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## Timeline: Countdown to conflict

### 1989

Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic takes away Kosovo's autonomy.

Street violence erupts when the Kosovo assembly approves the measure. Violence escalates and more than 20 people are killed.

### 1990

**January** - Violent clashes between police and ethnic Albanian demonstrators continue. Police shoot dead at least 10.

**February** - Yugoslavia sends troops, tanks, warplanes and 2,000 more police to Kosovo. By the end of the month more than 20 people have been killed and a curfew imposed.

**July** - Ethnic Albanian legislators in the province declare independence. Serbia dissolves the Kosovo assembly. Strikes and protests continue.

### 1991

The Bosnian war begins

Neighbouring Albania's parliament recognises Kosovo as an independent republic.

### 1992

**May** - Writer Ibrahim Rugova is elected president of the self-proclaimed republic after an election held in defiance of Serbian authorities.

**October** - Serb and ethnic Albanian leaders in Kosovo hold face-to-face peace talks for the first time in three years.

### 1993



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Police arrest more than 30 ethnic Albanians on suspicion of preparing an armed uprising.

## 1995

**July** - A Serbian court sentences 68 ethnic Albanians for up to eight years in prison for allegedly setting up a parallel police force.

**August** - Serbian authorities settle several hundred Croatian Serb refugees in Kosovo, drawing protests from ethnic Albanian leaders.

## 1996

Serbia signs a deal with ethnic Albanian leaders to return Albanian students to mainstream education after a six-year boycott of state schools and colleges.

The clandestine separatist group Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerges for the first time claiming responsibility for a series of bomb attacks.

## 1997

**January** - The Serb rector of Pristina University is badly injured by a car bomb.

A suspected leader of the outlawed KLA is killed in a gun battle with police.

**March** - Four people are injured when a bomb explodes in the centre of Pristina.

**September** - Armed men stage simultaneous night attacks on police stations in 10 Kosovo towns and villages. As the number of guerrilla incidents increase, clashes also continue sporadically between police and peaceful protesters.

**October-December** - A grenade and machinegun raid is made on a Serb refugee camp, but there are no casualties.

Separatists claim to have shot down a Yugoslav Airlines training aircraft.

## 1998

**January** - An ethnic Serb politician is killed in apparent retaliation for the reported killing of an ethnic Albanian by the police.

**February/March** - Dozens are killed in Serbian police operations against suspected Albanian separatists in the Drenica region of Kosovo. Houses are burned and villages evacuated.

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Tens of thousands protest in the Kosovo capital, Pristina, against the violence, and street clashes erupt.

Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova, disregarding Western calls for compromise, demands outright independence for Kosovo.

Ethnic Albanians vote for a president and parliament in elections which are considered illegal by Belgrade.

**April** - 95% of Serbs vote against international intervention in Kosovo, in a referendum.

The Contact Group for the Former Yugoslavia agree, with the exception of Russia, to impose new sanctions against Yugoslavia over Kosovo.

**May** - US envoy Richard Holbrooke begins a round of shuttle diplomacy which results in Yugoslav President Milosevic inviting Ibrahim Rugova for peace talks.

Ethnic Albanian and Serb negotiators start talks in Pristina as fighting continues.

**June** - The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, warned Nato that it must seek a Security Council mandate for any military intervention in the Serbian province.

**July** - France and Britain draft a UN Security Council resolution to try to bring about a ceasefire.

**August** - A massive month-long offensive severely weakens the KLA until a significant stronghold - the village of Junik - falls into Serb hands on the 16th of the month. The UN called for a cease-fire.

**September** - The Serbian army continues to attack villages in the Drenica region of Kosovo.

United Nations Security Council votes in favour of a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Kosovo, and warning the Yugoslav Government of "additional measures" if it fails to comply. Nato takes the first formal steps towards military intervention in Kosovo.

Heavy fighting continues despite Serbian assurances that the offensive is over. At least 36 ethnic Albanian civilians are reported to have been massacred in three separate incidents.

**October** - Western nationals are advised to leave Yugoslavia as Nato prepares for air strikes.

Nato countries give the go-ahead for military action against Yugoslavia if President Milosevic does not comply with United Nations resolutions on Kosovo.

Following intensive diplomatic efforts by US envoy Richard Holbrooke, Yugoslavia agrees to allow a 2,000-strong monitoring force into Kosovo to ensure it complies with UN demands, averting the immediate

prospect of Nato airstrikes.

**November**- The United States special envoy for Kosovo, Christopher Hill, says the humanitarian and security situation in the Serbian province has improved significantly in the few weeks after the Belgrade ceasefire agreement.

But later in the month Nato and the US accuse both the Belgrade government and the ethnic Albanian rebels of endangering the cease-fire in Kosovo.

Dozens of international monitors begin training in Kosovo before going into the field to verify October's ceasefire agreement.

**December** - The Serbian authorities say their forces kill at least 30 ethnic Albanians in the worst clash since October's ceasefire agreement.

US special envoy Richard Holbrooke warns differences between Serbs and ethnic Albanians over the future of Kosovo remain very grave.

Fresh fighting breaks out in northern Kosovo, jeopardising international efforts to renegotiate a truce.

## 1999

**January** - The bodies of almost 40 ethnic Albanians are found at a scene of recent fighting in southern Kosovo, in what appears to have been a mass execution.

In response, Nato sends two senior military officers to Belgrade to warn the Yugoslav authorities that they face air strikes if they do not end the violence.

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