

Church Leaders Visit Heads of State, Members in Croatia and Bosnia

By **Gerry Avant**

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In September, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Kent F. Richards, Second Counselor in the Europe Area Presidency, met with heads of state in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In Zagreb, Croatia, Elder Rasband and Elder Richards met with the country's president, Ivo Josipovic, and thanked him for the government's support of religious freedom, which the Church has enjoyed over the past 40 years. Elder Rasband pledged the Church's ongoing commitment to strengthen the family, to offer humanitarian service, to encourage education and self-improvement, and to foster high moral standards—centered in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

President Josipovic spoke of his government's commitment to religious freedom and its desire to promote tolerance among all faiths and peoples. This year marks the 40th anniversary since the late Brigham Young University basketball legend Krešimir Cosic introduced the Church to his home country of Croatia.

President Josipovic also

expressed his appreciation for the humanitarian aid the Church has provided his country, including the aid sent to address the devastation of the Balkan war in the 1990s.

Following this meeting, Elder Rasband and Elder Richards, accompanied by their wives, met with more than 160 members in a special devotional and then conducted a training meeting with missionaries serving in Croatia and Slovenia.

Traveling from Croatia, Elder Rasband arrived in Bosnia, where he presided at a meeting for new members of the Church and delivered messages about faith, the reality of the Restoration of the gospel, the sanctity of the family, and the worldwide scope of the Church.

This was the first meeting in Bosnia presided over by a General Authority since the Church was officially recognized there; that recognition occurred earlier this year. Now the Church has official status, Church units, and proselytizing missionaries in all of the countries in the former Yugoslavia—and in all of Europe.

The next morning, on September 12, Elder Rasband met with missionaries from Bosnia, Serbia, and the eastern part of Croatia, before meeting with Željko Komšić, one of the three-person presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This was the first time Church leaders had met with a head of state from Bosnia.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHURCH NEWS

Elder Ronald A. Rasband, right, presents a gift to Željko Komšić, a member of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

President Komšić described the diverse religious community that exists in Bosnia and welcomed the Church as a member of that community. He described the challenges families face in today's society and his concern for the success and well-being of families in his country.

Elder Rasband explained that the family is a high priority in the Church and that its members look forward to supporting this shared objective and contributing in other positive ways to Bosnia's society. ■