



news release

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CANADA ANNOUNCES EVACUATION OF BOSNIAN PATIENTS

External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty and Minister of National Defence Thomas Siddon today announced that Canada will airlift up to 20 Sarajevo hospital patients needing immediate medical treatment. Canada will also contribute an additional \$500 000 to the Canadian Red Cross Society for the provision of emergency medical assistance in the region.

"The suffering of victims in these poorly equipped and overtaxed hospitals has touched us all," said Mr. Beatty. "We have been overwhelmed by offers of assistance from organizations and individuals across the country."

Defence Minister Siddon announced that Canadian Forces aircraft will be used to evacuate priority patients to Canada. "Canadian peacekeepers have played a key role in the international response to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia," said Mr. Siddon. "We are determined to be helpful in this new humanitarian effort."

The ministers noted that Canada will work with the United Nations Medical Evacuation Committee to identify those patients who would best benefit from evacuation to Canada. Minister of Public Security Doug Lewis said that immigration officials will facilitate the patients' entry into Canada. Upon the patients' arrival, local branches of the Canadian Red Cross will look after arrangements during their stay.

The ministers welcomed offers from provincial governments -- particularly Nova Scotia and Quebec -- to provide hospital beds for some of the patients. Discussions are under way with other provincial officials concerning medical arrangements that will be required.

Canada's contribution to humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia is approximately \$38 million. Additional assistance will be considered in consultation with UN and Red Cross officials working in the region.

Individuals wishing to contribute funds or services are encouraged to contact the Canadian Red Cross Society, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), or other international relief organizations operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The ministers stressed that a political settlement in Geneva remains the most effective solution to the problems that gave rise to this humanitarian effort, and again called on all parties to return to the negotiating table to resolve the conflict.

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