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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

## Testimony :: Ambassador Robert Barry

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### Head - OSCE Mission in Bosnia

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

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"Bosnia's Future Under the Dayton Agreement"

June 13, 2000

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today about our continuing efforts to assist the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve a lasting peace, democracy and prosperity.

Our focus today is the Dayton Agreement. I will provide my perspective on what it is, what it is not and what I see as the keys to political and economic progress in Bosnia.

In any discussion of the Dayton Peace Agreement, it is important to understand both what Dayton is and what it is not. First, Dayton is a cease-fire agreement. Throughout the war the international community made continuous, exhaustive, but ultimately fruitless efforts to end the war, fruitless until the Dayton Agreement finally ended it. The agreement ended the fighting and separated and controlled the constituent military forces, but it did not identify a winner. The war-time power structure remained in place. If Bosnia is to become a viable state, it must begin to develop one integrated armed force, free of external influence, oriented towards NATO and subordinate to national civilian authorities. To achieve that goal, Croatia and Serbia must end their military support to national forces in Bosnia. Croatia has just done so, however, the Serb forces in Bosnia remain largely supported and directed from Belgrade.

Secondly, the Dayton Agreement is the basic framework for participatory democracy. It is a fairly precise diagram, a schematic for the institutions, political structures and inter-relationships required to begin the process of recovery and transition for the people of Bosnia. It is, however, a document of negotiated compromises, which decentralize political, economic and military institutions below the state level to the entities. All of the parties at Dayton agreed that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be one state with two entities and three constituent peoples. All agreed that Dayton described two entities, the Federation and the Republika Srpska, which would have strong powers, as well as a central government, which would have strictly limited powers.

Despite the lack of strong central governing institutions, the Dayton Agreement has produced important achievements. These achievements include:

- A stable security environment;
- The restoration of freedom of movement across the entire country;
- Completion of major infrastructure reconstruction programs;
- A single, stable Bosnian currency in overwhelming use;
- A series of internationally-supervised elections which have seriously eroded the grip of the nationalists on power and led to increased democratic pluralism;
- Democratic institutions of government at all levels which are slowly growing in strength and effectiveness; and
- Thousands of refugees who have returned to all areas of the country, and a rate of refugee return which is accelerating in inverse proportion to the declining power of the nationalists.

These and many other achievements point to the success of the Agreement. However, it is also clearly a work in progress.

Just as the Dayton Agreement is a sound and practical blue-print for a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, it does not resolve every issue, nor does it promise that the international community will solve every problem between the competing interest groups in the country. That is for them to resolve, in the course of time, through the democratic process and through elections. While Dayton does outline the key institutions and responsibilities of a stable and democratic state, it is up to the people of Bosnia, and the leaders they choose, to use the Dayton blue-print to build their new country, with its new institutions, to take its new place in Europe.

A fundamental problem with Dayton implementation is that many political leaders in Bosnia have not fully accepted the concept of Bosnia as a state. The leadership simply lacks the will to implement the various elements of Dayton, then go beyond Dayton in important areas. In fact, the nationalists on all sides, clinging to their narrow slice of power, never bought on to the promise and potential of the Dayton Agreement. It is this serious lack of vision, intolerance, failure to compromise, and most of all the unwillingness of these leaders to wholeheartedly embrace democracy and a market-oriented economy that have so badly slowed progress in Bosnia.

After five years Dayton is only a partial success, but progress continues. Certainly the pace of implementation is too slow, but Bosnia, and Dayton, must overcome three significant obstacles.

The first is the war. The brutal and lengthy conflict scarred everyone in Bosnia, and the people on all sides have only slowly gained the confidence that the war is indeed over. The people of Bosnia are not inherently hostile to each other, nor is future conflict inevitable. The security of knowing that armed conflict will not begin again is critical for Dayton implementation, and we must ensure that we do nothing to shake that confidence.

The second obstacle is nationalism and intolerance. The sooner the people remove political leaders who inflame ethnic tensions for political gain and replace them with leaders who promote economic and political change, the better. The nationalists are gradually losing power, but the transition is very slow. Milosevic continues to cast a dark and disruptive shadow over Serbs in Bosnia.

However, the defeat of Radovan Karadzic's SDS party at the entity level in Republika Srpska in 1997, and the significant erosion of support for nationalist parties in the Federation in this April's elections, are evidence that the people are turning away from the nationalists and their messages of ethnic supremacy and division. The recent collapse of the ruling nationalist HDZ party in neighboring Croatia has accelerated this process, and provided an example for other countries in the region of the benefits that can be achieved by embracing democracy and moving toward the Euro-Atlantic mainstream. This message was not lost on the electorate in Bosnia, and we are hopeful that people in Bosnia will participate fully and actively in all aspects of the democratic process, including elections, to choose the future they want for their country.

There is a third obstacle to overcome. The legacy of decades of communism in the former Yugoslavia continues to

hinder our efforts to assist the people to implement Dayton. It is clear that even when the people of Bosnia fully overcome both the war and nationalism, the struggle towards a market-oriented democracy will continue. They lived and were educated in a flawed system. Acceptance of authoritarian leadership and party control of the media and economy are hard habits to break. For more than a decade we have seen other Eastern European countries struggle to make progress in creating democratic institutions. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, corruption and cronyism slowed the already-difficult transition from communism to a free-market economy, so we should not minimize the progress already achieved in Bosnia.

Mr. Chairman, I do not believe that renegotiating the Dayton Agreement is in our interest. Some want to reopen the Dayton Agreement as a way to speed up the transition in Bosnia. The agreement is more than adequate to build on as it stands, and reopening it would not address the basic problems I just described. In fact, renegotiating Dayton with the current political, economic and military leadership would only set back existing achievements.

Others wish to end our presence in Bosnia and see reopening Dayton as a means to that end. Instead, reopening the agreement could, in fact, re-ignite old issues, set the clock back and require the international presence for longer in the Balkans.

In closing, I would like to say that the United States strongly supports the conclusions of the recent Peace Implementation Council meeting in Brussels, which called on the parties in Bosnia to accelerate implementation of the Dayton Agreement. We also strongly support the three primary objectives of the international community stated in May to assist the people of Bosnia:

- Economic reforms to eliminate interference in the economy by nationalist political parties;
- Accelerate the return of displaced persons and refugees; and
- Strengthen State institutions, including integrated defense, plus independent media.

New political leadership and more pluralism in the fall elections, economic reform, refugee returns and stronger state institutions are far more valuable to stability and progress in Bosnia than debates over renegotiating the Dayton Agreement.

Working together, the international community and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have made significant progress in achieving the goals to which the signers of the Dayton Agreement committed themselves. While there is still much to be done, the United States is proud to be a part of this effort.