



# Ohio Adjutant General's Department

BOB TAFT, GOVERNOR

MAJOR GENERAL GREGORY L. WAYT, ADJUTANT GENERAL

## Press Release

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### President of Serbia visit Ohio

COLUMBUS, Ohio - When pro-democracy forces compelled former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to relinquish power in October 2000, the seeds for a shared form of government slowly began to take root in the country. In the wake of devastation wrought by years of regional conflict, vital infrastructure was destroyed and those left behind began the monumental task of putting a politically and economically fragile country back together.

Some six years later, Serbia is looking to the future with the help of the Ohio National Guard.

On Sept. 8, one day after signing a Status of Forces Agreement with the U.S. government, Serbian President Boris Tadic visited Ohio to discuss a planned partnership through the National Guard State Partnership Program.

The partnership program was established in 1993, following the collapse of Communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when National Guard leaders recognized a unique opportunity to contribute to peace and stability in the emerging democratic nations. Since its inception, National Guards from 42 states, two territories and the District of Columbia have participated in the program, partnering with countries worldwide.

"It is a new page of our history in the relations between two states," Tadic said. "We are going to open a new door, new opportunities in all kinds of cooperation."

Ohio was chosen to sponsor Serbia due to its large Serbian population of nearly 200,000, concentrated in the northern region of the state. Ohio has also been partnered with Hungary, Serbia's neighbor to the north, since 1993.

Through the program, members of the Ohio National Guard will travel to Serbia, where they will help military leaders establish a reserve military force that functions much

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like the U.S. National Guard – helping in domestic emergencies and disaster relief and serving as augmentees to the active-duty forces.

Once the initial military aspects of the agreement are under way, the program shifts into a “citizen” training role. Program administrators then begin to focus on education, economic development, small business administration and other aspects affecting the country’s Citizen-Soldiers, including how to balance military life with civilian careers.

Following a brief ceremony to announce the planned partnership, Tadic spent the day with senior Ohio leadership, including Maj. Gen. Gregory L. Wayt, Ohio adjutant general, discussing concerns including force structure and disaster response.

Tadic expressed keen interest in the National Guard’s response to Hurricane Katrina, an unprecedented deployment of troops in terms of time and manpower. He said he envisioned his reserve forces serving in similar situations.

Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, chief, National Guard Bureau, explained how events on the devastated Gulf Coast came together, the interstate mutual assistance agreements and the teleconference that set the wheels in motion.

“Many federal organizations have been criticized in their response to Hurricane Katrina,” Blum said. “But the National Guard is one of the organizations that received no complaints as to how we responded. Everybody remembers New Orleans, but the National Guard was in Texas, Mississippi and Alabama as well.”

Wayt noted it was Ohio National Guardmembers who were initially airlifted into the Louisiana Superdome to assist in its evacuation.

Tadic was also introduced to the Ohio National Guard’s senior noncommissioned officers, State Command Sgt. Maj. William Gilliam (Army) and State Chief Master Sergeant Christopher Muncy (Air).

“These are my two senior NCOs in the state,” Wayt said. “They’re my right hands on the Air and Army side.”

Wayt plans to visit Serbia later this month to begin cooperative efforts. Muncy and Gilliam also plan to visit to help develop the NCO corps in the Serbian military.

-30-

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: The Ohio National Guard Public Affairs Office at 614-336-7000 or Dr. Mark Wayda at 614-336-7174. Please visit our public website for more information about the Ohio National Guard at [www.ohionationalguard.com](http://www.ohionationalguard.com)**

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