



NATO HEADQUARTERS SARAJEVO

OFFICE THE COMMANDER AND SENIOR MILITARY
REPRESENTATIVE



15 January 2021

Speech at the NATO- UK flag raising ceremony

Your Excellency, distinguished guests and NATO and EUFOR colleagues.

This is a great day for NATO Headquarters Sarajevo, and I'm very glad that we are here together to share in it.

A few weeks ago we gathered in this same place to mark the end of the UK's contribution to EUFOR; it was the end of a chapter, but definitely not the end of the story.

Because, like NATO, Bosnia and Herzegovina has few greater, more steadfast friends than the UK.

Financially, politically, diplomatically, militarily and in the values that it brings - such as in its pioneering work to promote the positive impact of ensuring that women's voices are heard in every aspect of society, including the defense and security sector – there are few greater contributors to our collective security...

Few stronger advocates for the simple, yet enduring principles upon which NATO is founded...

And few more notable champions of BiH.

During the UK's unbroken military presence here spanning almost 30 years, the Armed Forces of BiH – as well as every citizen- has benefited from the professionalism and expertise of one of the most respected militaries in the world.

I am delighted we are able to add their world-class capabilities to those of the already incredible international team here at NHQ Sarajevo.

As a founding NATO member, the UK is instrumental in keeping the Euro-Atlantic region safe for more than 70 years; playing a leading part in helping NATO become one of the most, if not the most successful and enduring military alliances in history. It is also at the forefront of work to ensure that, as an Alliance, we adapt to overcome the new security challenges facing us.

Today's threats are a hybrid. Unconventional as well as conventional. Covert as well as overt. Designed to divide and destabilize from within and exploit the intricate web of organized crime, terrorism, corruption and disinformation that crisscrosses the globe.

These, just as much as an invasion force of a regional power, are the 21st Century threats to our security – and few places are these threats more real, and have an impact in the daily lives of ordinary people, than in the Balkans.

The invaluable contribution of the UK to NATO operations in these areas can only strengthen the capability of the armed forces of BiH to tackle such challenges.

I am delighted to have the British contingent on the team.

Their transfer from EUFOR to NATO at midnight on 31st December ensured that not a second went by without an official British presence here. So I am pleased that we have had this opportunity to recognize and thank the UK for its contribution- and the sacrifices of its military personnel- in bringing peace, security and prosperity to BiH. And, like everyone else on the Camp, I am pleased that the Union Flag has once again taken its rightful place, alongside Allies and partners, flying over Butmir.

Thank you.

[ENDS]