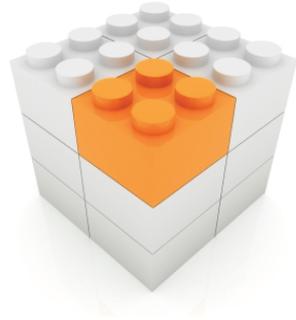


DE CONSTRUCTION TWO



Ardian Adžanela

Personal Safety Deconstructed

1. “There is a continuing threat to Western targets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with terrorist acts still carried out to this day”

Although Bosnia is closely monitored by international community in relation to terrorism, any thorough reading of official reports and information sheets of the government agencies of western countries concerned with terrorism and safety in general immediately shows that these reports and information sheets actually do not imply or explicitly say that “terrorist acts still carried out to this day” in Bosnia. In particular, the word “stil” in this statement implies that there has been a history of continuous terrorist attacks carried out in Bosnia, which is a complete misinformation, a false and a misleading statement.

The Overseas Security Advisory (OSA), for example, provides in its Bosnia and Herzegovina 2009 Crime & Safety Report the following information about Bosnia: “BIH, like many European countries, is not without elements willing to participate in the support and financing of terrorist organizations. Although there have been no direct terrorist attacks against western interests in BIH, extremist groups do exist which may have ties to terrorist support structure and financing.”¹ The Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland says on its web site: “The threat of a terrorist attack in Bosnia and Herzegovina is relatively low. However, given the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be directed against civilian targets, all travelers are advised to exercise caution and to remain vigilant.”²

“Bosnia experiences very little violent crime, as long as you stay on paved roads and marked routes. Beware of pickpockets, however, in larger cities, especially Sarajevo.”³

Most other government or travel agencies of western and other developed

¹ <https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=115557>

² <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=399>

³ http://iguide.travel/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina/Safety

countries safety related information follow suit.

This is the fact that has certainly been overlooked (intentionally or unintentionally) by those who try to attract attention through media articles and reports by making headlines about Bosnia like “Bosnia - a dangerous terrorist haven’, or the like.

What the reports and information on terrorism issued by the government agencies of western countries are implying is just that Bosnia is monitored more closely than many other countries in the region because of its war-time past that connects it directly to some of the terrorists or terrorist suspects, who have been fighting in the Bosnian war,⁴ but this certainly does not imply that terrorist attacks are being carried out in Bosnia.

No doubt there certainly were and there still are individuals and groups in Bosnia associated with terrorism that came from the group of those who fought in the Bosnian war,⁵ and there are those who were associated, or even convicted in Bosnia of terrorism that did not belong to the former group but emerged in the post-war period.⁶

However, when it comes to terrorism-related safety in Bosnia, which all this terrorism story should really be about, the fact is there have only been a couple of life-threatening incidents connected to (but not proven to be stemming from) terrorism related acts since the end of the war in 1995, and only one conviction for terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the span of 14 years.^{7,8}

In the end, the strongest argument against the erroneous and misleading statement ‘terrorist acts are still carried out to this day’ are the personal experiences of all those who had a chance to visit Bosnia since the end of war in 1995. It is these personal experiences that would easily strike down any claim like ‘Bosnia is a dangerous terrorist haven’. The first-hand accounts of visitors that pour into Bosnia every year, shows the opposite of these warning statements.⁹

One of those personal visitor accounts says:” ... If I would have listened to my friends, I would have probably missed what turned out to be one of my favorite places in Europe to travel...”¹⁰, and one will easily find that the statements like this are no doubt far greater in number than those warning of terrorist attacks in Bosnia.

⁴ <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122432.htm>

⁵ http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?complete_911_timeline_al_qaeda_by_region=balkans&timeline=complete_911_timeline

⁶ <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/?opcija=predmeti&id=24&završen=1&jezik=e>,

⁷ <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/index.php?opcija=predmeti&id=24&završen=1&jezik=e>

⁸ <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/index.php?jezik=e>

⁹ It is sufficient just to type in phrases like ‘visiting Bosnia’, ‘Travel to Bosnia’, ‘Bosnia travel’ and the like and one would instantly see that there is not one single witness to any kind of terrorist act affecting locals or visitors (for details see any site related to the visit/travel to Bosnia,

e.g. <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20091028143806AAIGDc7>

¹⁰ <http://www.serbiatravelers.org/forum/index.php?topic=3307.0>

Given all the personal experiences of all kinds of people that visited Bosnia at some stage after the war, that one can easily find these days on the internet, it should not come as a surprise that, Sarajevo, the historic and cultural center of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the venue of one of the most popular and reputable Film Festivals in Europe was nominated by the LONELY PLANET'S BEST IN TRAVEL 2010 as one of the Top 10 Cities to visit in 2010.¹¹ In addition, an increase in citizens of western countries buying real estate in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been visible too,¹ although perhaps still not at a pace that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be most happy with.

It would certainly be incorrect and unfair to undermine the fact that there is a concern about terrorism in Bosnia (albeit probably no more than in other parts of the world these days), but the above statement saying terrorist acts still carried out to this day more than certainly does not reflect the reality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country that actually only had a couple of attacks connected with terrorism carried out so far, based on official statistics and personal experiences of locals and many visitors that enjoy visiting this country, with number of visitors growing every year.¹³

While precaution and caution are necessary these days in every place on earth in terms of terrorist threats to personal safety, one should equally be cautious about the truthfulness of the unchecked or false statements like the one challenged here.

2. "Some areas in the country can be prone to destructive earthquakes."

This erroneous information is unfortunately to be found in many other sources, including the "The World Fact book" of CIA. This is another exaggerated information, as can be witnessed by the author of this text, a native and a current inhabitant of Bosnia, and probably all other inhabitants. The information on 'Area and Geographical' features of Bosnia on the 'UK Trade and Investment' web page would be a much more accurate description of the reality in Bosnia in terms of earthquakes:

"The country has some earthquake activity although major tremors are rare."¹⁴

"No large earthquake event has been recorded in the near past in the country by EM-DAT...", as reported in the 'Natural hazards' part of the report on Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Drace Project, an international project dealing with prevention of natural hazards, primarily floods and pollutions. The last destructive earthquake in Bosnia occurred in October 1969 in the city of Banja Luka, (5.4 on the Richter

¹¹ <http://www.serbiatravelers.org/forum/index.php?topic=3307.0>

¹² http://property.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/property/overseas/article7051733.ece

¹³ http://www.bhas.ba/ARHIVA/2009/SAO/TUR_2009M01_001_01_BA.pdf

¹⁴ <http://drace-project.org/index.php/map/bosnia>

scale), damaging many buildings in Banja Luka and killing 15 and leaving over a thousand injured.¹⁵

Finally, the most serious authority on earthquakes in Bosnia, the Federal Hydro-meteorological Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina busts the “dangerous earthquakes” myth by clearly stating about earthquakes in Bosnia that:

“Their intensity is less than II degrees of Mercalli scale and they are recorded only by instruments. The stronger earthquakes are rare...”

3. “Water should be boiled before consumption, unless it is bottled.”

This is one of the information about Bosnia that many Bosnians, and Sarajevans in particular would find not only to be a complete misinformation but even an entertaining one, given that Sarajevo is generally known for good quality drinking water, as its surroundings are abundant in fresh water springs.¹⁶

“The tap water in Sarajevo is safe to drink as it pours down as cool as the source and tastes really great so don't get surprised when you see people drinking the water from Sebilj (the old traditional fountain on Baščaršija). You should follow the example”, it reads in the web page entitled ‘Sarajevo-guide’¹⁷, and I bet you every inhabitant of this city would absolutely agree with this observation, as would every person that visited the city.

In general, most of Bosnia is in fact known as a country abundant in natural springs with the water exported being among the best quality water and winning prestigious awards, such as Texa, the Berkeley Springs Gold medal winner - bottled water from Tešanj,¹⁸ or Oaza another frequent gold medal winner from Tešanj,¹⁹ and many other bottled water brands, both carbonated and non-carbonated.

Kerry Kubilius, the author of ‘Before You Go: Bosnia and Herzegovina Travel Basics’²⁰ says the following on the drinking water in Bosnia: “The quality of water in Bosnia and Herzegovina is unusually good for Eastern and Southeastern Europe, as the region is a point of origination of many natural fresh and mineral springs. Nature enthusiasts will be delighted with the springs that are safe to drink from straight from the source. Natural mineral water that is bottled locally is also refreshing and clean.” 🍷

¹⁵ http://www.be40ce.org/e_poziv.asp

¹⁶ <http://www.ebrd.com/projects/psd/psd2010/39960.htm>

¹⁷ <http://www.sarajevo-guide.com/information.htm>

¹⁸ http://www.frbiz.com/product/26043166/Bottled_Water.htm

¹⁹ <http://www.berkeleysprings.com/water/awards.htm>

²⁰ <http://goeasteurope.about.com/od/bulgariaandthebalkans/bb/bihbasics.htm>