

## Bosnia Partnership Formalized in White House Ceremony

*By Barbara Ruben*

Hillary Rodham Clinton, First Lady of the United States, hosted a White House ceremony October 21 to formalize the partnership between Tuzla Clinical Center in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Buffalo General Hospital in Buffalo, NY. The First Lady was joined by Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the United Nations; Jill Buckley, USAID's assistant administrator for the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs; Sven Alkalaj, Bosnian Ambassador to the United States and the mayors of Tuzla and Buffalo.

Mrs. Clinton visited Tuzla earlier this year, and she described her conversations with residents about their concerns as the country begins to rebuild itself after years of war.

"I listened as doctors and nurses told me what it was like to care for patients under bombardment," she said. "In listening to the people I heard from in Tuzla, I also heard in their voices the hope that there could be a better life and that they could once again have a normal, peaceful existence. The projects we are announcing today reflect our belief that peace and democracy can last in Bosnia if the nation itself and the people's spirits are repaired."

The Buffalo-Tuzla partnership will focus on health services management and administration, nursing, women's and infants' health, renal and cardiovascular disease, and strengthening public education and community outreach.

Mrs. Clinton devoted her weekly column, "Talking It Over," to health and safety efforts in Bosnia. The column is published in about 100 newspapers in the US and around the world.

"Not only will American physicians and nurses be exposed to new and different challenges, the resources, expertise and technology they bring to Bosnia will improve the availability and equality of medical care for tens of thousands of people there," she wrote of the partnership. "Like other hospital partnerships I've visited in Russia, Estonia, Ukraine and Belarus, this one will benefit both hospitals and countries involved."

Buffalo General Hospital had worked with the Tuzla Clinical Center for two years prior to the establishment of the AIHA partnership, facilitating exchanges between doctors and nurses and assisting in care of those injured in the war.

"During the war, Americans from Buffalo worked side by side with their colleagues in Tuzla under heavy bombardment, without electricity, without water, with scarce medical supplies," said Ambassador Alkalaj. "This partnership is the right way to heal and help the suffering of the more than 150,000 wounded people and more than 40,000 invalids."

A large number of physicians and nurses fled Bosnia during the war, leaving a severe shortage of trained medical and health care personnel, said Emir Kabil, MD, chief of surgery at Tuzla Clinical Center. Because of this, the educational aspect of the partnership is a priority, he said.

"Tuzla is one of the only communities in Bosnia to retain its pre-war multi-ethnic character," USAID's Buckley said. It serves as a model for inter-ethnic cooperation and reconciliation for the rest of Bosnia during the ongoing peace process, she said.

The ceremony also recognized the publication of a Superman comic book that teaches children about the dangers of land mines, a project supported by Warner Brothers and UNICEF. There are 3 million land mines in Bosnia, Albright said. One out of every three acres of land in central Bosnia is unusable because of mines, and one in eight homes is in danger because of proximity to mines.