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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

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This report is published twice weekly as a general update on Red Cross Red Crescent activities during the Balkans crisis, primarily for the Movement's coomponents and supporters. Today's text can also be found on the Internet at www.ifrc.org and www.icrc.org

LATEST EVENTS

The rate at which refugees from Kosovo are returning to the province continues to exceed expectations and resources are being reassigned accordingly. UNHCR special envoy Dennis McNamara told a Geneva news conference that the "Kosovars are the most return-oriented group of refugees of any recent conflict." Some 20 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are now carrying out assessments or researching projects in Kosovo with ICRC assistance (see below), and the president of the International Federation, Dr Astrid Heiberg, is this week visiting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to highlight humanitarian needs there.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

Overview: Field delegates report that the number of Serb IDPs from Kosovo is stabilizing but there is no evidence of a pattern of return of IDPs to the province. Kraljevo office reports over 26,000 IDPs in the region, the bulk of them staying in the town (11,845 in private accommodation and 1,800 in collective centres). Kragujevac and Pozarevac regions are hosting 22,125 IDPs, while Vojvodina is accommodating 3,840.

On 4 July, the president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Dr Astrid Heiberg, arrived in Belgrade for a four-day visit to FRY. It will include field trips to Kragujevac, Cuprija and Montenegro, where she will focus on the Yugoslav Red Cross programmes for refugees and IDPs.

On 2 July, the ICRC Delegate General for Europe, Middle East and North America, Angelo Gnaedinger, accompanied by the Head of Operations in Central and Eastern Europe and Head and Deputy Heads in FRY, had meetings with Federal Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs and the Serbian Minister of Justice. The latter meeting resulted in the submission to the ICRC of a list of 481 persons in detention in Serbia.

On 3 July a Joint Teams Conference was held in Belgrade, where ICRC, Federation and YRC team members exchanged views on objectives and strategy.

Relief: The figures for implementation of the soup kitchen programme have been finalized. Purchasing of the food items has started and the actual supplying is to begin this week, the soup kitchens being a priority for the teams.

An independent study on a repair project for the Kragujevac plant -- which provided heating for some 20,000 families but was badly damaged in the bombing campaign -- has been presented.

Health: The first round of deliveries to eight humanitarian pharmacies has been completed, each of them receiving a donation worth 4000 USD.

A meeting was held with the Serbian Health Minister to inform him of the ICRC's intention to encourage PNS involvement in medical projects.

An assessment of sanitation facilities has been made in collective centres accommodating IDPs.

Tracing: Joint Field Offices report an increase in the number of people coming to the offices to place tracing requests. Kraljevo received 24 such enquiries in the course of the week.

Kosovo

Overview: The most recent figures from UNHCR show that more than 606,000 people have now returned to Kosovo from all locations within the region where they took refuge. More than half of the total returnees to date came from Albania, according to UNHCR. KFOR now says all the major urban areas in Kosovo are safe for returnees.

Relief: Distributions consisting of food exclusively were carried out at the following locations.

Kosovo Polje: 2 distributions totalling 30 MT of food for some 13,000 people;

Turicevac: 20 MT of food for 11,000 beneficiaries

Batuse: 2 MT of food for 600 people

Runik: 30 MT of food, 10,000 beneficiaries

Vucitrn: 20 MT of food for 10,000 beneficiaries

Srbica: 30 MT for 8,000 people

Lukare: 20 MT for 3,000

Orahovac: 20 MT for 10,000

Velika Hoca: 10 MT for 1,000

Vucitrn: 20 MT for 5,000 beneficiaries

Lebane: 20 MT for 3,000

Suva Reka: 30 MT

A total of 250 tonnes of food were delivered in Kosovo in the course of last week.

Tracing: From 21 June, the ICRC started a programme of "tracing mobile units" which offer the possibility of an immediate means of contact with relatives through satellite phone calls. Last week, the first mobile unit that was put into service provided the opportunity of directly contacting their families to some 2000 people at a dozen locations, out of whom close to 1,500 were successful. In addition to that, the team collected a further 401 phone numbers and later made the calls themselves.

Three children from Pristina and a baby from Kosovska Mitrovica Children Hospital were transferred to Macedonia for family reunion.

Health: Medical delegates continued to compile assessments and to meet with National Societies for future projects. Cleaning of contaminated wells started on 1 July. An estimated 1,300 rural water wells have been contaminated as a result of the recent conflict and large-scale wells cleansing is a

matter of urgency -- particularly in the Glogovac and Srbica areas. A local engineering contractor has been selected to organize teams in two areas, with priorities to be defined with community leaders. Up to now the ICRC has cleaned over 20 wells in the Glogovac municipality and its engineers have also proposed water supply projects for Suva Reka, Stimlje, Srbica and Vucitrn and rehabilitation of hospitals in Malisevo, Glogovac and Stimlje. The psychiatric hospital in Stimlje has been provided with spare parts for the water pump.

Mine awareness: The number of reported deaths and injuries from mines, booby traps and unexploded ordinances continues to rise slowly. The printing of the "Going Home?" leaflet has been completed and its distribution has started.

PNS: Some 20 national societies are now researching projects in Kosovo or have expressed interest in doing so. Some examples are: the German Red Cross is planning mobile kitchens in Pec and Prizren that will provide more than 6000 meals a day; the French Red Cross is considering assessments in the Mitrovica and Srbica areas with a view to undertaking reconstruction, health and psycho-social projects; the Norwegian Red Cross is discussing the provision of a medical team to Mitrovica hospital; the Belgian Red Cross is proposing to rehabilitate 1000 houses in the Suva Reka and Rahovac areas; a water and sanitation engineer from the Spanish Red Cross will carry out assessments in several areas; the British Red Cross is assessing the need for mobile technical teams; the Japanese Red Cross is interested in the rehabilitation of health facilities in the Decan area; the Italian Red Cross may bring one unit of its field hospital to Srbica to set up an orthopaedic rehabilitation centre; the Finnish Red Cross is interested in using the public health ERU in the field in Kosovo; other national societies conducting evaluations are the Danish, Austrian, Netherlands, Canadian, Swiss, the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Magen David Adom.

The German, French, Belgian, Norwegian and Japanese societies have now submitted specific proposals for Kosovo.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: The mobile tracing team was followed by Norwegian and Finnish newspapers, while the BBC filmed the work of a Red Cross surgeon specializing in mine awareness. French TV F1 followed the water sanitation delegate and the new wells clearing team, while ITN covered the topic of drug donations. Swiss Italian TV followed a team distributing food and mines information leaflets in Srbica.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Montenegro)

Overview: By the end of last week, half of the Albanian IDP population accommodated in Montenegro returned to Kosovo. With the departure of some 40,000 people, IDP camps and collective centres have been emptying, with the camp in Rozaje completely abandoned and only a few hundred IDPs remaining behind in a factory.

During the week, some 1300 Serb and Montenegrin IDPs arrived from Kosovo, bringing the total figure to 20,500 people entering Montenegro since 9 June. About half of them are now staying with families and friends while fewer than 500 have been accommodated in collective centres, notably in Berane.

Relief: The Red Cross will continue to support the collective centres of the newly-arrived IDPs with food, as well as supplement bulk food distributions by other agencies.

A survey has been carried out among Serb and Montenegrin IDPs with a view to establishing a plan of action to assist them.

Actual distributions were made to two collective centres in Berane (up to 450 people), for some 150 IDPs in collective accommodation in Andrijevica and Plav. A total of 1800 individual parcels, 1900 blankets, 400 mattresses and six stoves were delivered to these sites.

Tracing: The number of visitors to the office decreased as the return was in full swing. Of the 1879 phone calls, the majority were made for the purpose of informing relatives of the planned return.

Two family reunions involving unaccompanied children were carried out.

Total International Federation assistance to the Yugoslav Red Cross since the beginning of the year up to May, in both normal and emergency operations, is now as follows:

- 168,674 hygiene parcels from the Swedish Government;
- 57,500 hygiene parcels from the German Red Cross;
- 8100 baby parcels/baby baths from the German Red Cross;
- 143,750 hygiene parcels funded by ECHO currently arriving in the country;
- 727 MT of food items, hygiene items and used clothes from the Finnish Red Cross for the social cases programme in Kosovo);
- over 750 MT of ECHO-funded food aid (beans, oil and sugar);
- 250 dressing material kits from the Norwegian Red Cross;
- emergency assistance (including generators) worth 30,000 USD;
- 2 land cruisers from the British Red Cross;
- 73 computers from the British Red Cross and an additional 19 computers/faxes/photocopiers funded by ICRC
- Within the psycho-social support programme, 12 Red Cross clubs for youth and elderly were opened, 16 help-lines were established and 100,000 of leaflets entitled "How to cope with a stress in a war situation" were produced.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Overview: According to UNHCR figures nearly 200,000 refugees have now returned to Kosovo from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, leaving the total number of refugees still in Macedonia at 22,600 -- almost equally divided between camps and host families. Of the returnees, 1178 left camps with the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Programme.

Relief:

Logistics/Relief Distribution 1-4 July

SUPPLIES	Received	Distributed to refugees	Distributed to social cases
Mattresses (Swedish RC)	11,154	7118	-
Blankets	108	-	-
Blankets (American RC)	-	7	-

(Netherlands)			
Hygiene parcels (American RC)	3839	4446	71
Hygiene parcels (IFRC)	-	-	892
Suger (1 kg packs)	-	-	3201

The Macedonian Red Cross is distributing the ICRC's emergency stock of 1.5-litre water bottles and high protein biscuits to refugees as they pass border points, and 10,800 bottles of water were dispatched to Blace and Jazince.

Non-food items distribution to refugees for June is as follows: 1858 small hygiene parcels, 37,393 large hygiene parcels, 23,892 blankets, 28,732 mattresses and 10,436 baby parcels.

For the logistics department, the current level of activity is similar to the height of the crisis, with up to 15 trucks unloaded in a single day. An additional 2000 square metres of warehouse space has been secured to accommodate relief supplies for remaining refugees, additional social case families and emergency relief supplies for the region.

In June, the Red Cross sent the following relief goods to the Pristina warehouse: 13,040 individual 10.6-kg food parcels; 1892 hygienic parcels; 105,370 1-kg flour bags; 23,040 Meals Ready to Eat. (Each individual food parcel contains enough food for one person for two months -- cooking oil, canned vegetables, macaroni and yeast.

Health: The Norwegian Red Cross field hospital is scaling down activities but will be continuing surgery. For the week to 1 July there were 30 admissions to the hospital, while the average number of in-patients has been 27 with 472 out-patients. There were seven births. With the down-scaling of the Cegrane camp from 45,000 to less than 5000 refugees, the number of local staff has been reduced and activities are being reorganised; also, theft has become a major concern and security has been increased.

Mine Awareness: An additional 240,000 ICRC mine awareness brochures are being printed in both Albanian and Serbian versions for distribution in Kosovo and a CD-ROM is in production.

Participating National Societies: The head of the American Red Cross Boston chapter spent two days touring American Red Cross operations and visiting the tracing offices.

External Relations, Marketing and Publicity: International Federation information delegates have: conducted interviews or briefings with the following media and representatives of national societies since the last report -- PRO TV/Romania; AFP; British Red Cross; American Red Cross; coordinated visits to social case families for journalists from the News of the World and Novo Macedonia; worked with News of the World to feature actor Jerome Flynn meeting with host families in a Red Cross context.

Albania

Overview: The first refugees moved by the UNHCR last week were from camps in Durrës and Elbasan. Both trains and buses have been used to route people back home (through Mjeda). According to the latest information available from the UNHCR, there are nearly 104,000 refugees remaining in Albania. Most refugees are continuing their onward journey within 12 hours after stopped in Kukes, but some were grouped together in Kukes I camp until places such as Mitrovica

and Pec were added to UNHCR's list of safe destinations. Prizren, Pristina and Urosevac are the three destinations currently being used by UNHCR for the organised repatriation programme.

On 3 July, WFP held a meeting to establish which organisations will continue operating in the Kukes area in the near future, and how to support them. It was announced that WFP could provide food for food-for-work projects. In addition to the Red Cross Red Crescent, the following agencies plan to commit themselves for an extended period in the Kukes region: Action Contre la Faim (ACF), UNICEF, CARE, CRS, and ADRA.

Relief: The despatch of supplies to the regions decreases as the refugees continue to return. The only despatch on Friday and Monday was the release of 4000 Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 4.5 MT of flour to Durres and 4 MT of flour to Tirana. With the decreasing numbers of beneficiaries, there are no reported shortages of relief items. Food distribution to refugees, host families and displaced people in Krume district was completed on 4 July. This ends the current Red Cross Red Crescent programme of food relief in the Kukes prefecture.

It is believed that approximately 50% of the Red Cross Red Crescent caseload has left Albania. Donations of unsolicited relief goods, such as the one at the end of last week to the university hospital in Tirana, will be continued. The relief department is looking for suitable recipients and donation packages.

Health: Planning for the donation of eight ambulances to the Ministry of Health via the Albanian Red Cross continued and should take place during this week. Another donation of requested milk powder and sugar to the paediatric department of Tirana University Hospital is being prepared for this week. The medical coordinator travelled to Mjede and Kukes to reassess the ERU and the Japanese Red Cross programmes in those areas in the light of the changing situation.

The packing up of the Finnish Red Cross Basic Health Clinic has been completed. The supplies have been loaded onto four lorries for transfer to Tirana. A quantity of medicines and medical supplies were donated to the Kukes hospital, together with some mattresses and blankets.

Shelter: Kukes II camp is being used as the overnight transit point for the UNHCR's organised repatriation from the south. The Italian-run Kukes I camp is the overnight stopping place for refugees returning spontaneously to Kosovo. The two UNHCR Rubb Hall tents on the main square in Kukes are being used as a back-up transit point for people arriving very late at night or in the early hours of the morning, although it is planned to move these tents to Kukes II soon.

The eight chronically ill and elderly patients transferred from the UAE nursing home to the hospital in Kukes I on 30 June are still there. However, the authorities have indicated that they cannot stay there much longer as the beds are needed for emergencies. An alternative solution is urgently being sought.

Tracing: All those people recorded by the ICRC Tracing/Protection Department have returned to Kosovo but are contacting the Kukes sub-delegation on a regular basis to keep themselves updated about their applications. Two Red Cross satellite telephones situated in the Kukes tracing office next to the main square are being used regularly by people coming from Kosovo to make contact with relatives living abroad.

Apart from the large number of people coming from Kosovo, a particularly high usage figure for 3 July was due to the arrival in the main square of some 500 refugees from Gramsh, Elbasan and Durres who were taking the UNHCR bus to locations inside Kosovo. A satellite phone is stationed on the Kukes to Morine border road.

In the first four days of July, 115 visits were reported to the Tracing Department's headquarters, as were 603 telephone messages, the closure of two tracing cases and three family reunions. (Since the beginning of the operation, there have been 6475 visits, 34,614 telephone calls made, 28,788 radio messages made, 281 cases of unaccompanied vulnerable, 49 tracing cases have been opened and 19 closed, 151 cases of parents having lost children have been registered, 204 cases of unaccompanied children, 480 family reunion cases have been opened and 84 have been closed. Finally, 58 Red Cross messages have come in and 17 have gone out.)

Albanian Red Cross: The ARC is preparing its plan to distribute 30,000 French Red Cross food parcels to the most vulnerable social cases across the country. On 1 July, nine volunteers from the Albanian Red Cross youth sector participated in a mine awareness workshop given by experts from the ICRC and CARE. The day-long session aimed to enable the volunteers (all of whom are engaged in the mine awareness leaflet distribution campaign for returnees to Kosovo) to respond to people's questions about the dangers posed by mines, and to encourage them to pass on safety messages.

Participating National Societies: PNS have been asked not to send any more shipments to the Red Cross Red Crescent operation in Albania.

External Relations: The Medical/Health Co-ordinator was interviewed by the local press concerning the donation of foodstuffs to the hospital. Visits were made to all local newspapers in Tirana (with the Albanian Red Cross Information Officer) to make them aware of the donation to the hospital. Two press releases were issued to national media, as well.

Delegation: The joint delegation has approximately 300 local staff assisting the operation. However, the number of expatriates is expected to fall considerably over the next few days.

Logistics cell contacts are Goran Zuber, Federation, and John Wert, ICRC -- tel: 4122 730 2143 or 4122 730 2204; fax: 4122 730 2876; email: fedicrcbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org

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