

TR 5.1 OPERATION PARASOL**BACKGROUND**

The break up of Yugoslavia in 1991 and ensuing civil wars - first in Croatia, then Bosnia-Herzegovina, followed by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in Macedonia - resulted in more than two million refugees and internally displaced people in the Balkans. Every country in the Balkans was affected by conflict.

- As a result of the 1991 to 1995 conflict in Croatia, 300,000 people were displaced from their homes and 300,000 more fled to other countries. Additionally, Croatia took in hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- In Bosnia-Herzegovina, more than half the population had to flee their homes as a result of the three year war.
- Close to a million (800,000) Albanian refugees fled to Kosovo before and throughout the international military campaign. Additionally, Kosovo temporarily accepted more than 30,000 refugees during the crisis in Macedonia.
- Macedonia accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees during the Bosnian war and the crisis in Kosovo. At the height of the crisis in Macedonia, 70,000 had been alternatively displaced yet again to other countries.



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On April 30, 1999, the Government of Canada agreed to receive 5,000 Kosovar refugees as part of a mass international emergency evacuation from overcrowded refugee camps in Macedonia. In partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Canadian Red Cross took on an integral role in providing services for the refugees housed at Canadian Forces Bases (CFBs) in Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

The plan was to offer refugees a safe haven, assistance and activities for a few months until they were moved to communities or had the ability to return to Kosovo. This role, in what became known as Operation Parasol, allowed for a continuity of Red Cross services for the refugees, as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was already delivering humanitarian assistance programs in the Balkans. During the course of Operation Parasol, Canadian Red Cross volunteers and staff helped 5,051 refugees settle into life at the bases and supplied clothing, hygiene products and other daily necessities.

In order to respond to the changing needs of the refugees, they also organized recreational and educational services for the refugees' stay on the bases, as this was identified as a priority by those who were running the camps, and the refugees.