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February 2, 2009

Congressional Research Service

Report RS20154

KOSOVO: REFUGEE ASSISTANCE AND TEMPORARY RESETTLEMENT

Lois B. McHugh, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division; and Joyce C. Vialet, Domestic Social Policy Division

Updated September 1, 1999

Abstract. The State Department estimates that 90% of Kosovar Albanians fled or were driven from their homes since March 1998 by Yugoslav forces, with the majority leaving between March and June of 1999. At the height of the crisis, over 780,000 of them were in camps in the region, primarily Albania and Macedonia, two countries with little capacity for providing for them. Another 150,000 were scattered around Europe, principally in Germany and Switzerland, and 29 countries are providing temporary refuge to 91,000 outside of the region. On April 16, the Administration requested an emergency supplemental which included money for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo. On April 21, Vice President Gore announced 20,000 Kosovars would be resettled in the United States. The 20,000, with close family ties or in vulnerable circumstances, would come from Macedonian camps, and be admitted to the United States under the refugee provisions of the immigration law. The actual number is expected to be 14,850. P.L. 106-31 (H.R. 1141), signed on May 21, appropriates more than \$1 billion in humanitarian programs for Kosovo. With the peace agreement of June 9, the refugees returned quickly and the donor countries are focusing on temporary humanitarian aid and long-term reconstruction aid to Kosovo. Most of the reconstruction aid is expected to come from the Europeans. Additional U.S. assistance is expected to be appropriated in the regular foreign aid and defense appropriation legislation.

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CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Kosovo: Refugee Assistance and Temporary Resettlement

Lois B. McHugh

Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

Joyce Viallet

Domestic Social Policy Division

Summary

The State Department estimates that 90% of Kosovar Albanians fled or were driven from their homes after March 1998 by Yugoslav forces, with the majority leaving between March and June of 1999. At the height of the crisis, over 780,000 of them were in camps in the region, primarily Albania and Macedonia, two countries with little capacity for providing for them. Another 150,000 were scattered around Europe, principally in Germany and Switzerland, and 29 countries were providing temporary refuge to 91,000 outside of the region. On April 16, the Administration requested an emergency supplemental which included money for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo.¹ On April 21, Vice President Gore announced up to 20,000 Kosovars with close family ties or in vulnerable circumstances would be resettled in the United States from Macedonian camps. Approximately 13,000 have been admitted under the refugee provisions of the immigration law, and many are now returning to Kosovo. P.L. 106-31 (H.R. 1141), signed on May 21, appropriates more than \$1 billion in humanitarian programs for Kosovo. With the peace agreement of June 9, the refugees returned quickly (over 770,000 have returned since mid June) and the donor countries began focusing on temporary humanitarian aid and long-term reconstruction aid to Kosovo. Most of the reconstruction aid is expected to come from the Europeans. Additional U.S. assistance is expected to be appropriated in the regular foreign aid and defense appropriation legislation. It is not anticipated that this report will be updated.

Background

NATO estimates that all but 130,000 of the 1.8 million Kosovar Albanians were forced from their homes between March 1998 and June 1999, fleeing either to a neighboring country or province, or hiding within Kosovo with no access to humanitarian

¹U.S. officials urge monetary donations to appropriate private voluntary agencies working in the region. The Interaction web site lists these. See: www.interaction.org or contact Interaction by phone at 202-667-8227, extension 106.

assistance. At the height of the crisis, over 780,000 were in neighboring countries, including Albania and Macedonia, two countries with little capacity for providing for them (see table at right). Another 150,000 were scattered throughout Europe, principally in Germany and Switzerland. And 29 countries had offered permanent or temporary refugee to another 91,000 outside of the Balkans. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), U.N. relief agencies, NATO, donor governments, and international and local voluntary agencies provided aid to those fleeing the country. Since the signing of the peace agreement, over 770,000 Kosovars have returned to Kosovo, including 54,000 returning from outside the Balkans. Humanitarian officials expect most to return before winter. Since hostilities ended, about 200,000 Serbian Kosovars and Roma, have fled or been driven out of Kosovo, creating a new refugee emergency in the region. This includes 3,000 Bosnian and Croatian Serb refugees.

Number of Refugees and Displaced March 1998-June 14, 1999

Montenegro	69,800
Macedonia (FYROM)	244,500
Albania	444,200
Bosnia-Herzegovina	21,700
TOTAL	780,200

Source: UNHCR

The countries of the region are still sheltering many thousands of refugees and displaced persons from earlier conflicts and ethnic cleansing throughout the former Yugoslavia who are not included in these numbers. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo) has 223,000 refugees from Bosnia and 300,000 from Croatia. Bosnia is hosting 836,500 internally displaced and 30,000 refugees from Croatia. Croatia is host to 30,000 refugees from Bosnia and 62,000 from Serbia. Finally, European countries are sheltering 128,000 from Bosnia and Croatia. All are receiving assistance from the international community and the governments giving them shelter.

Humanitarian Conditions²

Although relief aid had been prepositioned in the area, the speed and size of the exodus from Kosovo, beginning shortly before the NATO bombing began on March 24, resulted in chaos and some deaths in the early days. Most refugees fled to Albania and Macedonia. In Albania, refugees entered the lightly populated and isolated northern province. In Macedonia, trains overloaded with people forced from the cities of Kosovo deposited thousands of refugees in a border area that has recently seen pro-Serbian rioting and destruction of humanitarian agency offices and vehicles, leading to security concerns for both refugees and aid workers. Those arriving in Montenegro, a province of Yugoslavia, faced continuing danger from Yugoslav military forces in that province. By early April, the humanitarian situation in both Albania and Macedonia began to stabilize. Donors provided aid to the Albanian and Macedonian government as well as to the refugees. Over 91,000 refugees were evacuated from Macedonia to ease the concerns of

²The U.S. government, the U.N. relief agencies, and many private organizations are providing regular updates of conditions, needs, and news about Kosovo. These are available on the web site: www.reliefweb.int or www.unhcr.ch/news/media/kosovo.htm.

the government. Many thousands more were bused to Albania and Greece. One half to two thirds of the refugees in Albania and Macedonia lived in private homes.

NATO and U.N. officials feared that some 600,000 Kosovars were without food and shelter or humanitarian aid in Kosovo when hostilities ended, but conditions in Kosovo were not as bad as expected. The first activities of the humanitarian agencies were to rush food, medical supplies, and shelter materials into Kosovo and reopen the international aid offices. Mines and booby traps left by both Yugoslav and KLA forces in some areas needed to be removed. The most serious concern facing Kosovo as winter approaches is lack of adequate shelter for the returnees. A UNHCR assessment of 450 villages (of 2,000 overall) estimated that 50,000 homes were uninhabitable. A European Union assessment of 1,383 villages found 78,000 homes uninhabitable. In addition, ethnic conflict continues to endanger personal security and Serb homes and buildings continue to be destroyed. UNHCR winterization of one room per home program is well underway with UNHCR, ECHO (the humanitarian aid agency of the European Commission), and USAID providing material for about 20,000 homes each and 15,000 more coming from other sources. Assistance to the displaced in Serbia is also a concern. A mid August survey of Serbia by UNHCR estimated that 770,000 Serbs, including refugees from Kosovo will need food aid this winter.

Humanitarian Assistance

The United Nations has issued several multi agency appeals for donations as conditions have changed. On July 27, the combined U.N. cost estimate for humanitarian assistance to the Balkans was \$939 million for calendar 1999, including \$689 million for Kosovo related programs. While donors have pledged money in response to these appeals, it does not always arrive or arrive quickly enough. For example, by July 30, UNICEF had received 64 percent of funds needed and UNESCO had received 2.3 percent. By August 10, UNHCR had received 72 percent of needed funds. Shortages are having an impact on specific sectors. UNESCO's shortage, for example, will slow the rehabilitation of schools. The U.N. humanitarian agencies and the private voluntary agencies which left Kosovo moved back with the refugees when hostilities ended. International agencies are also working in Montenegro and Serbia, as well as in Macedonia and Albania.

Because the humanitarian agencies were overwhelmed by the numbers of refugees, the difficult terrain, and local hostility in Macedonia, NATO took over coordination of air and ground transport of humanitarian supplies to the region on April 6 and provided troops in Macedonia and Albania to build camps, assist in the relief effort and provide security. The money spent by NATO is not included in the U.N. appeal.

There is no single source which can give total humanitarian aid provided by all countries, or even by the NATO alliance countries. The European Commission pledged 378 million Euros (1.1 Euro per \$) through ECHO between March and July of 1999. NATO member states also contributed bilaterally to the U.N. appeal. As of July 30, total pledges to the programs of the U.N. agencies in the Balkans totaled \$590.9 million, including \$187.9 million from the United States, according to the U.N. Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Activities (OCHA). OCHA estimates that countries had also provided \$300 million in humanitarian aid in addition to pledges to the U.N. appeal.

U.S. Assistance. The U.S. government stepped up aid to the region after the large-scale expulsion began on March 24, using the emergency funds of USAID and the Department of State, and the President's special authority to use Defense Department supplies and services. U.S. government aid since March 1998 and its sources is shown in the table at right.

U.S. Contributions to Kosovo Humanitarian Programs

USAID (Bureau of Hum.Asst.)	\$147,360,393
State/PRM (Pop., Refug.&Migra.)	\$149,618,322
DOD (Dept. of Defense)	\$45,281,000
TOTAL Govt. Asst. Since 3/98	\$342,259,715

Source: USAID 8/27/99

Emergency Supplemental Legislation (P.L. 106-31).

The Administration sent Congress an emergency supplemental request for funds totaling \$6 billion for military and humanitarian costs of responding to the Kosovo emergency on April 16, including about \$720 million for military and nonmilitary humanitarian assistance and another \$105 million in aid for Macedonia and Albania. P.L. 106-31 (H.R. 1141) increased the amount for non military humanitarian assistance \$447 million above the President's request including \$100 million for resettling refugees in the United States, \$149 million in food aid to refugees in the Balkans, \$92 million for the USAID disaster assistance account, and over \$211 million for the Department of State refugee account. For more details on the appropriation, see CRS Report RS20161, *Kosovo Military Operations: Costs and Congressional Action on Funding*.

Resettlement Outside the Region

In Macedonia, humanitarian aid to the Kosovar Albanians was not an adequate solution. Fear of internal destabilization and a large pro-Serb population limited sympathy for the refugees and local assistance was predicated on reducing the number of Kosovars in the country. In addition, the camps were poorly equipped to handle special health problems such as kidney dialysis. At the request of UNHCR, governments agreed to resettle 200,000 Kosovar Albanians temporarily outside of the area. The United States accepted approximately 13,000 refugees. Other countries accepting large numbers include Turkey-8,340, Germany-14,689, Norway-6,072, France-6,339, Italy-5,829, Austria-5,080, and Canada-5,438. The UNHCR program was suspended on June 30 except for the placement of a few hundred persons needing special medical care. Over 91,000 Kosovars were resettled outside the regions overall.

U.S. Response. On April 21, 1999, Vice President Gore announced that the 20,000 Kosovar refugees the United States had agreed to resettle would come to the United States instead of to the U.S. naval base on Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as originally planned. The Administration agreed to admit up to 20,000 Kosovar Albanians from the refugee camps in Macedonia who, in the Vice President's words, have "close family ties in America" or are "vulnerable," defined by the State Department to refer to persons who "have difficulty remaining in refugee camps for health or other reasons." As discussed above, P.L. 106-31 included \$100 million for resettling Kosovar refugees in the United States, plus additional emergency funds for transportation.

The State Department estimates that Kosovar Albanian refugee admissions will total approximately 13,000. Refugee processing is now limited to emergency referrals by the

UNHCR. According to the State Department, approximately 1,200 refugees have returned to Kosovo, and many more have expressed an interest in doing so.

While the Vice President referred to the refugees' admission to the United States as temporary, in fact they were admitted under the refugee provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which provide for permanent admission after a year in refugee status. However, from the beginning the State Department indicated that it would "provide maximum opportunities for people to return," including transportation. On July 12, the State Department announced that it had contracted with International Organization for Migration (IOM) to assist refugees who wished to return to Kosovo.³ Quoting from the statement, "Refugees will make the decision whether to return or to permanently resettle in the U.S. While the Department is not encouraging Kosovar refugees to return precipitously, it is responding to growing interest among them to return sooner rather than later." The State Department will fund the return travel of Kosovar refugees evacuated from Macedonia under the U.S. special assistance program who arrived here before July 31, 1999, provided they leave prior to May 1, 2000. Additionally, the IOM travel loan these refugees agreed to before they arrived here will be canceled.

Briefly recapitulating the refugee admissions effort, it was coordinated by U.S. government officials with the assistance of the UNHCR, IOM, and other U.S. nongovernmental organizations. Initially, the Administration had hoped to fully process all the refugees in Macedonia for admission to the United States, and place them immediately with their relatives upon their entry here. However, in response to an extraordinary influx of refugees into Macedonia — 19,500 in 3 days — the Secretary of State announced on April 30, 1999, that the refugee admissions program would have two components. The first was an emergency component, in response to the refugee emergency in Macedonia; and the second was normal refugee processing, as originally planned. The emergency program was intended to move refugees out of Macedonia as quickly as possible. After a preliminary review, they were flown to Fort Dix, NJ, for the completion of refugee processing, including further medical and security screening. Even before the signing of the peace agreement, this segment of the refugee admissions program was being phased out.

The Kosovar Albanians coming here were determined to be refugees under the INA, and to be otherwise admissible on medical and other grounds. In conformance with international law, the INA defines a "refugee" as a person who is fleeing "because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (§101(a)(42)). The annual refugee admission numbers and their allocation among refugee groups are determined at the start of each fiscal year by the President after consultation with the Congress (INA, §207). The INA also includes a provision for refugee emergencies that has been used only three times since the refugee provisions were adopted in 1980. If the President determines after appropriate consultation with Congress that an unforeseen emergency refugee situation exists and that the admission of the refugees is justified by grave humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest, he may specify an additional number of refugees to be admitted during the succeeding 12-month period. The Administration

³An IOM application form can be obtained by calling 1-800-748-4521. Information on the return program is available at the IOM website: www.iom.int/iom/kosovo/index.html.

consulted with Congress regarding the addition of up to 20,000 numbers for the Kosovar Albanians to the existing FY1999 refugee admissions ceiling. The final FY1999 ceiling was 91,000, of which 61,000 was allocated to Europe—including the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, and 13,000 numbers allocated to Kosovar refugees pursuant to the emergency consultation with Congress.⁴

In a related development, on June 8 the Administration announced the expansion of its existing grant of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to include Kosovar nationals in the United States as of June 8, 1999. TPS is blanket temporary relief from deportation for aliens fleeing dangerous situations and is available under the INA at the discretion of the Attorney General.⁵ Previously, TPS had been granted to Kosovars who were here as of June 9, 1998, effective through June 30, 1999. This date has now been extended until June 8, 2000.

Reconstruction of Kosovo⁶

Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, made the United Nations responsible for civil administration and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. The U.N. Secretary General named Bernard Kouchner of France as U.N. administrator. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees will be responsible for humanitarian activities, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for institution building, and the European Union for Reconstruction. The European Union has established an Agency for Reconstruction with a website (www.seerecon.org).

The European Commission has estimated that it will cost 1 to 1.5 billion euros (1.1 euros per \$) to rebuild Kosovo over the next 3 years. Other estimates range from \$1.5 to \$5 billion. Most reconstruction aid is expected to be provided by the European governments. The European Union has announced that it will contribute 500 to 700 million euros per year over the next 3 years. One controversy arising among donors already is how much aid will go to Serbia, which was heavily damaged by NATO bombing.

The United States and some governments want to limit assistance to Serbia to humanitarian aid only as long as the current regime remains in power. Other, primarily European, donors insist that the entire region must be developed to ensure the success of rebuilding Kosovo. A recent World Bank study concluded that the countries adjacent to Kosovo would require \$1.8 billion in economic aid this year alone to offset the costs and economic losses of the refugee influx.

Appropriations for the U.S. contribution to post peace agreement humanitarian and reconstruction aid will be appropriated in the FY2000 foreign aid and defense legislation.

⁴For more information, see CRS Report 98-668, *Refugee Admissions and Resettlement Policy: Facts and Issues*, by Joyce Viallet.

⁵For more information, see CRS Report 98-759, *Immigration: Temporary Protected Status Background and Issues*, by Ruth Ellen Wasem.

⁶For more information, see the Kosovo reconstruction website: www.seerecon.org.