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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-980T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform

## Why GAO Did This Study

The circumstances of armed conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan differed in many respects, but in all three cases the United States and the international community became involved in the wars and post-conflict assistance because of important national and international interests. Over the past 10 years, GAO has done extensive work assessing post-conflict assistance in Bosnia and Kosovo and, more recently, has evaluated such assistance to Afghanistan. GAO was asked to provide observations on assistance efforts in these countries that may be applicable to ongoing assistance in Iraq. Specifically, GAO assessed (1) the nature and extent of post-conflict assistance in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan; (2) essential components for carrying out assistance effectively; (3) challenges to implementation; and (4) mechanisms used for accountability and oversight.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-980T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-980T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Susan Westin at (202) 512-4128 or [westins@gao.gov](mailto:westins@gao.gov).

## FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

### Observations on Post-Conflict Assistance in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan

#### What GAO Found

Humanitarian assistance following armed conflict in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan—as well as in Iraq—is part of a broader, long-term assistance effort comprising humanitarian, military, economic, governance, and democracy-building measures. While the post-conflict situations in these countries have varied, they have certain conditions in common—most notably the volatile and highly politicized environment in which assistance operations take place.

During years of work on post-conflict situations, GAO found that three key components are needed for effective implementation of assistance efforts:

- a secure environment where humanitarian and other civilian workers are able to perform their tasks;
- a strategic vision that looks beyond the immediate situation and plans for ongoing efforts; and
- strong leadership with the authority to direct assistance operations.

GAO also observed a number of challenges to implementing assistance operations, including the need for sustained political and financial commitment, adequate resources, coordinated assistance efforts, and support of the host government and civil society.

Finally, GAO found that the international community and the United States provide a number of mechanisms for accountability in and oversight of assistance operations.

#### World Food Program Assistance in Afghanistan



Source: World Food Program.