

air strikes against Serbia–Montenegro, Serbian military and police units immediately began an effort to drive ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. The result was a massive influx of Kosovar refugees into the neighboring countries of Albania and Macedonia.

Within the first week, more than 22,000 people had fled toward the Macedonian border. Within two weeks, more than 115,000 people had arrived at or crossed the border into Macedonia. Slow border processing by overwhelmed Government of Macedonia (GOM) authorities, who initially continued to follow normal immigration procedures, led to a huge bottleneck of refugees on both sides of the Macedonian border. Those seeking to cross were stranded in a “no-man’s land” on the Yugoslav side of the Kosovo border, without food, water, shelter, medical care, or protection from Serbian authorities. On April 4, the GOM began transporting the stranded refugees to a new transit camp established by UNHCR at Brazda Airfield, and the back-up began to clear.

On April 7, U.S. Ambassador Christopher R. Hill declared a disaster due to the refugee crisis and requested immediate USG assistance to respond to the situation. A USAID/DART already was in Skopje and began to engage in contingency planning for the crisis situation and to coordinate humanitarian aid activities. Macedonia ultimately hosted approximately 250,000 refugees, with more than 110,000 hosted in camps and transit centers, and more than 106,000 residing with host families.

The GOM was hesitant to accept large numbers of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo, due to sensitivities over Macedonia’s ethnic balance. In light of this reluctance, the UNHCR/IOM Humanitarian Evacuation Plan (HEP), in which ref-

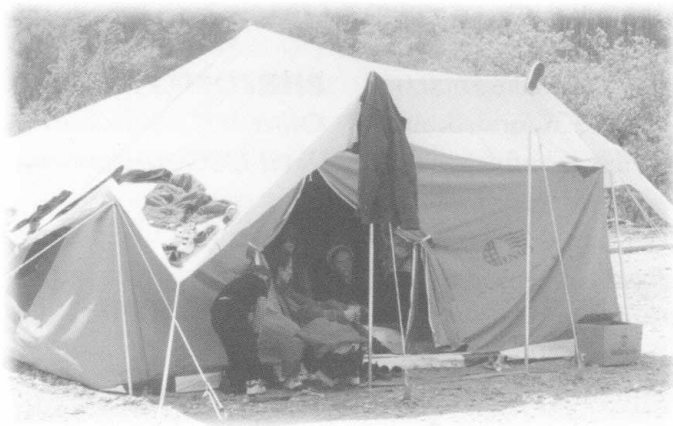
ugees were voluntarily transported from Macedonia to third countries, became a key component of the humanitarian response in Macedonia. From the program’s commencement on April 6, more than 91,000 refugees were airlifted to 28 countries. This figure included more than 9,000 who were transported to the United States Air Force

Base at Fort Dix, New Jersey for eventual transfer to American host families. A second voluntary plan, titled the Humanitarian Transfer Plan (HTP), was intended to transfer up to 1,000 refugees per day from Macedonia to camps in Albania.

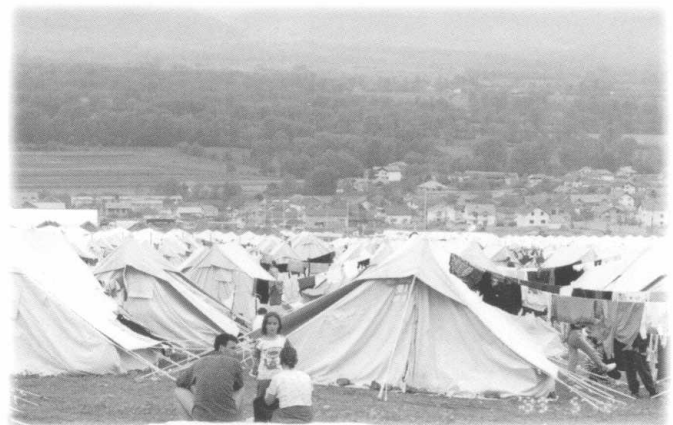
The HTP served another critical need by relieving overcrowding in Macedonia’s camps and transit centers. On April 19, NATO reported that all

existing camps were full, yet refugees continued to stream towards Macedonia. On April 20, the GOM announced that it would permit one new camp at Cegrane which could hold up to 20,000 people, and would permit the expansion of already existing sites. Cegrane quickly filled as it was constructed, and overcrowded conditions persisted. By late April,

UNHCR and WHO reported that none of the camps was in compliance with internationally recognized emergency water and sanitation standards. In late May, Macedonia’s camps reportedly had one



Refugees who recently arrived at Blace Reception Center in Macedonia seek shelter in tents provided by BHR/OFDA (photo by Paul Majorowitz, BHR/OFDA).



Kosovo refugees gather at the Cegrane refugee camp in Macedonia (photo by Paul Majorowitz, BHR/OFDA).

latrine for every 200 persons, ten times the acceptable emergency standard of one for every 20 persons. Tension among refugees and with local communities was a persistent problem and was exacerbated by crowded conditions.

In the initial phase of the crisis, large quantities of HDRs were provided due to lack of cooking facilities. To meet this need, DOD supplied 600,000 HDRs; BHR/OFDA and DOD each funded transport for 300,000 HDRs. In general, sufficient food stocks were available in the region. Although delivery mechanisms were initially ill-equipped to handle the vastly increased demand for food aid, they improved steadily through April. By the end of April, 10.7 MT of food had arrived, enough to feed 300,000 people for the next two and one half months.

NATO, which had a force of some 12,000 personnel in Macedonia, provided extensive support for the humanitarian relief effort. In addition to constructing refugee camps, NATO provided initial coordination support for the humanitarian airlift into Skopje and related offloading operations. On April 24, NATO handed airlift coordination responsibility over to UNHCR and the contracting of offloading to the Department for International Development.

The USG responded to the crisis in Macedonia through a multi-agency effort. On February 19, the USAID/DART in Kosovo relocated from Pristina to Skopje in response to mounting insecurity. The USAID/DART continued to make trips into Kosovo whenever possible, but also engaged in planning and coordination of relief activities for the Macedonia crisis.

In response to the humanitarian assistance needs identified by the USAID/DART, BHR/OFDA programmed grants totaling more than \$14 million for health, water/sanitation, food and non-food relief items and distribution, clothing, women and children's services, shelter, mapping, and psychosocial activities.

BHR/FFP provided \$57.1 million as a regional response to the Balkans, and a portion of these commodities was allocated to Macedonia. State/PRM provided \$9.7 million in funding to relief organizations for refugee registration; emergency shelter, hygiene, and sanitation; primary health care; winterization; food and nutrition, camp management; and

education. DOD provided a total of \$143.8 million as a regional response to the Balkans crisis. (For additional information, please see the "Serbia-Montenegro - Complex Emergency" case report. Readers may also request BHR/OFDA situation reports on the Kosovo crisis.)

BHR/OFDA Assistance	\$14,161,371
Other USG Assistance	\$9,720,988
Total USG Assistance	\$23,882,359

Russia

Fire

During the fall of 1998, major forest fires swept through Khabarovsk Krai in the Russian Far East, burning more than two million hectares. Three people were killed, 800 were left homeless, and more than one million were affected by the fires. As a result of the lethal emission of carbon monoxide and dioxide, the region sustained significant losses of wildlife and destruction of habitats for endangered species. The soil erosion caused by the fires also created human health hazards in the affected areas by disturbing existing water runoff patterns, causing flooding and disrupting the potable water supply.

Carbon monoxide levels were 24 times greater than the maximum allowable concentration in some nearby cities. Urban residents were required to tape and cover their windows to prevent contaminant particles from being inhaled. In addition, fires nearly destroyed the region's timber business, which is one of the major industries in the affected area.

On October 23, 1998, U.S. Ambassador James F. Collins declared a disaster due to the forest fires. BHR/OFDA provided \$25,000 through USAID/Moscow to the World Wildlife Fund, a PVO already working in the area. The funds were used to provide emergency relief items to victims of the forest fires.

BHR/OFDA Assistance	\$25,000
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