

Speech by United States Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Charles  
English at the US- BiH Cooperation Day Ceremony in Mostar

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June 5, 2008

Members of the Presidency, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Representatives of the Federation and Republika Srpska, Colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to join you for this important celebration and demonstration of the close cooperation between the Bosnian and United States Armed Forces. This event, inconceivable only a couple of years ago, underscores the significant positive changes in the security relationship between our two Armed Forces, and the Bosnian military's development into a unified and capable force.

The United States maintains a leading role as a partner and close friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For much of the past decade and a half, that partnership and friendship was led by the United States Armed Forces. Our Armed Forces first came here to end a tragic and horrific war. Tens of thousands of our bravest young men and women then stayed to help this country and its citizens secure the gains of peace and to rebuild from that devastating conflict. Today, our Armed Forces remain committed to preserving peace and stability in this region and stand ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina as it further integrates into NATO. The United States Armed Forces stood by Bosnia and Herzegovina during some of the most difficult times in its recent history, and will remain a deeply committed friend, partner and ally as you move towards a brighter future.

That future is guaranteed in no small part by the Bosnian Armed Forces that stand with us today. The sight of one Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, wearing one uniform, serving under one flag, and respecting one civilian chain of command demonstrates Bosnia and Herzegovina's irreversible march down the Euro-Atlantic path. This professional and capable force has already displayed its capacities to assist both the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and support the cause of international peace and security. From the forest fires in Herzegovina to the desert of Iraq, these brave men and women of the Bosnian Armed Forces have displayed character and courage of which all citizens of this country can be proud.

We must not forget that none of this would have been possible without the significant achievements in implementing comprehensive defense reform. The United States will continue to be a strong supporter of this reform, and provide all assistance required to see its full implementation. Not so long ago many in this country doubted that such a comprehensive reform would have been possible. We always believed that, by working together, making hard choices, and finding room for compromise, the leadership of this country could create the positive change that would move Bosnia and Herzegovina forward and into the Euro-Atlantic community. This forward-looking leadership and compromise is something that must be applied to the many other reforms that are currently faltering. Only then will Bosnia and Herzegovina be able to take its rightful place in a Europe that is free, whole, and at peace.

I would like to thank our hosts for planning this historic and positive event. While the nature of our defense and security relationship has evolved over the past decade, the United States remains as dedicated as ever to remaining a close partner and friend to Bosnia and Herzegovina.