

## **Establishment of Aviation Departments and the Opening of Airports in BiH**

On Thursday and Friday last week the Council of Ministers ratified the establishment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and approved three separate Memorandums of Understanding, with SFOR, for the opening of Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla airports. These agreements commence the process of opening airfields to normalized civil aviation. The agreement followed several months of intensive but co-operative negotiations between the Parties, international aviation experts, SFOR and the OHR.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina DCA will take the lead in re-establishing the safety foundation that will guide aviation regulation in certifying all aspects of aviation within the State. A three member Board of Directors, with responsibilities for Policy, Regulatory and Air Navigation Divisions, establishes the DCA as a joint organization consisted of Bosniak, Serb, and Croat posts. An International Secretariat located within the Headquarters will provide technical assistance to the Board. The DCA will be the focus for all dealings with international aviation organizations and will provide a mixture of policy, co-ordination and delegated authority to Entity Civil Aviation Departments within respective Ministries of Transport and Communications.

The International Secretariat, to be initially chaired by Air Vice Marshal Rob Wright, Military Adviser to the High Representative, will be staffed by technical experts from the International Aviation Community from around the world. The role of the International Secretariat will be to assist, advise and arbitrate where necessary during the early days of the establishment of the DCA. The new DCA Staff will be guided through the difficult process of constructing the regulatory fabric that will allow aviation to safely return to Bosnian skies and bring with it the economic benefit offered by airports and aviation businesses.

The first round of assistance through the Secretariat has started this week with the establishment of an Aeronautical Information System and the inspection of ground facilities. These are the first steps in identifying airport safety certification and air navigation issues that might impact scheduled air carrier service to airports at Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla, and Sarajevo. Work continues this week in establishing safety regulatory controls and addressing the issues of commencing civil airport operations at locations that have been dormant for over four years. A long term action plan is also being developed, of which, one aspect is the connection of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Eurocontrol enabling the collection of overflight fees to fund aviation development.

Most importantly, the new DCA constitutes the return of a significant economic driver which will influence economic revival throughout the Country. On airports alone the expected direct employment payrolls will exceed 2.5 million DM per year for facilities enplaning 400,000 passengers, and the indirect and induced impacts within the communities where commercial service airports are opened are expected to exceed 5 million DM. Air transport will also provide public benefits of emergency health transportation, stimulation to business interests, and time saved with costs avoided through air transport of people and goods, expected to save more than 10 million DM in the first year alone.

The return of self-regulated civil aviation to Bosnia and Herzegovina is a strong signal that jointly established government offices can work together towards independent economic recovery for the benefit of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.