvrđena optužnica protiv ministrice Marina Pendeš,” *N1*, August 25, 2015, available at: <http://ba.n1info.com/a57662/Vijesti/Vijesti/Potvrđena-optuznica-protiv-ministrice-Marine-Pendes.html>; See also “Skandal u HDZ-u BiH: Ministrica obrane Marina Pendeš optužena za nesavjestan rad,” *HINA*, July 16, 2015, available at: <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/skandal-u-hdzu-bih-ministrice-obrane-marina-pendes-optuzena-za-nesavjestan-rad/831067.aspx>

⁴⁷ Interview with Western official, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview with AFBiH officer, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁴⁹ Discussion with international military professional, June 2011.

⁵⁰ Discussion with international military professionals, September 2011.

⁵¹ Interview with AFBiH officer, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁵² One Western military professional expressed his disgust thus: “So they have the money to send 9 on the Hajj, but they don’t have the funds to repair computers and copy machines?” (Interview, September 2015). “Prethodno hadž, a sada i hodočašće na Krf: Građani plaćaju odlazak na vjerska putovanja,” *bh-index.com*, September 17, 2015, available at: <http://www.bh-index.com/prethodno-hadz-a-sada-i-hodocasce-na-krf-gradani-placaju-odlazak-na-vjerska-putovanja/#>

⁵³ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

The Regimental System

Competing imperatives of retaining elements of the entity armies and creating a new combined force led to compromises in the construction of the AFBiH. To get consensus in the defense reform process, while the entity armies were abolished, a “regimental system” was created as an echo of the three wartime armies – the Armija BiH, the HVO, and the VRS. Three regiments – the 1st Guards (Croat), 2nd Rangers (Bosniak) and 3rd Infantry (Serb) – were created, according to one earlier interviewee, to “throw the Serbs a bone” and accept overall defense reform.⁵⁴ “In 2005, the deal was to allow battalions to be formed on an ethnic basis – it was one of the compromises to get defense reform.”⁵⁵ Another interlocutor believed “the only consensus was to have ethnically-based infantry battalions. That was the only possible solution at the time; we didn’t follow up (and keep pushing for deeper integration).”⁵⁶ Deeper integration of the force would have cost more political capital and leverage in 2005 to achieve; revising the arrangement after the fact will be even harder.

Each regiment has a small headquarters staff; members of the regiments wear shoulder badges signifying their membership. Article 6 of the Law on Service stipulates that these three regiments are repositories of culture and heritage to which service members can belong. There were to be six non-infantry regiments for other branches of service without this culture and heritage link – but this has not happened. The regimental system *does not* have an operational character.

But there remains an uncomfortable overlap with the operational AFBiH. Members of the regiments are concentrated in nine monoethnic infantry battalions, all of which are under the AFBiH Operational Command and included in the three (multiethnic) infantry brigades. The regimental mechanism is seen by many as an avenue for political and ethnic manipulation of the AFBiH.

One potential way this can be manifested is through pressure on new recruits to join the regiments. Interviewees familiar with the AFBiH regimental structure note that despite hopes that recruits would see opportunities in developing their skills to rise in the ranks, which requires one to “serve in a multiethnic environment” (e.g., outside the monoethnic infantry battalions), there has been a persistence of new trainees electing to be posted to these units.⁵⁷ Some of this seems an understandable gravitational pull to stay close to home. Unlike the Yugoslav People’s Army, where enlisted men were sent far from home by design, the AFBiH system doesn’t require them to “get away from mother’s kitchen;” they can choose to serve in the infantry battalion nearest their hometowns.⁵⁸ Some interviewees stated that recruits are subjected to pressure to enlist in the units under the regimental system before leaving basic training. One interviewee stated that the recruits trained at Rajlovac, outside Sarajevo, are “[W]ell-trained and choose their units. Then the ethnic pressure starts.”⁵⁹ Another said, “the problem is that they are under pressure to wear the ethnic badges. Infantry commanders are squeezed all the time to do ethnic regimental functions by politicians (and) veterans’

⁵⁴ Discussion with international military professional, May 2011.

⁵⁵ Discussion with international military professional, November 2008.

⁵⁶ Discussion with international organization officials, military professionals, and diplomats, June 2011.

⁵⁷ Discussion with international military professional, August 2011.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Discussion with international military professional, June 2011.

organizations.”⁶⁰ This is seen by some experts as an impediment to the development of the capabilities the force will need in the future. Furthermore, former Deputy Defense Minister Marjanac reportedly wanted all Serbs in the AFBiH to wear badges signifying this identity.⁶¹ More recently, a senior MoD official opined glibly that Defense Minister Pendeš was “a firm believer in apartheid,” e.g., maintaining functional ethnic division in the ranks.⁶²

The consequences of this lasting, visible and heightened ethnification are evident. The lines between regimental events and commemorations undertaken by AFBiH personnel acting in their personal capacity can often be confusing, even to those attempting to unravel them and go beyond their (often mis-) representation in the media. Regimental functions – involving serving AFBiH personnel – can create ample opportunities for misperception, appearing to blur the lines between ethnically polarized commemorations of wartime experience and the needs of a unified state-level force. In the research for this study, numerous incidents were cited of political leaders, including politicians from neighboring states, addressing AFBiH officers and troops with nationalist statements at events with nationalist symbols. It may even be that some of those interviewed were unclear whether the events were regimental or conducted by veterans’ organizations. A more sanguine note was sounded on the regiments by a senior MoD official who replied saltily to a query on the matter: “It’s bullshit. It’s three days a year. It is a political headache,” but not a major impediment, in his view.⁶³

Military Capability and Performance

Despite the institutional challenges, AFBiH officers are largely seen by Western military professionals to be making the effort to develop as best they can within the constraints wrought by BiH politics. The junior to mid-grade officers were most often cited as the drivers of change and modernization; many among them had opportunities to deploy on peace support missions abroad. But a frequent complaint was the lack of vision at the ministerial and command level, as well as a risk-averse culture throughout. One earlier interviewee described the AFBiH in 2011 as “a social welfare organization.”⁶⁴ Another recently stated “The MoD are civilians, they don’t care. The staff is laden with former entity MoD people who had to be kept on the payroll. They’re waiting for their pensions. They don’t care at all. There is some hope with young officers, some civil servants.”⁶⁵

Many interviewees mentioned the problem of insufficient funding not only in regard to developing the force to NATO standards, but to even maintaining its current equipment and facilities. One stated that “The (AFBiH) is ill-equipped...The battalions have no capability to fight or move.”⁶⁶ None of those interviewed for this study believed that the AFBiH is capable of large-scale military operations.

The BiH participates in a plethora of regional initiatives, and has been deploying contingents to peace

⁶⁰ Discussion with international military professional, May 2011.

⁶¹ Discussion with international military professional, September 2011.

⁶² Discussion with senior MoD official, June 2015.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Discussion with international military professional, June 2011.

⁶⁵ Discussion with international military professional, July 2015.

⁶⁶ Interview with international military professional, April 2011.

support operations since before the AFBiH was assembled. The AFBiH has sent several rotations of troops to Afghanistan to participate in NATO's International Security Assistance Force, the most recent deployment consisting of an infantry platoon providing perimeter security at Bagram Air Base outside Kabul.⁶⁷

Bringing in "New Blood"

In terms of staffing, one widely celebrated new element is a British-sponsored program, launched in early 2014, to recruit recent university graduates for officer training.⁶⁸ One Western military professional stated that the program was "important – to resist nepotism and corruption" in the ranks.⁶⁹ The first class entered service in December 2014.⁷⁰ A senior MoD official called it "one of the best things we have. We want to keep and expand it."⁷¹ He added that "there is strong international support" for merit-based educational programs. "We have big and powerful friends" in the effort to professionalize and modernize the AFBiH, in his view.⁷² The program's current class consists of 17 specialists (e.g., doctors, veterinarians, etc.); the upcoming target class size is 64, and the prior class numbered in the 20s.⁷³ The process assesses applicants on the basis of their qualifications without regard to their ethnic affiliation; quotas come into play once a pool of finalists is assembled. "So it's always the best of each type, but not necessarily the top finishers."⁷⁴ The need for "new blood" was foremost in the minds of those who designed the program. "If we can stick with this for ten years, 90 percent of the officers will have come through this way. That would be transformational," according to a senior Western diplomat.⁷⁵ AFBiH officers interviewed agree. "We need a new generation. We need to clean out the war generation – people like me – to be able to move forward... It's a very good start...They don't remember the war, don't care about ethnic belonging."⁷⁶ Yet the BiH Minister of Defense has apparently already weighed in to ensure that some of "her NCOs – presumably Croats" are included in the new program.⁷⁷ One AFBiH officer noted that ethnic-majority infantry battalions undercut the ethos of the program. "If you are bringing in new officers into that environment...it runs counter to the idea of bringing in new blood."⁷⁸

2014's Challenges

The AFBiH emerged from two significant tests of its disposition and capability in 2014 – large-scale public protests in February and major flooding in May, the latter improving the public image of the force

⁶⁷ 2015 MoD/AFBiH Brochure, p.45.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.15.

⁶⁹ Interview with Western military professional, September 2015.

⁷⁰ Ibid, page 19.

⁷¹ Interview with senior MoD official, July 2015.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Interview with senior Western official, July 2014; interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁷⁷ Interview with senior Western diplomat, July 2015.

⁷⁸ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

and its morale.

The social protests initiated in Tuzla in early February 2014, and which spread to Sarajevo and numerous other towns in BiH – primarily, but not exclusively in the Federation, and primarily but not solely in Bosniak-majority areas – included some highly visible acts of vandalism and violence. The protests put political elites on the defensive quite sharply, albeit briefly, and exposed the dysfunction of security planning and coordination, particularly in the capital.⁷⁹ Political leaders sought to protect themselves from a wave of popular wrath, quite frequently by attempting to deflect it toward ethnic and/or political adversaries. But the AFBiH did not get involved in any way. One well-informed officer stated “we stick to our role, the law. We had no engagement.⁸⁰ We were more alert on our premises. But we have no role – not even assisting in civil disturbances. There was no doubt, no political pressure.”⁸¹ He added that his wife attended the demonstrations and he would have as well, were he not in uniform.⁸² In the unlikely event that the Presidency unanimously ordered the AFBiH to intervene in a politically or ethnically polarized situation, one interviewee for the first edition of this study stated that the AFBiH’s response would be that it could not act, for it has no doctrine or training for such actions, being tasked with territorial defense.⁸³

The May 2014 floods offered those serving in the AFBiH the opportunity to provide direct and life-saving assistance to BiH citizens throughout the affected areas. In the view of the author, it was the only governmental institution above the municipal level which acquitted itself with *any* credit or effectiveness at all; all other cantonal, entity and state governance units failed this clear test. The emergency provided the AFBiH with the most intensive and important opportunity to interact with the wider citizenry since its founding. The AFBiH assembled personnel and equipment to deal with situations as they emerged, at the request of the civil authorities, where their resources allowed – or “where we could, where we were invited.”⁸⁴ “People accepted our mixed teams without a problem – nobody cared who was who. I wonder how much we exploit that, in terms of informing people.”⁸⁵ As reflected in the

⁷⁹ See “EU Policies Boomerang: Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Social Unrest,” by Bodo Weber and Kurt Bassuener, *DPC Policy Brief*, Democratization Policy Council, Sarajevo and Berlin, February 2014, available at: http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/pdf/briefs/DPC%20Policy%20Brief_Bosnia-Herzegovina's%20Social%20Unrest.pdf This phenomenon will be a subject of a future paper in this series, looking at the police forces in BiH.

⁸⁰ The disposition of the AFBiH in the case of a civil emergency had been a hypothetical topic in the first edition of this study. At that time, the majority view of informed interviewees was that the Armed Forces could not and should not be called upon to support governments in the case of civil unrest. In 2008, a senior AFBiH officer warned US diplomats that “the AFBiH would ‘break’ if called upon to assist civilian authorities with an internal security challenge.” Given that the order to act would have to come from the BiH Presidency, in unanimity, it is hard to imagine the AFBiH being ordered to deploy in a politically polarized situation. Even if it were, one interviewee for the first edition stated that the reply to the BiH Presidency would be that the Armed Forces could not act, for it has no doctrine or training for such actions, being tasked with territorial defense. Discussion with international military professional, September 2011. See “Bosnia - Senior Military Commanders Concerned about Political Crisis Impact on Armed Forces,” Leaked US diplomatic cable, March 4, 2008, available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/03/08SARAJEVO414.html>

⁸¹ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Discussion with international military professional, September 2011.

⁸⁴ Interview with senior BiH MoD official, Sarajevo, June 2015.

⁸⁵ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015. The MoD website has a whole section dedicated to the flood relief effort, *Poplave i odbrana* (Floods and Defense), available at: http://www.mod.gov.ba/aktuelnosti/Poplave_i_odbrana/Archive.aspx?template_id=144&pageIndex=1

press, the RS Government seemed more concerned with pursuing turf battles and staying “on message” about the fecklessness and alleged anti-Serbness of the state than ensuring timely provision of assistance to its residents in need.⁸⁶ One AFBiH officer noted, “in the RS, there is an information ban. There is nothing in the media about the AFBiH. Any reflection is very limited, controlled.” According to senior MoD officials, the AFBiH accomplished the following during the flood emergency and recovery effort: “We evacuated 1,500 people from dangerous situations.”⁸⁷ In addition, “we fixed 6,500m of local roads, removed 24,000 cubic meters of debris, cleaned 16,500me of local rivers...built 7 bridges, repaired 2,800m of dikes, and drained 36,500 square meters of agricultural land, removed 2,800 animal carcasses... We did all this with 361 personnel,” a pick-up team, not a formed unit. Some 27 vehicles were employed in these operations.⁸⁸ The MoD received 38 requests for assistance, 33 of which were implemented, according to MoD officials.⁸⁹ Engineering units, attached to the Tactical Support Brigade, are based throughout BiH. According to troops directly engaged in the effort in the Maglaj-Doboj region, “we had good cooperation with civil defense, rafting clubs... In Maglaj and Doboj, I think that cooperation with local authorities went very well. The problem was that the RS entity level didn’t want to ask for help, even though it was very critical.”⁹⁰

The deployment throughout the country boosted morale in the AFBiH. “It was very positive for morale; it united people – in the units and at the top. It was the first time we had a common enemy! For a brighter future, we need a common enemy.”⁹¹ “All soldiers felt they were useful and wanted. They did the best they could with what they had,” observed one Western official.⁹² But the experience also exposed weaknesses in the force’s equipment and preparations, according to informed observers. Problems included “command and control, resourcing – that’s where they fell short. There isn’t a good mechanism for dealing with civil emergencies. This has more to do with the (BiH) Ministry of Security’s inability to manage a crisis – they have no crisis management staff. So these are long-standing systemic problems, not (the responsibility of) the troops.”⁹³ The long-term funding shortages certainly reduced the AFBiH’s potential to assist in this and future crises. “We don’t have enough capacity, but we had the will to help. We need adapted choppers, disaster relief equipment. This is one of the AFBiH’s main tasks,

⁸⁶ One illustrative episode was the punishment meted-out to Mayor Obren Petrović (SDS) for thanking the neighboring (Federation) municipalities of Tešanj (Bosniak-majority) and Usora (Croat-majority) for sending humanitarian assistance to his flood-stricken city of Doboj, on the River Bosna. Petrovic was relieved by RS Prime Minister of his leadership of civil defense and replaced with General Momir Zec, a former RS commander. Throughout the election campaign which followed that summer, Petrović’s “pro-Bosnian” orientation was used by the ruling SNSD as a smear against the SDS and the Alliance for Change. See “Gradonačelnik Doboja: Kriv sam što sam probosanski orijentiran,” RadioSarajevo.ba, May 21, 2014, available at: <http://radiosarajevo.ba/novost/152413/gradonacelnik-doboja-kriv-sam-sto-sam-probosanski-orijentiran> See also H. Čalić, “Obren Petrović: Stid me grafita s porukom ‘koljite balije!’,” *Dnevni Avaz*, May 21, 2015, available at: <http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/178997/obren-petrovic-stid-me-grafita-s-porukom-koljite-balije?url=clanak/178997/obren-petrovic-stid-me-grafita-s-porukom-koljite-balije>

⁸⁷ Interview with senior BiH MoD official, June 2015.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Interview with Western official, Sarajevo, July 2015.

⁹³ Ibid.

so it ought to be a funding priority.”⁹⁴ When asked specifically for the sort of equipment required, interviewees enumerated several items on their wish list: helicopters capable of vertical extraction; medevac; specialized vehicles; firefighting equipment; and boats.

Interviewees in the MoD noted they were waiting for US help on vertical extraction equipment and training, and also the delivery of 18 Chinese engineering machines.⁹⁵

The flood emergency, which also heavily affected neighboring Serbia, also offered opportunities for the greatest cross-border military cooperation to date. The cooperation from neighbors was “very visible, good. We got help from Croatia, Slovenia of different types.”⁹⁶ The MoD has stated that it wants to develop an interchange of training in specialty capabilities within the region. BiH excels in demining, fielding an entire battalion for that purpose based at Rajlovac. Apparently, the US wants the AFBiH to train Montenegrin forces – and in exchange, AFBiH pilots could be trained at facilities in Croatia and Serbia.⁹⁷ In terms of civil defense and natural disaster relief capabilities, DPC has advocated for some time that this should be a focal point of regional cooperation and international assistance.⁹⁸

Defense Property

The issue of immovable defense property and surplus arms and munitions, which is part of the 5+2 formula that the PIC Steering Board established in 2007 as the hurdles to clear before OHR can be closed, remains unresolved. The lack of political agreement on this issue between RS and FBiH politicians also impedes the AFBiH’s ability to meet the requirements of NATO’s Membership Action Plan, which was conditionally granted at the Tallinn summit in 2010, with resistance from Germany and the Netherlands, and – until then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton shifted the American position – the United States.⁹⁹ The guarding of arms and munitions sites – some of which are empty, some of which remain loaded with (increasingly old and unstable) munitions dating to or before the war – costs the AFBiH manpower, resources, and the ability to train and professionalize further. One interviewee estimated the number of troops guarding these sites¹⁰⁰ at any given time to be about 700.¹⁰¹ With the necessary rotations, this comes to about 2,000 – meaning about one-quarter of the force.¹⁰² So the impact on training is significant. The sites also house significant stores of surplus – and often dangerously unstable – weapons and ammunition slated for destruction. MoD sources state that there

⁹⁴ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁹⁵ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

⁹⁶ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

⁹⁷ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

⁹⁸ See Kurt Bassuener, “The EU and U.S. on Security in SEE: Divergence, Convergence, and Mutual Confusion,” in “A Future Security Architecture for Southeast Europe,” Aspen Institute, Berlin, Valeska Esch and Juliane Kabus, eds. p.144, available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.de/wp-content/uploads/A-Future-Security-Architecture-for-Southeast-Europe.pdf>

⁹⁹ Interviews with diplomats, Sarajevo, Berlin, and Washington, April 2010-July 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Between the sites the BiH Ministry of Defense says it will require (numbering 69) and those “non-prospective” sites that it does not need – but whose ownership is still in dispute – these number 223. See the State Property Inventory at <http://www.ohr.int/stateproperty/AnnexAENG.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Discussion with international military professional, June 2011.

¹⁰² Discussion with international military professionals, September 2011.

remains 22,000 tons of surplus ammunition to destroy.¹⁰³ The number of sites is currently 63; two will be added to facilitate destruction of surplus arms and ammunition.¹⁰⁴

There has been some movement on this matter in the past year. First, the BiH Constitutional Court ruled in July 2012 that defense property is the exclusive purview of the state, directly confronting the RS Government's line on defense and state property.¹⁰⁵ The state-level coalition government assembled after the October 2014 elections, which includes the Alliance for Change (the Serb Democratic Party – SDS; the Party for Democratic Progress – PDP; and the People's Democratic Party – NDP), has aligned around resolving the issue of defense property in order to allow activation of NATO MAP and further development of the AFBiH. As a result, at least twelve properties were registered in the first three months of the government.¹⁰⁶ Yet in April 2015, Serb member of the BiH Presidency Mladen Ivanić, apparently reacting to constant attacks on his patriotism from Banja Luka, stated that NATO membership for BiH was out of the question unless and until Serbia joined the Alliance.¹⁰⁷ The RS Government continues to resist registering sites in the RS. In the case of a site in Veliki Žep, the RS position was rejected in “an unambiguous, very clear ruling” for the MoD by the Court of BiH “that this belongs to the state, not Srpska Šume and MTel.”¹⁰⁸ Banja Luka is appealing the ruling. Two seasoned observers believe that whatever the appellate ruling, the RS Government will refuse to implement it – especially if the threatened referendum on the legitimacy of the state judicial institutions is held.¹⁰⁹

Conclusions & Recommendations

The AFBiH is not insulated from the society at large or the wider political environment. But given the inherent handicaps stemming from the unaccountability of the governing system and the leaders who inhabit it, the AFBiH has performed admirably under the circumstances, both on the home front and in deployments abroad.

None of those interviewed either for the 2011 study or this second edition believes that the AFBiH poses a first-instance security threat. But the overwhelming majority – domestic and foreign – asserted that the AFBiH would collapse under significant interethnic pressure. “Monoethnic infantry battalions are not a problem now. But with an escalation of ethnic violence... In the case of real ethnic violence, (the whole AFBiH) would split,” said one officer in summer 2015.¹¹⁰ The events of the past few months – the Zvornik police station shooting in April and the RS police “Operation Ruben” which followed; the RS authorities’ playing-up fears of Islamist terrorism based on the foreign fighter phenomenon and instrumentalizing the Kumanovo operation in Macedonia the following month; and the attack at the Srebrenica

¹⁰³ Interview with senior MoD official, June 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Discussion with senior MoD official, June 2015. See also page 12 of 2015 MoD/AFBiH Brochure, available at: <http://www.mod.gov.ba/foto2015/1809-Engleski%20jezik%20.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ The decision in Case No. U 1/11 is available in PDF at: <http://www.ccbh.ba/eng./odluke/index.php?src=2#>

¹⁰⁶ Discussion with senior MoD official, June 2015.

¹⁰⁷ “Koalicija se ruši zbog Srbije i NATO saveza?,” *Dnevni List*, April 16, 2015, available at: <http://dnevni-list.ba/web1/koalicija-se-rusi-zbog-srbije-i-nato-saveza/>

¹⁰⁸ Discussion with senior Western official, July 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Discussions with Western officials, July 2015.

¹¹⁰ Interview with AFBiH officer, July 2015.

commemoration on Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić all signify the trend toward further polarization.¹¹¹ This security threat is not one that can be countered internally. As discussed earlier in this Policy Note, the AFBiH has no role in internal security. If pressed to act in such a fashion, it would most likely collapse. The best that can be hoped for in the event of the emergence of organized violence would be for the AFBiH – and the arms and munitions it possesses and secures – to remain out of it.

The following policy recommendations are to Western governments – particularly those represented in NATO and the EU, both of which have extensive engagement with, and investment in, the AFBiH – and BiH more broadly. Individual member states of NATO and the EU, such as the United States and Great Britain, have cultivated close contacts with the AFBiH, and can play a particularly important role in supporting the AFBiH and drumming up further support from allies.

- 1) End the ambiguity on BiH security guarantees: The reduction of EUFOR over the past eight years to a paltry approximately 600 troops has conveyed the signal to politicians and citizens alike that there is no longer a credible deterrent to destabilizing actors, nor a capability to react to unforeseen crises or undeterrable threats. This affects the environment in BiH generally, by allowing greater leeway for political adventurism and irresponsible polarization. But it has a particularly severe impact on the AFBiH. Preventing destabilizing further polarization would be far less expensive in terms of resources and credibility than reacting to it. Unfortunately, the few attempts in recent years to send messages that the country will not be allowed to split or collapse have never been followed up, in word or in deed.¹¹² The EU and NATO need to finally state without ambiguity that any attempts to split BiH or initiate interethnic violence will be confronted forcefully.
- 2) Demonstrate steadfast Western solidarity and firmness regarding compliance with legal decisions relevant to defense property: The 2012 Constitutional Court decision on State property has never been the rallying cry it should have been, given the resolution of the RS Government to defy it. This judgement, as with the Court of BiH's 2015 judgement on a defense property site in the eastern RS, needs to be a focal point of Western – including EU – policy attention, as it is integral to the rule of law that all Western actors advocate. Should the RS fail to comply with these rulings (and others), there must be concrete consequences for RS Government decision-makers. These can include EU “restrictive measures,” such as visa bans and asset freezes, as well as moratoriums on contact with officials in breach of legal judgements.

¹¹¹ On the Kumanovo instrumentalization in the RS, see Kurt Bassuener, “No Stability without Accountability: The West’s Responsibility in Macedonia,” DPC Policy Brief, Sarajevo, May 2015, pp 11-12, available at:

<http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/uimages/DPC%20Policy%20Paper%20-%20The%20West's%20Responsibility%20in%20Macedonia-1.pdf>

¹¹² UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond did so in a commentary piece published in major BiH dailies. The original English version, “The Case for Change in Bosnia,” published on October 24, 2014, is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-the-case-for-change-in-bosnia> In the article, Hammond explicitly stated the following: “Don’t waste precious time arguing about referendums and separation. That is not going to happen. We have a legal responsibility to protect the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we remain as committed to that responsibility as we were when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed 19 years ago. The redrawing of borders in the Balkans is finished.” Unfortunately, such clear language has not been since repeated in London, Berlin, Washington, or Brussels, let alone undergirded with policies to support them.

- 3) Continue long-term support to “new blood” in the AFBiH: The British-sponsored new officer induction program is universally praised. Such efforts are long-term investments in BiH and regional security. Other donors should consider similar or complimentary efforts to introduce new talent and skills into the AFBiH.
- 4) Provide support for force integration at the company level: As one interviewee noted, “new blood” can get corrupted or disillusioned if introduced to a system designed to perpetuate ethnic division. Many senior MoD officials would like to see the force’s integration down to the company level. This is unlikely to be a rapid process, and will surely engender resistance. But a dedicated effort to ensure operational unit integration, particularly for units deployed abroad and for newly-inducted officers, is an important goal that should be an explicit – and articulated – target for Western assistance.
- 5) Assign experts to assist in procurement, so the defense budget can be wisely spent in a timely fashion. The staffing and capabilities shortfall in the MoD has numerous negative effects, but the impact on the procurement process is especially baneful, given the meagerness of resources at hand. Assistance in developing tenders and due diligence by Western militaries/MoDs would maximize the utility of the limited defense budget and external assistance.
- 6) Provide assistance in planning for natural disasters: Interviews for this report pointed to deficiencies in the preparations and capacities for civil emergencies like the May 2014 floods, particularly on the coordination side. In the case of serious deficiencies in police coordination exposed by the fumbling response to the violent element of the February 2014 protests, external supporters of public security and rule of law have devoted ongoing efforts to remediate them. A similar approach should be undertaken for the AFBiH and the wider civil defense architecture in BiH: Ministry of Security and entity and cantonal bodies. Even with the best planning and liaison, however, these ties can only function properly in a crisis with the requisite political will.
- 7) Provide or assist in procuring specialized equipment for civil emergencies, including through regional pooling/collaborative arrangements: Numerous interviewees enumerated the lack of proper equipment and training as a problem exposed in the May 2014 floods. These included helicopters capable of vertical extraction; firefighting equipment; boats; and specialized engineering equipment. Coordination of donations and support is essential – including with non-Alliance/EU donors like China. BiH, like many regional countries, also suffers regular/seasonal weather-driven emergencies, such as flooding and forest fires. The recent regional flood response effort should point the way toward further functional cooperation. External supporters of Euro-Atlantic integration for the region should explicitly call for regional pooling of resources (such as the legendary Canadair firefighting planes, the lack of which is a regular seasonal talking point) and coordination of effort as criteria for such support.