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The Civil Protection System in Serbia



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THE CIVIL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN SERBIA

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Key Findings

1. The conflicts of the 1990s were among the greatest crises that Serbia's Civil Protection System had ever faced, and the system performed admirably.
2. Any revised legal framework for disaster preparedness and response in Serbia should emphasize coordination of activity and clarification of the different roles of each Ministry and government agency rather than emphasizing the primacy of one agency over the other.
3. Senior staff in the Ministries of Defense, Interior and Environment should continue their efforts to establish an inter-ministerial coordination body as a mechanism for enhancing disaster preparedness. The United Nations, in their International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, promotes the concept of "*National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction*" which could be a useful model for promoting inter-agency cooperation in Serbia.
4. Expand resources to continue and enhance inter-agency participatory capacity building at the national and local levels, especially assistance focused on practical technical knowledge transfer, and inter-agency desk and field exercises.
5. Support agencies, such as the Serbian Red Cross, that can bolster the processes of: community mobilization; linking national and local level disaster preparedness and planning.
6. Continue to provide focused support to the Serbian Ministry of Defense in their efforts to strengthen national-level disaster preparedness. The Ministry of Defense is a key player in disaster management given the manpower, logistical, transportation and communications resources that they command.

7. Initiate a process to review recent disasters to determine what kinds of responses are most effective and to identify gaps in disaster response. Knowledge gained in this type of assessment should be a basis for refinement of the legal framework for disaster response.
8. Provide capacity building assistance to key line ministries involved in disaster preparedness to improve their ability to conduct internal reviews (or after-action assessments) of the response of their ministries to disasters. This is a key element of the creation of a learning organization that is able to improve its effectiveness in responding to disasters.

I. A Historical Perspective on Civil Protection in Serbia

The notion of disaster management in Serbia can trace its roots to the emergence of the modern concept of humanitarian assistance. In 1876, a mere 13 years after the first International Geneva Conference, Dr. Vladan Djordjevic established the “Serbian Society of the Red Cross”¹. That same year, the International Committee for the Relief of the Wounded became the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)². In Serbia, as in the rest of Europe, the concept of humanitarian protection continued to evolve throughout the 20th century beyond its initial focus on armed conflict to encompass a broad range of threats to the public welfare.

I.a The Evolution of Disaster Management in Serbia

The first legal establishment of disaster management as a state obligation took place in 1932 when the Yugoslav Ministry of Army and Navy published “the General Instructions for the Work for the Protection of the Country in Case of the Enemy Attack from the Air”. The government subsequently established regional boards with first aid, chemical, evacuation, operations and public information divisions.³ In January 1940, the government adopted the Protocol for territorial air defense command (TVO), creating a Directorate for Passive Protection.⁴ German attack and occupation undermined efforts to further develop disaster preparedness during World War II.⁵ Despite these challenges, in December 1948, the Federal Ministry of Interior adopted the “Regulation on Organization and work of the Division for Anti-aircraft Protection (PAZ)”.⁶ The

¹ From “History” Red Cross of Serbia website, downloaded September 16, 2007, <http://www.redcross.org.yu/engistorijat3.php>

² From “Significant Dates in the History of International Humanitarian Law and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, ICRC website, downloaded September 16, 2007.

³ Djarmati, Dj. i V. Jakovljević, *Civilna zaštita u SRJ*, Studentski trg, Beograd, 1996, p. 33.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Vladimir R. Jakovljević, *Sistem civilne odbrane*, Fakultet civilne odbrane, Beograd, 2006, p. 27.

Division was put in charge of: strengthening military power, providing support to the armed forces in battle, and protecting citizens and the national economy from air attacks.⁷ The mission of PAZ included the responsibility for fire protection, which predated the Department of Fire Protection within the Ministry of Interior. In 1955, the Law on People's Defense transformed the Division for Anti-aircraft Protection into the Civil Protection Service, expanding its responsibilities to include protection and rescue in natural disasters. This new law mandated that the disaster management be organized as a part of a people's defense system. The notion of a unified system for disaster management was emerging.

On January 1, 1963, the Civil Protection Service, along with Fire Protection, was moved to the Ministry of Defense (MoD).⁸ The move brought together the Armed Forces, the Civil Protection Service, and a Monitoring & Alert Service all within the MoD, creating what is commonly recognized as the Yugoslav model of disaster management. Within this model, the Civil Protection Service was organized for the protection and rescue of people, material and other assets, as well as for mitigating the effects of war, natural disasters and other dangers.⁹ It was organized with operational units in municipalities as self-contained entities with responsibility for individual and community protection and rescue. By this time the Department for Civil Protection already had general and specialized units as well as a headquarters staffed with experts in disaster response. The Monitoring and Alert Service had two core functions: to detect and monitor threats of hostile activity and natural disasters, and to disseminate information during crises to other first responders and the public. It consisted of two interconnected systems; one system for civilians and another for the armed forces.¹⁰

In 1965, legislation was passed that further defined the scope of the Department of Civil Protection by regulating citizen's obligations to participate in civil protection, establishing responsibilities for the provision of material support to the Department, and creating a Civil Protection headquarters.¹¹ The

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ From "Belgrade Fire Brigade History", Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia website, downloaded October 01, 2007, <http://www.mup.sr.gov.yu/domino/uppp.nsf/SUP%20Beograd>

⁹ "Snage opštenarodne odbrane", from: *Strategija oružane borbe*, Savezni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, Beograd, 1983, p. 54.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Djarmati, Dj. i V. Jakovljević, *Civilna zaštita u SRJ*, Studentski trg, Beograd, 1996, p. 34.

1969 law on People's Defense defined protection and rescue measures for a myriad of situations: urban protection measures, displacement of citizens and material assets, evacuation, care of endangered and injured citizens, medical and veterinary first aid and measures for maintenance of order and security, among others. During this period, the Department of Civil Protection evolved into a massive organization with responsibility for the protection and rescue of citizens and property during war and peacetime. The Law on Defense from 1994 established the Territorial Body for Defense which was renamed into Department for Defense of the Republic of Serbia within the Ministry of Defense of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 2000. That department still exists at the MoD today, although it now shares the field of disaster response with an ever increasing number of actors.

I.b Disaster Experience

The conflicts of the 1990s were among the greatest crises that Serbia's Civil Protection System had ever faced. Located in a region of intense political change and civil unrest, Serbia also experiences many natural disasters, most notably floods, forest fires and earthquakes. As a major link between Asia and the rest of Europe, the threat of transportation accidents, terrorism and infectious disease epidemics are substantial. An overview of the major disasters faced by the former Yugoslavia, and more recently Serbia in particular, reminds us of the substantial experience in crisis response that already exists, not only among the professionals charged with responding to these disasters, but also among the population that has lived through them.

I.b.1 Pre 1990

One of the largest landslides in Serbia's recent history took place on the 26th of February 1963 in the Stara planina mountain range near the town of Pirot. Caused by melting snow, the 240 thousand square meter landslide was so massive it blocked the Visočica river creating lake Zavoj.¹² In July of the same year, a massive earthquake hit the city of Skopje, capital of the Republic of Macedonia. One thousand and seventy people died, devastating the town's population.¹³ Six years later, another earthquake struck the region of Banja Luka, killing thirteen people and leaving forty thousand without homes.¹⁴ In

¹² Ibid., p. 78.

¹³ Ibid., 1996, p. 74.

¹⁴ Djarmati, Dj. i V. Jakovljević, *Civilna zaštita u SRJ*, Studentski trg, Beograd, 1996, p. 74.

March 1977, a catastrophic landslide destroyed over 100 homes and one monastery in the village of Jovac. Just two years later, an earthquake struck the Montenegrin coast, causing 101 deaths and massive destruction to coastal towns.¹⁵ In addition to natural disasters, a fire broke out in a tire factory in Rakovica on June 4, 1989.¹⁶ Damage from the fire totaled three million dollars. A mining accident that same year killed more than 90 miners in an underground fire.

I.b.2 1990 - 2000

The breakup of the former Yugoslav republics during the 1990s caused some of the largest population movements in Europe's recent history. Hundreds of thousands of refugees sought shelter in Serbia, placing an enormous strain on state institutions. Conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina displaced hundreds of thousands of individuals. As in most countries, no state institutions existed that were capable of managing such an enormous influx of people within such a short period of time. Violence in Kosovo as well as the subsequent NATO bombing further complicated the task of providing aid to the huge numbers of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Many of those affected were forced to find shelter for themselves, seeking accommodation among family or friends.¹⁷ An April 2001 analysis by the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia, with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), found that there were 451,980 people displaced in the country, out of which 377,731 had been granted formal refugee status.¹⁸

In this same period, Serbia experienced its usual share of natural disasters. Earthquakes in 1998 and 1999 inflicted considerable damage on the municipality of Mionica and the city of Valjevo, with many families who lost their homes still waiting for reconstruction to be completed. The Ministry of Infrastructure (Formerly the Ministry for Capital Investment) created a directorate with the goal of developing the affected district. Floods in July 1999, affected the watersheds of the Sava, Velika Morava and Zapadna Morava

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁷ *Indicators of Human Security in Serbia 2004*, Faculty of Civil Defense, Belgrade, 2005, pp. 284-285.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 287.

rivers.¹⁹ In 1992, a catastrophic fire struck the clothing industry in Pirot. Several facilities were completely destroyed, totaling damages of thirty million USD.²⁰

I.b.3 2000 – 2007²¹

Less than ten years after this decade of upheaval, the degree of growth and development that is taking place in Serbia today is impressive. The World Refugee Survey Report from 2003 states that by 2002, Yugoslavia had around 353,000 refugees (12% less than in 2001).²² The same report showed that at the end of 2002 there were 262,000 IDPs, including 234,000 from Kosovo. Data from UNHCR estimated the number of refugees in Serbia in January 2004 to be 379,135. Around 35,000 of these individuals were living in collective centers, another 10,000 were living in unregistered informal centers, while the vast majority sought accommodation with relatives and friends. The overall number of refugees and IDPs in Serbia will never exactly be known, given that estimates varied between 350,000 and 800,000²³, roughly 5-10% of the country's population. Beginning in 2002, the government, together with UNHCR, began closing the collective centers while continuing efforts to integrate those refugees who choose to remain into the country's economy.

In addition to managing the needs of refugees and IDPs over the past seven years, the government has responded to the usual floods, landslides, transportation accidents, and most recently, forest fires. In April 2005, the Tamiš river breached a dam in Romania, flooding large parts of the province of Vojvodina. The municipalities of Sečanj, Žitište and Plandište, were hardest hit, especially the villages Jaša Tomić and Medja. In Jaša Tomić 200 houses were destroyed and 800 flooded, forcing 3200 people to evacuate. The estimated damage was around 13 million Euros.²⁴

The government response included the army, police, civil protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water, the Food and Agriculture Organization and

¹⁹ Varga, S. i M. B. Mladenovic, *Zastita od poplava u Srbiji – Novi pristup*, Institut za vodoprivredu "Jaroslav Cerni", Beograd, p. 5.

²⁰ Djarmati, Dj. i V. Jakovljević, *Civilna zaštita u SRJ*, Studentski trg, Beograd, 1996, p. 125.

²¹ Sources for floods, landslides and earthquakes: *The Condition of Human Security in Serbia 2005-2006*, Fund for an Open Society, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 116-118.

²² *Indicators of Human Security in Serbia 2004*, Faculty of Civil Defense, Belgrade, 2005, p. 288.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

²⁴ *The Condition of Human Security in Serbia 2005-2006*, Fund for an Open Society, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 116-117.

local and central government officials representing a number of other ministries and official bodies. The Red Cross of Serbia was also heavily involved in the relief effort. The physical work of securing dams and protecting towns involved regular soldiers, soldiers in civil service (conscientious objectors who fulfill their military service obligation through non-military assignments) and volunteers -- mostly local residents. The Red Cross of Serbia provided emergency relief for over 4,000 individuals in the form of clothing, food, water, and shelter, in addition to providing storage space for distributing goods from government and international sources²⁵. Soldiers from Novi Sad evacuated people and material assets, while the army and police both provided food transport and local security. The Defense Center of Novi Sad (an office of the MoD) called upon all soldiers in civil service in Banat to assist in the recovery. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water provided veterinary services in the field and contacted the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Belgrade to request urgent financial support.²⁶

A Crisis Headquarters for response and recovery to the floods was created in nearby Banat, while the government of Vojvodina established a Center on Activities in Defense from Floods. Meanwhile, the Serbian Directorate for Material Reserves was sending food to endangered municipalities. The President, several ministers, and representatives from the government of Vojvodina visited the affected regions, releasing 750,000 Euros to assist in relief efforts. Journalists from 21 countries covered the crisis, raising questions about the lack of preventive protection, coordination with Romanian authorities, and protection of the Danube-Tisa-Danube artificial canal. A mere two months later, floods hit the towns of Leskovac, Porečje and Vučje, along with other towns around Niš and Kruševac in Southern Serbia. Around 30 thousand hectares of agricultural land was destroyed, as well as 2500 homes. Total damages affected almost half of the agricultural land in the region.²⁷

Landslides in April 2006, prompted the declaration of a state of emergency in the municipalities of Trstenik and Lučani. At the time, there were approximately 3000 registered active landslides in Serbia endangering 966 population centers. Damages were estimated at 25 million Euros, with 2300 houses, 639 roads and

²⁵ IFRC. Serbia and Montenegro Flood: Final Report. March 3, 2006, http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA008final.pdf

²⁶ *Danas* Daily Newspapers, April 22-30, 2005, downloaded May 25, 2005, <http://www.danas.co.yu/>

²⁷ *Ibid.*, also: Georgijev, S. *Poplave u Banatu – Mali potop*, *Vreme* magazine, no. 747, April 28, 2005.

17 bridges damaged in Central Serbia. The Ministry of Defense mobilized to help the local population and assist with the eventual clean-up. A total of 97 Civil Protection HQs with 634 individuals in addition to 134 specialized operational teams engaged in relief efforts. Overall, around 2000 members of the Department for Civil Protection were dispatched in the field. Numerous other organizations assisted in the relief effort, including construction companies, professional and voluntary fire fighting units, and the Red Cross of Serbia. The Red Cross provided clothing, hygiene packages, food, water, and mattresses for those affected²⁸. The mobilization of Ministry of Defense resources is one measure of the scale of the relief effort. Eighty-one organizational units engaged in the recovery efforts after the floods and subsequent landslides. Around 10,000 soldiers were engaged, 4,500 of which were in the civil service in the Army.²⁹

On July 19, 2007, large-scale fires spread across much of the country. Fires raged on the Stara Planina and Vidlic mountains in Pirot, on Mount Cer in the municipalities of Valjevo, Svrljig, Bor, Kuršumlija, Negotin, on Mount Avala near Belgrade, in the forests in Deliblatska peščara, and in the canyon of Uvac. Over 5200 hectares caught on fire, including 2500 hectares of forests. The Government formed an *ad hoc* central headquarters to coordinate fire fighting and prevention activities managed by the MoI. Within the MoI, the Sector for Protection and Rescue engaged all fire-fighting units along with 400 police and Gendarmerie officers as support. One helicopter was used for aerial fire fighting on Stara planina, but was unable to prevent fires from spreading to Greece and Bulgaria. Russia sent its Ilusin 76 fire-fighting airplane in response to requests from the Serbian government, eventually controlling all of the fires in Pirot and other critical places. All told, the Sector for Protection and Rescue engaged 3000 men - its full capacity, while the Army assisted with reconnaissance, fire-fighting helicopters and soldiers. Meanwhile, droughts and fires affecting agricultural land caused enormous economical damage.³⁰

²⁸ IFRC, DREF Bulletin, Serbia and Montenegro: Floods/Landslides. August 5, 2006.
http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?06/MDRYU001.pdf

²⁹ Mutavdžić, R. *Interview – Milan Popadić, Head of Defense Department of MoD*, Odbrana magazine no. 16, May 15, 2006, pp. 8-11.

³⁰ Antic, A. *Interview – Predrag Maric, Head of the Sector for Protection and Rescue of the MoI*, Odbrana magazine, August 01, 2007, pp. 16-19.

I.b.4 Peacekeeping Operations³¹

In addition to its experience with domestic crises, Serbia has also participated in international crisis response. Although peacekeeping operations were stopped as a result of UN sanctions during the 1990s, Yugoslavia participated in several prior missions. Between 1956 and 1967, Yugoslavia formed a part of the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) in Sinai. At the time, the Yugoslav People's Army had the largest presence in the mission, with 22 rotations and 14 thousand soldiers. During this time, an additional detachment participated in the United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM) from 1963 to 1964. Other missions included participation in the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (1988-1991), the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (1989-1990) in Namibia, and the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (1989-1991).

Participation in peacekeeping operations did not resume until June 2002, when a team of three military observers from the Yugoslav Army were sent to East Timor. Since December 2003, the Serbian Ministry of Defense has participated in the United Nations Mission in Liberia. At the moment, there are six military observers in this mission, supplemented by seven officers from the Ministry of Interior. Military observers in Liberia are working in land and air patrols and monitoring the security, humanitarian, social and health situation in the country. The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the only mission where the Ministry of Defense is participating with a complete unit, consisting of two doctors and four medical technicians. Forty-eight doctors and medical technicians with six month mandates have participated in this mission since March 2003. Future engagements in Afghanistan are planned in collaboration with Belgian forces. The preparation and training of these units is the responsibility of the Center for Peacekeeping Operations, and their deployment is regulated under the "Law on the engagement of professional officers of the Serbia and Montenegro Army, civil protection officers and public administration of the Council of Ministers' employees, in peacekeeping missions and other activities abroad"³², in addition to other relevant acts.

³¹ Source: Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia, International Peacekeeping Missions, <http://www.mod.gov.yu/01aktuelno/misije/020-mmisije-s.htm>

³² Official Gazette of Serbia and Montenegro, no. 61/04

II. Disaster Management: Present Conditions

II.a Rapidly Changing Environment

As we have seen, the concept and role of civil protection in Serbia has evolved from a focus on protection of civilians during wartime, to encompass an ever widening range of threats. Despite both economic and political setbacks, Serbia has demonstrated a remarkable resilience in responding to these challenges. From its modest roots within the Ministry of Interior in 1948, the work of disaster management evolved to become a full fledged Department within the Ministry of Defense, with a university faculty and substantial resources and personnel at its disposal. At its peak, the Department of Civil Protection had representatives throughout the country in every municipality and large enterprise.

However, during the crises of the 1990s, funding within the MoD was reallocated to favor the armed forces, leaving the Department of Civil Protection largely unfunded for over a decade. In this context the Serbian response to crises relied heavily on a strong sense of solidarity and willingness to come to the aid of others. Lacking the resources it had previously enjoyed, the existing structure of disaster management depended heavily on personal relationships and a willingness to respond to calls for assistance, rather than on systematic plans and protocols.

In the post-conflict period, the need to cut costs in combination with a trend towards decentralization led to significant layoffs and a weakening of the Yugoslav-era Department of Civil Protection. The existing legal framework for disaster response had been created for a country and political system that no longer exists. With the Department of Civil Protection lacking the resources and trained personnel to fulfill its mandate, other government structures responsible for various aspects of crisis response stepped into the vacuum. At

the same time, policies favoring decentralization delegated increasing responsibility for disaster management to local government.

The Ministry of Interior renamed its Department of Fire Protection & Rescue the Department of Protection & Rescue, to reflect an expanded mandate to coordinate the response to all kinds of disasters including fires, toxic spills and floods. At the municipal level, the Law on Local Self-Government delegated the responsibility for crisis response to each municipality, whose mayor is responsible for establishing a crisis headquarters staffed by the appropriate experts. Not surprisingly, there is great variability in the preparedness of municipalities. Many mayors have not received specific training in disaster management, and the resources both human and material that each community has is highly variable. Differences aside, a common challenge facing all communities is the fact that after ten years of war, neither the army, police, fire, first aid, nor Department of Civil Protection has had sufficient funding to adequately maintain and upgrade its equipment.

Since 2000, recovery from a decade of turmoil has accompanied improved disaster response in most sectors. A recent training exercise that brought together many government disaster response agencies, Danube Guard 2007, as well as summer forest fires throughout much of the country illustrate that while there are still improvements to be made, the importance of better cooperation is recognized by all parties. The remainder of this section is devoted to a closer look at several of these organizations to better understand the changes needed to achieve a level of cooperation that will allow Serbian disaster response to achieve its full potential.³³

II.b Ministry of Defense

II.b.1 Civil Protection

The history of the Department of Civil Protection (CP) follows closely the history of disaster management in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia. At its peak, every municipality, as well as important factories, had a Civil Protection Officer who monitored state owned resources such as construction machinery, buses, and

³³ While we will not cover them in detail, the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Energy, Border Police, Veterinary Agency and many other state bodies also play important roles in civil disaster response.

other equipment that could be mobilized if needed to respond to a disaster. Today, the hierarchy of civil protection offices at the republic, provincial, district, and municipal level remains, although certain access to material resources is considerably less than before.

In theory, the function of Civil Protection Officers includes risk assessment, monitoring, investigation, response and coordination. Civil Protection Officers are expected to conduct risk assessments to determine what threats and vulnerabilities exist in their communities and to investigate potential threats to civil safety such as reports of unexploded ordinance, chemical spills and other disasters. When an accident does happen, Civil Protection Officers are meant to be key expert advisors to the crisis committee that mayors are responsible for assembling. They are expected to communicate with both the military and civilian responders on the status of the crisis and provide the general public instructions on how to respond. However, the level of training and capacity among CP officers is highly variable. Some are trained and experienced staff from before the 1990s and others are relatively new. CP Officers consequently vary between being active participants to passive observers of the crisis response. The CP office has responded by transferring experienced staff to the site of disasters when they occur. Ideally, CP would make use of its risk assessments to maintain an early warning system that would provide data and analysis to both the central government as well as to all local crisis responders. However, such a comprehensive system of early warning does not exist at this time.

Civil Protection offices at the municipal level typically have 4-5 staff. In a larger city such as Nis, staff are responsible for: flooding, radiation, unexploded ordinance (UXO), fires, shelter, evacuation, and land reconstruction (e.g. cleaning up of landslides, etc.). The types of equipment typically available to civil protection offices includes: ropes, mechanical ladders, nets for catching people jumping from buildings, forest fire fighting equipment (axes, backpack water pumps), electric generators, hand tools and equipment for cutting concrete³⁴. However, equipment is frequently old and otherwise inadequate in relation to the potential need.

³⁴ The list of items was taken from that available in the Civil Protection office in Nis, the 2nd largest city in Serbia. Smaller towns usually have much less equipment.

Few, if any, Civil Protection offices have had the resources to conduct training in recent years. The Civil Protection headquarters in Belgrade is currently in the process of creating a curriculum to re-establish this function. In places like Nis, the Civil Protection Office participates in combined exercises with other agencies, but conducting exercises is not a requirement of Civil Protection Offices. The Department of Civil Protection in contrast to other entities that respond to disasters, are in close communication with the army. Coordination between Civil Protection Officers and disaster responders other than the army takes place through the Crisis Committee. However, Civil Protection Officers are not allowed to share disaster plans with other disaster responders, limiting the degree of cooperation that can be actually be achieved.

II.b.2 Army (J-9)

The army has three main missions: the first is defense of the state; the second is peace building and peacekeeping, and the third is protection of civilians in cases of natural disasters and emergencies. According to several respondents, the army is often an essential responder to large disasters. It has the transportation and communication equipment, skilled manpower and other resources needed to cope with major crises. In the event of a national disaster, the President will order the Chief of the General Staff to mobilize the army. This order will be transmitted down through the chain of command for the army to assist as needed. However, in local disasters where army personnel or materials are threatened, the army may organize itself to respond immediately.

While there are currently no regular trainings for the military to refine their civil crisis response skills or to coordinate their efforts with other disaster responders, a Civil Military Coordination (CIMC) office was created in Vranje in June of 2007 specifically for this purpose. In the past four years there are three examples of exercises that combine civilian and military response to a crisis. The most recent example was a trilateral exercise in June 2007 between Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania called Danube Guard 2007. Prior to that, there had been a bi-lateral exercise between Serbia and Romania in 2005, and in 2004 there was a joint exercise between the army and the Red Cross of Serbia at the military academy. This situation is changing now that the MoD has formally established CIMIC functions within its structure.

In February 2007, the army created a specialized department dedicated to Civil Military Cooperation.. Organizational subunits have been designated for this

purpose within the General Staff (J9), Land Forces (L9), Air Forces (A9), and Training Divisions (T9). Furthermore, both Land and Air Forces have brigade (B9) CIMIC “cells”³⁵ that can be deployed on the ground in the event of a crisis. The B9 “cell” typically consists of a Lt. Colonel and a Captain. The primary function of the B9 officer is to communicate and coordinate with other non-military crisis responders and eventually to conduct risk assessments. However, the B9 “cell” is made up of active duty military officers who would function as such if needed. Currently, assignment to a B9 unit is strictly voluntary.

In terms of resources, the army has helicopters, trucks, buses, hand tools, tents, blankets, fire fighting, engineering, mountain climbing, SCUBA, nuclear/biological/chemical (NBC), water purification, communications, logistics, and other kinds of specialized equipment essential to managing large scale disasters. Moreover, it is one of the few state institutions that maintains a large young and healthy workforce ready to be mobilized on short notice. The army also has some, albeit very limited, humanitarian supplies, such as food and blankets, that it can dedicate to a crisis response.

With regard to other disaster responders, leadership on the ground seems to be negotiated on an ad hoc basis owing in large part to the lack of clear legislation regarding the organization of crisis management. All parties identify this ambiguity as a major barrier to responding efficiently. In practice common sense seems to prevail in response to situations where the army has the resources to respond and can expeditiously intervene. Whichever entity takes the lead, the military always maintains control of its men and equipment. Communication between the army and other civilian crisis responders is in a state of transition as the CIMIC function of the army is being actively defined. Currently, there do not appear to be any institutional mechanisms for communication between crisis responders. We encountered anecdotal evidence of communication between a garrison and the local police or fire department. We also found some examples of the army participating in active crisis planning with other responders, and there is relatively good communication between the army and the Red Cross of Serbia. One of the

³⁵ The CIMIC B9 is a brigade level entity within the military hierarchy, but it is not the size of a regular brigade. The CIMIC “cell” refers to two officers that are at the hierarchical level of brigade, but which are in fact only two officers rather than a full brigade in the sense of a large sized fighting unit.

explicit objectives of B9 officers is to establish these lines of communication with other crisis responders.

II.c Ministry of Interior

II.c.1 Protection & Rescue

The Department of Protection and Rescue (hereafter called Protection & Rescue) within the Ministry of Interior (MoI) was created in 2002. It replaced the Department of Fire Protection, and Rescue, which itself was created from what was originally the fire brigade. Of its 3000 officers, 150 are prevention inspectors and the remainder are firemen³⁶. Like the police, it is an independent branch within the Ministry of Interior. Its role has changed over time along with the crisis management environment, especially in response to the decline of the Department of Civil Protection within the MoD. In 2006, the MoI submitted legislation that would have placed the responsibility for domestic crisis response entirely within the MoI. The proposal has since been placed on hold while the government explores other options for coordinating disaster management, including the creation of a body independent of both the MoD and MoI.

The Department for Protection & Rescue includes sub-units specialized in: water and mountain rescue, firefighting, containment of hazardous materials spills and releases radioactive materials, and explosive removal. In addition to their role in crisis response, local Protection & Rescue Offices conduct risk assessments and training exercises and respond to calls made to 92 and 93. The 92, 93, 94 system is a nationwide phone system similar to 911: dialing 92 connects to the local police department; 93 connects to the local fire brigade; and 94 connects to the local first aid/ emergency department. Collaboration between Protection & Rescue and the Police appears to be quite good, even in small communities. Cooperation with other responders in contrast seems to vary considerably, especially at the ministry level. The 92, 93, 94 system is specific to the departments that it connects, and is not meant to connect with other crisis responders such as the army or Red Cross.

³⁶ Politika Newspapers, October 12, 2007,
<http://www.politika.co.yu/detaljno.php?nid=43902&lang=2>

Local Protection & Rescue offices are required to have yearly training exercises. These seem to be focused primarily on fire fighting – reflecting the sector’s origins within the fire brigade. However, exercises with local industries encourage preparation for a variety of risks and help to uncover gaps in preparedness. The fire department in Nis regularly conducts exercises with local industries that are at risk of chemical or explosive accidents and maintains detailed maps of gas lines in the city. This department also uses exercises as an opportunity to provide public education about hazards such as car fires and train accidents. Protection & Rescue units have also trained with Fire Brigades from other European countries and participated in the capacity building efforts of organizations such as the Red Cross and the USAID funded Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Program (SCOPES) project.

While the Protection & Rescue units are mandated to respond to a broad range of crises, the level and quality of resources available to them is highly variable. As with many government agencies in Serbia, they function in an environment of scarcity. The Department of Protection & Rescue does appear to have fared better in maintaining basic equipment such as fire trucks, ladders and ropes, but units in small towns often lack personal protective equipment for dealing with radiation. In contrast, the department in Niš has a truck specially outfitted to deal with HAZMAT accidents.

II.c.2 Police & Gendarmerie

The role of the police in disasters is typically to provide security at the local level. For example, this past August in the municipality of Kuršumlja incidents of shooting required police to provide security for firefighters battling forest fires in the area.³⁷ During the 1990s, the police were responsible for officially registering refugees and IDPs, creating lists that were then used by the Commissariat for Refugees to grant official refugee status to individuals. The police also have rescue units that they can use to assist in crises. In Nis, local disaster responders have agreed that the local police chief be the person in charge at the scene of an accident. However, this is not an officially legislated role. The gendarmerie represents police units with a greater degree of training and specialized equipment. It has tactical units that can be mobilized for situations such as hostage negotiations, scuba, helicopter rescue, and anti-terrorism.

³⁷ B92 News, August 30, 2007,
http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?nav_category=16&dd=30&mm=8&yyyy=2007

II.d Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water

Given the high risk of flooding in many parts of the country, constraints of the study period, and the degree to which it was mentioned in conversations of crisis preparedness, we selected the Water Department as the focus of this inquiry. The primary function of the Water Department in terms of disaster preparedness is risk assessment. It is the agency that monitors the water levels in rivers and orders levees and dams to open or close their floodgates. It has the authority to recommend that the state declare a state of emergency based on either current flooding, imminent risk of danger requiring the evacuation of civilians, or the need for emergency repairs to prevent an imminent emergency.

Rather than implement these directives itself, the department relies on the National Water, and Electric companies to execute its commands. The Director of the Water Department was not sure whether the department is required to conduct regular exercises. However, he could state that there has only been one exercise actually conducted in the past four years. With regards to communication, the department does not share its risk assessments with other organizations. Smaller water companies are also responsible for assisting with trucks and labor in the event of an actual crisis. During non-crisis times, these small companies will compete for contracts to make repairs to levees and other small construction jobs that provide a source of revenue when they are not involved in an emergency. Generally there is a lack of sufficient peacetime work to sustain these small companies, and their future in the current economy is uncertain.

II.e Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is undergoing a substantial reorganization. The Ministry, with the exception planning for a possible avian influenza pandemic, has largely delegated the responsibility for disaster preparedness to the National Institute of Public Health (IPH). The IPH has recently created a new department for Bioterrorism and Crisis Management, but as of August 2007, was not yet fully staffed. With regard to potential epidemics, the IPH's Epidemiology Department monitors infectious diseases outbreaks by collecting data about acute infections from hospitals across the country on a bi-weekly basis. The Ministry of Health also has a Sanitation Inspection Department that conducts food control and water testing, as a part of flood response.

A working group at the Ministry of Health is currently examining the system for emergency medical response in Serbia. The project is funded by the Norwegian government, and is ongoing. The Emergency Medicine Institute in Nis has developed a proposal to create a central organizing body designated by its hotline number, 985, that would compile incoming information submitted by disaster responders in order to mobilize assistance and provide a centralized source of information and coordination for crisis management. The group reports that this proposal did meet with substantial interest, but the extent to which it will influence the working group is unclear. The consensus from several outside observers, is that the health system, both at the Ministry of Health and individual hospitals are not adequately engaged in disaster planning. Discussions with individual physicians indicate that, if specific protocols do exist, they are not widely known. A lack of insight by outside agencies into the plans and protocols of the Ministry, does not suggest robust communication with other disaster responders.

II.f Commissariat for Refugees

The commissariat for refugees was established by the Law on Refugees of 1992 in response to the vast numbers of people that were displaced during the conflicts of that decade. It has several functions: to register refugees and IDPs; to pay for shelter and utilities; for coordinating humanitarian aid provided by other agencies and organizations; for monitoring the timely delivery of services to refugees; and for initiating the request for assistance from international institutions for assistance to refugees in Serbia. It does not directly provide services, food, or non-food items apart from shelter. Its role in a disaster is very specific and likely to be minimal in most domestic disasters.

II.g Municipal Disaster Headquarters

In addition to the existing Department of Civil Protection headquarters in every municipality, municipalities often create additional ad hoc crisis headquarters in the event of major disasters under the Law on Local Self-Government. These special headquarters (HQs), are established independently from Department of Civil Protection HQ, although they often count on the support of the local Department of Civil Protection staff. It is not unusual for the members of the Civil Protection HQs to be members of the municipal HQ. Legally, these two entities are not required to cooperate. The report “The Condition of Human Security in Serbia 2005-2006” found that more than half of these HQs were

established on an ad hoc basis when a major crisis occurred within the municipality (mostly floods and landslides).³⁸

II.h Red Cross

The purpose of the Red Cross (RC) of Serbia is to provide support to civilians affected by crises. The Red Cross of Serbia has committees in all of the country's municipalities, making it a major partner in any large scale relief effort. During a disaster, the Red Cross of Serbia focuses its activities on shelter, food, and first aid. During the 1990s, it functioned as a major pipeline for international aid, utilizing its vast networking of local committees throughout the country. In the event of a crisis, the Red Cross must receive a request for assistance from a government representative, which can be the mayor of the municipality or a representative of the state from the central government. Until it receives such a request, it is not allowed to intervene.

As a quasi-governmental organization the Red Cross of Serbia enjoys a closer relationship to government institutions than other non-governmental organizations. For this reason and because it is one of the better organized bodies for crisis response, it is often a major player in domestic crises. The Red Cross of Serbia receives funding from both national and local government and from its international partners the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It also receives technical training and material assistance from other national Red Cross societies through bilateral agreements.

The Red Cross has both technical expertise and physical resources that it can mobilize in the event of a crisis. Its experienced professionals are supplemented by a large cadre of trained volunteers. The Red Cross regularly participates in national and international events. Committees in each municipality are required to hold regular trainings, and in places like Nis, these have expanded to include other disaster responders. Equally impressive, is the fact that the Niš Red Cross has begun to train Protection and Rescue staff as well as Policemen in first aid. In addition to trained personnel, the Red Cross of Serbia has its own storage depots, trucks, tents, first aid, water purification, food, and non-food items that it can deploy in the event of a crisis. Furthermore, it can tap into emergency ICRC funding that can be accessed within hours or days of a crisis.

³⁸ *The Condition of Human Security in Serbia 2005-2006*, Fund for an Open Society, Belgrade, 2007

In 2003, the Red Cross of Serbia began a series of workshops to improve communication between its chapters and other disaster responders. These workshops included simulations in which police, protection & rescue, municipal representatives, as well as civil protection staff all took part. They have formed the model upon which the USAID SCOPES project has continued to build. With regard to planning, the Red Cross is included in the contingency plans created by the IFRC and the ICRC. It is not, however, privy to the UNHCR contingency plan on which it has been consulted.

II.i Inter-governmental Civil Protection Organizations

The inter-governmental organizations in Serbia specializing in disaster planning are the UN organizations (UNHCR & UNDP) and the international partners for the Red Cross (IFRC & ICRC). Many local Serbian NGOs are implementing partners of these organizations.

II.i.1 United Nations

The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) is, among other things, meant to “mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action [to] ... alleviate human suffering in natural disasters and complex emergencies”³⁹. In this role, it is largely focused on organizing the mobilization of international resources for the work of the specific UN bodies for crises in individual countries. In Serbia, the UN Country Team has a substantial role in crisis preparedness by coordinating the work of the various resident UN bodies in-country to plan for and mitigate the impact of potential crises. Its role extends to advocating for these issues with the government.

The primary United Nations organization actively involved in crisis response in Serbia is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR’s history in the region is considerable. It opened its office in Belgrade in 1976⁴⁰, to assist refugees entering Yugoslavia from Eastern Europe. Its mandate covers both refugees and internally displaced persons within Serbia. It provided substantial resources via its implementing partners during the war in 1999, although it is notable that most international funding during that crisis was

³⁹ From OCHA online. <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docid=34697>

⁴⁰ Zajedno Za Razvoj, United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator, Belgrade.

provided through bilateral arrangements with national NGOs rather than being provided via UNHCR⁴¹. It has since scaled back its assistance and currently advocates for the development of appropriate asylum legislation and effective asylum institutions in Serbia. With funding from the EU, UNHCR has also recently assisted with the reconstruction of a reception center for asylum seekers. As with all UN organizations, UNHCR is required to draft plans for ensuring that it continue to support its mandate in the event of a crisis. The resulting contingency plan has been presented by the media in Serbia as a plan for the expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo. In this highly charged environment, UNHCR has had limited active communication with state institutions such as the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, or the Commissariat for Refugees.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has general responsibility for assisting member states in achieving the highest possible level of health for their populations. With regards to crisis planning in Serbia, the WHO has worked with the Ministry of Health and Institute for Public Health to create a contingency plan for an outbreak of avian influenza. It also conducted a study on the likely socio-economic impact that such an outbreak would have in Serbia. These projects reflect the kind of technical assistance that is the core function of the WHO.

In its roles as an advocate for improved crisis preparedness the UN country team established a working group in 2005 to foster better coordination both among international crisis responders and Serbian state agencies. The purpose of the workshop was to foster better coordination amongst all crisis responders. At the time, these workshops did not succeed in establishing a productive dialogue with the state institutions, and it was decided that in 2007 a similar working group would focus on coordinating the efforts of just the international institutions. A parallel effort would continue to explore ways to create linkages with the Serbian government.

The UN Development Programme's (UNDP) focus in Serbia has been on assistance with broader economic development rather than disaster preparedness. UNDP has worked on bringing municipalities together to identify needs that can then be met with funding from the agency, largely through funds given by the European Union. In addition to funds for identified projects, UNDP

⁴¹ The Kosovo refugee crisis: An independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response. Feb 2000, p.9

has focused on developing the regional capacity to solicit and manage funding available from the EU. Most municipalities have prioritized initiatives such as poverty reduction and economic development over disaster preparedness.

II.i.2 ICRC, IFRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the Swiss-based organization whose mission is to “protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance”⁴². Its mandate is to protect and promote the observation of the Geneva Conventions in time of War. Technically, this extends only to conflicts, where a major function is to visit prisoners of war to monitor their treatment. The ICRC also has an important role in facilitating communication between families and providing tracing services for families separated because of military conflicts. During times of conflict, it is the coordinating body between National Red Cross societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The IFRC has a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) that National Red Cross societies can access in times of emergency beginning in the initial hours and days of a crisis⁴³. Unlike the IFRC, the ICRC has the right of intervention, in that it can intervene without being invited by the host government, during times of conflict.

The IFRC is an international membership organization made up of all of the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies across the globe. It provides assistance with capacity building, disaster preparedness, and disaster response outside of war zones. The IFRC through its national organizations provides both technical assistance and material support. In the event of a crisis, the National Red Cross societies would appeal for international aid via the IFRC.

The ICRC and IFRC, both provide substantial amounts of technical assistance and relief supplies in Serbia. During the war in 1999 and in the years thereafter, the ICRC provided food and non-food items for up to 200,000 people. At that time, the ICRC had its own vehicle fleet and delegates working in the field. Since the end of the conflict, it has expanded its support to include provision of hand

⁴² ICRC, The Mission, Accessed August 14, 2007.

<http://www.icrc.org/HOME.NSF/060a34982cae624ec12566fe00326312/125ffe2d4c7f68acc1256ae300394f6e?OpenDocument>

⁴³ Disaster Relief Emergency Fund: What is DREF? Accessed December 9, 2007.

<http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/dref/index.asp>

tools to support income generation among refugees and IDPs, vocational training, provision of micro-loans, as well as advocacy. The IFRC has also assisted the Red Cross of Serbia to purchase supplies such as water purification equipment⁴⁴. The IFRC technical assistance and strategic planning culminated in a five year plan and reorganization of the national RC society. Both the ICRC and IFRC work closely with the Red Cross of Serbia, in order to provide services and plan for potential crises.

II.j Donors

II.j.1 USAID

The United States Agency for International Development is spending considerable funds for crisis preparedness in Serbia. The funding that has been designated for crisis preparedness is not for direct crisis response, but rather aimed at working through existing state and non-governmental agencies for improving the capacity for crisis response. USAID does not implement its projects directly, but rather works through implementing partners. In the case of the Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Program (SCOPEs), Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) in cooperation with Cooperative Housing Foundation International (CHF) and Booz Allen Hamilton are the implementing partners. USAID's SCOPEs project builds upon the experience of the Red Cross of Serbia that worked with individual municipalities to build local level crisis response capacity through simulations and workshops. The SCOPEs project works with municipalities to build and institutionalize a disaster management system that addresses preparedness, response, recovery and prevention.

II.j.2 Norwegian Government

The Norwegian government, through funding from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has two initiatives for crisis preparedness worth noting in this brief. As mentioned previously, it has been working with the Serbian Ministry of Health to support the working group on Emergency Medicine in order to improve the emergency response system in Serbia. It has also funded a small effort by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), to support the work of the Edukacioni Centar in Leskovac. This initiative capitalized on the trust in the Edukacioni Centar in the local community. With funding from NPA, the center met with the local Civil

⁴⁴ IFRC, Where We Work: Serbia. Accessed December 9, 2007.

<http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?iYear=1&xFlag=2&countryid=11&view=1>

Protection office which recognized the opportunity to access resources that it lacked for adequate crisis preparedness. The group brought together several local municipal and NGO partners to create a crisis plan. The next phase of training volunteers is about to begin, as is the process of making cooperative agreements among the various agencies in order to implement the plan in the event of an emergency.

II.k Civic Implementing Partners

As a relatively new sector, NGOs in Serbia arose primarily in response to the crises of the 1990s, where the focus of humanitarian aid was on support of refugees and IDPs. As a result, the vast majority of local NGOs focus on providing for the material, psycho-social, and economic needs of refugees and displaced persons. Examples of the organizations working on the ground in Serbia are the Danish Refugee Council, Serbian Refugee Council, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbian Democratic Forum, Novi Sad Humanitarian Center, Hi Neighbor, and many others. These and other local NGOs are responsible for translating the funding and planning done by the above intergovernmental organizations into services and action on the ground. In interviews we found that these local NGOs are generally focused on the services they are actively providing. With limited staff and resources, they are unable to form disaster plans of their own, independent of subcontracts that they might receive from the larger international NGOs.

While these organizations are critical to mitigating the human impact of disasters on the affected population, it is largely up to the state institutions to provide the immediate response to natural, man-made, or technological disasters. Evacuation, security, shelter, protection of infrastructure and health care, will place the greatest pressure on state institutions to respond and work effectively together in the event of a disaster. Local NGOs may lack the resources to be primary responders in the event of a crisis, but they are often most familiar with those individuals who are vulnerable and at highest risk in these situations. Therefore, they are often critical partners in both risk assessment and disaster response.

III. Conclusion - Building Capacity for Civil Crisis Planning in Serbia

The purpose of civil crisis planning (or disaster preparedness) is to protect life and property, including the economic, natural (environmental) and cultural resources and assets of society. Civil crisis planning is intended to assist communities to either prevent disasters or their impacts, or to reduce the negative consequences when disasters cannot be prevented. In every society the resources available to prepare for disasters are limited and to some degree, inadequate. For this reason, efforts to prepare for disasters must prioritize activities that provide the greatest benefit in terms of prevention or mitigation of disaster effects. The primary strategies used globally to prepare for disasters are:

- Promotion of inter-agency cooperation in disaster preparedness. Improving cooperation and coordination between appropriate agencies at the national level and between the national and community level is a challenge everywhere, but it is necessary in order to: a) enhance the coordination of disaster preparedness and response initiatives; b) mobilize all available resources; and, c) hasten response times after disasters.
- Develop 'all-hazard' national and local disaster preparedness plans. No society has sufficient resources to develop individual response plans for every conceivable type of disaster, thus resources need to be aimed at those prevention and preparatory activities that are effective in addressing key issues across a broad range of disaster types and scenarios.
- Provide capacity building at the community level. Disasters, even massive ones, are first and foremost local, community-level events. Community members are usually the first and primary responders to disasters. Communities possess resources that can be utilized to prevent or reduce the consequences of disasters if they are mobilized properly and if community level institutions are supported and engaged in the process of disaster preparedness.

- Engage both community members and experts in identifying, at the local level, both the threats that communities face and the vulnerabilities of the community in order to prioritize prevention and mitigation activities.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Any revised legal framework for disaster preparedness and response in Serbia should emphasize coordination of activity and clarification of the different roles of each Ministry and government agency rather than emphasizing the primacy of one agency over the other.
2. Senior staff in the Ministries of Defense, Interior and Environment should continue their efforts to establish an inter-ministerial coordination body as a mechanism for enhancing disaster preparedness. The United Nations, in their International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, promotes the concept of “*National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction*” which could be a useful model for promoting inter-agency cooperation in Serbia.
3. Expand resources to continue and enhance inter-agency participatory capacity building at the national and local levels, especially assistance focused on practical technical knowledge transfer, and inter-agency desk and field exercises.
4. Support agencies, such as the Serbian Red Cross, that can bolster the processes of: community mobilization; linking national and local level disaster preparedness and planning.
5. Continue to provide focused support to the Serbian Ministry of Defense in their efforts to strengthen national-level disaster preparedness. The Ministry of Defense is a key player in disaster management given the manpower, logistical, transportation and communications resources that they command.

6. Initiate a process to review recent disasters to determine what kinds of responses are most effective and to identify gaps in disaster response. Knowledge gained in this type of assessment should be a basis for refinement of the legal framework for disaster response.
7. Provide capacity building assistance to key line ministries involved in disaster preparedness to improve their ability to conduct internal reviews (or after-action assessments) of the response of their ministries to disasters. This is a key element of the creation of a learning organization that is able to improve its effectiveness in responding to disasters.

Appendix 1 – Supporting Documents

Existing legal basis for emergency management

Efforts are currently underway to create legislation that would encompass and codify all Civil Protection roles, clarifying among other things issues of command, responsibility and financing. This law is expected to establish a new body, either within an existing ministry or independent of ministry structures, that will be in charge of planning, coordinating and managing Civil Protection on the national and local level. Below are a number of existing laws representing the current legal basis for emergency management within Serbia.

Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, in the Article 190.6 (Competence of Municipality) says "The municipality shall, through its bodies, and in accordance with the Law: ...be responsible for environmental protection, protection against natural and other disasters; protection of cultural heritage of the municipal interest."

Law on Defense, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 116/07, defines the civil protection, and responsibilities and elements of the civil protection system.

Law on Fire Protection, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 37/88, 53/93, 67/93, and 48/94.

Law on Natural Disasters Protection, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 20/77, 24/85, 27/85, 52/89, 61/89, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, and 20/97.

Law on Red Cross of Serbia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 107/05.

Law on Local Self-Government, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 9/02. Article 16 on organizing natural disasters and fire protection. First time that local government has the possibility and the authority to form an independent staff for emergencies apart from existing CP Staffs.

Defense Strategy of Serbia and Montenegro, Official Gazette of Serbia and Montenegro, no. 55/2004.

General Plan for the Defense from Floods for 2003-2008, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 34/03.

Regulation on organization and functioning of civil protection, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 21/92.

Regulation on organization and development of civil protection units, and on measures for protection and rescue of civilians and material assets, Official Gazette of FRY, no. 54/94.

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