



(U) SID Around the World: Living High in the Balkans

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(C) One thing is for certain. If you spend a significant amount of time anywhere in what used to constitute the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), you will definitely get a good meal. Having traveled the world over, I believe that cuisine in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro is some of the best food anywhere. But cuisine is only a small part of what makes the Balkans special.

(C) As background, I am a former Air Force linguist who attended DLI (Defense Language Institute) in 1977, way before anyone thought that Serbo-Croatian would be such a valuable language at NSA. I was stationed in Yugoslavia as an intelligence assistant to the U.S. Defense Attache Office, Belgrade, and have been TDY to the Balkans theater literally dozens of times supporting a variety of offices at NSA.

(C) I was in Belgrade in 1989 during the 600th Anniversary Celebration of the Battle of Kosovo Polje. This event signalled the rise of Slobodan Milosevic to power, a man who ultimately caused the collapse of Yugoslavia. During that trip, I was able to visit the beautiful city of Dubrovnik. The next time I saw Dubrovnik, it was being shelled by Yugoslav People's Army artillery literally destroying a centuries-old historic city. Unfortunately, that was only the beginning of the nightmare for the Balkans. For almost a decade, war ravaged almost every corner of the "former Yugoslavia." NSA supported and still supports the myriad, alphabet soup of peacekeeping operations throughout the Balkans - UNPROFOR, UNTAES, UNMOP, IFOR, SFOR, and finally KFOR.

(C) Being on the front lines, sometimes living in tents or buildings partially destroyed by war and supporting these operations was professionally very rewarding, even though many times it meant spending significant time away from family and friends. But the opportunity to support the visit of President Clinton to Tuzla Air Base in January 1996, to work at a variety of new, state-of-the-art collection facilities supporting national policy-makers and commanders on the ground, meeting ambassadors and four star generals, the Secretary of State, and touring Air Force 2, are once in a lifetime experiences.

(U//FOUO) But even with all that excitement, all those experiences, and all that good food, it is nice to be back at NSA, back in the United States and back with friends and family.



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