

Remarks by Principal Deputy High Representative Lawrence Butler at the Peace Support Operations Training Centre

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The BiH officers in this room are at the cutting edge of a transformation that will affect this country well beyond the immediate confines of its military establishment.

You are a distinctive element in a process that can take Bosnia and Herzegovina to a better place. That process is now moving forward – faster and more decisively than either its supporters and its opponents imagined possible even two or three years ago.

It is a process of reform in key areas – economic, military, and police are three of the most critical in 2005 – that has crystallised in BiH's effort to be accepted as a participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace and to begin negotiating a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

The very presence of this group testifies to the fact that this reform process can deliver tangible results – it testifies to the fact that reform is not just about *enacting* laws and ticking off boxes covering the requirements of NATO or the European Commission; it is about *implementing* laws and securing real benefits for citizens.

It's not, for example, a matter of changing the organisation of the tax office just for the sake of change; it's about reorganising the fiscal system so that it works better for the people of this country.

It's not about tinkering with chains of command in the armed forces, but about giving the armed forces a modern, responsive and efficient chain of command that will allow them to discharge their primary duty – to protect the citizens of BiH.

Participating in PfP will be a welcome *by-product* of that exercise (and, of course, BiH's deepening engagement with NATO, concluding eventually with full membership, will form a bulwark against any return to the violence of the recent past.)

Reforms have reasons, and we should keep those reasons to the fore.

The bottom line is this: reforms will make life *better* for citizens; they will make life *safer* for citizens.

And the development of BiH's Peace Support Operations capacity is an example of this. It is a sign that BiH is beginning to acquire a military posture appropriate to a modern democracy. At the same time, this project reflects the growing institutional support for that military posture.

BiH is to deploy an Explosive Ordnance Disposal platoon to Iraq. This unit – led by your colleagues – will serve in one of the world's most demanding operational environments. Preparations have been long and thorough. And the officers and soldiers in that platoon have proven their capacity to operate as a cohesive and effective unit that will discharge its professional duties in the most challenging of circumstances. This testifies to the fact that:

- BiH soldiers *can* function at the peak of professional standards
- BiH soldiers *can* operate under a **joint** chain of command
- the BiH authorities *can* provide the necessary financial and administrative support for effective participation in international operations.

And it shows that BiH is emerging from the trauma of conflict – psychologically as well as organisationally. The fact that *you* are succeeding together in your military task shows that BiH citizens in a host of other professions can do the same.

If we follow the debate over defence reform we see that there is often a tendency to put politics before praxis.

Flags and uniforms and administration have all been put forward as core issues.

But they are not core issues.

The core issue is how to give the Armed Forces the resources they need in order to do their job – which is maintaining the security of this country's citizens.

Defence reform will give BiH the most effective armed forces that it can have, in terms of streamlined organisation and in terms of appropriate financial outlays.

Until now, citizens have been paying too much for too many soldiers who can do too little – there is nothing there that serves the interests of citizens.

We don't have to look very far to find good practical reasons for establishing modern, cost-effective armed forces – and you are a pre-eminent example of the tangible benefits that can come out of this process.

But as you all know only too well, building a BiH Peace Support Operations capacity has taken a long time, and it is still modest.

Does this reflect – in a negative way – BiH's capacity to meet its own requirements as a modern democracy?

No, because it's a small beginning to a profound and far-reaching process.

And no, because, although the capacity of the first unit to be deployed to Iraq may seem modest, it is operating in key area.

Peace Support Operations are not a boutique item, something that countries can get round to when they are ready.

As the frequency and scale of humanitarian interventions have increased exponentially in the last decade, so the capacity of countries to take part in these interventions has become a crude but widely used barometer of a country's diplomatic outreach. BiH's capacity to participate with capable, well-prepared officers and soldiers in Peace Support Operations will therefore directly and positively impact its diplomatic outreach. Your success will enhance the credibility and international effectiveness of your country.

I should emphasise that administrative complexity is a challenge wherever you go – it's not just something that bedevils BiH, although the excessive degree of devolution in this country obviously hasn't done anything to *diminish* the administrative complexity that accompanies sometimes fairly straightforward tasks.

In the US we have a phrase – “ Purple Suiter” – with which many of you may be familiar. It indicates that happy set of circumstances where the various branches of the armed forces work *together* to secure a common goal – which is ensuring the security of the US and its citizens. Sometimes this operational harmony is hard to achieve, and it's not because of a divergent political agenda or fractured chains of command, or even because of different attitudes towards the country. It's because of the complexity and contradictions that are an innate part of any large administrative apparatus.

We should not forget that defence reform in BiH is an administrative as well as a political challenge – and bureaucracy has a way of resisting reform and a way of entrenching itself regardless of the purposes for which it was

originally set in place.

I believe we can be confident that this Staff Officers' Course is a valuable product of good administration, rather than a casualty of poor administration. This is not least because the object of the course is clear and attainable. It is to deliver practical training to an officer elite who will be called upon to put that training into practice in the most demanding international environments. You have been chosen because you have the ability to meet those demands, as well as to represent BiH and its Armed Forces abroad.

You have a powerful incentive to succeed, and this course is about acquiring the tools that will make that success more likely. It will also prepare you for further international educational exchanges and exercises.

You are preparing for participation in multinational operations (other than war) under UN, NATO or EU command – and as such you are operating in a military context that would be familiar to any serving officer in Western Europe or North America. This is not simply training for peace operations – it is preparing to participate in an overarching military structure that will enhance the security of all the people of BiH.

You are preparing to take part in operations that are significantly more sophisticated and complex than might have been the case even a decade ago – for one thing, military technology, from weapons to signals, has taken a quantum leap, for another, forces comprising more than a dozen nationalities are now the rule rather than the exception. And these operations encompass very much more than for example, delivering humanitarian aid to populations in distress. Peace operations now customarily range from maintaining a secure environment all the way through to infrastructure reconstruction and nation building.

This is a huge task, participating in that task is not something that can be taken on lightly. I would therefore like to thank Brigadier General Henning Larsen, Colonel Philip Lilliman and the staff of the Peace Support Operations Centre for the work they are doing here, because that work is nothing less than furnishing BiH officers with skills that they need in order to work effectively in one of the most important areas of any country's international activity. And I would like to thank the BiH officers here, for applying yourselves to the task of acquiring desperately necessary skills and because you represent a bright future for this country and its military.

Thank you