

Chile in the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Chile, a country from the South American continent has an efficient, strong half professional, half conscripts Armed Forces of 79 000 soldiers. More than 1100 of her soldiers are serving abroad, in international operations for a more secure, more stabile, more peaceful world. 17 Chilean soldiers are serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the EUFOR mission, part of them in the EUFOR Headquarter in Sarajevo, part of them in the Liaison Observation Team (LOT) houses. LOT houses are the bridges between civilian and military area, between governmental and non-governmental organizations. They take part in the important task of providing mine information for the local population, especially for children. Chilean people are proud, honoured and enthusiastic to be here, stay here and help as much as they can for a population suffering a lot after a bloody war in the Balkan Peninsula. Chile feel social responsibility for the refugees as well, because in the country they are 25 000 refugees from the Balkan region.

Chile's Armed Forces and International Presence in missions

The fundamental reason and mission of the Armed Forces of Chile is to preserve peace, and to guarantee national sovereignty, protect the institutions and the population of the nation. The vision is efficiency, security, cooperation international and interoperability. These are fulfilled across different operations and humanitarian aid all around the world with the objective of preserve peace and stabilisation in the conflict zones. The Chilean Army in his two hundred years of history always symbolised the national development and the social responsibility.

The size of the Chilean Armed Forces is 79 000. It consist of Army (44 000), Navy (22 000) and Air Force (13 000). Around 45% are conscripts and 55% are professionals, but from year to year, the professional rate is growing, and conscripts rate are decreasing. The end goal is a totally professional Chilean Armed Forces.¹

The equipment and armament is partly national fabricated, like – without entirety – FAMAE SAF submachine gun, SIG SG 542-1 battle rifle, MOVAG Piranha armoured personnel carrier, partly coming from different countries to support a high standard Armed Forces. From Germany like: Leopard 2 A4 MBT, Heckler and Koch G3 battle

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rifle, from the Netherlands – Leopard 1V MBT, YPR-765 infantry fighting vehicle, from Switzerland – SIG SG 543 assault rifle, from Belgium – FN Minimi light machine gun, from Israel – IMI Galil assault rifle, Spike anti-tank guided missile, from France – MBDA Mistral surface to air missile, from Spain – CASA Aviocar tactical transport and from the United States of America – HUMVEE, F-16CL Aircraft, M203 Grenade launcher. With several re-equipment and modernization programs the Chilean Army became a technologically advanced army in the region and in the world.²

From the early 90's Chile is participating in international peacekeeping missions like MINUSTAH in Haiti, or UNFICYP in Cyprus, UNMOGIP in India-Pakistan, UNTSO in the Middle-East, UNMIK in Kosovo and according to a bilateral agreement with the European Union since 2003 in EUFOR Althea. Altogether more than 1100 soldiers participate in international military operations all over the world.³



Figure 1. Chilean Army participation in international military operations
source: <http://www.ejercito.cl/presencia-internacional.php>

Operation name	Zone	Number of participants 2006–2007	Number of participantes 2008–2009
MINUSTAH	Haiti	1271	991
EUFOR	Bosnia and Herzegovina	20	84
UNFICYP	Cyprus	7	28
UNMOGIP	India – Pakistan	1	2
UNTSO	Middle East	2	5
UNMIK	Kosovo		
Total		1301	1111

Figure 2. Participation of the Chilean Army in international military operations
Source: <http://www.ejercito.cl/presencia-internacional.php>

Chile's Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The EUFOR forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) consists of one-thousand six-hundred soldiers, from twenty-six different nations, twenty-one are from the European Union (EU) and five are non-EU members. One of the non-EU states is from Latin-America. Chile is part of the EUFOR to maintain the peace in the Balkan Peninsula and take part in the development of the country. From the year 2003, more than four-hundred Chilean soldiers were deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Few years the Chilean contingent personnel had up to 55, the average of their number are 41–42, but there were years when only 32 soldiers were deployed in BiH. The rate of the officers (OFs) and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) was also changed from 2003 to 2011. Officers number were decreasing, while non-commissioned officers number was increasing.

Year	Officers	Non-commissioned officers	Total
2003	03	29	32
2004	12	43	55
2005	17	38	55
2006	16	30	46
2007	13	28	41
2008	14	28	42
2009	14	28	42
2010	14	28	42
2011	15	28	43
Total	118	290	408

Figure 3. Chilean Contingent Contribution, Non-Classified EUFOR handout, from Commander of Chilfor 16, October 13, 2011, Camp Butmir, Sarajevo

The future Chilean contribution for EUFOR (from 1st November, 2011) are 17 military personnel, seven officers, and ten non-commissioned officers. Eight military personnel (four OF and four NCOs) are at the EUFOR HQ in Sarajevo, one officer at Regional Coordination Center North, and eight personnel at LOT house in Banja Luka (two officers and six NCOs). In the LOT house seven persons will be patroller, which is one of the main tasks.

The main reason to participate in a mission so far from homeland is the international cooperation. Chile is very proud to be there as the only Latin-American country working together to the EUFOR troops.

They arrived in 2003 with the British contingent, to help in Banja Luka Metal Factory and in weapon-harvest operations, which were performed by the Chileans in a very effective way. They stayed because it was an important international role and also was something that made them feel honoured. They try to help as much as they can with

all of their capabilities working in two main areas. One part of the contingent is working by “felling the pulse” to monitor the SASE (Safe and Secure Environment) in their area of activity. They have information-gathering teams, mostly NCOs in the northern area of the country who are working among the local population. The other members of the Chilean Contingent are working as part of the EUFOR HQ. Some of them are directly involved trying to help improve the doctrine of the Armed Forces BiH (AF BiH), and to reach the high standard in their own training.

The Liaison Observation Team and the LOT houses in BiH

There were, and there are several LOT-houses (Liaison Observation Teams) across Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2003 until nowadays. In the LOT houses the best platoons are deployed. At the beginning, there were 38 LOT houses from several countries, Chile had LOT Houses in Banja Luka, Prijedor, Sanski Most and Bosanska Gradiska but now, because of a re-structuring process in EUFOR, from 1st of November, 2011, a Chilean LOT House in Banja Luka reopen again. In the national composition were many changes as well. An outstanding one, is from 31st October, 2011 when the Netherlands are reducing his troops from LOT houses, and Chile began a new turn with Austria. The total number of LOT houses, operating by Greece, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, Austria, Switzerland is also decreasing.

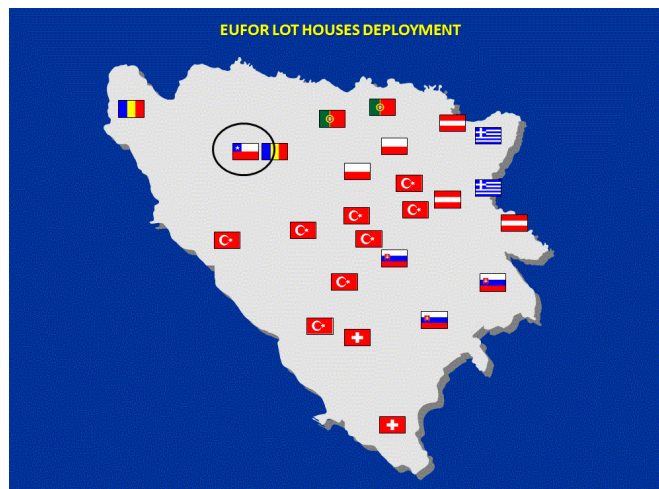


Figure 4. LOT houses from 1st November, 2011. source: Chilfor 16 Commander, 13 October 2011

LOT houses are the eyes and the ears of the EUFOR on the field and their mission is to feel the pulse of the population across speaking with them day by day personally and with the help of the interpreters. These LOTs gathering information in their area of responsibility cooperate with the local authorities and with the population.

From 1st November, 2011 the one and only main territory for Chile is Banja Luka and its surrounding municipalities. Other nations are responsible for other LOT-houses. Bulgaria, Romania and Austria are working in LOT-houses as well. The cooperation with the local police is very good, and they underline the fact that the level of the security was risen a lot, because of the efficient work of the LOT-houses. The efficient work is based on the patrolling, the showed presence of the international community and the help as much as the military personnel can, the leadership of the population and participate in education.

Concerning finances: in the earliest time the United Kingdom was taking the biggest part (2004–2006), than the Netherlands supported to pay the LOT operation (2006–2011). From 2011, Chile was strong enough to pay everything for herself.

Demining is a hard work and almost impossible to finance, but it is important to inform the population about its danger. With 213 000 mines across the country on 10 866 minefields makes Bosnia and Herzegovina the most endangered countries. Every twelfth victim of mines is a child. Mine accidents resulted in 2000 victims so far, from which one-fourth was died. The safety of the local population, especially of the children is one of the highest priorities for EUFOR. Members of the EUFOR throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina assisted by 18 civilian instructors provide the civilian population with necessary information about the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance. To inform the civilians about mine risks they visit schools and other education institutions all around Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To win the heart and the mind, and the trust of the local population is also a very important task. The only way to acquaint the Bosnian people with a country like Chile – which is more than 14 000 kilometers away – is the presence of the Chilean soldiers. The size of Chile can be illustrated with the fact that this country compasses at least seven climate types and it is 5000 kilometer long from north to south. Like many other members of the EUFOR, which are away of their family, waiting them to return home, is hard, but not inconceivable. Looking for the wonderful landscape in BiH is hard to notice that after the second world war one of the bloodiest war took place here in Europe.

To get closer to Bosnian population, soldiers involve them to know each other's culture as well. It is also part of the Civil-Military cooperation and good relation between local civilians and foreign military persons that in the LOT houses, Chilean soldiers play traditional Chilean music, and cook traditional food: "empanada".

Chile feels social responsibility, open to the world, and even the crisis is continuing, tries to provide its own population the best and help in the risk zones as much as they can. Her goals are: to be a strong economy and to be a strong political and military nation. The expected economical growth is optimistic, and in the last 15 years Chile did not had international dept. For her political and military alliances are excellent with everyone: excellent political agreement with the United States of America, good economical agreement with Asian-Pacific region (China, Thailand, Korea), with the European Union as the demonstration that “we can and we want”. Chile is a serious and hard worker, learnt a lot from the European Union, and could turn the false prejudices about Chile. Now Chile is a totally acceptable, trusted honoured nation in the military missions, and a good economical and political partner as well. The country gives support for the families in the Balkan Peninsula and feels social responsibility for the 250 000 descendants and immigrants coming from the Balkan region to Chile. It is one of the most important reasons to participate in the LOT houses activity. LOT houses operation requires good military, political, social skills, efficiency, which Chile already has. Chile reduced her tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also reduced the number of LOT houses, from now so – only one on full spectrum and highest efficiency will operate.



Figure 5. LOT house with Chilean soldiers in BiH
source: Chilfor 16 commander, 13 october 2011

The full spectrum consists patrolling, showed presence, help as much as they can to the local population, to the local authorities, and to the non-governmental organisations, leading the population, keep contact with the regional leaders, the religious group, provide information for the local population about mine and about other unexploded devices and its danger, and it is high priority to visit educational institutions and schools together with civilian instructors to provide information about mine-danger.

LOT houses main goals are: monitoring and reporting on situational awareness, feel the pulse of the local population and agencies, identify and report changes, proactive liaison with the international organisations, non-governmental organisations, governmental organisations, local authorities, local enforcements and local population. Support information operation campaigns, human intelligence, and EUFOR operations. Demonstrate EUFOR presence is a significant activity as well.

A personal opinion of the CHILFOR 16 Commander

Finally, I would like to show some personal opinion from Lieutenant-Colonel Rafael Villaroel, who helped me to realise this article about Chile and her EUFOR activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I really appreciate, that Lt. Col. Villaroel gave me some time to have an interview with him in Camp Butmir, Sarajevo; sent me pictures and other material.

LtCol Villaroel feels, that to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is quite far from his home, is an excellent opportunity it is a surprising and unexpected beautiful country with a lot to discover. It makes him happy to see, that people after suffering a lot in this country, and after a war as wlle are very kind and open minded.

Conclusion

Chile is a Latin-American country, which operates 14,000 kilometers away from home in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because she feels social responsibility for the Bosnian people in and out of Chile, and because she can and want to have an effective, professional, high standard Armed Forces, an economical, political, militarily-strong nation. Chile is responsible for several LOT houses since 2003, and from 2011 for only one, in Banja Luka, but the latter is a great challenge. Chilean soldiers are trying to help as much as they can, to get closer to local people, to have excellent contact with the local authorities, enforcements and non-governmental organisations. It has a high priority task to inform people, especially children about mine and other unexploded devices risk and danger. Chilean Army is going to become totally professional one,

instead of a mixed: conscripts-professionals, own armament factories, but supported with high standard foreign weapons, vehicles as well. More than 1100 Chilean soldiers are serving abroad in UN and EU-led operations for a more secure world, and provide more prosperity for the people.

References

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