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Bosnian War Shaped Their Early Lives, U.S. College Experiences Now at Hand

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**BOSNIAN WAR SHAPED THEIR EARLY LIVES,
U.S. COLLEGE EXPERIENCES NOW AT HAND**

DAYTON, Ohio — From 1991 to 1995, while American teen-agers were mall-hopping and roller-blading, their counterparts in Bosnia were living daily with the realities of a brutal civil war that claimed the lives of 300,000.

Ten college students from Bosnia will give their perspectives of the current state of affairs in the Balkans as well as talk about their lives during and since the war at a forum at 9 a.m. Friday, Nov. 20, in room 470 of the Jesse Philips Humanities Center at the University of Dayton. Two of the students attend UD, four attend Grand Valley State University in Michigan and the other four study at Heidelberg College in northern Ohio.

The event, which is open to students, faculty and the general public, is part of a series of events Nov. 20-22 to mark the third anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, the U.S.-brokered negotiations and agreement that ended the Bosnian war. Moderators for the student session will be Bruce Hitchner, director of UD's Center for International Programs, and Mark Ensalaco, UD's director of international studies.

Emir Vajzovic describes himself as a "wild child," unafraid to take a chance and willing to explore the unknown. This sense for adventure brought him from the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia to UD.

"I wanted to come to the United States to enrich my academic knowledge," Vajzovic says. "And I wanted to improve my professional experience. Everything is perfect at UD. The people are nice, the faculty is amazing and the facilities are new. The University of Sarajevo has no money for new facilities, and the students work hard for less things."

The University of Dayton hosts two Bosnian students, Vajzovic and Lejla Mrkonja.

Mrkonja and Vajzovic are studying criminal justice and both are considered juniors despite their five-year age difference — Mrkonja is 26 and Vajzovic is 21 years old. Mrkonja had to delay her education for three years when the University of Sarajevo closed during the war in Bosnia. She says this taught her that life cannot be carefully planned, but an individual must be flexible and enjoy life.

"My credits from UD may or may not transfer to the University of Sarajevo," Mrkonja says. "That doesn't matter. I have learned that I only have one life, and I need to fill it with

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many lifetime experiences. Even though my credits may not transfer, my time will not have been wasted. What is a year in a lifetime anyway?"

Vajzovic and Mrkonja are studying in the U.S. with the help of the U.S. Information Agency and its Bosnia Undergraduate Development Program, as are the other eight students.

The independent foreign affairs agency administers and supports activities intended to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries. The program brings Bosnian undergraduates to the United States for one academic year and offers the students a chance for internships. The students return to the University of Sarajevo to finish their degrees following the completion of the program.

Additional activities in honor of the third anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords include:

- A U.S. State Department town meeting with Robert Gelbard, special representative of the president and secretary of state for implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, at 11:30 a.m. Friday, Nov. 20, in the Hope Hotel at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The session is open to the public but registration is required. For registration materials, call (937) 257-6593.
- An invitation-only black-tie dinner to honor Richard C. Holbrooke, chief architect of the Dayton Peace Accords, on Friday, Nov. 20, on campus. The University of Dayton will award an honorary degree to Holbrooke for his accomplishments. Holbrooke will sign copies of his book, *To End a War*, at 3 p.m. in the atrium of Joseph E. Keller Hall on campus. Sponsored by Books and Co., it's open to the public. Guests may park in the Caldwell Street Center parking lot on Caldwell Street and in the Physical Activities Center parking lot on Alberta Street.
- International experts on the region will gather at UD Nov. 21-22 to recommend a strategic concept for NATO in the Balkans in "The Dayton Peace Accords and Beyond," a workshop organized by UD's Center for International Programs. The public is welcome to attend one session, a roundtable discussion at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom on campus. Seating is limited, and doors will open at 7:30 a.m.
- Dedication of the painting "Nocturne," acquired by UD's Center for International Programs for the first Dayton Peace Accords symposium in 1996, at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, at the Dayton Art Institute.

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For media interviews, call **Emir Vajzovic** at (937) 285-5298 and **Lejla Mrkonja** at (937) 285-5299. For more information on the student forum, contact **Amy Schlaerth** (937) 229-2748.