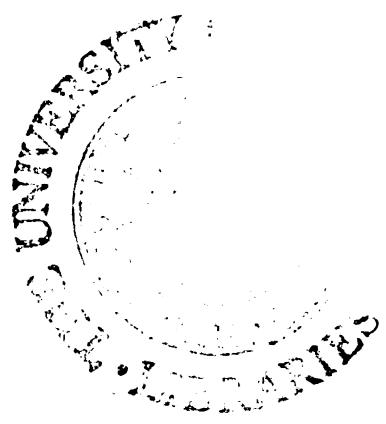

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BALKAN BATTLEGROUNDS



VOLUME 2

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Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995 Volume II

Central Intelligence Agency
Office of Russian and European Analysis
Washington, DC 20525

October 2003

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“Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990 – 1995” is the first effort to write a comprehensive, annotated, map-referenced military history of the series of armed conflicts that embroiled the former Yugoslavia between the 1990 run-up to the Slovenian declaration of independence and the Dayton Accords of 1995. It was researched and written by two CIA intelligence analysts assigned to follow military developments in the region throughout that period. These analysts reported on and analyzed the conflict on a daily basis for two presidents, their senior advisers, US diplomats and military commanders, and members of Congress.

Monitoring developments in the Balkans was one of the highest ongoing intelligence priorities of the 1990s. Intelligence analysts were involved in all aspects of the conflict, starting with their warnings to policymakers in late 1990 that the breakup of Yugoslavia was not only inevitable but imminent, and would likely be violent. Many dedicated military analysts and their managers—not just at CIA, but at the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency as well—contributed to this protracted, exhausting enterprise.

The book is an unclassified byproduct of that enterprise, a retrospective compilation of the battles fought that has been painstakingly drawn from open sources, map analyses, and the day-to-day observations of the analysts. It is being published to provide a single-source reference that may better inform observers of the pre-Kosovo fighting in the Balkans and benefit analysts and historians of post-Cold War conflicts.

Volume I of “Balkan Battlegrounds” was distributed in July 2002 along with a map case; this dissemination of Volume II, which had been scheduled to follow at the end of that year, now completes the publication. Designed to provide specialists with more comprehensive accounts of individual battles and campaigns and to address in depth such topics as the organization of the Bosnian Serb Army and the status of the UN Protection Force, it consists of a series of annexes covering the 1991 war in Croatia and the 1992-1994 periods of the Bosnian war. Both volumes provide detailed order of battle tables, and the chronology, illustrations, and maps accompanying Volume I are designed for use with both volumes. The authors, whose official duties have moved them to new battlegrounds, regret that the press of other business has delayed the publication of Volume II until now.

You are receiving this copy of Volume II because you or your organization is listed as having been sent Volume I. A limited number of copies of Volume I and the map case remain available from the publisher, the US Government Printing Office, and the Library of Congress. Please see the inside cover for their addresses.

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Preface to Volume II

Balkan Battlegrounds is a study of the military conflict in the former Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1995. It was compiled and written by two military analysts in the Central Intelligence Agency who, having tracked developments in the region throughout this period, applied their experience to producing an unclassified treatise for general use.

The study is organized in two volumes to make it useful to both the nonspecialist general reader and to professional soldiers, scholars, and military historians. Volume I, published separately in 2002 with an accompanying case of maps, is a chronological narrative covering the genesis of Yugoslavia's breakup in 1990 through the end of the Bosnian war in October 1995. It is divided into sections that introduce the conflict and its opening round, the Ten-Day War in Slovenia; the 1991 war in Croatia; each year of the Bosnian war from 1992 through 1994; the development of the Croatian Army and the progress of the Croatian-Serb conflict; and a more detailed 1995 section that covers actions in both Croatia and Bosnia.

This volume, Volume II, completes the publication of *Balkan Battlegrounds*. Designed to provide specialists with more comprehensive accounts of individual battles and campaigns and to address in depth such topics as the organization of the Bosnian Serb Army and the status of the UN Protection Force, it consists of a series of annexes covering the 1991 war in Croatia and the 1992-1994 periods of the Bosnian war. Because the events of 1995 were covered in their entirety in Volume I, Volume II has no annexes for 1995.

Both volumes provide detailed order of battle tables, and the chronology, illustrations, and maps accompanying Volume I are designed for use with both volumes. Volume II also includes a series of addendums that correct or update some portions of Volume I using information that became available after Volume I was published, including the prosecutor's pre-trial brief for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic at the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia. Regrettably, because of the press of official business the authors have been unable to incorporate additional information released during the UN trials or available from other sources since 2002.

We again gratefully acknowledge our debt to BBC Worldwide Limited/Penguin, and to authors Laura Silber and Allan Little, for allowing us to quote liberally in both volumes from their book, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, which helped provide much of the political context for our military analysis. For Volume II, we acknowledge permission from W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.,

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The conclusions, judgments, and opinions we have expressed in both volumes of this book are solely and entirely those of the authors and are not to be represented as emanating from the Central Intelligence Agency or the United States Government.

The Authors
McLean, Virginia
July 2003

**Balkan Battlefields:
A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict,
1990-1995
Volume II**

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Section I

Addendums to Volume I

Addendum 1 Sections II through VI, Volume I

Chapter 11: The JNA, Serbia, and the Croatian War, Fall-Winter 1991

Comments on Yugoslav and Serbian War Aims and JNA War Planning

In Volume I on pages 96-97 and in endnotes 42 and 43, the authors note that JNA war aims and Serbian war aims appeared to diverge and that the JNA was under extreme pressure from the Serbian leadership to scale back its war aims and corresponding strategic objectives. The authors also note that by fall 1991 the JNA was vacillating between accepting Serbian war aims and continuing to pursue its own more expansive objectives that called for the military defeat of Croatia in order to preserve some form of a confederal Yugoslavia. In a recent book by Milisav Sekulic, who served as an officer in the JNA, the Yugoslav Army (VJ), and the Krajina Serb Army (SVK), the differences between the aims and objectives pursued by the two sides are laid out more clearly. Sekulic states,

... October [1991] was also characterized by the onset of a direct confrontation between the proponents of two different plans for resolving the Yugoslav crisis. The "Serbian plan," advocated by Borisav Jovic and Slobodan Milosevic, provided for engagement of the military (JNA) in order to preserve a future Yugoslavia without Croatia and Slovenia, but including Krajina. This plan also clearly addressed the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina. If Bosnia-Herzegovina decided to leave Yugoslavia, then the part of the republic with a majority Serb population would remain in the future Yugoslavia. The second plan was supported by the military top brass, led by Gen. Veljko Kadijevic. It presupposed a continuation of the fight for integral SFRY, whereby

those republics that wanted to leave would be allowed to do so through negotiations, by peaceful means. Implementing this plan meant carrying out general mobilization in the country, but what was anticipated was mobilization only in Serbia, Montenegro, and the territories of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina with a majority Serb population. The military leadership anticipated launching a war against Croatian territory with a mobilized JNA, the aim being to defeat Croatia and in that way to force the leadership of that republic to leave Yugoslavia "by peaceful means."¹

This is a much clearer statement of the JNA's war aims and strategic objectives, and clarifies that—at least by September 1991—the JNA probably did not have as its war aim the preservation of the SFRY with Croatia in it. However, the aims and objectives themselves suggest that the JNA was still as confused as the authors initially assessed in Volume I. If you expect Croatia to leave the SFRY anyway, why mount a massive strategic offensive to keep it in, only to then allow it to negotiate its way out? The "Serbian plan" as Sekulic calls it was much simpler and more straightforward.

Comments on Mobilization and the Political Military Conflict, September-December 1991

Page 98—In Volume I the authors also judge that, as of 9 October, Kadijevic had acceded formally to the Serbian war aims but continued to call for general mobilization and an offensive to keep Croatia in a confederal Yugoslavia. We have found a 22 October statement by Kadijevic that makes it even clearer that he had still not truly acceded to the Milosevic-Jovic objectives and was still putting forward the JNA's quite different aims:

In the assessment of the Supreme Command Staff, the time has come when it is necessary to

take appropriate political and military measures in a clear, decisive, and coordinated fashion. For that reason I propose:

First, that the orientation of all those who favor preserving the Yugoslav state be clearly defined and realized through practical measures as soon as possible by the nations that desire that and their legitimate representatives. In parallel, that the JNA be transformed into an Armed Forces of Yugoslavia that will survive.

Second, that the mobilization of military conscripts and units be carried out immediately in the part of the country that is willing to remain in Yugoslavia, in accordance with the operational needs of the JNA. That must be done in a clearly legitimate way, bearing in mind the de facto state of the legal order in the country. By carrying out mobilization in the necessary scope and applying political, legal, and other measures dictated by the situation, we would avoid a situation in which unacceptable solutions are imposed on the nations that want to continue living in Yugoslavia—by domestic or foreign force—during the negotiations that are under way or on the battlefield if the negotiations yield no results.

Third, the Armed Forces of the SFRY will rigorously carry out the complete decision by the SFRY Presidency adopted in The Hague on 18 October 1991. If the Croatian side continues to evade the obligations taken on under The Hague agreement, then resolute action will be taken with all available means, not stopping until the lifting of the blockades of all JNA barracks and installations has been ensured, together with the effective protection of the Serb nation in Croatia until a final political solution to the Yugoslav crisis is found.²

Chapter 21: Bosnian Serb War Aims and Military Strategy, 1992

Pages 140-141—This chapter's discussion of the Bosnian Serb war aims is drawn primarily from an interview with Radovan Karadzic in 1995. Recently, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugo-

slavia (ICTY) has listed the Bosnian Serb war aims in its pre-trial brief for the Milosevic prosecution, drawing on the minutes of the apparently closed session of the Bosnian Serb Assembly on 12 May 1992. All six of the aims that Karadzic discussed in 1995 are included in this list, although what he later described as to “separate the Bosnian Serbs from Bosnia” is more explicitly stated in 1992 as the “separation of the Serbian people from the other two national communities.”³ During this assembly session, General Mladic—who had already been appointed to command the nascent VRS—discussed this war aim in these terms:

People and peoples are not pawns nor are they keys in one's pocket that can be shifted from here and there. It is something easily said but difficult to achieve . . . we cannot cleanse nor can we have a sieve to sift so that only Serbs would stay, or that the Serbs would fall through and the rest leave . . . I do not know how Mr. Krajisnik and Mr. Karadzic would explain this to the world. People, that would be genocide.⁴

The ICTY notes that “Mladic indicates that he knew that the action that was about to be undertaken would need to be kept secret and presented in an acceptable manner.”

. . . let us not only put our minds into what we are doing, but let us also think thoroughly about it, and let us be cautious about when to keep mum. No. The thing that we are doing needs to be guarded as our deepest secret. And what our representatives appearing in the media, at political talks and negotiations, are going to say, and they do need to present our goals in a way that will sound appealing to the ears of those we want to win over to our side, without being detrimental to the Serbian people.⁵

As the ICTY adds, Mladic states that

. . . it is a common enemy, regardless of whether it is the Muslim hordes or Croatian hordes. It is our common enemy. What is important now is either to throw both of them out by employing political and other moves, or to organize ourselves and throw out one by force of arms, and we will be able to deal somehow with the other. . .⁶

The ICTY ends this section with the observation,

By the summer of 1992, it was clear that the objectives of creating a Serb state and separating the communities in BiH were a driving factor behind the actions of the VRS. These objectives were emphasized in reports and instructions from the VRS Main Staff, were highlighted in combat reports and instructions of the Corps, mentioned in meetings and briefings, and disseminated to soldiers at the lowest level.⁷

These statements and documents constitute the most explicit evidence of the orchestration at the highest levels in the Bosnian Serb political and military leadership of the mass removal and killing of the Bosnian Muslim and Croat population in the Bosnian Serb Republic.

Chapters 51 and 55: Bosnian Serb War Aims and Military Strategy in 1994 and Operation “Drina 93”

Pages 220-221, 228-229—The ICTY’s Milosevic pre-trial brief also sheds more light on Bosnian Serb war aims and strategy in late 1993 and early 1994 by citing documents related to the VRS strategic offensive plan, “Drina 93.” The descriptions of these documents broadly confirm the discussion of “Drina 93” in Volume I. The ICTY states,

In November 1993 the Bosnian Serb leadership disseminated Operational Directive Number 6 in response to ongoing political negotiations and the military situation within BiH. This detailed the tasks of the VRS, which included operations aimed at achieving the six strategic goals. In December 1993, an addition to Operational Directive 6 was issued to expand the objectives outlined in the original Directive.

From these two directives the VRS Main Staff produced its own detailed directive for combat operations under the codename “Drina.” Much of the language and tasking contained within these three documents are similar.

The Drina plan comprised two separate phases. The first phase, which was to be completed by spring 1994, was a series of VRS-wide combat operations aimed at defending RS territory, improving the tactical and operational position of the army, shortening the frontline, and freeing VRS forces for engagement within the RS. The second phase was a detailed contingency plan involving VRS, VJ, and SVK forces in the event of Croatian aggression against the RSK or foreign aggression, including NATO air strikes, “against Serbian states.” The Drina plan as a whole included significant reference to—and coordinated action with—both the SVK and the VJ . . . References were also made to the general objective of establishing conditions for a single Serb state.

The first phase of the Drina plan primarily concerned combat operations through the various Corps of the VRS which were to be implemented through the early months of 1994. Although the instructions for this phase predominantly involved VRS units, it is clear that, in certain areas, close co-operation and support was expected from the VJ . . .

. . . The overall objective of the second phase anticipated co-ordinated VRS and VJ action in order to “ . . . crush and destroy Muslim OS [Armed Forces] in the enclaves, in Sarajevo, and on the Kalesija-Tuzla-Lukavac axis, and then continue operations and advance as soon as possible to the Neretva valley on the Mostar-Metkovic-Neum line, and the coast on the Neum-Zaton and Cavtat-Prevlaka stretches.”⁸

The phrasing of parts of the ICTY text might seem to imply that the second phase of the Drina plan was conditional upon a Croatian or foreign attack against either the RSK or the RS. However, absent access to the VRS planning documents in their entirety, it seems likely that the ICTY meant that the large-scale involvement of VJ combat forces was conditional, but that the VRS fully intended to mount offensive operations against Tuzla, the eastern enclaves, parts of Sarajevo, and in the Neretva valley.⁹

Based on the VRS Main Staff directive's mention of the Kalesija-Tuzla-Lukavac axis as the location of the VRS main effort during the second phase, the Olov operations discussed in Volume I probably were the main effort during phase one, designed to cut off Tuzla from the Sarajevo and Zenica regions so that in phase two the main effort would be able to overrun the Tuzla area itself. The failure of the various operations from phase one, discussed on pages 228 and 229 of Volume I, apparently led to the cancellation of the phase two operation against Tuzla.

Chapter 51: The Bosnian Serb Army in 1994 VRS Military Organization and Defensive Doctrine

Page 222—The discussion of VRS military organization and defensive doctrine may leave one with the mistaken impression that all VRS intervention or counterattack units were held as corps-level reserve brigades or battalions. In fact, each sector-holding brigade also had its own elite intervention units—formed from the youngest and most experienced per-

sonnel—to carry out local counterattacks. Generally, infantry battalions within a brigade would have an intervention platoon (or some other unit with an elite-type designator such as “reconnaissance-sabotage”) used for counterattacks. Directly subordinate to the brigade would be a reconnaissance-sabotage company, a military police platoon or company, and sometimes a designated intervention company also used to counterattack. Some brigades even appear to have had a brigade-level assault or intervention detachment or battalion available for such missions. Of course, the VRS also could group these brigade assets into composite units to augment its picked mobile brigades and battalions at the corps level for major counteroffensive or offensive operations.*

* See Annex 24: “Mladic’s Own: The Bosnian Serb Army,” for additional details on VRS offensive doctrine.

Addendum 2

Section VII, Volume I

Chapters 75 and 88: Abdic-Krajina Serb Operations in Bihać, January-July 1995

Pages 294, 363, and Endnote 55—The ICTY's Milosevic pre-trial brief also provided information that suggests that Operational Group "Pauk" was organized into three tactical groups, at least two of them commanded by Serbian officers. A July 1995 Krajina Serb Army video shows Radojica (Raja) Bozovic—"Kobac," a senior Serbian State Security (RDB) officer and the joint commander of OG Pauk, and Mihajlo Ulemek—"Legija," from Arkan's Serbian Volunteer Guard (SDG), as commanders of Tactical Groups 2 and 3 respectively.¹⁰ Tactical Group 1 likely was commanded by an SVK officer. Each tactical group probably was formed around one of the three Abdic People's Defense brigades, augmented with various small SVK or VJ, Serbian RDB, or SDG units. The main SVK forces supporting OG Pauk appear to have remained in Tactical Groups 8 and 9.

Chapter 80: The Sarajevo Breakout Attempt, June 1995

VRS Order of Battle

Pages 311 and 314—The VRS probably had at least another 500 Bosnian Serb MUP special police available for intervention missions during this operation. These comprised the 1st (Sarajevo) Detachment, the 2nd (Sekovici/Zvornik), 6th (Banja Luka), and 9th (Foca) Detachments of the RS MUP Special Police Brigade. It is unclear where the 1st Detachment was deployed, but the 2nd and 9th Detachments operated

in the Treskavica-Trnovo sector. The 6th Detachment may have been deployed with the 3rd Sarajevo and 1st Ilijas Infantry Brigades northwest of Sarajevo.¹¹

Chapters 91 and 92: ARBiH Offensive Operations, September-October 1995

The two reported atrocities described below, combined with the ICTY indictments of senior ARBiH commanders for battlefield atrocities committed against Bosnian Croats in central Bosnia during the 1993 war, suggest that the killing of military prisoners probably was not uncommon among some ARBiH units—especially those that included radical foreign Muslim volunteers. However, the authors have yet to uncover any ARBiH ethnic cleansing operations that were organized or carried out with the political forethought and systematic execution of those undertaken by the Bosnian Serbs and, to a lesser degree, the Bosnian Croats.

ARBiH 505th Mountain Brigade Atrocities, September 1995

Pages 382-383—A recently surfaced videotape shows members of the ARBiH 505th Mountain Brigade—one of the best units in the ARBiH 5th Corps—abusing a VRS straggler during September 1995 as the 505th Brigade advanced north in Operation "Sana 95." The VRS prisoner was eventually executed by a foreign Muslim volunteer and beheaded. The attitude displayed by the ARBiH soldiers toward the prisoner, as detailed in the transcript, suggests that this probably was not the first time that a Serb prisoner had been killed by these troops.¹²

ARBiH El Mujahid Detachment Atrocities After 35th Division Attack, 21 July 1995

Page 385—During the successful ARBiH 35th Division attack against Podsiljelovo, spearheaded by the foreign Muslim volunteer El Mujahid Detachment, a number of prisoners were taken from the VRS 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade. Several of these prisoners who survived claim that many of the VRS prisoners were beheaded by the foreign Muslim soldiers in the El Mujahid Detachment.¹³

Chapter 91: The 5th Corps Drive to the Sana, 13-18 September 1995

Correction. Page 383—The VRS “Prijedor” Operational Group 10 title shown is somewhat confusing. It should read “Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja’s reactivated ‘Prijedor Operational Group 10 of the 1st Krajina Corps.’”

Endnotes

¹ Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrnohvna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*. Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 203. Some of Sekulic's comments in this book need to be treated with caution because he believes—in good Balkan conspiracy fashion—that Kadijevic was intentionally trying to sabotage the performance of the JNA.

² Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrnohvna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*. Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 197-198.

³ Minutes of the 16th Session of the Assembly of the Serbian People in BiH, Banja Luka, 12 May 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, pp. 113-114.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

⁶ Ibid., p. 114.

⁷ Various VRS documents cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, p. 114. The ICTY cites VRS Main Staff Operational Directive Number 4, 19 November 1992, which states,

... in relation to forcible population transfers, the Drina Corps was tasked thus: . . . From its present positions, its main forces shall persistently defend Visegrad (the dam), Zvornik and the corridor, while the rest of its forces in the wider Podrinje region shall exhaust the enemy, inflict the heaviest possible losses on him and force him to leave the Birac, Zepa, and Gorazde areas together with the Muslim population.

The ICTY also notes a 1st Krajina Corps Daily Combat Report from 7 August 1992 which states, regarding Croat and Muslim refugees, "The attempt to expel them to Central Bosnia failed because of transportation difficulties and their resistance to leaving their places of residence."

⁸ VRS Main Staff document for DRINA operation, Extract from the Directive for use of the Republika Srpska Army; Karadzic, Directive for Further Operations, Operational Number 6; Radovan Karadzic, Addition to Directive Number 6, all cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, pp. 120-122. The ICTY also includes additional details in this section describing the VJ's close coordination and support to the VRS.

⁹ The ICTY notes that the 1st Krajina Corps fleshed out the Main Staff directive for its own sub-operations within the plan "adding specific tactical objectives and timelines for 1KK [1st Krajina Corps] units in both phases," [emphasis added]. General Momir Talic, Commander VRS 1KK, Drina-R document 21 January 1994, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, p. 122.

¹⁰ SVK Parade Video, 28 June 1995 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, pp. 119-120. The ICTY claims that the tactical groups led by Bozovic and Legija were from the VRS, but these two officers' central involvement with OG Pauk at the time and their presence at a parade for the SVK—which was also at the heart of OG Pauk—strongly indicates that the TGs were from OG Pauk, not the VRS.

¹¹ See Maja Bjelajac, "I Do Not Give In To Pressure," Banja Luka Reporter 11 July 2001, pp. 15-17, an interview with 6th Detachment commander Dragan Lukac; SRNA 3 June 1995. The RS MUP Special Police Brigade was organized into nine battalion-size detachments with a total of 2,000 troops. The brigade was organized as follows:

- 1st (Sarajevo) Detachment
- 2nd (Sekovic/Zvornik) Detachment
- 3rd (Trebinje) Detachment
- 4th (Bijeljina) Detachment
- 5th (Doboj) Detachment
- 6th (Banja Luka) Detachment
- 7th (Prijedor) Detachment
- 8th Detachment
- 9th (Foca) Detachment

See also Darko Grabovac, "Serbs of a Special Breed," Banja Luka *Glas Srpski* 21-22 October 1995, pp. 2-3, interview with Goran Saric, Commander of the RS MUP Special Police Brigade.

¹² "Accusing Tape," Sarajevo Dani 17 October 2001, p. 19, which includes the entire tape transcript. The atrocity occurred somewhere near Jesenice and Lusci Palanka.

¹³ Belgrade Tanjug 26 September 2001 citing statements given to the Bosnian Serb newspaper, *Glas Srpski*. The surviving prisoners were eventually turned over to ARBiH 3rd Corps military police, who apparently expressed amazement that any of them had survived their captivity with the El Mujahid Detachment. The former VRS prisoners reportedly later provided statements to the ICTY.

Addendum 3
Chapters 77, 88, and 89 of Volume I,
Additions and Corrections from *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* by Major General Milisav Sekulic

Overview

Major General Milisav Sekulic's book, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)*, became available in 2001; the authors were able to digest and incorporate into Volume I only a few elements of information derived from the Sekulic book. This addendum seeks to compare Sekulic's study more closely with Chapters 77, 88, and 89 of Volume I for the purpose of correcting errors, providing some additional information on key incidents, and amplifying analytic points made in our treatment of the fall of the Republic of Serb Krajina.

Sekulic was the Chief of Operations and Training for the Main Staff (*Glavni Stab*) of the Krajina Serb Army (SVK). In his memoir he is highly critical of the SVK leadership. His main thesis, however, appears to be that the Belgrade government—focusing on Serbian President Milosevic and the Yugoslav Army General Staff—mismanaged the defense of the Krajina, either intentionally or through incompetence, thus allowing the Croatians to overrun the Krajina. In preparing his study, Sekulic obviously had almost complete access to the remaining archives of the SVK, including after-action reports provided by SVK commanding officers upon their arrival in Belgrade at the VJ's 40th Personnel Center.¹ Especially critical is his review of the SVK in the run-up to and during the Croatian Army's Operations *Bljesak* and *Oluja*, covered in chapters 13 and 18, "The Aggression of the Croatian Army in Western Slavonia," and "The Last Battles of the Krajina Serb Army." His chapter 13 analyzes the reasons for the defeat of the SVK 18th West Slavonian Corps in *Bljesak*. Chapter 18 is even more comprehensive, walking through the fate and performance of each SVK corps command and combat brigade during

Oluja, starting with the 7th North Dalmatian Corps in UN Sector South and moving to the north, ending with the SVK Air and Air Defense Force. It includes summaries of the after-action reports by the SVK commanders and Sekulic's comments on them.

Bljesak Summary Comments

Sekulic harshly criticizes the leadership displayed by the SVK during the May 1995 Western Slavonia operations, but his analysis does not negate the basic fact that the 18th Corps had insufficient forces to defend the RSK territory in Western Slavonia even if it had been better organized and led. Although it probably could have delayed the HV advance for a longer period of time, the 18th Corps still would have been defeated. Sekulic appears to acknowledge this, albeit grudgingly.

Page-Specific Comments and Corrections for Chapter 77

SVK 18th Corps Order of Battle. Page 297 and Endnote 79—Sekulic states that the 18th Corps had 4,000 troops available, which is consistent with the 4,000 to 5,000 SVK and MUP personnel estimated in Volume I. These 4,000 troops included only 38 professional officers and 22 professional NCOs.²

In addition to the three brigades and two detachments mentioned, the 18th Corps included a battalion-size tactical group, Tactical Group-1, an independent intervention battalion, a reconnaissance-sabotage detachment, and an independent military police company. (The unidentified Slatina detachment mentioned in Endnote 79 is the 63rd Detachment).³

Lieutenant Colonel Borivoje Pavlovic, a former VRS battalion commander, headed TG-1, which was an odd unit comprised of 500 personnel, 374 of whom were

from Republika Srpska; 75 percent of them were Croats and Muslims. Sekulic has nothing but contempt for the tactical group and its commander, which he charges was essentially a criminal enterprise run by VRS deserters, engaging in smuggling and other black market activities. General Celeketic, the SVK Main Staff commander, had formed the tactical group when he was commander of the 18th Corps, and it had reported only to him. After his promotion out of the corps his former command was able to exercise only the most tenuous control over TG-1. The tactical group's nominal mission was to defend the far left flank of the 18th Corps on the Sava River at Jasenovac.

Operation Narrative. Pages 297-298 and Endnote 81—Sekulic's information tracks closely with the situation as described in Volume I, which drew primarily on HV sources. On the Novska axis, the initial HV advance successfully hit the boundary between the 98th Light Infantry Brigade and Tactical Group-1, cutting off a battalion from the 98th Brigade.⁴ The 98th Brigade was pushed out of its defensive zone by 1200 on 1 May. TG-1 apparently collapsed precipitately at Jasenovac with most of its personnel fleeing to Bosnia.⁵ Sekulic also notes the 54th Light Infantry Brigade's initially strong resistance around Okucani, as described in Volume I.⁶ Sekulic states,

The enemy thrust into the area of Bijela Stena [Stijena], cutting off the zone of the 51st Brigade [near Pakrac].^{} Defense could not be stabilized through the deployment of the remnants of a company of military police. The logical consequences ensued. The loss and abandonment of defensive positions by the 98th and 51st Brigades [Sekulic probably meant the 54th, vice 51st Brigade] resulted in large columns of refugees moving toward Bosanska Gradiska . . . In the morning hours of 1 May, the Tactical Group defending Jasenovac stopped putting up any resistance. They were to retreat south of the River Sava without a fight.*

Not knowing how matters had developed or the conduct of their “neighbors,” 51st Brigade, 59th and 63rd Detachments, and one battalion

^{*} The Croatian units probably were MUP Special Police and the HV 81st Guards Battalion.

*each from the 98th and 54th Brigades would continue to mount a defense. The same applied to the intervention battalion, even though it had been abandoned by its commander. All of these forces were to be left without any links with the corps command, while the battalions were cut off from their brigade commands. Right up until 3 May these units were expecting help to come from the corps command and would offer resistance to the Croatian Army forces carrying out the blockade . . .*⁷

This account of the forces around Pakrac suggests that the bulk of the SVK troops held out a little longer after the 51st Brigade commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harambasic, surrendered on 2 May, and differs slightly with the account in our Volume I. Sekulic claims Harambasic was tricked into surrendering.⁸

Analysis of the Operation. Page 298 and Endnote 87—Sekulic's analysis of the SVK's failure to defend Western Slavonia corresponds closely with the views of the RSK investigative commission discussed in Endnote 87. He condemns both the 18th Corps commander, Colonel Lazo Babic, and SVK Main Staff commander General Milan Celeketic. He portrays Babic as unfit to command, failing to grasp the appropriate war plans for the 18th Corps, rejecting any advice from staff officers—he sacked the most capable officer on the corps staff—and ignoring the problems in the corps. Sekulic describes him as “an overbearing and swaggering piece of acting, and an amateur one at that.” At the start of the attack, Babic moved the corps command post from Okucani to Stara Gradiska, abandoning a well-equipped command post for one that lacked any communication links to the corps subordinates, severely limiting the 18th Corps command's ability to influence the battle. The corps was poorly trained and its units had only a slight understanding of their defensive responsibilities. The 18th Corps' reports that its mobilization was satisfactory were false. Babic had earlier ignored repeated reports from the SVK Security Directorate that the corps was in poor shape internally.⁹

Sekulic indicates that the SVK Main Staff was unable to even try to alleviate the problems within the 18th Corps because General Celeketic, the Commander of

the Main Staff, refused to allow the rest of the Main Staff access to the corps and made all of the decisions regarding it himself. Prior to *Bljesak*, the Main Staff did not question this because, as a former commander of the 18th Corps, Celeketic was presumed to have an excellent grasp of the situation in Western Slavonia. Celeketic also ignored the Security Directorate reports that came to his attention—reports which the rest of the Main Staff did not have access to.¹⁰

Sekulic—noting the fundamental problem that the 18th Corps was not actually a corps and had insufficient manpower to defend the territory allotted to it—also criticizes the SVK's lack of any contingency plans to deploy forces from any of its other five corps to Western Slavonia. He also criticizes the failure to execute “pre-arranged” plans for a combined attack by the SVK 11th East Slavonia-Baranja Corps and the VRS East Bosnian Corps. Sekulic claims that VRS Main Staff Commander General Mladic had expressed his readiness to carry out this operation, but Sekulic suggests that Belgrade vetoed the plan.¹¹

Finally, Sekulic assesses that the intermingling of the local population with the 18th Corps troops led to mass desertions of SVK soldiers when the HV attack began and the troops became more concerned with protecting their families than defending their positions.¹²

Reference to the SVK “General Staff.” Page 298 and Endnote 87—Any references in this chapter or elsewhere in Volume I to the SVK “General Staff” instead of the SVK “Main Staff” are incorrect. The SVK technically had a Main Staff (Glavni Stab), just like the VRS, not a General Staff (Generalni Stab). It had both a Commander of the Main Staff and a Chief of the Main Staff, instead of only a Chief of the General Staff as was the case in the Yugoslav Army (VJ).

Oluja Summary Comments

After reviewing Sekulic’s study, the authors would not change any of their major conclusions in “Evaluation

of *Oluja*,” pp. 374-376, Chapter 89, Section VII of Volume I. However, his information amplifies some of these conclusions:

- As emphasized in Volume I, the lack of Main Staff, corps, and brigade-level reserves was the single biggest reason for the SVK defeat. The after-action reports from the various SVK formations engaged make this readily apparent.
- The new Corps of Special Units (KSJ)—formed to function as the SVK mobile reserve—fought quite poorly. This probably is a reflection on its personnel composition, which included a large number of draft dodgers who were rounded up in Serbia and sent back to the Krajina. In addition, Sekulic judges that the corps command ineptly handled its role during the HV offensive. (See additional details below.)
- Although not directly discussed, the war weariness of the entire RSK comes through in the reports presented by Sekulic.
- Orders to evacuate the civilian population from threatened areas—whether directed from good or ill intent—had an absolutely disastrous effect on the morale and motivation of SVK soldiers, who almost immediately started to drift away from their units to look after their families. A review of brigade casualties reported by Sekulic suggests that SVK losses were light.
- The typical “domino effect” that can strike an army when a situation starts to come unglued played out in the SVK. Brigade commanders typically blamed adjacent brigades for withdrawing and undermining their own positions so that they too had to withdraw.¹³ HV breakthroughs in key sectors caused the entire front to unravel.
- All of this was greatly exacerbated by the near-disintegration of the SVK command and control network, and—according to Sekulic—poor performance by senior commanders in coordinating the various corps.

Sekulic's sweeping criticisms include charges that a number of brigades failed to hold their positions as long as they could have and should have—including brigades that, relative to the rest of the SVK, fought well. Sekulic clearly judges that, overall, the SVK should have been able to resist the HV for much longer than it did. He seems to ignore a number of factors in making his judgments: that the HV and ARBiH forces engaged in *Oluja* outnumbered the SVK at least three to one—105,000 troops to about 35,000—and probably had an even greater advantage in critical sectors; that the HV was a much different army than that which faced the JNA in 1991; and that a number of the corps commands were facing totally untenable circumstances at the operational level when they were ordered to withdraw, even if the tactical position of some their brigades was not unfavorable.

Page-Specific Comments and Corrections for Chapter 88

Comments on General Mrksic. Pages 361 and 362 and endnotes 518 and 519—Sekulic describes Mrksic's attitude after his arrival,

His bearing was aloof and superior. He was always surrounded by a personal entourage of special forces. He also demonstrated "his" work methodology. He placed the corps commanders under his jurisdiction and spent more time with them than with the people in the Main Staff. He also demonstrated exemplary flexibility, demanding only what could be carried out. He also had "his own" people, which he trusted without reserve . . .

Mrksic seemed like an officer who was quick to perceive problems. He made precise assessments in connection with the capabilities of his officers and associates. He never reacted impetuously . . . He seemed confident and unwavering. He did not care about publicity, but it was plain to see that he knew how to maintain the image of commander and general from the glorious (!) battles in Vukovar. He went personally to any place where he thought there could be refusal to obey his commands and always managed to set things straight. He always insisted on the importance of training soldiers and

troops. He did not hold staff meetings very often . . .

. . . The progress that had been achieved under Mrksic's command in a little more than a month . . . was more than had been done during all the previous years.¹⁴

Composition of the Corps of Special Units. Page 362 and endnote 523 (page 411)—Sekulic does not indicate that the KSJ included a special operations brigade, but only identifies a small battalion-size reconnaissance-sabotage detachment and a military police battalion. It is likely that the SVK originally intended to form the 71st Special Operations Brigade, but that it lacked sufficient trained manpower or possibly the headquarters staff to do so. Normally, these two detachments/battalions would have been combined under such a brigade. In addition, unlike our terminology in Volume I, Sekulic refers to the armored brigade and Guards brigade in the corps only as the "Armored Brigade" and "Guards Brigade" not "2nd Armored" or "2nd Guards Brigade."¹⁵

15th Light Infantry Brigade. Endnote 527—The 15th Light Infantry Brigade was a new formation raised in the 15th Lika Corps only after General Mrksic's arrival. It was formed from draft evaders returned from Serbia.¹⁶

Page-Specific Comments and Corrections for Chapter 89^{*}

Disposition of the Corps of Special Units.

Page 369—Sekulic provides the deployment plan for the KSJ, indicating that the corps HQ, the 2nd Armored Brigade, and the MP battalion were in the Slunj area, while the 2nd Guards Brigade and the recon-sabotage detachment were in the Knin area.¹⁷

Comments on New SVK Corps Commanders. Pages 368 and 370 and Endnotes 550 and 560—Sekulic dis-

* Instead of being organized chronologically as the narrative on *Oluja* is in Volume I, these comments are organized by theme in order to deal with the key events and issues raised by Sekulic, most of which transcend an individual day's worth of combat. Any details in these comments and corrections that differ from those in Volume I supersede the earlier text, even if not specifically stated.

parages the commander of the 7th North Dalmatian Corps, Major General Slobodan Kovacevic, and overall is less than impressed with the new commanders of the 39th Banija Corps and the Corps of Special Units. When General Mrksic was dispatched from Belgrade to take over as Commander of the SVK Main Staff, he was accompanied by Major General Slobodan Kovacevic, the then Chief of Armor-Mechanized Units on the VJ General Staff, and Major General Slobodan Tarbuk. Kovacevic took over the 7th North Dalmatian Corps and Tarbuk took command of the 39th Banija Corps. Sekulic notes that the new commanders had little time to comprehend the operational-tactical situation in their respective areas of responsibility and, in particular, criticizes Kovacevic as "a weak and poor commander." Sekulic charges that the 7th Corps headquarters basically ceased to function during *Oluja*, and that Kovacevic further undermined the corps' ability to operate by placing the corps chief of staff—who Sekulic respects—in command of a task-organized battle group instead of keeping him back to run the corps headquarters.¹⁸

SVK Defensive Operations Along the Northern and Northeastern Approaches to Knin. Pages 370-371—A more detailed reading of Sekulic's text than was available as Volume I was being finished indicates that the SVK had one tactical group—TG-3—plus the 2nd Guards Brigade available to defend against HV attacks from the Bosansko Grahovo-Dinara Mountains area toward Knin. The disposition of Tactical Group-3—which probably numbered 1,000 to 1,250 troops—appears to have consisted of the following:¹⁹

- A "reinforced" battalion from the 15th Lika Corps' 103rd Light Infantry Brigade—some 240 troops—was positioned southwest of Drvar, facing south, along the route from Strmica to Licka Kaldroma.²⁰ This element appears to have been designated Battle Group-1.
- A battle group drawn from various 7th Corps brigades—apparently primarily from the 3rd and 92nd Brigades—covering the Derala-Strmica-Knin route. This element probably was designated Battle Group-2.
- A battle group formed from elements of two unidentified 7th Corps brigades, 7th Corps headquarters,

and an RSK MUP police battalion. This element was designated Battle Group-3.²¹

- The KSJ 2nd Guards Brigade and the KSJ Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment were deployed to the Dinara Mountains north of Knin at the end of July following the suspension of Operation "Mac 95" against Bihać in order to help stem the HV/HVO Operation "Ljeto 95." However, the KSJ forces apparently were withdrawn from Dinara back into the Knin area prior to the start of *Oluja* on 4 August.

The brunt of the HV attack—4th and 7th Guards Brigades—fell on Battle Groups-2 and 3 with 4th Guards apparently hitting BG-2 and 7th Guards assaulting BG-3. BG-1 was not attacked. BG-2 appears to have finally disintegrated by 2100 on 4 August, despite the best efforts of the TG-3 commander to encourage his troops to hold the pass at Strmica. BG-3, however, was able to stabilize its defenses on the TG-3 right flank, using elements of the 2nd Guards Brigade and a tank company dispatched by General Kovacevic. Eventually, however, BG-3 was forced to withdraw because of the HV gains against BG-2. It is remarkable that BG-2, which probably numbered no more than 500 troops, was able to hold out as long as it did against an entire HV Guards brigade, plus elements of another.²² A bigger question was why the KSJ troops from the SVK 2nd Guards Brigade were not thrown in to block the HV 4th Guards Brigade. Apparently, prior to the start of *Oluja*, the morale of the brigade—which included large numbers of former draft evaders—had collapsed, and it was unfit for combat.²³

Correction: on page 371, "Vijuga Battle Group" should be replaced with "Tactical Group-3."

The Performance of the 7th Corps and Its Decision to Withdraw. Pages 371-372 and Endnote 578—Sekulic lambastes the performance of every brigade in the 7th Corps except that of the 92nd Motorized Brigade and indicates that for the most part 1st Vrlika Light, 2nd Kistanje Infantry, 3rd Benkovac Infantry, and 75th Drniš Motorized Brigades collapsed or retreated when barely pushed by the HV.²⁴ He also criticizes the brigade commanders for doing so little to

coordinate their actions with each other. However, a close reading of Sekulic's information does suggest that the SVK Main Staff and 7th Corps command appear to have feared being cut off by the HV drives toward Gracac and Knin and therefore ordered the withdrawal of 7th Corps late on 4 August, confirming the judgment on pages 371-372 in Volume I.²⁵

Comments of the SVK 18th Brigade Commander.
Page 371—The 18th Infantry Brigade was the formation that checked the HV 9th Guards Brigade in front of the Ljubovo position near Gospic on 4 August. The brigade appears to have been well organized and highly motivated, and Sekulic holds it up as a model. Based on the brigade commander's after-action report, Sekulic states,

... around 85 percent of the brigade's fighters had experience in fighting the [Croatians] and that they exhibited no fear concerning the outcome of the fighting, which was based not only on their experience, but also on the well-prepared defense and the engineer organization of the positions and the region. The 18th Brigade had significant successes in battles with Croat units . . . defense of the zone . . . [was] carried out systematically and in detail. Observation posts were set up for all company commanders and battalion commanders, as well as four advance command posts for the brigade command. Wire communications were reinforced with another 50 kilometers of cable. Command operations were organized for multiple scenarios. A brigade reserve was formed and prepared for use in multiple scenarios. The brigade's reserve had one tank company, one infantry company (85 fighters) . . . one motorized company (56 fighters), two armored personnel carriers (M-60), and a Bofors mounted on a motor vehicle with a 12.7mm antiaircraft machine gun. Besides these forces, the reserves allayed fears of an enemy attempt to wedge in at the junction of the 3rd and 2nd Battalions . . . and at the juncture of the 2nd and 1st Battalions . . . Besides all this, the brigade was stocked with enough food and ammunition to fight in an encircled position for as long as 10 days without replenishment (there were six functional small

storehouses in the zone). All of this heightened the fighters' sense of self-reliance and their confidence in the command structure.²⁶

The 18th Brigade lost nine killed in action, 42 wounded, three captured, and one deserter during *Oluja*.²⁷

The SVK Defense of Petrinja. Pages 370, 372, and 373—The highly detailed after-action report by Colonel Milorad Jankovic, the commander of the 31st Infantry Brigade, focuses on the 31st Brigade's left flank as the main HV effort—correctly, since this was the sector where all but one battalion of the HV 2nd Guards Brigade was committed. After an initial HV penetration early on 4 August, the 31st Brigade commander inserted part of his reserve—one tank and one infantry platoon, a recon-sabotage unit, and an MP platoon—to block the HV advance. During continuous fighting in the morning on this flank, the 4th Battalion/31st Brigade collapsed when its commander was killed; however, the commitment of an additional infantry company and efforts by SVK officers to impose order restored the brigade defensive position. At 0925 on 4 August, a renewed HV 2nd Guards Brigade effort was repulsed and the tank platoon leading it wiped out. The brigade then managed to hold its own the rest of the day despite several near-panics in some of its sub-units—which were encouraged to hold their positions by threats from the brigade commander and brigade intervention units to shoot anyone who retreated.²⁸

The HV attack on 5 August continued to wear down the 31st Brigade, despite some reinforcements from the 39th Corps who promptly abandoned their positions.²⁹ The 31st Brigade was so low on troop reserves that a communications platoon was committed to battle. Finally, at 1800 on 5 August, Colonel Jankovic requested permission to withdraw from Petrinja under overwhelming HV pressure. The town fell to the HV the next day. The 31st Brigade lost 13 killed in action, 45 wounded, and six missing on 4 and 5 August.³⁰

Timing of 5th Corps Attack Against 39th Corps. Page 372 and Endnote 591—The after-action report of the 39th Banija Corps agrees with the ARBiH 5th Corps statement that its 505th and 511th Brigades attacked toward Zirovac into the 39th Corps zone only on 5 August, despite the claim in the after-action report from the SVK 33rd Dvor Infantry Brigade that it was attacked simultaneously with the start of the HV offensive on 4 August.³¹

Comments from the SVK 26th Brigade Commander. Pages 371, 372, and 373—The 26th Infantry Brigade on the right flank of the 39th Corps performed well, except along the Una River, where its after-action report confirms its inability to halt the attack of the reinforced HV 125th Home Defense Regiment, despite the commitment of the 26th Brigade reserves. In his after-action report, the brigade commander lays out critical problems that his unit faced during *Oluja*—most of which were problems universal to the brigades of the SVK:

- The 64-kilometer width of the brigade sector—a massive sector in hilly terrain for a unit that probably had no more than 1,500 men;
- The limited depths of the brigade's defenses;
- Abandonment of their positions by too many soldiers;
- An HV penetration in a key sector;
- The breakdown in communications;
- Inadequate numbers of trained officer and NCO cadres.³²

The Encirclement of the 21st Kordun Corps. Pages 371 to 374 and associated endnotes—Sekulic regards the encirclement and capture of the 21st Corps as one of the great disasters suffered by the SVK during *Oluja* and blames a series of events for this debacle:

- The penetration of the HV 1st Guards Brigade along a vulnerable brigade boundary between the 50th and 70th Infantry Brigades in the 15th Lika Corps, com-

bined with the ARBiH 5th Corps attack in the same area;

- Poor performance by the Corps of Special Units in stemming HV and ARBiH penetrations, both in the 15th Lika and 39th Banija Corps areas;
- Poor command decisions by Operational Group “Kordun;”
- The respectable performance of the 21st Corps itself in generally repelling most HV Karlovac Corps District attacks, which left it holding its positions as the rest of the SVK collapsed around it.³³

The 70th Plaski Infantry Brigade was positioned forward in a salient around the town of Plaski on the right flank of the 15th Lika Corps, adjacent to the 21st Corps and the KSJ, which was centered around Slunj. The brigade was essentially separate from the bulk of the 15th Corps further south. The left flank battalion (3rd) from the 70th Brigade faced the entire reinforced HV 1st Guards Brigade—a daunting task for any single brigade in the SVK, let alone an individual battalion. Nonetheless, the battalion performed credibly against the 1st Guards in its assault from the direction of Otocac, holding it up until early on 5 August, despite receiving no response to requests for reinforcements from the KSJ.³⁴ (This corrects our inaccurate judgment in Volume I that the 1st Guards had run into “stiff opposition” from the KSJ near Licka Jasenica; it was actually the 70th Brigade.) The 50th Infantry Brigade to the south was unable to protect its right flank adjacent to the 70th Brigade to help block the 1st Guards, and it was brushed aside.³⁵ As a result, the 70th Brigade commander, apparently fearing that his forces would be cut off in the salient around Plaski when the HV turned north, ordered a withdrawal to Slunj early on 5 August. With the attack of the ARBiH 502nd Mountain Brigade on 5 August, its rapid defeat of the weak SVK 15th Light Brigade and 37th Independent Infantry Battalion, and the link-up with the 1st Guards, the 21st Corps was now cut off to the south.³⁶

In addition to the failure of the KSJ to intervene in the 70th Brigade sector, the corps also even more disastrously failed to follow two separate orders from both General Mrksic and General Novakovic, commander of the Kordun Operational Group controlling all SVK operations in the north. Late on 4 August, Mrksic had directed that the KSJ redeploy the 2nd Armored Brigade to the Glina area by early on 5 August in order to bolster the 39th Corps defense at that critical road junction. Late on 5 August, with the 39th Corps defense of Petrinja faltering, Novakovic issued a similar instruction. Both orders apparently were ignored. In the latter case the KSJ headquarters, including Major General Milorad Stupar, and the armored brigade arrived at the town of Topusko on 6 August, but decided on their own authority that the situation had deteriorated too quickly for them to have any effect at Glina, so Stupar and the brigade abandoned their mission and drove on to Dvor, on the RS border.³⁷ Even if this armored brigade was at less than full strength, its failure to engage at Glina was a critical failure in the SVK defensive operations and led directly to the capture of the 21st Corps. A counterattack by these SVK armored units against the HV 2nd Guards Brigade, already tired from its tough fight with the 31st Brigade at Petrinja, would have further delayed the advance of the HV Zagreb Corps District here and probably helped hold Banija and Kordun for a few more days. Eventually the combined HV/ARBiH drive from the Slunj area would have forced the SVK to withdraw, but probably not in as disastrous a fashion as occurred.

The employment of SVK forces in the Banija and Kordun was further confused by command and control problems among the Kordun Operational Group (more or less the Operational Group “Pauk” HQ dual-hatted), the KSJ, and the 21st Corps. The OG Kordun/OG Pauk headquarters—headed by Lieutenant Colonel General Mile Novakovic and chief of staff Colonel Cedo Bulat—appears to have been taxed beyond the ability of their headquarters to cope with the evolving situation in essentially four different corps—21st, 39th, KSJ, and Abdic’s National Defense. The OG headquarters probably had inadequate communications equipment to start with and when combined with the communications breakdowns suffered during *Oluja*, likely had limited information on which to act. Further, Sekulic charges that Novak-

ovic’s HQ did a poor job of coordinating the actions of these four commands in adapting to the evolving situation. Novakovic’s relief of Colonel Veljko Bosanac, the commander of 21st Corps, and his replacement by Bulat further disrupted Novakovic’s ability to direct operations. (This corrects an erroneous judgment in endnote 605 of Volume I that Bosanac might have been killed in action.)³⁸ Not only did Novakovic lose his chief of staff at a critical moment, but he introduced a new one—albeit a former commander of the 21st Corps—into a difficult command situation at the same time. In addition, the existence of the KSJ HQ only further diluted and interfered with Novakovic’s orders, despite his subordination of the KSJ component units to the 21st Corps.³⁹

Defeat of Abdic’s Forces. Page 374—in contrast to the account available at the time of writing Volume I, which suggests that the 5th Corps overran Abdic’s forces and captured Velika Kladusa on 7 August. Sekulic indicates that Abdic’s troops began defecting on 5 August. This started with the 2nd Brigade, and was followed by the other two brigades, plus other ancillary units. This information is apparently drawn from the 21st Kordun Corps after-action report. It is unclear, however, whether all of these units defected on 5 August, or if—as seems more likely—the defections occurred over 5 and 6 August, allowing 5th Corps to march into Velika Kladusa on 7 August after overcoming whatever resistance remained. The Serbian RDB special operations unit, Bosnian Serb MUP Special Police, and other Serbian/FRY units that had been reinforcing Abdic successfully evacuated—“willfully abandoned” in Sekulic’s words—Velika Kladusa before the 5th Corps arrived.⁴⁰

Defense of the Escape Route to Dvor. Page 373 and Endnote 607—The route south to the border town of Dvor on the Una River and the “border” between the RSK and the RS was the primary evacuation route for SVK forces in Kordun and Banija, as well as the fleeing Serb population. The primary threats to this route were the attack by ARBiH 5th Corps forces from the 505th and 511th Brigades toward the Glina-Dvor road through Zirovac, and the HV 125th Home Defense

Regiment assault from the direction of Dubica via Kostajnica. Sekulic confirms that the 33rd Dvor Infantry Brigade was able to hold against the 5th Corps attack until 7 August, when the brigade's morale collapsed as word of Petrinja and Kostajnica's fall spread among 33rd personnel. This allowed 5th Corps troops to reach Zirovac and cut the 21st Corps' escape route. Meanwhile, after the 33rd Brigade troops retreated across the Una River into the RS, HV troops occupied Dvor. However, Volume I incorrectly assumes that the battle ended here. In fact, sandwiched between the ARBiH troops at Zirovac and the HV 125th Regiment at Dvor were the SVK 13th Slunj Infantry Brigade, which had managed to avoid the fate of the rest of the 21st Corps, and the KSJ's 2nd Armored Brigade—plus large numbers of SVK stragglers. Early on 8 August, the two brigades, under KSJ commander General Stupar's direction and assisted by the VRS 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade in Bosanski Novi (Novi Grad), assaulted Dvor and recaptured it, allowing the refugees traveling with them to escape across the Una to Bosanski Novi. Attacks on 9 August by the 13th Brigade, supported by the armor, against the ARBiH forces to the north allowed additional refugees to escape before the SVK forces finally withdrew across the Una for good.⁴¹

Additional Comments on the Performance of the Corps of Special Units. Page 375—In the authors' "Evaluation of *Oluja*" the poor performance of the KSJ, which was to have acted as the Main Staff mobile reserve, was discussed.⁴² At the time, the authors did not realize exactly how little the corps contributed to the SVK defense—playing no role at all in delaying the HV 1st Guards Brigade, as was thought at the time, and which was discussed earlier in describing the fate of the 21st Corps. Major General Milorad Stupar—much maligned by General Seku-

lic—in his after-action report laid out a number of problems the KSJ had to deal with. These included:

- Exhaustion of the personnel from the 2nd Guards and 2nd Armored Brigades because they had been engaged in combat operations since 19 July—the start of Operation "Mac 95" against Bihać;
- Poor morale of the KSJ soldiers, most of whom were draft evaders from the RSK forcibly detained in Federal Yugoslavia and shipped back to the RSK;
- Lack of communications equipment, which inhibited command and control;
- Poor engineer preparations of defensive positions.⁴³

Sekulic himself states that,

The plan to replenish the Special Unit Corps with younger personnel was not a complete success. The use of personnel forcibly mobilized in the FRY to replace deserted military conscripts from Croatia and the RSK was a fundamental weakness that could be overcome only over an extended period of time. The combat capabilities of the Special Unit Corps were significantly limited by the inability to keep the officer cadre up to strength. The first problem was the numerical shortfall of personnel and the second was the inadequate quality and the small size of the officer cadre.⁴⁴

It was on the weak reed of the KSJ that Mrksic and the SVK Main Staff had counted as their primary device for halting HV breakthrough operations; it utterly failed.

Endnotes

¹ The 40th Personnel Center or 40th Cadre Center was the official VJ unit to which ex-JNA and VJ officers on loan to the SVK were assigned, and it controlled the administrative and pay records for these personnel. The VJ 30th Personnel Center performed the same function for the VRS.

² Major General Milisav Sekulic *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, p. 101.

³ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 103-106.

⁴ Sekulic op. cit., p. 105.

⁵ Sekulic alleges that TG-1 fabricated its war diary in order to cover up its failure to mobilize and its flight from battle. He is more than a little upset that such a disgrace of a unit was defending Jasenovac, site of a World War II concentration camp responsible for the deaths of many Serbs. "And for the absurdity and humiliation to be all the greater, most of the unit was made up of Muslims and Croats." Sekulic op. cit., pp. 106-107.

⁶ Sekulic op. cit., p. 106.

⁷ Sekulic op. cit., p. 106.

⁸ Sekulic op. cit., p. 106.

⁹ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 102-105, 108-109.

¹⁰ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 102-103, 112-113, 116-117.

¹¹ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 115-116, 118-119.

¹² Sekulic op. cit., p. 111.

¹³ For an excellent analysis of this phenomenon, see Martin Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle 21 March 1918: The First Day of the German Spring Offensive* London: Penguin Press, 1983.

¹⁴ Sekulic *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.y/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001. The rest of the Sekulic citations are drawn from the actual book, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁵ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 223-224.

¹⁶ Sekulic *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* as excerpted in *Politika*, Online Edition. URL: <www.politika.co.y/feljton> Accessed 18 July 2001.

¹⁷ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 223-227.

¹⁸ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 188-189, 234.

¹⁹ Tactical Group-3 was commanded by Colonel Rajko Grbic, the 7th Corps Chief of Artillery.

²⁰ This battalion from the 103rd Brigade comprised the 1st Battalion (-), augmented with the brigade recon platoon, an MP platoon, a tank platoon, a 122mm howitzer platoon, an M-77 multiple rocket launcher, and a "police"—probably a MUP—platoon.

²¹ Battle Group-3 was the unit commanded by the 7th Corps chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Milorad Radic.

²² Colonel Grbic apparently reported that SVK troops in BG-2 "willfully abandoned the defense," with an infantry company and a mortar battery from the 92nd Motorized Brigade the first to abandon their positions.

²³ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 189-190, 192, 210-211, 223-224. Sekulic states, Before the beginning of Operation Storm, the Guard Brigade abandoned its combat mission on Dinara. It willfully abandoned Dinara and gathered at the barracks in Knin. That is where it was when Operation Storm began. Over the course of 4 August, the brigade was ordered to intervene with part of its forces in the zone of the 9th Brigade (15th Corps) in the Velebit hinterland [presumably the critical Mali Alan pass area]. That order was not carried out. Practically speaking the brigade did not participate in any of the fighting during Operation Storm . . . If the brigades of the Serbian Army of the Krajina (*Srpska Vojska Krajina*) were to be ranked according to what they did during the August aggression against the RSK, the Guard Brigade would be assigned the most shameful role. Besides its cowardice, it would rank highest among all the units of the Serbian Army of the Krajina in terms of the lack of discipline and refusal to carry out orders
Sekulic op. cit., pp 223-224.

²⁴ Sekulic seems to be exaggerating somewhat, based on a review of the information he provides, except in the case of the 1st Vrlika Light Infantry Brigade, which does appear to have almost completely collapsed, almost without an HV attack. Sekulic claims that it took the HV—probably the 126th Home Defense Regiment—24 hours to realize that the 1st Vrlika Brigade had abandoned its position. Sekulic also states that the commander of the 75th Motorized Brigade apparently disregarded a direct order from Mrksic late on 4 August to move a battalion to defend Knin. Sekulic op. cit., pp. 192-194.

Sekulic praises the 92nd Motorized Brigade—the former JNA 180th Motorized Brigade—indicating that it had routinely defeated the Croatians since 1991, and stating that it "would have fought the battle that was most critical to the RSK with honor and dignity, and with a willingness to lay down its life." He reports that the brigade had lost 420 killed and 1,500 wounded in action since the start of the conflict. Sekulic op. cit., p. 201.

²⁵ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 187-202.

General Kovacevic told Lieutenant Colonel Radic, the 7th Corps chief of staff, sometime early on 5 August that,

... the decision had been made "to evacuate the people to the Srb region, and then most likely to [Bosanski] Petrovac . . . then the military will be pulled out . . ." "If we do not do that immediately, we will be in an encirclement on the other side of Velebit and we will be destroyed, both us and the people. We must save lives."

Sekulic op. cit., p. 190.

In addition, Major General Dusan Loncar, Chief of the Main Staff, told the 15th Corps staff during a meeting with them late on the evening of 4 August that the RSK Supreme Defense Council had ordered the SVK Main Staff to move to Srb and that the Dalmatian population was to be evacuated because of the HV penetration to the outskirts of Knin. Loncar was particularly concerned that the 9th Motorized Brigade from the 15th Corps focus on defending Gracac to allow the evacuation of the Dalmatian population and was next going to Gracac with Colonel Milan Suput, the RSK Minister of Defense, to help oversee the defense. Loncar also ordered that the 15th Corps pull out its forces in a timely manner to avoid encirclement.

Sekulic op. cit., p. 206.

²⁶ Sekulic op. cit., p. 207.

²⁷ Sekulic op. cit., p. 209.

²⁸ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 234-235.

²⁹ Sekulic op. cit., p. 233. The 39th Corps chief of staff states that the entire corps reserve comprised three infantry companies, not including the 33rd Infantry Brigade facing the ARBiH 5th Corps.

³⁰ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 234-235.

³¹ Sekulic op. cit., p. 236.

³² Sekulic op. cit., pp. 236-238.

³³ See Sekulic's detailed description of the performance of the three brigades in the corps, as well as for a blow-by-blow account of Bulat's surrender of the 21st Corps.

³⁴ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 209-210, 211-214. The 70th Brigade had been augmented with a weak battle group from the KSJ prior to the HV attack. The battle group appears to have been comprised of a composite company with an infantry platoon, a tank platoon, and a mechanized platoon—52 "fighters," two tanks, two APCs, and a Praga self-propelled air defense vehicle with 30mm cannon. For the movements of the HV 1st Guards Brigade, see Volume I, Endnote 585.

³⁵ Based on the 15th Corps after-action report, Sekulic notes that the weakest cooperation in the corps was between the 50th and 70th Brigades. According to the 50th Brigade commander's after-action report, the 50th Brigade held a 67-kilometer front with 1,200 troops.

³⁶ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 206-207, 224-225. The commander of the 18th Infantry Brigade in the 15th Corps notes that the 15th Light Brigade was "completely routed" in the area around Zeljava, Licko Petrovo Selo, and Vaganac. The KSJ commitment of a few military police units to this area failed to halt the 502nd Brigade.

³⁷ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 222-227.

³⁸ Bosanac had a reputation as a strong-willed commander and apparently he and Novakovic had a disagreement over something, according to Sekulic, which led to Bosanac's relief. Sekulic op. cit., p. 216.

³⁹ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 221-223.

⁴⁰ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 215-216.

⁴¹ Sekulic op. cit., pp. 218-219, 226-227, 236.

⁴² Sekulic states that,

... the Special Unit Corps was intended to represent the creation of an operational-tactical component that could move very quickly throughout the entire western part of the RSK. Its existence solved the problem of reserves for the Main Staff of the

Serbian Army of the Krajina, since it could intervene in crisis areas of the theater of operations. The organization-formational structure of the company-battery and battalion-artillery battalion (*divizion*) components made it possible to split off parts of the Special Unit Corps and send them on missions with a greater level of autonomy. Thus, in specific regions individual components of the Special Unit Corps became part of other corps, where they remained until specific missions had been completed.

Sekulic op. cit., p. 223.

⁴³ Sekulic, op. cit., p. 227.

⁴⁴ Sekulic op. cit., p. 223.

Section II

Croatia 1991

Annex 1

The Organization and Arming of the Croatian Serbs 1988-1991

As Serbian President Milosevic continued to consolidate and expand his power in Serbia during the late 1980s, he also began to develop a base of support in the Serb communities in the Krajina and Eastern Slavonia regions of Croatia. One track of this covert operation provided assistance in organizing a Serb political party and a separate Serb political identity, making possible the formation and declaration of the Serb autonomous regions in Croatia during 1990 and 1991. Probably even more covert was the simultaneous program to organize, train and arm Serb personnel of the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs and Croatian Serb civilians at least as early as 1990. The size and scope of the effort, and conclusive evidence of the involvement of Milosevic's most senior advisers in orchestrating the operation, make it inconceivable that Milosevic himself did not order this action. To bypass Federal institutions, he used his own Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP), in particular the Serbian State Security Service (SDB) of the MUP. As Radmilo Bogdanovic, the Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs in 1990-1991, stated in 1995:

Thus we had ties with Martic, who was first commander of the police and then Minister of Internal Affairs. We extended help to enable them to . . . begin from nothing. It was the same way when people from the present day Serbian Republic, the then Bosnia-Herzegovina, turned to us. . . . We did our utmost to carry out, follow up, and ensure security for (the help) they sought and for that which Serbia and the Serbian people offered. There, that is what the Service did.¹

This subversive program—in contrast to that of the Croatians—appears to have gone undetected, or at least ignored, by JNA counterintelligence.² The SDB plan to create a viable Serb autonomous organization within Croatia appears to have had three interlocking

objectives: developing a reliable leader or leaders, organizing elite and reliable Croatian Serb combat units, and arming additional police reserves and local Territorial Defense (TO) and village guard units.

Key SDB and MUP Personalities and Roles³

The SDB/MUP program to arm the Croatian Serbs centered on four key people:

- Mihalj Kertes and Radmilo Bogdanovic, the two most senior Serbian officials directly involved in arming the Croatian Serbs, probably exercised political control over the operation. Once they had received their orders from Milosevic, they probably proceeded without much further reference or reporting to him. Kertes, one of Milosevic's most loyal subordinates, was a member of the Serbian Presidency from the late 1980s until early 1992.⁴ Bogdanovic served as Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs from May 1988 to May 1991, when he was relieved as a consequence of the brutality with which his police suppressed demonstrations in Belgrade.⁵ Despite his formal removal, he continued to exercise considerable influence over the ministry.
- Jovica Stanisic—later one of Milosevic's closest advisers—served as deputy chief of the SDB until 1991, when he was appointed its chief.⁶
- Franko “Frenki” Simatovic, as one of Stanisic's deputies, was the primary SDB liaison officer to the Croatian Serbs and exercised direct control over the SDB's hand-picked agents there.

Creating a Leader: Milan Martic

Milan Martic, a mid-level police inspector in 1990 in the Knin police station, appears to have been the man

the SDB chose to act as the military figurehead for the Croatian Serb revolt against Zagreb and as the counterpart to Milan Babic, the political figurehead of the revolt. Martic rose from obscurity in the summer and fall of 1990 during the first Serb uprisings against Zagreb's rule to become chief of the separatist Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs by January 1991. There is little chance someone with Martic's rank and experience could have achieved so much so quickly unless he was coached and supported by the SDB.

Milosevic's SDB liaison officers used Martic to subvert Croatian control of the Knin police and then create a Krajina Secretariat of Internal Affairs embracing the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina (SAO Krajina), formed in December 1990. Martic was to use his units and local SDB-armed village guard forces to consolidate military control over those ethnic Serb areas that were to be incorporated into the SAO Krajina. His first public act was to send a letter directly to the Federal Internal Affairs Ministry—bypassing his superiors in the Croatian MUP—notifying it that he and his personnel would refuse to wear new Croatian MUP uniforms and insignia.⁷ When the Croatian Internal Affairs Minister and his deputies came to Knin on 5 July to discuss the letter, it became clear to them that they had lost control of the Knin police to Martic and Serb nationalists.⁸

Martic took complete command in mid-August during the so-called "Log Revolution," which started the de facto Serb secession from Croatia. Clearly he and others had been working for some time to organize the Serb members of the police into units that he could command and activate at a moment's notice. His role was formally recognized on 4 January 1991 when the executive council of the recently declared Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina formed the Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs with Martic at its head.

The Serbian SDB worked with Martic in the Krajina well before the uprising there in August 1990. Franko Simatovic—"Frenki"—served as Stanisic's man on the ground in Knin throughout the 1990-1991 time frame and appears to have exercised direct command over Martic. Simatovic took part in organizing the uprising in Knin under the nom de guerre "Dragan

Simendic," possibly under cover as a journalist for the Socialist daily *Politika*.⁹ Simatovic may in fact have bypassed Martic at times and directly commanded the Krajina police force or at least key elements of it, and he directly controlled "Captain Dragan," the commander of Martic's "Kninjka" Special Police unit.

Formation of Elite Combat Units

The SDB, having prepared Martic to be the Krajina Serb military leader, formed for him an elite combat unit that was well-trained and reliable, augmented in 1991 by the new SDB (RDB) Special Operations Unit. At the same time, in Eastern Slavonia, the SDB was organizing the Serbian Volunteer Guard (SDG) under Zeljko Raznjatovic—"Arkan"—although the SDG did not come into prominence until full-scale war erupted in fall 1991.¹⁰ Martic's unit, nicknamed the "Kninjas" and commanded by Dragan Vasiljkovic,¹¹ more often known as "Captain Dragan," was formed as a special police unit, probably in mid-1990. It was first used openly in the August 1990 uprising as the professional core of Martic's forces when they consolidated Krajina Serb control first near Knin before moving into the northern Krajina's Banija region during spring and summer 1991. The unit was also heavily involved after full-scale war broke out in fall 1991, fighting both near Knin and in the Banija region.¹² In May 1991, the SDB—now renamed RDB—formed its Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za Specijalne Operacije*) at Golubic in the Krajina under Captain Dragan's command, but overseen by Frenki Simatovic. The unit operated jointly with the Kninjas.¹³ The SDB also appears to have worked with private Serbian banks and businessmen to finance Dragan (and probably other SDB activities).¹⁴

Formation of Police Reserves and the Territorial Defense

The formation of the "Kninjas" (and Arkan's SDG) was part of a two-level approach to arming the Croatian Serbs. The Kninjas—working with the

JSO—and the SDG were to serve as elite mobile units that could be shifted wherever they were needed. The second part of the SDB plan was to form police reserve units in the Krajina and arm them, along with the village guards, which were later formed into the SAO Krajina Territorial Defense.¹⁵ The latter groups would serve as static defense units for the ethnic Serb regions and provide the bulk of Serb manpower when the fighting escalated during spring and summer of 1991.

The police reserve units were first activated during the August 1990 uprising, but the arming of Serb villagers probably began some time before that.¹⁶ The local village guards were mobilized as the Territorial Defense under the new SAO Krajina in April 1991 and their command and control was consolidated by August 1991.¹⁷ The same evolution occurred in the SAO Western Slavonia and SAO Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem TO forces. The SDB worked closely with the Serbian Ministry of Defense, drawing older weapons from the Territorial Defense of the Republic of Serbia to arm the Krajina and East Slavonia village guards.¹⁸ These weapons included captured German small arms and US-made Thompson submachine guns supplied to Yugoslav partisans during World War II; some Thompsons may have dated from the 1950s. The weapons had been transferred to Serbia's TO stocks in the 1960s from the JNA. The TO also received light antitank weap-

ons, 60mm and 82mm mortars, and probably other infantry support weapons. In some areas the village guards and TO were able to use weapons captured from Croatian MUP police stations.¹⁹ It was probably not until after full-scale war broke out in September that the Krajina Serb TO began receiving large-scale assistance directly from the JNA.

TO forces in SAO Krajina were organized generally by municipalities, which had sufficient people to form a brigade-size force,²⁰ but in the summer of 1991 most SAO Krajina municipal TO headquarters probably were still struggling to organize as many as 300 or 400 men, about a battalion. By September 1991, however, most of these TO staffs probably had mobilized brigade-sized units, estimated at about 1,000 to 2,000 troops per municipality. In Western Slavonia and Eastern Slavonia-Baranja, the TO forces were more closely organized on the village, and the notional TO "brigade" structures in the outline below may not have existed. Instead, typical reporting identifies, for example, the "Brsadin TO," which was a battalion-sized unit raised from Brsadin and other hamlets nearby. These TO were little more than bands of armed civilians; few of the men had received any military training whatever and fewer still had any concept of discipline. JNA professional officers would come to loathe the often uncontrollable TO forces they encountered during their peacekeeping duties and in the fall 1991 fighting.

Chart 1

Organization of Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs, January 1991-December 1991

Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs (Headquarters: Knin)

Special Purpose Unit "Kninjas"

Knin Public Security Station

Benkovac Public Security Station

Obrovac Public Security Station

Gracac Public Security Station

Korenica Public Security Station

Vojnic Public Security Station (as of July 1991)

Vrginmost Public Security Station (as of July 1991)

Dvor na Uni Public Security Station

Glina Public Security Station (as of July 1991)

Kostajnica Public Security Station (as of August 1991)

Petrinja Public Security Station (as of September 1991)

Chart 2

Croatian Serb Territorial Defense Forces, November 1991²¹

SAO Krajina Territorial Defense Staff²²

1st Zone Staff for Dalmatia
Knin Municipality Staff
 Karin Territorial Defense Brigade
 Bukovica Territorial Defense Brigade
 Benkovac Municipality Staff
 Benkovac Territorial Defense Brigade
 Obrovac Municipality Staff
 Obrovac Territorial Defense Detachment

2nd Zone Staff for Lika²³
Korenica Municipality Staff
 Korenica Territorial Defense Brigade
 Plaski Territorial Defense Detachment
 Gracac Municipality Staff
 Gracac Territorial Defense Brigade
 Donji Lapac Municipality Staff
 Donji Lapac Territorial Defense Detachment

1st Sveti Rok Territorial Defense Brigade (Gospic)²⁴

3rd Zone Staff for Kordun and Banija Kordun Territorial Defense²⁵
Vojnic Municipality Staff
 Vojnic Territorial Defense Brigade
Vrginmost Municipality Staff
 Vrginmost Territorial Defense Brigade
Glina Municipality Staff
 Glina Territorial Defense Brigade
Kostajnica Municipality Staff
 Kostajnica Territorial Defense Brigade

Dvor na Uni Municipality Staff
Dvor na Uni Territorial Defense Brigade
Petrinja Municipality Staff
Petrinja Territorial Defense Brigade
Sisak Municipality Staff
Sisak Territorial Defense Brigade
Western Slavonia Zone Staff
Pakrac Municipality Staff
Pakrac Territorial Defense Brigade
Okucani Municipality Staff
Okucani Territorial Defense Brigade
Daruvar Municipality Staff
Daruvar Territorial Defense Detachment
Bilogora Territorial Defense Detachment
Jasenovac Municipality Staff
Jasenovac Territorial Defense Brigade
Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem Zone Staff
Serbian Volunteer Guard “Tigers” (Battalion)
Tenja Territorial Defense (Brigade)
Tenja Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Tenjski Antunovac Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Petrova Slatina Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Brsadin Territorial Defense²⁶ (Brigade)
Marinci Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Brsadin Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Pacetin Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Ostrovo Territorial Defense (Battalion)
Markusica Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Borovo Selo (Vukovar) Territorial Defense²⁷ (Brigade)

“Stari Jankovci” Territorial Defense (Brigade)²⁸

Nijemci Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Stari Jankovci Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Mirkovci Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Baranja Territorial Defense (Division)²⁹

Beli Manistir Territorial Defense (Brigade)

Beli Manistir Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Knezevi Vinogradni Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Bolman Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Knezevo Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Darda Territorial Defense (Brigade)

Darda Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Jagodnjak Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Bilje Territorial Defense (Battalion)

Endnotes, Annex 1

¹ "The Logistics of Service for the People's Will," Belgrade *Duga*, 7-20 Jan 95, p. 21. Radmilo Bogdanovic quoted in Paul Williams and Norman Cigar, *A Prima Facie Case for the Indictment of Slobodan Milosevic*, London: Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1996, p. 35.

² The JNA monitored the Croatian Serbs and their efforts to arm themselves, but there are no indications that the JNA fully realized the extent of the Serbian Government's involvement during 1990 and most of 1991. See Annex 5: "Kadijevic Indecisive: The JNA Fails to Stop Secession," in which the JNA reports its knowledge to the Federal Presidency of "illegal" weapon acquisitions and the formation of "illegal" military forces, including those of the Croatian Serbs. Likewise, except for a few instances where local commanders went beyond their authority to pass out arms, there are no indications that the JNA began arming the Croatian Serbs until full-scale war broke out between the JNA and Croatia in September 1991. On 13 July 1990, during a meeting between General Veljko Kadijevic and Serbian Federal presidency member Borisav Jovic, Jovic stated, "The Serbs in Croatia have begun to organize into partisan detachments. For now, that knowledge is based on statements by individuals. The Serbs in Serb opstinas have asked that TO weapons be turned over to them. I tell Veljko that that should have been done, *but he does not agree*," (emphasis added), suggesting that the JNA was not arming the Croatian Serbs during 1990. Jovic goes on to state that "They will get them on their own. And I believe that they already have some." Jovic may not have been fully cognizant of Milosevic's covert arming operation. Jovic entry for 13 July 1990.

³ The SDB, the State Security Service (Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti), was redesignated RDB, Department for State Security (Resor Drzavne Bezbednosti), in 1991. Mark Lopusina, "Stanisic More Dangerous Than Milosevic," Belgrade *Intervju* 9 May 1997, pp. 60-61.

⁴ Kertes followed his service on the presidency as chief of the Federal State Security Service in the Federal Internal Affairs Ministry for part of 1992, and later became head of Serbian Customs in August 1994 when Milosevic imposed sanctions on the Bosnian Serbs. This position is politically sensitive because of the substantial revenue generated for the government through customs duties.

⁵ Belgrade Tanjug 26 May 1988.

⁶ A Serbian magazine stated in 1997 that Jovica Stanisic was scheduled in 1989 to eventually take over the SDB, to which he was appointed chief in 1991. The article claims that Stanisic was close to Milorad Vucelic—a Milosevic adviser—and Mihalj Kertes. Kertes was the best friend of Jovica's brother. The article goes on to say:

During the reorganization of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia in 1991, Jovica Stanisic renamed the Secret Service, changing what used to be called the State Security Service (SDB) to the State Security Department (RDB). He hoped by this means to get rid of the connotations of the term "SDB," which had functioned exclusively as a political police force, and he tried to make the RDB a reputable service for fighting terrorists and armed Serbian enemies.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Yugoslav and the Serbian press connected Stanisic to the arrival of Captain Dragan in

Serbia and Krajina from Australia . . . to the activation of Simo Dubajic (a volunteer/paramilitary commander). . . and even Zeljko Raznatovic—Arkan . . . Stanisic used to go to the Knin Krajina personally, with his driver and a bodyguard. Some inspectors say, jokingly, that he went there to visit his in-laws and a weekend house he has there.

Mark Lopusina, "Stanisic More Dangerous Than Milosevic," Belgrade *Intervju* 9 May 1997, pp. 60-61.

⁷ Silber and Little, p. 98.

⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 6 July 1990; See Silber and Little, pp. 98-100 for a description of the meeting.

⁹ Zorica Vulic, "Franko Simatovic, a 'Red Beret,'" Belgrade Glas Javnosti 11 Nov 2000, p. 4; Dragoljub Petrovic, "Belgrade's Soft Hand," Belgrade *Nasa Borba* 6 June 1995, p. 8. SRS leader Seselj—who had intimate dealings with the SDB and MUP in 1991—stated in 1993 that Simatovic was in charge of secret contacts with Martic. Marko Lopusina, "The Serbian Police Are Being Cleaned Up," Belgrade *Intervju* 26 November 1993, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the SDG see Annex 17: "Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations: The Road to Vukovar."

¹¹ Captain Dragan was considered a charismatic commander. Born in Belgrade, he spent much of his life in Australia, where he may have served in the Australian Army. In addition (or alternatively) he is reported to have served in the French Foreign Legion. Dragan's real name is not known for certain, but he has been identified as Dragan Vasiljkovic and, as recounted below, by other names.

The Belgrade daily *Borba* today deals with the enigmatic Captain Dragan, commander of Special Units in the Serbian Autonomous Region (SAO) of Krajina in the Republic of Croatia, western Yugoslavia. He is credited with superior achievements in training and commanding the Krajina units in their clashes with the Croatian Armed Forces . . . The true name of Capt. Dragan was kept secret, but Borba at last came out with the claim that the man is Zivojin Vasiljkovic, 40, in all likelihood a Belgrader who as a child left Yugoslavia for Australia with his parents. Leaving in suspense those curious to know whether he is a Serbian patriot or a mercenary paid by Serbian emigres, the paper wonders whether 'CAP D' is a "veteran legionary, a retired officer of the Australian Military Academy, a businessman or a Yugoslav People's Army Intelligence Colonel." Belgrade Tanjug 15 August 1991.

Some accounts claim Dragan's real name is "Daniel Sneden": The real name of Captain Dragan, until recently the chief instructor of the special units of the Army of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina, is Daniel Sneden. He was born in Belgrade and is no kind of criminal, as he has been described in some newspapers, but a top military expert. This was stated at this afternoon's news conference for domestic and foreign journalists by Milan Martic, Internal Affairs Minister of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina. Belgrade Radio 13 August 1991.

¹² The "Kninjas" operations during 1990-1991 (before JNA intervention in September 1991) included:

- Operation Golubic Kub Knina (Dove for Knin)—August 1990, the "Log Revolution"
- Plitvice Lakes—March 1991
- Operation Zoaka (Stinger)—July 1991, Serb takeover of the town of Glna
- Operation Dvor na Una—July 1991, Serb takeover of the town of Dvor na Una.

¹³ Captain Dragan states that the JSO was actually formed from the Kninjas. It is possible that the Kninjas were split into two units with the JSO absorbing non-Krajina residents from Serbia and probably Bosnia while the Kninjas retained the Krajina Serbs. Vz Cvijic, "Minister's Resignation and Frenki's Return," Belgrade *Danas* 19 November 2001, p. 5, an interview with Captain Dragan; "A Career: Milorad Legija Uleme—a Legionnaire-Politician," Belgrade *Beta* 21 November 2001, includes portions of an interview with Legija, the deputy commander of the SDG and late JSO commander; Milan Galovic, "Red Berets' Decline Making Arrests for Hague Tribunal," Belgrade *Politika* 11 November 2001, p. 9. Dobrila Gajic-Glisic, an official during 1990-1991 in the Serbian Ministry of Defense—which controlled the Serbian Territorial Defense and was used by the SDB as a source of weapons and other resources—stated that Captain Dragan had returned to Yugoslavia at the behest of the State Security Service, and that he worked for both Radmilo Bogdanovic and Jovica Stanisic. She also stated that Captain Dragan's force was trained by special police from Serbia's Ministry of Internal Affairs. Dobrila Gajic-Glisic, *The Serbian Army: From the Minister of Defense's Office*, Cacak: Marica and Tomo Spasojevic, 1992, pp. 101-102, p. 106 cited in Paul Williams and Norman Cigar, *A Prima Facie Case for the Indictment of Slobodan Milosevic*, London: Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1996.

Other paramilitary/volunteer commanders—after falling out with Milosevic's government—have also affirmed that Bogdanovic and the SDB, through Simatovic, commanded Dragan. Vojislav Seselj stated in 1993 that Captain Dragan personally served Radmilo Bogdanovic. Miroslav Mikuljanac and Cvijetin Milivojevic, "I Will Travel to the Hague With Milosevic," Belgrade *Borba* 13-14 November 1993, pp. 10-11, an interview with Vojislav Seselj. Dragoslav Bokan, leader of the White Eagles volunteers, in 1991 stated that the "Red Berets (Captain Dragan's unit) are Franko Simatovic's people under the command of Mihalj Kertes." Dejan Anastasijevic, "Plucking the Feathers of the Eagles," Belgrade *Vreme* 22 November 1993, pp. 20-21. An interview with Dragoslav Bokan, leader of the White Eagles.

In fact, Dragan has publicly admitted on a number of occasions his debt to Bogdanovic and acknowledged that his success was attributable to Bogdanovic and the police, while also praising Frenki Simatovic's role in directing the JSO. The close links between the SDB/MUP, Captain Dragan, and the Serbian Ministry of Defense during 1990-1991 are also apparent in public statements from Captain Dragan in November 1991 after he returned to Belgrade following a dispute with Babic. Dragan states, "I am active in the training of a special purposes unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) of Serbia. I will work with units of the Territorial Defense attached to the Ministry of Defense of Serbia in Bubanj Potok . . ." Belgrade Tanjug 7 November 1991; see also Belgrade Tanjug 13 August 1991. The "special purposes unit" presumably was the JSO.

¹⁴ Dafina Milanovic of Dafiment Bank "reportedly equipped 500 Knin special troops led by Captain Dragan Vasiljkovic." Svetlana Vasovic, "Perfidious Resourcefulness," Ljubljana *Mladina* 17 May 1994, pp. 37-38.

¹⁵ The SDB/MUP apparently decided that Belgrade needed to exercise even closer control over the "Territorial Defense of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem," probably because of its close proximity to Serbia. Thus, a Serbian Special Police commander, Radovan Stojicic-Badza, was appointed to command the TO in this area. Stojicic's effectiveness and reliability had been proven in 1989 when he commanded the Special Police in Kosovo during heightened unrest and Serbian suspension of Kosovar autonomy in 1989. Belgrade *Beta* 16 April 1997; Belgrade Radio 7 December 1991. As noted above, there are also indications that Stojicic was also involved in the Knin uprising. Stojicic exercised direct control over Arkan's SDG in the 1991 eastern Slavonia fighting and coordinated the TO and SDG operations with the JNA. Stojicic reportedly fought in Bosnia in command of Serbian Special Police. He was then appointed to head Serbia's regular police as Assistant Serbian Internal Affairs Minister. Together with Stanisic, he was one of Milosevic's closest advisers. After his assassination in 1997, Arkan, Stanisic, and Milosevic attended his funeral. Belgrade VIP News Service 14 April 1997.

¹⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 17 August 1990.

¹⁷ "The Executive Council today also endorsed an order by Milan Babic to mobilize the Territorial Defenses and the units of volunteers in the municipalities which decided to join Krajina." Belgrade Tanjug 1 April 1991.

During a meeting of the Government of the SAO Krajina in August 1991:

...the conclusion was reached to establish a unified system of Krajina's Territorial Defense as the armed forces of Krajina and as a part of the unified system of armed forces of the SFRY. The decision of the Defense Minister to regulate the system of Territorial Defense was adopted; this calls for subordinating opština Territorial Defense command centers of Knin, Benkovac, Obrovac, Gracac, Donji Lapac, and Korenica and the zonal Territorial Defense command centers for Kordun and Banija to the Krajina Territorial Defense command center and to regulate Territorial Defense command centers according to regulations issued by the JNA General Staff.

The Internal Affairs Minister and Defense Minister are commissioned to determine the numerical structure, equipment, purpose, and structural status of special purpose units. The announcement also stated that insignia has been adopted for members of Territorial Defense units to be worn on the left sleeve (The Kosovo shield, crossed swords, the Serbian tricolor, and the name Krajina).

Internal Affairs Minister Milan Martic has been appointed deputy Territorial Defense commander and a member of the Krajina Territorial Defense command center responsible for police units. C. C., "Creation of Larger Defense Structures," Belgrade *Borba* 21 August 1991, p. 10.

¹⁸ Arkan—an SDB operative—was arrested in 1990 for smuggling arms to the Krajina Serbs, but reportedly was released as a result of pressure from Bogdanovic. Dada Vujasinovic, "Secret File on Arkan: Early Jobs, Paths of Revolution, and Parliamentary Rehabilitation: Pedagogic Poem," Belgrade *Duga* 30 January 1993-12 February 1993, pp. 16-21. For a detailed discussion of Arkan's work for the SDB, see Annex 17: "Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations—The Road to Vukovar."

¹⁹ Ante Barisic, "We Do Not Have the Forces For War," Zagreb *Danas* 16 July 1991, pp. 18-19.

²⁰ The municipal TO units were redesignated as brigades late in 1991.

²¹ The order of battle for the SAO Krajina Territorial Defense is drawn from Milisav Sekulic, *Knin je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, pp. 34-35. The authorized manpower for the SAO Krajina TO Staff was

380 personnel, the regional zone staff HQ was 180 personnel, the municipality staffs 190 personnel, a TO brigade 1,428 personnel, and a TO detachment 428 personnel. Total authorized manpower for the SAO Krajina TO in November 1991 was 24,410 personnel.
²² Centralized staff command formed in August 1991 to control the Krajina TO, 6th Lika Division, Kordun TO, and 7th Banija Division regional headquarters. The Western and Eastern Slavonia TO regional staffs remained separate and nominally subordinate to the political leadership of the Serbian Autonomous Regions in both Western Slavonia and Eastern Slavonia-Baranja-Western Srem. After mid-September, all TO commands came under the operational control of the JNA.

²³ This was the former 6th Lika Shock Division.

²⁴ This brigade had an authorized strength of 2,600 personnel.

Milisav Sekulic, *Knin je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)* Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, p. 34.

²⁵ This included the former 7th Banija Shock Division.

²⁶ The “Brsadin TO” referred to here—which later became the 40th Infantry Brigade of the Krajina Serb Army (SVK) may not have been a brigade-sized headquarters in 1991, but instead a number of independent battalion-size units from local villages. Thus, this “Brsadin TO” probably actually included the Brsadin village TO, Pacetin village TO, Ostrovo village TO, and Marinici village TO.

²⁷ The Borovo Selo TO may have been similar to the “Brsadin TO” described above and probably comprised the Borovo Selo village TO, Bobota village TO, and Trpinja village TO.

²⁸ It is unclear whether a municipal TO formation so designated existed. However, there were a number of TO formations that were probably battalion-sized, such as the Sotin village TO and the Mirkovci village TO, from the villages south of Vukovar. These were later grouped into the 45th Infantry Brigade of the SVK.

²⁹ Equivalent to a TO division or sub-regional headquarters.

Annex 2

The Organizing of the Croatian Government Forces May 1990-April 1991

The new Croatian Government under President Tudjman inaugurated on 30 May 1990 faced the daunting task of building up a military force without enough weapons to arm it. Prior to Tudjman's inauguration, the JNA had confiscated the entire Republic Territorial Defense (TO) stock of weapons, beginning on 16-17 May (at the same time that it attempted to seize the weapons of the better-prepared Slovenian TO).¹ While they searched for foreign weapons suppliers willing to provide arms to a non-national government, the Croatians turned to the only internal institution left with arms in Croatia—the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP)—to equip their nascent armed force. The arming of the MUP led to the creation of the National Guard Corps (ZNG) and eventually the Croatian Army (HV).

Organizational Overview

The MUP in May 1990 had only a single armed unit—a special operations/antiterrorist force about the size of a company—and a total of 15,000 rifles (or possibly a combination of that many rifles and pistols).² From this unpromising base, the Croatians embarked on a three-step program to turn the MUP into an army. First, they began recruiting to enlarge the regular public security police force, both to reduce and dilute the presence of ethnic Serbs in the force and to expand the Croatian security presence in Serb areas through the establishment of new police stations. Second, the MUP established training centers which produced “special units” that became in effect military formations. Finally, the MUP began to expand its police reserve units at the regional level. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense—with no more units to direct after the loss of the Territorial Defense—began recruiting company-size volunteer units as well as unarmed volunteer guards. All of these formations—

except the original national antiterrorist unit—were used to create the National Guard Corps (ZNG) in May and June 1991. As soon as its combat units had been transferred to the ZNG, the MUP started all over again to form additional special police units to supplement the ZNG.

Organization and Training of the MUP Regular Police

The Public Security Service of the MUP—the regular police—were divided among county-level “police administrations,” one for each of Croatia’s twenty-one counties (*zupanija*). The police administrations’ regular police units were then subdivided into one public security station per municipality. By January 1991 the regular police had been enlarged by at least 3,000 personnel to between 15,000 and 20,000. By bringing additional ethnic Croatians into the regular force, the Croatian Government hoped both to decrease the number of Serbs in absolute and percentage terms and to move Croatian personnel into police stations in Serb territory.³ To upgrade its personnel, the MUP established as many as five training centers, several of which were colocated with special police battalions.⁴

Organization and Training of the MUP Special Police, Summer 1990-Spring 1991

The Croatian Special Police units—organized into battalions or battalion-sized units—appear to have numbered 3,000 troops by December 1990. The MUP probably began planning for the new special police force in June or July 1990 and began recruiting in September or October. The Special Police appear to have included formations directly subordinate to MUP headquarters and some units directly subordinate to

the regional police administrations. The formation and activities of the Rakitje Special Police Battalion “Tigers”—one of the units directly subordinate to MUP headquarters and which later served as the nucleus for the ZNG/HV 1st Guards Brigade—will serve to illustrate how the MUP went about creating the special police units.

In fall 1990 the Croatian MUP sent several hundred volunteers ostensibly for police training to the “Simunski” police training center. About 250 of these volunteers were then told off into a battalion and sent to a raw new center in Rakitje, just west of Zagreb, for an entirely different and secret purpose. With no experience in organizing a military unit, few facilities for military training, and neither cadre nor non-commissioned officers to help them, their officers started out with the basics, creating a training plan that began and continued with a strong focus on physical fitness—a virtual necessity since early firearms training had to be conducted with a minimum of weapons and an absence of firing ranges. Other basic elements of military organization and practice included morning reveille and formation for the raising of the Croatian colors and the playing of the national anthem, and the command staff gradually lengthened training time and the length of the workday to something like military dimensions. By December of 1990 the battalion had come far enough to be organized into four companies and designated a special military formation within the police force, and its staff began to develop contingency planning for the defense of Zagreb. By January 1991, the unit had drawn in more volunteers, including some from Bosnia, and numbered more than 300 personnel. To preserve the fiction that these were policemen and not members of an illegal paramilitary formation, the special police had to take the same MUP exam required for the regular police. But the battalion was beginning to drill and train regularly with the weapons the MUP was buying abroad, including Armbrust antitank rockets. The training facilities, however, remained rudimentary.

In January 1991, as the threat of JNA intervention against the Croatian Government grew, the battalion began providing around-the-clock guard service at key government buildings. Elements of the battalion

also helped escort secret arms shipments coming into Croatia from abroad. Contingency planners also gave the unit the assignment of defending the western part of Zagreb against a drive on the city by the JNA armored brigade stationed in Jastrebarsko. It saw its first action in February 1991 when—in conjunction with the Lucko Antiterrorist Unit (Lucko ATJ)—it successfully moved into the town of Pakrac in western Slavonia to evict armed Serbs who had taken over the local police station. The Pakrac operation dispelled any illusions the Croatian commanders might have that they would or could function as policemen, not soldiers. The 200 riot shields the battalion took to Pakrac proved useless against the automatic weapons wielded by their Serb opponents. The battalion’s final operation as a police formation in March—the “battle” at Plitvice Lakes—underlined the combat nature of its future work and foreshadowed its emergence as a fully military element of the National Guard Corps.⁵

During the first two weeks in May, the last stage in the transformation of all the MUP Special Police battalions into military units began. The MUP created its first higher-level formation, the Special Police Brigade, combining the four Special Police battalions in the Zagreb area. The new brigade, however, would never see action under this title as two weeks later it underwent a further transformation into the 1st Brigade of the National Guard Corps.⁶

Organization of the MUP Reserve Police

Little information on the structure of the MUP reserve police has emerged since 1991, although its organization can roughly be discerned from the ZNG successor formations. It appears that the MUP organized reserve formations for almost every regional police administration. The MUP probably began organizing the reserve units sometime during fall of 1990 and, by June 1991, may have had as many as 10,000 personnel organized into about 16 battalion-sized formations and 10 company-sized units, although a sizable portion of this total probably lacked

weapons. For example, in the Zupanja municipality (opština), volunteers for apparent MUP reserve units began to organize in late October 1990.⁷ MUP reserve personnel probably were recruited primarily from among politically reliable police reservists, along with men selected from TO lists and from Tudjman's political party, the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ). It is unlikely these units saw much, if any, action before they were incorporated into the ZNG in June 1991, although many did deploy to wartime locations during the January 1991 confrontation between the JNA and the Croatian Government.

Federal estimates of the size of the Croatian MUP reserve appear to have been consistently overestimated. The SSUP report noted in the endnotes states that on 31 May 1990 there were 10,589 personnel on the MUP reserve list, while between mid-October 1990 and 10 January 1991 the number of reservists increased to 22,865, and by 21 January it increased by another 9,327 members for a total estimate of some 45,000 personnel on its rosters at the end of January. Borisav Jovic in his notes claims that on 25 January 1991, during the JNA-Croatian confrontation over the Croatian "paramilitary" forces and weapons shipments, that the Croatians had mobilized 50,000 "reserve" policemen. Although the SSUP report showing the reserves on 31 May probably is accurate, it almost certainly includes Serbian reservists whom the Croatians obviously intended either to purge or leave inactive. In addition, the increases which both the SSUP and Jovic claim are probably exaggerated. The first chief of the HV Main Staff, General Anton Tus, stated in 1996 that in late May the Croatians had "only a few thousand" personnel in the MUP in addition to the ZNG; this number would have included MUP reservists since they had not yet been transferred to the ZNG. The Croatian MUP reserve units and MoD volunteer troops probably numbered about 7,000 by December 1990-January 1991. Some of the discrepancies in MUP and ZNG personnel estimates probably can be attributed to personnel added to MUP rosters as individuals but who had not received weapons or been organized into a unit.⁸ It seems clear from descriptions of the newly formed ZNG reserve units that they were expanded from original MUP reserve units to which were added unorganized

reservists drawn from the MUP general reserve roster. The 114th Split Brigade, for example, reportedly placed most of its armed personnel, comprising the MUP reserve unit, into a single battalion, implying that the brigade's other battalions were formed from something other than a MUP reserve unit.⁹

Organization of the Ministry of Defense and Volunteer Units, August 1990-April 1991

The Croatian Ministry of Defense, having lost the weapons stocks of the Territorial Defense to the JNA, had little to do with the organization of Croatian military forces until Colonel-General Martin Spegelj, a retired JNA officer, became Minister of Defense on 24 August 1990. Spegelj appears to have made the acquisition of foreign weapons an immediate top priority, although the MoD does not seem to have begun to create new military units to replace the TO until late in the year.

Despite the loss of the TO weapons, the MoD retained its pre-confiscation municipal defense offices—"Secretariats for National Defense"—throughout Croatia. These had previously been responsible for maintaining the TO weapons depots and the mobilization rosters necessary to call up recruits and reservists in each area. These offices provided the MoD with an organizational framework with which to organize men into new units if weapons could be found for them.¹⁰

The MoD first began to organize some company-sized volunteer units in August 1990, in the aftermath of the Serb uprising in Knin. The evolution of a company in Zagreb probably is a good example of how things proceeded. On 17 August 1990, Zvonimir Cervenko, the Chief of the Zagreb City Secretariat for National Defense, summoned the city's district defense secretariat chiefs to a meeting to discuss the organization of Zagreb's defenses.¹¹ About 10 days after this meeting, 10 people from the Podsused Secretariat—one of Zagreb's districts—met secretly

to discuss the organization of a volunteer company. On 9 September the unit began forming. The people involved recruited only individuals they knew to be reliable. The unit set up an alert system and established protected hidden mobilization sites; few written records were kept for security reasons. (See Figure 1 below.) The company initially consisted of about 60 personnel and coordinated its activities with the city secretariat and also the MUP's Rakitje Special Police Battalion. By November 1990, the company was fully officered, had been issued weapons (though its antitank weapons were limited to Molotov cocktails and some mines), and its soldiers had begun training on the few weapons they had. The company made its public debut in January 1991, after the JNA threatened to disarm the Croatian "paramilitaries," when it deployed with a Special Police unit to guard the western approaches to the city, including key bridges and tunnels. The company did not see combat until after the outbreak of war in fall 1991, when it had probably been transferred to the ZNG.¹²

Another example of a locally organized MoD force was in the Virovitica area where the local municipality (opstina) assembly formed a staff to organize armed

detachments throughout the municipality in coordination with the MoD. The units were organized into territorial platoons equipped with home-made weapons and some automatic rifles. By December 1990, Virovitica had about 550 personnel available to guard key facilities. During the tension with the JNA in January 1991, the volunteer units reportedly surrounded local JNA garrisons and blocked approaches to the city.¹³

By March 1991, still plagued by a lack of weapons, the MoD began to organize unarmed local "National Protection Councils" whose immediate purpose seems to have been something like a "neighborhood watch" to guard key facilities.¹⁴ General Spegelj stated at the time that they had a "Gandhi-like mission" to bring masses of unarmed citizens into the streets and around bridges and city approaches to deter the JNA from overthrowing their government.¹⁵ Although this seems unrealistic, the organization of manpower—even without weapons—would allow the ZNG and HV to group these "National Protection" units into real combat units once weapons became available in fall 1991.

Chart 1

Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs County Police Administrations and Training Centers

Zagreb Police Administration

Krapina-Zagorje Police Administration

Sisak Police Administration

Karlovac Police Administration

Varazdin Police Administration

Koprivnica-Krizevci Police Administration

Bjelovar Police Administration

Rijeka Police Administration

Gospic Police Administration

Virovitica Police Administration

Pozega Police Administration

Slavonski Brod Police Administration

Zadar Police Administration

Sibenik Police Administration

Osijek Police Administration

Vukovar Police Administration

Vinkovci Police Administration

Split Police Administration

Pula Police Administration

Dubrovnik Police Administration

Cakovec Police Administration

“Simunska” Education and Training Center (Zagreb)

“Rakitje” Education and Training Center/Center for Training of Special Units, Rakitje

“Kumrovec” Education and Training Center

“Pionirski Grad” Education and Training Center (Zagreb)

“Valbadon” Education and Training Center/Center for Police Training (Pula)¹⁶

Chart 2

Special Police Units Directly Subordinate to Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs HQ—December 1990-May 1991

Anti-terrorist Unit Lucko—pre-war formation

Rakitje Battalion “Tigers”—formed July/August 1990^{17 18}

Kumrovec Battalion—formed July/August 1990

Dubrava Battalion—formed by December 1990

Tuskanac Battalion “Cobras”—formed by December 1990

Chart 3

Croatian Reserve Police Units May 1991 (Assessed)

Zagreb Police Administration

- 4 battalion-size units
- 3 company-sized units

Krapina Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Varazdin Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Bjelovar Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit
- 1 company-size unit

Virovitica Police Administration

- 1 company-size unit

Osijek Police Administration

- 2 battalion-size units

Slavonski Brod Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Vinkovci Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Karlovac Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Rijeka Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Zadar Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Sibenik Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Split Police Administration

- 1 battalion-size unit

Cakovec Police Administration

- 1 company-size unit

Sisak Police Administration

- 3 company-size units

Dubrovnik Police Administration

- 1 company-size unit

Pozega Police Administration

- 1 company-size unit

Figure 1
Text of “The Oldest Order Preserved”
—Podsused Volunteer Company¹⁹

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
ZAGREB-SUSEDGRAD 2 OCTOBER 1990
ORDER**

1. THE PODSUSED INDEPENDENT COMPANY

IN THE EVENT OF JNA AGGRESSION AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, THE CITY OF ZAGREB, AND THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT, AFTER RECEIVING THE ORDER TO BEGIN ARMED COMBAT, CARRY OUT THIS COMBAT ORDER.

IN THE ZONE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PODSUSED COMPANY, WITHIN THE BORDERS OF DONJI JAREK (INCLUSIVE) AND THE JANKOMIR BRIDGE (INCLUSIVE), JNA FORCES CAN BE EXPECTED

—FROM THE DIRECTION OF JASTREBARSKI

AN ARMORED BATTALION TOWARD THE PODSUSED AND JANKOMIR BRIDGE

—FROM THE DIRECTION OF BREZICE

AN ARMORED-MECHANIZED BATTALION TOWARD THE BRIDGE ON THE KREPINI-PODSUSED RIVER

—THE AREA OF JAGODISTE AND GORNJI JAREK, AN AIR ASSAULT.

THE GOAL OF THE ENEMY STRIKE IS TO LIQUIDATE THE LEADERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND ESTABLISH SERBIAN AUTHORITY.

ON THE BASIS OF WHAT IS ORDERED ABOVE THE FOLLOWING HAS BEEN DECIDED:

THE PODSUSED INDEPENDENT COMPANY, REINFORCED BY RAKITIJA SPECIAL POLICE, WILL OCCUPY POSITIONS TO DEFEND THE FOLLOWING:

1ST PLATOON: ESTABLISH POSITIONS AND PREPARE FOR DEFENSE IN GORNJI JAREK UP TO THE BOLONJA TUNNEL.

2ND PLATOON: THE PODSUSED BRIDGE ON THE OLD SAMOBOR-BUKOVINC ROAD

3RD PLATOON: THE JUGORAPID-FACTORY—THE JANKOMIR BRIDGE

CARRY OUT ALL PREPARATIONS, BUT DO NOT ACT WITHOUT AN ORDER FROM THE CITY SECRETARIAT FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE IN RAKITIJA. SECRETARY OF THE SUSEDGRAD SNO, Z. PRPIC

Endnotes, Annex 2

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 17 May 1990.

² Silber and Little, p. 107.

³ Belgrade Tanjug 14 August 1990; See also Silber and Little, p. 146, footnote 4.

⁴ Belgrade *Politika* 21 April 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 14 August 1990.

⁵ Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16. See also an interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic, a founding member of the "Tigers" in Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting for Croatia" *Hrvatski Obzor* 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29.

⁶ Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16. The 1st Guards Brigade.

⁷ Zlatko Djurjevic, "On to Freedom With Patriotism and Courage," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 16 July 1993, p. 18.

⁸ This is based on an estimate of about 500 personnel per battalion-sized unit and 150 per independent company-sized unit. The number of battalions and companies is based on the assessment that each battalion was, on transfer to the ZNG, activated as a brigade and that each independent company was activated as an independent battalion. Thus, identifying the number of ZNG formations in June/July 1991 permitted an assessment of police reserve formations.

Information from the SSUP report is drawn from Slobodan Milosevic, "The Croatian Army: The Laundering of Weapons," *Nin* 7 June 1991, p. 35. Jovic entry for 25 January 1991.

The Special Police had an estimated force of 3,000, while MUP reservists and volunteer MoD units are estimated at about 7,000 personnel as of December 1990.

⁹ *Velebit* 21 February 1997, p. 14.

¹⁰ Vesna Puljak, "Born in the Underground," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 12.

¹¹ Cervenko later became Chief of the Croatian Army General Staff in spring 1995.

¹² Vesna Puljak, "Born in the Underground," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 12.

¹³ Zlatko Djurjevic, "On to Freedom With Patriotism and Courage," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 16 July 1993, p. 18.

¹⁴ Gordan Lasic, "A Symbol of Croatian Victory—The 125th Brigade," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 12.

¹⁵ Zagreb Danas 26 March 1991 pp. 11-13.

¹⁶ "Simunski" may have been able to train up to 2,000 recruits. It appears to have been the basic induction center for the Croatian MUP.

"Rakitje" reportedly had space to train 350 personnel.

"Kumrovec" reportedly had space to train 600 personnel.

"Pionirski Grad" reportedly had space to train 600 personnel.

"Valbadon" reportedly had space to train 750 personnel.

Belgrade *Politika* 21 April 1991.

¹⁷ The battalions in bold face formed the Special Brigade of the MUP in early May 1991.

¹⁸ Each battalion is estimated to have had 250 to 300 personnel.

¹⁹ Taken from Vesna Puljak, "Born in the Underground," *Hrvatski Vojnik*, 13 August 1993, p. 12.

Annex 3

Croatia Creates An Army: The National Guard Corps, May-September 1991

By spring 1991 the Croatian Government was ready to move forward to the next phase in its development of armed forces, moving ever closer to the overt creation of a "Croatian Army" through the formation of the National Guard Corps (ZNG). In the earlier phases of Croatian rearmament the MUP played the key role, but now the Croatian MoD became the focal point for Croatian military development efforts. The MUP, however, was still the only Croatian armed force active in the escalating series of military confrontations with the Croatian Serbs. On 10 April 1991 President Tudjman's State Supreme Council—equivalent to the US National Security Council—announced that the MUP "Special Purpose Force, in order to acquire a more suitable organization and training, were placed under the Defense Ministry as a special formation, the National Guard Corps."¹ On 18 April, the Croatian parliament passed into law the bills submitted by Tudjman's government to establish the ZNG. The law prescribed that the ZNG would deal with "the defense of the state borders of Croatia, will defend its territorial integrity, and prevent terrorist operations in the Republic."

Formation

President Tudjman himself administered the oath of service to newly transferred former special police units at the Zagreb soccer stadium on 28 May 1991, formally establishing the ZNG. At its birth the ZNG consisted of four active-duty brigades drawn from the Special Police and a special operations battalion formed by a cadre of former French Foreign Legionnaires serving with the Special Police. The total force numbered probably about 3,000 to 4,000 troops, as measured by earlier Special Police totals.² These formations were to form the backbone of first the ZNG and then the Croatian Army (HV)

throughout the 1991-1995 wars. The brigades were often split up in company- and battalion-sized elements during the first year of their existence to give professional stiffening and support to local MUP and reserve ZNG units. From June to September 1991, the ZNG Guards brigades were the only Croatian units fully equipped with small arms, though they continued to lack heavy weapons. For antitank weapons they had only hand-held antitank rocket launchers, notably the "Armbrusts" purchased abroad. The Guards brigades are estimated to have had about 2,000 personnel each, for a total of 8,000, by July 1991.³

Expansion

In early June the Croatian MUP began transferring police reserve units to the ZNG to provide it with territorially organized reserve brigades and independent battalions.⁴ The order to form most of these new units was issued on 28 June and went into effect on 2 July.⁵ (See Chart 1) Most of these formations, however, were desperately short of small arms and had virtually no antitank weapons or mortars. A nominal brigade, therefore, was probably able to field no more than one armed battalion, and the independent battalions only about a company of men, and many of these would have only hunting rifles and home-made hand grenades. For example, the 57th Independent Sisak Battalion in June had 60 hunting rifles and 40 automatic rifles, while the 114th Split Brigade had only 620 rifles—mostly M-48 Yugoslav copies of German WW II bolt action rifles—by the end of July. The 114th reportedly spent most of its first two months searching for weapons and uniforms.⁶ The organization of some "brigades" at the time also provides some indication of the ZNG's ability to equip its personnel. The 112th Zadar Brigade in July was organized into one active-duty company and four reserve companies, rather than

battalions.⁷ The ZNG reserve units probably had some 40,000 personnel more or less organized by July 1991, but probably less than half of these were armed.⁸ The reserve units would not begin receiving sufficient weapons and equipment until the latter half of September 1991, after the Croatians began capturing large numbers of JNA barracks and depots, which contained most of the weapons for the former Republic TO. Although their lack of experience, weapons, discipline, and training limited the combat value of the ZNG reserve brigades, they were to provide the bulk of Croatian manpower when the fighting with Serb forces escalated during July and August 1991 and in the first days of full-scale war with the JNA in mid-September.

Post-ZNG Organization of New MUP Special Police

The formation of the ZNG left the MUP with a single combat unit, the Lucko ATJ, so it began recruiting new active-duty Special Police companies for each police administration. Some of these units were later expanded to battalion size, although many of them included reservists as well. Like their predecessors, the new Special Police units would receive good training and equipment and would join with the ZNG Guards Brigades in spearheading Croatian ground operations throughout the 1991 war.⁹ The new Special Police probably numbered 2,000 to 3,000 active duty troops by August 1991, possibly reinforced by another 4,000 to 7,000 reservists.¹⁰

Creation of the ZNG Command and National Command and Control

On 3 July 1991, President Tudjman appointed a new Defense Minister, Sime Djordan, and made former Defense Minister General Spegelj the new commander of the ZNG, with former Yugoslav Air Force Colonel Imra Agotic as his chief of staff. Prior to this, the ZNG field units appear to have reported directly to the Ministry of Defense. Command and control over both MUP and ZNG forces, however, remained difficult with insufficient regional and local command structures in place to exercise authority

over ill-disciplined troops—particularly the ZNG reservists—involved in chaotic situations. Coordination at the local level reportedly was particularly poor, and lack of consultation among many regular MUP, ZNG, and Special Police in Serb-dominated areas made it virtually impossible for the Croatians to mass their limited forces in sufficient number to take on Croatian Serb forces.

The Croatian Supreme State Council on 17 July ordered the formation of a national-level Crisis Staff with subordinate regional and municipal crisis staffs to coordinate political, ZNG, and police activities throughout the country.¹¹ The crisis staffs were not true military command structures, but rather highly politicized bodies often subservient to local HDZ officials who often had neither the military experience nor the authority to command MUP and ZNG combat units. Few of them coordinated their activities with the national crisis staff in Zagreb with any regularity. Despite several changes in leadership, the national staff proved unable to exert authority over the regional staffs, and labored in vain from June through August to develop a sound national defense plan.

General Spegelj's resignation on 3 August further disrupted the Croatian command system, leaving the relatively junior Colonel Agotic in charge of the ZNG during the crucial run-up to full-scale war in September.¹² Agotic remained the senior Croatian military commander of ZNG troops in the field until the formation of the Main Staff of the Croatian Army under former JNA general Anton Tus in late September. Croatian military command and control at all levels remained generally dismal until Tus took control and transformed the ZNG into the Croatian Army with a real military command system. Tus's advent represented the final stage in Croatia's development of a true military establishment.¹³

Chart 1

Croatian National Guard Corps Units and Date of Formation, May-August 1991

Active Brigades and Independent Battalions

Zrinski Battalion—18 May 1991

1st Guards Brigade¹⁴—25 May 1991

2nd Guards Brigade—May/June 1991

3rd Guards Brigade—May/June 1991

4th Guards Brigade—28 May 1991

Reserve Brigades and Independent Battalions¹⁵

99th Zagreb-Pescenik Brigade

100th Zagreb Brigade

101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade

102nd Novi Zagreb Brigade

103rd Krapina Brigade

104th Varazdin Brigade

105th Bjelovar Brigade

106th Osijek Brigade

107th Valpovo Brigade

108th Slavonski Brod Brigade

109th Vinkovci Brigade

110th Karlovac Brigade

111th Rijeka Brigade

112th Zadar Brigade
113th Sibenik Brigade
114th Split Brigade—1 June 1991
117th Koprivnica Brigade—late August 1991
118th Gospic Brigade—26 August 1991
120th Sisak Brigade—15 August 1991
50th Independent Virovitica Battalion
51st Independent Vrbovec Battalion
52nd Independent Pula Battalion—not formed¹⁶
53rd Independent Dugo Selo Battalion
54th Independent Cakovec Battalion
55th Independent Bjelovar Battalion
56th Independent Kutina Battalion
57th Independent Sisak Battalion—15 June 1991
61st Independent Jastrebarsko Battalion
62nd Independent Novska Battalion
63rd Independent Pozega Battalion—7 June 1991
65th Independent Ivanic-Grad Battalion
Klek Battalion (Ogulin)—7 July 1991
Metkovic Battalion
Makarska Battalion

Chart 2

Croatian Ministers of Defense—August 1990-December 1991

Colonel General Martin Spegelj, August 1990-July 1991

Simo Djordan, July-August 1991

Luka Bebic, August-September 1991

Gojko Susak, September 1991 to current

Endnotes, Annex 3

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 10 April 1991.

² Interview with Corps General Anton Tus, first Chief of the Croatian General Staff. Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. Tus states that the ZNG had about 2,000 troops in May upon formation; this total seems low when compared to earlier numbers of Special Police in the MUP.

Not all four brigades were ready for combat, however, upon the ZNG's foundation. The 2nd Guards Brigade was formed from the following units in June:

1st Battalion—Cadres from Special Police Training Centers and Rakitje Battalion

2nd Battalion—Special Police/Sisak Police Administration

3rd Battalion—Special Police/Karlovac Police Administration

Vesna Puljak, "'Thunders' From Banija," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-20. Vlado Vurusic and Ivo Pukanic, "The Commander of the Fourth Guard Brigade is 25 Years Old, and All the Members of the Lucko ATJ Are Taller Than 180 Centimeters!" Zagreb *Globus* 26 May 1995, pp. 48-49. Neven Miladin, "The Strength of the Black Mambas," Zagreb *Velebit* 26 January 1996, pp. 16-17. Neven Miladin, "Proven Military Skill," Zagreb *Velebit* 8 March 1996, pp. 14-15.

The 3rd Guards in Osijek appears to have been formed in May/June from the following units:

1st Battalion—Special Police/Osijek Police Administration

2nd Battalion—Special Police/Vinkovci Police Administration

3rd Battalion—Special Police/Slavonski Brod Police Administration

The 4th Guards in Split probably was formed in May from Special Police units in the Dalmatian region.

Former French Foreign Legion soldiers were to play a large role in the formation and history of the Croatian military during 1991-1995. The first of these arrived in 1990 and began training as part of the MUP's Lucko Antiterrorist Unit. On 18 May 1991 the MoD ordered the formation of the Zrinski Battalion with former Legion personnel led by Ante Roso and his deputy Miljenko Filipovic as the battalion's command cadre. According to Filipovic, 27 volunteers drawn from the 300 personnel at the MUP's Kumrovec training center were the unit's first troops. The Legionnaires' strict selection procedures required all men to be 25 years or younger, be psychologically and physically fit, and have no family obligations. Snjezana Dukic, "If We Had Been Only 10 Minutes Late . . ." *Slobodna Dalmacija* 23 May 1994, p. 9, an interview with Colonel Miljenko Filipovic. See also Marko Barisic, "The Colonel or the Corpse," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 24 November 1993, p. 6, which is a profile of General Ante Roso, who became the most senior ex-Foreign Legionnaire in the HV and HVO. An article by Mate Basic, "As An Old Member of the Foreign Legion, I Do Not Fight For Money, But Because I Am Drawn By the Smell of the Enemy!" Zagreb *Globus* 12 August 1994, pp. 49-50, is an interview with another ex-Foreign Legionnaire. The Zrinski Battalion was to become one of the best combat units in the Croatian Army and the lineal progenitor of the 3rd Guards Parachute Battalion/1st Croatian Guards Zdrug/1st Croatian Guards Corps.

³ The 1st Guards had six maneuver battalions by September 1991 and probably numbered about 3,000 to 3,500 personnel. Boris Komadina, "A Tiger Fighting for Croatia (interview with Staff Brigadier Jozo Milicevic)" *Hrvatski Obzor* 6 November 1995, pp. 28-29.

⁴ Interview with General Mladen Markac, commander of MUP Special Police, Jasmina Ivancic, "Specialists—Men For Hellish Missions," Zagreb *Vjesnik* 20 April 1994, pp. 4-5. An article on the 114th Split Brigade notes that its first main armed unit were MUP reserve police, which were used to form the 1st Battalion. Zeljko Stipanovic, "The Pride of Croatia's South," *Zagreb Velebit* 21 February 1997, p. 14.

⁵ Multiple issues of the Croatian military journals *Hrvatski Vojnik* and *Velebit*. In addition, the two editions of the Croatian Army insignia book, *Hrvatsko Ratno Znakovlje* by Ankica Tudman, provide additional information from formation dates stitched on brigade patches.

⁶ Sinisa Haluzan, "Sisak's Heart on Front Line," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 22-24; Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18. See also Sinisa Haluzan, "The Croatian Heart of the Fighting Men From Banija," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 23 April 1993, p. 18 for a description of 57th Battalion's lack of weapons and uniforms. The battalion transport was a collection of livestock trucks.

⁷ Gordan Lausic and Dejan Frigelj, "St. Krsevan and 112th Defending Zadar," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 14.

⁸ This is based on an estimate of 2,000 personnel for each of the 16 identified ZNG reserve brigades and 500 for each of the 13 identified independent battalions. The Croatians almost certainly never put all of these personnel in the field. There are indications that when units rotated personnel passed the rifles of the departing troops to the incoming ones because of the weapons shortage.

⁹ Jasmina Ivancic, "Specialists—Men For Hellish Missions," Zagreb *Vjesnik* 20 April 1994, pp. 4-5. Interview with General Mladen Markac, commander of MUP Special Police.

Photographs of Special Police troops in late 1991 showed them to be better equipped and far better disciplined than the ZNG/HV reserve units that fought alongside them. Many Special Police units probably were better trained than even most of the ZNG Guards. See "The Balkans on Fire" by Yves Debay and James Hill, pp. 43-47, for a series of photographs of Special Police in eastern Slavonia.

¹⁰ This is based on an estimate of 100 to 150 active-duty Special Police and 200 to 350 reservists for each police administration.

¹¹ The national Crisis Staff consisted of Prime Minister Josip Manolic, Defense Minister Sime Djordan, National Guard commander General Martin Spegelj, Internal Affairs Minister Onesin Cvitan, Deputy Internal Affairs Minister Slavko Degoricija, "Minister for Emigration" (and Deputy Defense Minister) Gojko Susak, Civil Defense commander Josip Slunjski, and two presidential advisers. Belgrade Tanjug 17 July 1991.

The regional staffs usually were headed by the senior political or party officials of the regional counties (*zupanija*), and included the regional police administration chiefs, regional civil defense chiefs, regional Ministry of Defense heads, and appropriate ZNG commanders. Municipal staffs consisted of the municipality political leadership, probably the police station chief, civil defense and local Ministry of Defense secretariats, and local ZNG commanders.

¹² See Volume I main text for a more detailed discussion of Croatian strategy.

¹³ See section and Annex 11: "The Croatian Army Rises: September to December 1991."

¹⁴ The original four active duty ZNG brigades—usually referred to at this time and during 1991-1992 as "A-brigades"—will be referred to hereafter as "Guards Brigades" even though they did not formally assume these titles until December 1992. The territorially raised ZNG (later HV) reserve brigades (often referred to as "R-brigades") will be designated by their numeric designator and regional title, e.g., 106th Osijek Brigade.

¹⁵ Other than where noted, the Ministry of Defense ordered the formation of all R-brigades and independent battalions on 28 June 1991. This order took effect on 2 July 1991.

¹⁶ The 52nd Independent Pula Battalion was not formed and the unit designator was later allocated to a ZNG/HV independent battalion in Daruvar (western Slavonia). The HV claims that the

ZNG was unable to form the battalion because of JNA counterintelligence operations against the ZNG in the Istrian peninsula and a shortage of weapons. Gordan Lausic, "The 119th Brigade—The Pride of Istria," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 23 April 1993, p. 15. While this may be true, there are also indications that the mixed ethnic population of Istria was less than enthusiastic about Croatian secession from Yugoslavia, and JNA counterintelligence almost certainly tried to exploit this apathy, so recruiting for the ZNG and HV suffered. The HV was unable to deploy a single combat brigade from the Istrian peninsula in combat prior to January 1992, and even the Istrian volunteer company of only 45 men it sent to the Dubrovnik front had to be withdrawn after 11 days of combat. Gordan Lausic, "The 119th Brigade—The Pride of Istria," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 23 April 1993, p. 15; Gordan Lausic, "Croatian Armed Forces 154th Brigade: Force of Croatian Istria," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 7 May 1993, pp. 28-30.

Annex 4
The Arming of the Croatian Government Forces,
May 1990-August 1991

The JNA's confiscation of Croatia's TO weapons stocks in May 1990 forced Zagreb to look to the worldwide gray arms market for the weapons it needed for its fledgling forces. How early Croatia began actively pursuing such arms deals is not clear, but the acquisition process gained momentum after General Spegelj became Minister of Defense in August 1990. Spegelj claims he traveled to Budapest in October 1990 and contracted with Hungarian Government officials for the shipment of as many as 30,000 AK-47 rifles, 40 SA-7 hand-held surface to air missiles, 40 launchers for rocket-propelled grenades, and other equipment for a total of 11 million Deutschmarks.¹ Probably no more than 10,000 of the rifles were actually transported to Croatia.² The Croatians also bought a number of Romanian-manufactured AKM rifles, SAR-80 rifles manufactured in Singapore, Ultimax light machine guns, and "Armburst" antitank rockets.³ Franjo Greguric, head of the Zagreb-based "Astra" import-export firm, was probably the government's primary procurement official and the conduit to both the MoD and MUP.⁴ Gojko Susak, the Croatian Minister for Emigrant Affairs and Deputy Minister of Defense, played a key role in Croatian arms acquisitions by funneling funds from Croatian expatriates into Zagreb's coffers.⁵ Susak stated in September 1991 that through his efforts the Croatian Government had received in excess of DM 30 million,

which they used to buy about 5,000 small arms.⁶ By such means the Croatians apparently managed to import as many as 30,000 small arms by August 1991, to augment many as the 15,000 or so rifles and other small arms they reportedly had when Tudjman took power in 1990.

The Federal authorities appear to have overestimated the number of weapons available to the nascent Croatian armed forces in the same manner they exaggerated the forces themselves, especially in early 1991. The Federal Secretary of National Defense, General Veljko Kadijevic, briefed Jovic on 21 January 1991 from what he claimed were notes from a meeting between Spegelj and other Croatian officials. The Croatians were said to have reported that they had 60,000 AK-47 rifles and about 7,000 submachine guns. This is at odds with the fact that the Croatians were able to arm only about 10,000 "military" personnel—not including regular police—by January 1991, and Croatian military journals clearly indicate that during the formation of the ZNG reserve units in mid-1991 there was a desperate shortage of small arms, with many units being armed with hunting weapons and World War II military rifles. Kadijevic may have accurately reported information on Croatian weapons he received from JNA counterintelligence, but it is likely that Spegelj and his associates—suspecting that their meeting place was bugged—were intentionally exaggerating the weapons available as a deterrent to JNA military action.

Endnotes, Annex 4

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 10 July 1995.

Tanjug drew this information from a July 1995 Zagreb *Globus* interview with Spegelj. Unfortunately, a copy of that edition was unavailable for this study.

Spegelj reportedly claims that his arms smuggling had the direct support of the Hungarian Government and President Jozef Antal. He is reported to have stated that "I was personally on very good terms with Antal. . . . I am convinced he was the one who ordered that the arms be sold to us at the lowest price, and that all the arms we need be delivered to us."

Spegelj reports that on 5 October 1990 he and the Croatian foreign minister negotiated the purchase of 30,000 AK-47s or AKMs at a price of 280 DM apiece, along with other arms and equipment, in a meeting held in the foreign ministry with the President of Tehnika, a Hungarian military equipment import-export firm. The Hungarian offer was a great bargain for the Croatians, who (according to Spegelj) had been buying AK-47/AKMs at 700 DM a piece. A total of 11 million DM worth of equipment was purchased, including 40 S-2M and 60 RPGs.

² The Hungarian Government acknowledged in 1990 that it had shipped 10,000 AK-47 rifles to the Croatians, but had then stopped further shipments. A Hungarian lawyer filed a claim with the Hungarian privatization agency in June 1997 on behalf of the Croatian Government to recover money paid for weapons that they never received. The Croatians want \$985,000 plus interest from the money they originally transferred to Tehnika, which has since been liquidated. Reuters 20 June 1997.

³ The Romanian weapons were first observed during the ZNG formation parade on 28 May 1991. Photographs of ZNG personnel later in 1991 confirm their possession of weapons from Singapore.

⁴ Greguric's involvement in early Croatian arms deals has been widely publicized in the Croatian and Yugoslav press. Zagreb *Danas* noted as early as August 1991 that Greguric was involved in deals to import AK-47s while he was head of "Astra." Darko

Pavicic, "Success on the Third Try," Zagreb *Danas* 6 August 1991, pp. 16-17. *Globus* reported in early 1995 that Greguric arranged the first arms imports into Croatia. Davor Butkovic, "The Last Showdown With the Boys From Hennessy: Will the Croatian Government Go Down With Them?" Zagreb *Globus* 24 March 1995, pp. 8-9. The Belgrade press claimed in February 1991 that Greguric had tried to acquire 36,000 AK-47s from the Soviet Union, but the deal fell through. To cover up the real Croatian destination, Greguric reportedly wanted the arms to be exported to South American and African dealers used by Astra for genuine arms deals with these countries. Greguric almost certainly used similar methods for shipments that did make it through from other countries. Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service 1 February 1991.

Serbian President of the Federal Presidency Borisav Jovic noted in January 1991 that "... over the last two months, 10 barges . . . have arrived transporting arms and ammunition from military depots in Hungary. This weaponry and ammunition was acquired by way of the 'Astra' Work Organization for Foreign Trade in Zagreb." Jovic entry for 9 January 1991. Jovic's information clearly came from JNA counterintelligence.

⁵ *Globus* noted in spring 1996 that "Gojko Susak is also one of a small number of people who know which and how many weapons were bought as well as how the money Croatian emigrants have sent to the country during the last five years has been distributed. Susak was Minister for Emigration until September 1991." Davor Butkovic, "Who Will Replace Gojko Susak, the Croatian Defense Minister?" Zagreb *Globus* 19 April 1996, p. 2.

⁶ Djurdjica Klancir, "What I Spent the 30 Million Marks On," Zagreb *Globus* 20 September 1991, p. 14. Interview with Minister for Emigres Gojko Susak. Susak did not directly state that they had acquired 5,000 small arms, but that one-tenth of the weapons being used by the "50,000 people fighting on all Croatian fronts" had been bought with the emigre money.

Annex 5

Kadijevic Indecisive: The JNA Fails to Halt Secession¹

As Croatia and Slovenia began to move further away from Federal Yugoslavia and create independent military forces, the JNA came to the fore as the only Federal institution capable and seemingly willing to block their secession efforts—with force if necessary. Army General Veljko Kadijevic, the Federal Secretary for National Defense² and a true believer in a Federal Yugoslavia, was the pivotal figure in the non-shooting war the JNA waged with the Slovenian and especially the Croatian Governments in 1990-1991. Kadijevic, however, repeatedly lost his nerve during these political-military confrontations and, despite excellent intelligence on at least the Croatians' activities and intentions, he failed to exploit opportunities for the JNA to strike at the republics and disarm them.

Kadijevic and the JNA, in their campaign against both republics (and particularly Croatia), used as their principal weapon the JNA Security Directorate (*Uprava Bezbednosti—UB*), which was popularly known as “KOS” from its Tito-era abbreviation. KOS followed the organization and arming of the illegal armed forces during the 1990-1991 period.³ The JNA's monitoring of nationalist activities in Croatia began during the rise of the Croatian nationalist political party, the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) under Franjo Tudjman, during 1989-1990. KOS not only organized the Federal surveillance campaigns against the two republics but laid out the planning for JNA strikes against the Croatian Government and its “paramilitaries.” The JNA's first move against the republics, and its only decisive one, came in May 1990, just as the newly elected Slovenian Government took power and before Tudjman's inauguration, when it confiscated the weapons of the republican Territorial Defense. KOS continued to monitor Croatian efforts to create a military force within the MUP and developed a plan to eliminate this nascent Croatian army, confiscate its weapons, and if necessary depose both the Slovene and Croatian Governments. KOS

was ready to activate the plan in early December 1990, but Kadijevic and key elements of the Federal presidency postponed the move at the last minute. A month later Serbian Federal Presidency member Borisav Jovic joined with Kadijevic in pressing for action, but when the confrontation came to a head in the Federal presidency, Jovic and the JNA again backed down. Kadijevic passed up his last chance to move against the Croatians in March 1991 when Jovic resigned as President of the Presidency to give him a free hand.

The KOS and the Rise of Croatian Nationalism

With the creation of the HDZ in early 1989, KOS began to organize itself to monitor the growth of nationalism in Croatia through the penetration of senior levels of the Croatian Government and its nationalist political party.⁴ It mounted at least two separate operations for this purpose. Colonel Bosko Kelecevic, Chief of Security for the JNA Fifth Military District covering Slovenia and most of Croatia, set about enlarging the agent network which the JNA had developed over years of internal security work, reportedly infiltrating various organizations, trade companies, and newspapers.⁵ One of his greatest reported successes was the spreading of KOS personnel throughout Croatia disguised as news reporters.⁶

The second and more well-known major collection operation was a special organization set up under Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Sabolovic of the Security Department of the JNA's Fifth Air and Air Defense Force Corps in Zagreb, apparently code-named “Vihor” (Whirlwind), but later more generally known as the “Labrador Group.”⁷ A former case officer of the Labrador Group, Branko Tarzivuk, stated in 1993 that the group was established in the spring of 1989, when

KOS and the still-subordinate Croatian State Security Service (SDB) grew concerned about growing Croatian nationalism. The group's assignment was to prevent the infiltration of nationalists into the Croatian state administration and to conduct electronic surveillance against key government officials, including senior Communist party officials, the HDZ, and JNA personnel. By such means Belgrade intended to keep current on any nationalist plans of the then-communist Croatian Government and on HDZ and Croatian nationalist penetrations of the JNA.⁸

Tarzivuk's claims that the Labrador Group succeeded in organizing a very strong intelligence network appear to be borne out by later developments.⁹ When the Croatians wrapped up part of the group in October 1991, the identities of some key Labrador assets became public.¹⁰ Senior members of the group—apparently acting as controlled agents of KOS—reportedly included three Croatian security officers, four officials in the former SDB (the MUP's renamed Department for the Protection of the Constitutional Order), and two from the technical services of the Croatian parliament. The Croatian police then arrested another 50 persons, including senior MUP officials, and the deputy district prosecutor for Zagreb indicated that this intertwined KOS network had also penetrated widely into political circles. Labrador in particular appears to have been quite successful in penetrating the MUP, even more extensively than indicated in the Croatian MUP's investigation of late 1991.¹¹ Sabolovic later reportedly claimed that only a part of the Labrador network was wrapped up, and that the essential structures remained intact.¹²

The JNA Confiscates Territorial Defense Weapons

With the JNA's access to excellent information on the growth of nationalism in Croatia and the political gains of the HDZ in particular, KOS provided increasingly pessimistic assessments of the future of a unitary, "communist" Yugoslavia to the JNA high command. General Kadijevic relayed these assessments to the Federal Presidency, especially the Serbian member of the Federal Presidency, Borisav Jovic.¹³ On 26 April 1990—in the aftermath of the Slovenian elections and the first round of the Croatian

elections—General Kadijevic presented this assessment of the situation in Yugoslavia:

- Anti-Yugoslav, anti-socialist, and nationalistic forces have won in Slovenia and Croatia.
- There is a danger and an assumption that the same thing could happen in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, partially in Macedonia, and perhaps to some extent even in Montenegro.
- In Slovenia, they have already begun, and they will certainly do so in Croatia as well, to consolidate their programs and to take action against socialism, communism, and Yugoslavia. They are already acting like victors and think that no one can touch them any more.

Kadijevic indicated that the Slovenes and Croatians would then begin replacing all of the current officials in federal political institutions with nationalists while undermining Croatia's federal institutions and loosening its ties to Belgrade. Kadijevic claimed that Tudjman had already announced that a separate military—anathema to the JNA—would be formed. Concluding that the two republics were on the road to secession, he proposed to Jovic actions the JNA felt were necessary to prevent the dissolution of Yugoslavia, including:¹⁴

To force observance of the SFRY Constitution and federal laws throughout the country, including Slovenia and Croatia, by all means possible, including political ones, but by force if necessary.

Kadijevic reported that the JNA was already making contingency plans to take over Croatia and Slovenia if that should become necessary.¹⁵

Kadijevic's assessment was the product of JNA fears that the situation was getting out of control. The JNA was particularly concerned about Slovene and Croatian campaign statements about forming their own militaries and supporting laws barring conscripts

from serving outside their own republics. It was in this context that the JNA—apparently in league with Jovic—began planning to deal with the perceived threats in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina by confiscating the republican Territorial Defense weapons stocks throughout Yugoslavia: If not put under better control, the JNA feared, these stocks could be readily seized by nationalists to form republican armies and challenge the JNA. As Jovic was scheduled to become President of the collective Federal Presidency on 15 May, it is clear that he and the JNA planned to wait until the day after Jovic took office to strike.¹⁶ On 15 May, Jovic used his inaugural speech to serve notice that “unconstitutional” acts in Yugoslavia—clear references to Croatian and Slovenian moves toward unilateral independence—would not be tolerated. Amplifying his warning, Jovic said:

I believe that the Presidency is duty-bound to react to every political act that upsets the public, brings about insecurity, and threatens our shared life . . . We cannot tolerate crude attacks on the country's constitutional institutions, and calls on citizens to behave in an unconstitutional way, heralding anti-constitutional actions, such as the formation of national armies . . .¹⁷

On 16 May the Federal Presidency met to discuss the “situation in the country” and apparently adopted some sort of resolution which Jovic used as legal justification for the decision to confiscate the TO weapons.¹⁸ Only Slovene Presidency member Drnovsek opposed the measure, according to Jovic.¹⁹ The Presidency issued a statement on 16 May:

The SFRY Presidency judges that there is a serious breakdown in the country's constitutional order, disregard for existing Federal laws, and other phenomena of social instability. Because of this, the Presidency considers it essential to take urgent measures to protect the territorial and political integrity of the country.²⁰

The JNA began confiscating weapons late on 16 May and completed the task on 18 May in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Jovic stated on 17 May:

We take measures to ensure that weapons are taken from civilian Territorial Defense depots in Slovenia and Croatia and transferred to military depots. We will not permit Territorial Defense weapons to be misused in any conflicts or for forcible secession.²¹

The JNA faced no opposition and at a stroke the TO in both republics was disarmed. Croatian and Bosnian protests proved useless. But Slovenia proved to be a different story.²²

JNA Planning for a State of Emergency and the Elimination of the “Paramilitaries”

In the immediate aftermath of the TO weapons confiscation and the inauguration of the new Croatian (and Slovenian) Governments, the JNA focused on the political threat that their independence efforts posed. The army began refining its plans for removing the Croatian and Slovenian Governments, if necessary. Colonel Aleksandar Vasiljevic, a veteran KOS officer from SSNO, became the lead officer in KOS, coordinating the security service’s efforts to follow developments in the separatist republics. Vasiljevic stated in a 1992 interview that the JNA had developed plans in the summer of 1990 to implement a “state of emergency” and take over the governments in Slovenia and Croatia.²³ Kadijevic repeatedly updated Jovic during the summer of 1990 on JNA planning.²⁴ On 13 July Jovic noted:

Veljko (Kadijevic) informs me that a plan has been definitively formulated for use of the military in the event that the SFRY Presidency adopts a decision on a state of emergency. It will be important to adopt decisions in time. The military will propose such decisions.²⁵

The JNA continued to modify its planning and prepare justification for the Federal Presidency during August and September. On 4 September Kadijevic told Jovic that they needed to be ready to use the military in Slovenia as early as September and in Croatia possibly in October. Kadijevic outlined the JNA's strategy regarding the two republics which, rather than launching a preemptive strike, focused on allowing the secessionist leaders to continue their course toward independence and even developing independent militaries so that the JNA would have ample justification for moving against them.²⁶

According to the bare outline of this planning provided by Vasiljevic in 1992, the operation would have consisted of two parts. Elite military police antiterrorist units would have seized senior government officials and probably occupied government offices.²⁷ As the JNA special operations forces decapitated the government, conventional maneuver units would have occupied border crossings, blocked key border access roads, and occupied the major airports.²⁸

Operation Shield and the January Crisis

In fall 1990, the JNA appears to have shifted its emphasis from operational plans to topple the Croatian and Slovenian Governments to a more direct counterintelligence focus on Croatia's efforts to develop its own military forces with arms purchased from abroad, a program energized by the appointment of former JNA General Martin Spegelj to the post of Croatian Defense Minister. Vasiljevic and KOS had been tracking these activities for some time, but in October they received the break of a lifetime.²⁹ Spegelj had been recruiting ethnic Croatian JNA officers to provide inside information on the JNA, procure weapons for the militarization of the Croatian police, and, in the event the JNA moved against Croatia, sabotage their JNA units. In early October Spegelj propositioned a man who should have proved the perfect agent, Colonel Vladimir Jagar, then stationed in Virovitica, Croatia.³⁰ Jagar's natural father had been a "close, lifelong" friend of Spegelj, and he raised the boy as part of his own family when Jagar's mother died. Silber and Little note that "Spegelj loved

and trusted Jagar almost as though he were his own son." But Jagar, like many of the young officers who had begun their Army careers as teenagers, regarded himself as a Yugoslav, not a Croatian. He reported the contact to the KOS. The security service quickly persuaded him to work as a double agent, directing him to accept Spegelj's offer and then act as a mole inside Spegelj's organization. Jagar was able to provide detailed information on Croatia's arms purchasing efforts, Croatian contingency planning for war with the JNA, and Spegelj's thoughts on how an armed conflict between the JNA and the Croatian Government might pan out. Jagar was "wired" for his meetings with Spegelj, and Vasiljevic ordered Jagar to encourage Spegelj to talk as much as possible about the smuggling of weapons and to disclose details of the arms-distribution network. Vasiljevic wanted to know where the paramilitaries were based, who was in charge, where the weapons were stored. He needed a detailed breakdown of the operation in order to plan a JNA campaign against it.³¹

Jagar's information became the centerpiece of a new Vasiljevic-led plan by which the KOS proposed to disarm the Croatian paramilitaries, expose Croatia's "unconstitutional" arms acquisition efforts, and bring Spegelj and the key Croatian "military" leaders before a JNA court. The plan was called Operation "Shield."

Planning for Operation Shield began to jell when Jovic held a series of briefings on 22-23 October for the JNA's most senior officers and Kadijevic assured him that the military was developing evidence to try Spegelj and Boljkovac, the Croatian Internal Affairs Minister.³² But only a week later the JNA asked for a delay in the operation's implementation, claiming to Jovic on 2 November that they needed more time to complete the indictment against Spegelj. Further delays would occur because Jovic was going to be out of the country from 6 to 15 November on a state visit to the Far East, and the JNA insisted that he be present to ensure that the Federal Presidency approved their move against the Croatian paramilitaries. Jovic privately noted his belief that the JNA was stalling again because of Kadijevic's indecisiveness, and he

wondered why they couldn't just arrest the Croatian officials and then finish compiling their evidence.³³

According to Colonel Vasiljevic, the JNA finally set 3 December as the date for Operation Shield's execution, and spent the rest of November finishing its preparations.³⁴ This included the psychological preparation of the JNA officer corps to undertake an internal security operation in Croatia, finishing the legal preparations for arresting Spegelj and his associates, and completing Shield's operational planning. Kadijevic reported to Jovic on 23 November that preparations for the arrests in Croatia would be completed in the next few days, but that he needed to know from Jovic whether to first arrest and institute proceedings against General Spegelj and then seek the Croatian Government's agreement, given the immunity issue, or to first seek its agreement:

...we agreed that he should proceed according to the law: first seek the Croatian Government's agreement. If that agreement is not granted, then the Croatian authorities will have shown their true colors. After that, we will probably have to arrest him anyway under public pressure, once all the facts of the case are disclosed.³⁵

At the end of November, the JNA had completed its secret preparations and was ready to go. By now the KOS, in conjunction with the JNA Political Administration, had put months of effort into the plan.

On 2 December the JNA set in motion the last piece of its operational clockwork, a propaganda ploy designed to justify the impending action. That day it published an official interview with Kadijevic, prepared days before, that signaled the army's intentions. Kadijevic stated:

Yugoslavia is not at the moment threatened by immediate danger from abroad. However, as early as tomorrow it might no longer be so. Continued unfavorable trends in internal processes are conducive to the further erosion of Yugoslavia's position in the world . . . Precisely because of their determination to defend Yugoslavia, our armed forces have been exposed to unprecedented attacks and challenges. The

main blow has been directed toward breaking up the JNA . . . The greatest danger for the integrity and security of the country is to be found in the intensive development of purely national armies. . . all armed formations established outside the uniform forces as defined by the SFRY constitution will be disarmed. Those who constituted them will be accountable before the law.³⁶

The next day, with everything in place, Kadijevic called Colonel Vasiljevic and ordered him to postpone the operation.

Vasiljevic was nonplused. Later, in 1992, he said:

I will never understand why Kadijevic called me on 3 December 1990 and delayed the start of the operation. That destroyed months of hard work by the KOS and enabled the leading people in Croatia to get wind of what was intended for them. . . . It was not a question of betrayal by the Federal Defense Secretary, but his indecisiveness, which has been at the root of all bad decisions made by the army leadership.³⁷

The record is blank on why Kadijevic called off the operation, but it seems likely that he had not attempted to get approval from the Federal Presidency or even consulted Jovic over the final date. Kadijevic could never bring himself to undertake such a radical move unilaterally, without approval from the Presidency or even a large part of it. There are no entries about the operation in his journal from 28 November until 10 December, at which point he states:

Veljko Kadijevic has prepared a report for the Presidency on the creation of a parallel HDZ army in Croatia and on a draft resolution by the Presidency under which Croatia would be called upon to voluntarily disarm that army within 10 days. Otherwise, criminal prosecution and the disarming of these forces will be instituted as prescribed by law. I will present these proposals at the session on the 12th of this month.³⁸

At the 12 December meeting, consideration of Kadijevic's report was put off for another ten days or more. This time it was Jovic who delayed, because of his "desire to avoid upsetting the public until the second round of elections in Serbia is completed." The elections would not be held until 23 December. Operation Shield was delayed yet again.

The Croatian Government realized that the JNA was planning possible intervention in December, although how much it knew is unclear. Spegelj, however, did not want to wait for the JNA. Instead, during a meeting of the Croatian security council in early December—presumably on 2 or 3 December after Kadijevic's interview was published—he called for a pre-emptive war for independence launched with a strategic offensive against JNA barracks in Croatia. Silber and Little state:

... General Spegelj now unveiled his plan to an incredulous and plainly nervous meeting of Croatia's small defense council. Spegelj argued that the JNA was too weak to launch the war Kadijevic was threatening. The JNA was made up, he said, of eighteen- or nineteen-year-old conscripts, the majority of whom were non-Serbs, and who would not be prepared to fight. Spegelj argued that the Croatian police should lay siege to JNA barracks in Croatia, and cut off food, water, and electricity supplies and telephone lines. The garrisons, he said, were by JNA convention all physically separated from the logistics units on which they depended. If the two were separated for long enough, the garrisons would fall apart by themselves. Their members—the officers and men—could then be invited to transfer their loyalty, en bloc or individually, to the new armed forces of the Croatian republic.³⁹

President Tudjman vetoed Spegelj's proposal. As he explained in a November 1993 interview,

We were not capable in terms of weapons of winning a victory. In political terms, even then we would have evoked the anger of the international public, because we would have been rebels against the constitutional order of a

state which was internationally recognized. We would have experienced total defeat.⁴⁰

As Silber and Little note, "The political and diplomatic case won over the military."⁴¹

The confrontation became a showdown the following month when the Presidency finally met on 9 January to consider Kadijevic's plan. Kadijevic presented a detailed JNA assessment, laying out everything the JNA knew about Croatian arms shipments and contingency planning (as well as Slovene, Croatian Serb, and Kosovar paramilitary formations). (See Annex 3 for Jovic's journal entry on Kadijevic's assessment.) Jovic asked the Presidency to approve and immediately promulgate an order requiring unauthorized military forces to disband and surrender all weapons to the JNA, but after a day-long discussion he had still failed to win over a majority. The Slovene and Croatian Presidency members, Janez Drnovsek and Stipe Mesic, both voted against the resolution, and the Bosnian member, Bogic Bogicevic—the deciding vote again—refused to give his assent. Jovic had to settle for a ten-day grace period for compliance with his order.⁴² (See Appendix 4 for text of the Presidency order.)

Both the Slovenes and the Croatians publicly announced their refusal to abide by the order. The Croatian Council for National Defense and Protection, who were the JNA's primary target, claimed that Croatia had none of the illegal groups as defined in the Presidency order; Zagreb considered all of its new forces "legal" and only the Croatian Serb rebels in the Krajina "illegal."⁴³ If the JNA tried to intervene and disarm its forces, Croatia threatened to defend itself by force.⁴⁴

The Croatians alerted all of their newly formed forces—MUP Special Police units, reserve MUP units, and MoD volunteers. Within a week of the Presidency order Croatian Special Police and volunteer units began to move to their wartime deployment locations.⁴⁵ Contingency plans—probably a variant of the Spegelj plan which Tudjman had

vetoed in December—called for them to deploy around JNA garrisons and open fire if they moved out.⁴⁶

As the 19 January deadline grew closer, Jovic met with Kadijevic on 15 January and began to express his concern over the progression of the crisis. It would be hard for the JNA to crush an “indoctrinated nation,” he argued, and so “we must attempt to persuade them (the Croatians) to surrender their weapons voluntarily, even though that is not very likely.” Observing that the Croatian nation was resolute, Jovic appears to have questioned whether the military would be willing to clash with the Croatian people. Kadijevic told Jovic that the JNA was in favor of eliminating the “HDZ government” not just its paramilitaries. Jovic perceptively pointed out that the Federal authorities would be unlikely to find a democratically elected successor government in Croatia that would support a Federal Yugoslavia. But Kadijevic remained deaf and blind to the idea that the federal, socialist Yugoslavia which he held dear could no longer exist under the conditions that had emerged over the previous few years. Jovic noted that:

If they meet resistance, I ask them whether we are in a position after that to get other democratically elected authorities that will be on our side. Not for socialism, but rather for Yugoslavia. No response. That is the key to the problem. Croatia's aspiration is to separate from Yugoslavia, under the pretense of struggling against Bolshevism . . . And in the case of the radical variant, we will not be able to find new democratic authorities, there will be bloodshed, we will have to enforce martial law for at least a year, we will be isolated from the world, through such action we would disrupt any effort for a peaceful solution to the political crisis, speed up Slovenia's secession, and reinforce the Albanians' resistance. That is why we must attempt to have the weapons surrendered voluntarily, to discredit them politically without overthrowing them . . . We will shed blood, if there is no alternative, only for territories in which nations who want to remain in Yugoslavia live.⁴⁷

Kadijevic and the Serbian leaders, Milosevic and Jovic, had not always seen eye to eye on the future of Yugoslavia. From this point forward, their differences would widen. While Kadijevic clung to his pipe dream of a unified, federal Yugoslav state, Milosevic, Jovic, and the Serbian political establishment concluded that if the Slovenes and Croatians wanted out of Yugoslavia, they could go as long as the Serb regions of Croatia remained behind.⁴⁸

On 18 January Jovic met with Mesic to try to get the Croatians to yield peacefully to Federal demands. If they did not, he warned, the army would take their weapons by force and individuals—he meant the top Croatian leaders—would be put on trial. Mesic replied that if the Federal authorities did that, the Croatians would immediately withdraw from all Federal institutions, call on all Croats, Slovenes, and Albanians to desert the army, and force a direct showdown. Somehow, Mesic was led to agree that he would ask Zagreb to surrender 20,000 of the weapons.⁴⁹ After consultations in Zagreb, Mesic told Jovic that the Croatian Government had grudgingly agreed to collect the weapons and place them under JNA control. The Croatians, however requested another extension, to 21 January, to which Jovic and Kadijevic agreed.⁵⁰

By 21 January, however, the Croatians had still not given up any weapons. They now demanded that for the weapons to be turned over and their reserve MUP forces to be demobilized the JNA must observe a series of unacceptable conditions, including:

- The JNA announces that the Presidency order has been fulfilled.
- The JNA withdraws to its barracks.
- The people of Croatia and their leaders are not further troubled.
- The Presidency and the JNA declare that Croatia has the right to impose order in Knin and other Serb opstinas.

Mesic also informed Jovic that if the Federal Government did not accept the Croatian demands his government would:

- declare that the Republic of Croatia has seceded.
- ask for UN Security Council intervention and the deployment of peacekeeping troops.
- withdraw all personnel from Federal institutions.
- confiscate all Federal property in Croatia.
- withdraw all personnel from the JNA
- threaten anyone who refuses with judicial action.

Jovic's retort to Mesic was that "they have chosen war . . ."⁵¹

The Croatian military and the JNA began preparing in earnest for war. All Croatian forces went to their highest alert. The JNA announced on 23 January that unless the "illegal" formations were disbanded, it would "enhance the combat-readiness of its units to a level which will guarantee the implementation" of the Presidency order, or, in other words, the JNA would "disarm" Croatian forces.⁵² In fulfillment of its proclamation, it began preparations to redeploy its forces and mobilize additional soldiers.⁵³

Events again came to a head on 25 January, and again the JNA was forced to back down. Croatian President Tudjman and Mesic had scheduled a meeting with Milosevic and Jovic in Belgrade to discuss a resolution of the crisis.⁵⁴ As Silber and Little note, "In Zagreb tension had reached a fever pitch . . . many (Croatian assembly) delegates told him (Tudjman) he would not make it back alive."⁵⁵ At the same time, however, Milosevic had asked Jovic to convene a Presidency meeting in order to give the JNA the authority to strike. Fatefully, Kadijevic proposed to Jovic that the "military be ready to take action if necessary, but only after it is authorized to do so (by the Presidency)." Jovic was unable to deliver a decisive vote, even after the JNA showed an amazing film documenting the arms shipments to the Croatians, including clandestine footage of Spegelj acquired

through Jagar. Bosnian Presidency member Bogic Bogicevic, an ethnic Serb, still held the deciding vote and would not cast it for military action against the Croatians. Jovic and Kadijevic were forced to accept from Tudjman's delegation another compromise whereby the Croatians promised to demobilize their reserve MUP units in return for the JNA returning to peacetime readiness levels.⁵⁶ All the detailed intelligence the JNA had gathered, all of the planning, all of the propaganda and psychological operations it had put together had gone for naught. As Silber and Little put it:

Kadijevic's indecision, his refusal to act without political authority, played into Milosevic's hands. Jovic had known of Spegelj's arms smuggling and distribution program since mid-October. It had taken nearly four months to reach even this inconclusive compromise. Throughout this time, the Federal authorities never once mounted a serious effort to prevent the arming of the Croats.⁵⁷

Unlike the JNA, Milosevic—the man behind Jovic—had read the handwriting on the wall and acted on it.

. . . Milosevic had already decided: if Yugoslavia could not be salvaged and centralized, then the Croats, like the Slovenes, would be allowed to go. But they would not be allowed to take with them those parts of their republic that Milosevic's men considered Serb territory.⁵⁸

The JNA—and Kadijevic in particular—still refused to acknowledge the death of Yugoslavia.⁵⁹ Only the disasters of war would be able to force them to accept Milosevic's view. Before that happened, the irresolute Kadijevic would be given one more chance to deliver a knockout blow to the secessionist republics.

Kadijevic and the JNA Falter Again, March 1991⁶⁰

The JNA wasted no time after its latest political defeat in beginning to plan again, this time not just for the disarmament of the "paramilitaries" but for a full state

of emergency and the outright removal of the offending governments. In its angry view, Slovenia and Croatia were intentionally paralyzing Federal institutions in order to create a fait accompli, as Jovic and the army described it, in order to dismember Yugoslavia without going through the constitution or holding referendums. On 11 February, Kadijevic broached to Jovic a new draft statement and proposals on military intervention, although he did not explicitly mention a state of emergency.⁶¹ On 25 February, he returned with the JNA's contingency plan to implement a state of emergency. Jovic writes:

The military's basic idea consists of relying firmly on the forces that are for Yugoslavia in all parts of the country and through combined political and military measures overthrowing the government first in Croatia and then in Slovenia.

The plan also included organizing pro-Yugoslav political rallies and demonstrations in all of the republics to support the military and oppose the secessionists. The chain of events would include:

- A Federal Presidency decision to authorize the JNA action
- An ultimatum to the Croatians that they turn over General Spegelj for indictment, surrender all of the Croatian weapons, and disband the Croatian MUP reserve police
- In the event of Croatian refusal, JNA actions to take Spegelj and the weapons by force.

A military government would then be established and new institutions formed from "uncompromised" citizens. The Federal Presidency would decide the process thereafter for such matters as elections and referendums on secession.⁶² Jovic, although he generally supported the military's plan, doubted there would be sufficient votes in the Presidency for its approval, and temporized about committing himself to anything. Milosevic, however, endorsed the plan, except that the Serbian president felt the military should deal with Croatia only and leave Slovenia alone. Milosevic told Jovic that the JNA should quit

worrying about winning a majority vote in the Presidency and just go ahead on the authority of the supporters, removing the rest as part of its program.⁶³

Jovic, however, feared that without Presidency agreement the plan would fail or the military would refuse to act. He observed that the "military is in big trouble because there is no political 'backing' for what it is supposed to do. It is afraid of taking action without 'backing'." Jovic also worried that the multi-ethnic JNA might unravel if its leaders acted without political cover. His fears led him, on 28 February, to consider an alternative: He could resign and disable the Presidency in the hope that a Presidential vacuum would permit the JNA to act on its own authority.⁶⁴

Then, after Belgrade erupted in anti-Milosevic street demonstrations and violence on 9 March, Jovic called a Presidency meeting on the 12th to consider the JNA state of emergency proposal. The meeting stretched into an intense series of meetings over the next four days and presented the JNA with its last chance to try to save Federal Yugoslavia. To underscore its view of the emergency facing their government, the JNA insisted that the Federal leaders meet in the cold and intimidating wartime Supreme Command bunker in a Belgrade suburb.⁶⁵ Not even Jovic knew exactly what the JNA was going to propose. Kadijevic set forth a five-point plan progression that began with the declaration of a state of emergency throughout the SFRY. The disarming of "illegal" armed forces would follow, then referendums in secessionist republics in which "nationalities" rather than the republic at large could vote on secession, and, within six months, the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of multiparty elections. Led by their Croatian member, Mesic, the Presidential majority rejected Kadijevic's proposal and worked to water it down, asking for modifications, proposing public statements that negotiations be intensified, stipulating everything should be achieved through political means, and seeking to remove anything that would allow the army to act. Kadijevic called their statements

... the road into the abyss . . . Declarations of principles that are not accompanied by adequate concrete measures and do not ensure the

realization of those principles are worthless. I am no longer willing to participate in such a dance.⁶⁶

Although he would one day be accused of acting as a Serbian nationalist rather than a Yugoslav patriot, it was the hard-headed General Adzic, chief of the JNA General Staff, who seemed to state the army's case most eloquently and damned the indecision of the Presidency as Yugoslavia crumbled.⁶⁷

Thus far, we (the JNA) have constantly acted exclusively in accordance with the law . . . I think that we are the only remaining element of society that is executing your decisions . . . Please do not misunderstand my criticism, but no one respects and carries out your decisions and your public announcements anymore. On the contrary, they have become an object of evasion by people who hold power, by those who are threatened by them—most of all, by the people in all our regions and republics; they have become an object of pity because in practical terms no one respects and carried out those decisions.

The JNA has no purpose without Yugoslavia. Accordingly, no one should think that we are fighting for the Army—we are fighting for Yugoslavia . . . I do not know whether anyone really thinks that we will preserve the country in this way, the way things are going, but we think that there must be resolution regarding what will become of Yugoslavia. . . . I personally think that we must be more energetic, that it is high time, if we really want to save Yugoslavia, that we also adopt concrete measures that will mean that. We have offered such measures.

Imposing a state of emergency is not to the detriment of democracy. I still cannot understand what some people mean by democracy. For some people, anything that destroys Yugoslavia is democratic and anything that preserves it is antidemocratic.⁶⁸

Despite the angry pleas of Jovic and the JNA, the Presidency voted down the proposal.

A furious Kadijevic, accompanied by Adzic, told Jovic and Milosevic the following day that "We are going to stage a military coup. Regardless of whether or not the proposed decision is adopted." Kadijevic said that they would depose the Federal Government and the Presidency and remove the republican governments if they opposed the coup. The army would then give all sides a deadline of six months to reach an agreement on the future of Yugoslavia, holding the line itself against the state's disintegration until then. Jovic—utterly frustrated by the outcome of the Presidency meeting the day before—had already decided to resign and implement his plan to paralyze the Presidency; he promised the generals he would give them "room to act."⁶⁹

The next three days of Presidency meetings resembled the first day, as compromises over the JNA proposal flew back and forth across the table. The state of emergency had been dropped, and now the members and the JNA were haggling over even an increase in the army's readiness level. The Croatians and the Slovenes remained adamant that they would not tolerate any use of the JNA in the Federation's dealings with them. The Presidency was stuck between two bad choices. As Macedonian Presidency member Vasil Tupurkovski perceptively stated, "...we face two risks . . . that without these measures civil war will break out, and second, that after these measures are adopted, civil war will break out."⁷⁰ At the end of the last meeting on 15 March, Jovic resigned as President of the Presidency, followed by the Milosevic-controlled members from Vojvodina and Montenegro. Milosevic also managed to force the Kosovar member to withdraw. The ball was in the army's court.⁷¹

Despite the heat and daring of their arguments in the Presidency meetings, the JNA leadership contemplated the civil war that intervention would precipitate, peered into that abyss, and drew back. On 17 March, the JNA senior leadership told an incredulous Jovic and Milosevic their conclusion that JNA intervention would be a disaster, both internally and diplomatically. The JNA presented two options;

the first more or less repeated earlier JNA plans for a state of emergency but now included a detailed analysis of the catastrophic events which were likely to occur under this scenario. The second option represented a JNA capitulation which would blandly state that :

... the SFRY Presidency did not adopt the decision proposed by the military leadership, but that independently of that the military affirms its constitutional responsibilities to defend the territorial integrity and constitutional order of the country. The people are declaratively guaranteed peace and security.

Jovic could not believe that the JNA had taken the Serb leadership and the Presidency through the events of the previous five days only to come up with such a vacuous statement. As he put it,

... A very strange outcome. If they were bearing in mind all the analyses back when they told us that they had decided on a military coup, it is unclear how they decided on this. If they were

not keeping all that in mind, then they are frivolous.

When they presented to us the astounding analysis of what military intervention in Croatia would mean from the viewpoint of resistance in Croatia, what the reaction would be like in the other republics, Europe, and the world, and what kind of repercussions that would have on the economy and on the army itself, I was amazed that they could even conceive of such a plan, if their analysis is accurate. And for the most part it is realistic.⁷²

The JNA had squandered its last chance—however slim it was—of saving a federal Yugoslavia. As Jovic wrote, “All possibility of defending Yugoslavia has been lost.”⁷³

Appendix 1

JNA Intelligence on Croatian Military Planning

Jovic detailed in his journal on 12 October what clearly is intelligence derived from the KOS-Jagar collection effort against Spegelj; in fact, in some places Jovic appears to be quoting transcripts of the audiotapes Jagar made of Spegelj. The information appears to have been included in some kind of broader JNA assessment on the current state of Croatian armament and separatism. The assessment provides a flavor of what the JNA knew and/or believed about Croatian intentions at this time, as well as demonstrating biases in its analysis. The entire journal entry reads:

The Croatian leadership continues to work feverishly on consolidating a separatist-coalition block with the new authorities in Slovenia and on destroying the defensive system of the country and the JNA, as the only obstacle to the definitive breakup of Yugoslavia. Feeling that the time has come for a radical showdown with the Army, the innermost leadership circle of Manolic (Josip Manolic, Croatian Prime Minister), Boljkovac (Josip Boljkovac, Croatian Internal Affairs Minister), Spegelj (General Martin Spegelj, Croatian Defense Minister), and Seks (deputy Croatian assembly leader), led by F. Tudjman, has drawn up a secret "Croatian Defense Plan," with which the most responsible figures in the new Croatian Government are intimately familiar.

The plan is based on the general mobilization of all Croats inside the country and abroad, on a platform of extreme anticommunism and Serbophobia. In order to achieve the fullest possible effect, an agreement has been reached with the Slovene leadership whereby that republic will first promulgate amendments on suspending Federal regulations and forming republican armed forces by taking over the staffs and units of territorial defense, and while that is going on M. Spegelj will complete the projects that are under way and form Croatian armed forces on the same model. In connection with this, Spegelj has spoken with J. Jansa on several

occasions and practically guaranteed the drafting of a joint defense plan, in which one of the priority tasks is to procure arms as soon as possible.

Spegelj's assessments served as the basis for the drafting of the plan: that the JNA does not dare intervene right now because such an action against Croatia and Slovenia would be ponderous, complicated, and expensive; that the Army is incapable of carrying out a brilliant operation like the military intervention in Poland and Turkey, "because things have gone too far" and it would be forced to opt for classical military intervention like Iraq in Kuwait; that the Army, together with Yugoslavia, is dying and that "its helplessness is greater than its rage and desire"; that the JNA is currently behaving like a "worn-out nag" and a "mangy horse."

Because of this, the plan (Jovic apparently is referring to the Croatian Defense Plan) specifies that the JNA be compromised, humiliated, and degraded by all means, thus shattering its unity, and because of this all the media will add the prefix "so-called" to the name of the JNA, while the tone of reporting will be such that it upsets and "instills fear in the citizens of sovereign, independent Croatia," in order to provoke their revolt against the JNA. Related to this is the fact that "a corporal has become minister of defense" (apparently a reference to Jansa), even though in Slovenia they could have found some retired general for that post, which is why a reservist major is also being appointed commander of the TO.

Through all this, Franjo Tudjman has continued to develop his policy of a so-called "zig-zag line," the essence of which is continuously accusing Belgrade, the JNA, and the Serbs of being the "screenwriters" of the breakup of Yugoslavia, in order to thus put the Army in a position where "it is afraid of us, not we of it." At the same time, the constant emphasis on the "danger" from Serbs reflects a desire to instill fear in part of the Serb populace and create the

impression among them that the only way out is self-organizing, taking up arms, and leaning toward the chetniks, all of which is in turn used to frighten the Croats into thinking that "the Serbs are going to shoot at them." Because of this, the position that has been adopted in this context is that a referendum on the future structure of Yugoslavia is completely out of the question, that the HDZ will dictate such conditions, and that its plan for a confederal structure will be posited in such a way that it will be unacceptable to Serbs from the very outset.

In the event that the Army does move to intervene, the HDZ plans to call on all soldiers of Croat nationality to refuse to follow orders and to undertake armed resistance to the military's actions, whereby the volunteer youth units (Comment: these proved fruitless and the concept was abandoned) will be especially important since they will be used to raid command posts and staffs, barracks, weapons depots, and other military structures. Based on this plan, the armed structures of the Croatian MUP have been assigned to so-called Croatian armed police formations, which have been joined by former special units of the Croatian

republican SUP (Secretariat for Internal Affairs), to which have been added another 400 to 600 constables and discharged police officers from the SAP (Serbian Autonomous Province) Kosovo. Some of these forces have already been deployed to tighten security at public buildings that are especially important to the republic, and some at MUP buildings in Zagreb.

All of this indicates the determination of the Croatian leadership to achieve, in the shortest possible time and no matter what the cost, the plan for creating its own armed forces and breaking up the JNA, in connection with which numerous concrete measures and activities have already been undertaken, from acquiring a large quantity of arms and ammunition to attempts to recruit individual members of the JNA.⁷⁴

Much of the JNA assessment appears to have been accurate. See section above, "The Organization and Arming of the Croatian Government Forces," as well as the discussion of Spegelj's contingency planning to initiate a confrontation with the JNA and coordinate defenses with the Slovene Defense Ministry.

Appendix 2
Federal Secretariat of National
Defense Report to the Federal Presidency
on Import of Arms and the Formation of
Illegal Paramilitary Units

Originated 11 December 1990
Presented to Presidency 9 January 1991

The report asserts that in several parts of the SFRY, arms are being imported and procured illegally and armed structures are being formed in an unauthorized fashion, beyond the scope of the JNA and territorial defense. It's obvious that the goal of all such activities is to create, contrary to the SFRY Constitution and federal laws, paramilitary organizations that would be under the command of republican institutions or individual parties and organized groups.

- Intensive work is under way in Croatia to create separate armed forces in order to violently threaten the constitutionally established order of the SFRY.
- With this goal in mind, the illegal acquisition of large quantities of arms and ammunition is being organized and implemented.

Arms and ammunition are being intensively imported into the territory of Croatia contrary to the law, governing the trade in arms and military equipment and the customs procedure. For example over the last two months 10 barges of the "Casmatrans" RO (work organization) have arrived transporting arms and ammunition from military depots in Hungary. The weaponry and ammunition was acquired by way of the "Astra" Work Organization for Foreign Trade in Zagreb. Members of the Croatian Government (the ministers of defense, internal affairs, and foreign affairs) and their departments have been directly involved in the illegal acquisition of these arms and ammunition abroad and their delivery into the country. In this process, special protection and armed escorts have been provided from the border Crossing to the unloading points (the "St. Nedelja" warehouse near Samobor, "Mostine" near Split, and others). Arms have been illegally imported in other ways from other countries as well. This illegal importation into Croatia has provided several tens of thousands of completely

new "Kalashnikov"-type automatic rifles and other weapons, as well as several million rounds of live ammunition.

- In addition, negotiations are currently under way in Croatia with individual foreign exporters of arms concerning the acquisition of antitank, anti-aircraft, and other types of weaponry.

This illegally acquired weaponry and ammunition has been secretly distributed across the territory of the republic and provided exclusively to persons of Croat nationality who are confirmed HDZ activists. Agencies of the Ministry of Defense and individual members of local HDZ committees have been involved in this while security has been provided by members of special Ministry of Internal Affairs units. In this way alone, tens of thousands of persons have been armed and provided with up to 150 rounds of live ammunition each.

Armed, illegal paramilitary organizations have also been created throughout the entire territory of Croatia through coordinated actions by government institutions and leading activists of the HDZ, within that political party, which is registered for legal political activity and is in power. The basic criteria for the selection of the persons filling these organizations are: national affiliation (Croat); an orientation toward Croatian statehood and toward denying Yugoslav confirmation through the execution of right-wing political missions; and the willingness to follow orders unconditionally. In that regard, oaths are also administered. Complex plans have been formulated for the use of those armed structures against JNA units and institutions at garrisons on Croatian territory. The constant monitoring of units, structures and activities in JNA garrisons has been organized. Addresses are being gathered and lists of JNA officers are being drawn up, their political orientation is being appraised, and measures are being formulated to liquidate individual responsible officers in order to deprive units of their leaders and prevent their use. Plans are being made to liquidate the officers who are called to units at the first alarm signal, as well as

military couriers and summoners. For the sake of deterrence, various measures are also being planned involving reprisals against their wives and children, all the way up to liquidation. For the execution of such missions, terrorist-commando units have already been formed, including groups for so-called quiet liquidation. The executors, based on compiled "black lists," have performed reconnaissance of military personnel housing and know whom they must liquidate.

Measures have been planned for keeping units from leaving their barracks by erecting various barricades and obstacles, including machine-gun nests near military structures. Measures have also been formulated for turning off electric power and water, cutting phone connections, and taking control of relay nodes, in order to disorganize the leadership and command system.

- Active work is also being done on breaking up JNA units from within. To this end, individual officers are also being recruited for cooperation with the HDZ military structures, and they are being given intelligence and subversion tasks.
- All these activities have been intensively under way for several months now.

Based on the manner of organizing, the planned goals, and the form of activities, it can be concluded without a doubt that this is a terrorist, party-based paramilitary organization whose existence is in conflict not only with the Constitution and laws of the SFRY, but also with the international conventions and acts recognized by the SFRY.

Despite the fact that these HDZ measures and activities are being pursued secretly, because of their grand scale they have not gone unnoticed, especially in ethnically mixed areas. The Serb population is reacting to this strongly, and part of it is arming itself illegally, compiling lists of active and armed members of the illegal HDZ groups, and undertaking other countermeasures, all of which increases the possibility of direct interethnic armed conflict.

The SSNO report then stresses that during discussion of the events in Knin Krajina at the session of 2 October 1990, the SFRY Presidency, among other things, asked for a detailed analysis of the causes that led to interethnic armed conflict and set out the obligations of all competent institutions in finding peaceful ways to resolve the conflict situation, as well as demanding that the institutions of the Republic of Croatia examine and eliminate the causes that are instilling fear, resistance, and even mass civil disobedience, including the withdrawal of special-purpose police units, the release of those who have been wrongly detained, the legal return of illegally confiscated weapons, the dismantling of barricades and sentries, the opening up of communications and the restoration of public law and order, and the provision of guarantees of the freedom and safety of all citizens. It is noted that these demands by the SFRY Presidency have essentially not yet been complied with.

In the territory of Knin Krajina, armed groups have been formed for which weapons are being acquired in various illegal ways. In that region, there are several thousand rifles and pistols of various types and even some handheld rocket launchers, while significant quantities of explosives have been taken from work organizations and are being used to build improvised explosive devices.

The armed people of Serb nationality have been organized into armed structures and staffs for use on specific communication routes. These structures are engaged in obstructing communications, monitoring movement and continuous observation and reporting, which all comes together at a corresponding center in Knin. Lately, terrorist-commando operations have been carried out, the perpetrators of which have not been identified. Only those who have stolen JNA weapons have been identified. The competent institutions of justice have launched an investigation against 16 persons on the charge of seizing weapons from a military transport at the Knin train station. Although all of those weapons were returned, the investigation is under way and its aim is to identify who organized that act.

Viewed on the whole, the situation in Knin Krajina is such that all authority is being exercised by local

institutions, independently of the republican institutions in Croatia, which makes it possible for the new paramilitary organization to act freely. At the same time that this paramilitary organization was being created, the HDZ was illegally arming and organizing the Croat population in surrounding areas, which creates the conditions for armed conflict in this area.

... the unauthorized importation of arms is also taking place in the SR of Slovenia. Certain quantities of antitank and automatic weapons have been ordered, and possibilities for the importation of anti-aircraft missiles have also been examined. They are openly threatening to use these formations against JNA units. As far as is known, however, no secret party-based armed terrorist formations have been created.

According to the SSNO report, a large quantity of infantry and other weaponry is also being imported into Kosovo by various illegal means. The money for this is being obtained in part by various criminal activities (burglaries, thefts, drug trafficking, etc.). Although reliable data on the number of weapons and people involved in secret military organizing in Kosovo are not available, the estimated number is so great that it constitutes a real threat to peace in that part of the country. The conclusion to the SSNO report states that the provided information indicates that paramilitary formations have been created or are in the process of being created in several parts of the country, beyond the scope of the legitimate and unified armed forces of the SFRY and under the command of institutions and individuals beyond the scope of the armed forces leadership and command system established by the SFRY Constitution and federal regulations. The aim of the activities and measures that their leaders are undertaking is to violently disrupt the constitutional order of the SFRY, or rather large-scale armed rebellions. Thus, they are committing serious criminal acts that are punishable under the SFRY Criminal Code (Articles 114 and 124 of the SFRY Criminal Code). Such acts are punishable even if they are limited to preparatory work. The

existence of armed structures constitutes a constant danger to the constitutional order of the SFRY. Bearing in mind that these armed structures are being created within the framework of mutually antagonistic national political parties and their leadership, they constitute a serious and immediate danger of the outbreak of armed interethnic conflict and civil war on the soil of Yugoslavia.

- That is why this situation must be resolved immediately and unconditionally in a constitutional and legal manner.

Even though the JNA's criminal prosecutors, which are tracking the cited activities are obligated to institute criminal proceedings in keeping with their official duties (Article 236 of the SFR Constitution and Article 6 of the Law on Military Prosecution), considering all the consequences that could be catastrophic for the fate of the country, they have notified the federal secretary for national defense of all this.

All the analyses and assessments indicate that criminal proceedings and the obligatory public trial would uncover facts that are so shocking that they would provoke reactions in other parts of the country that would be impossible to control.

That is why the SSNO believes that it would be better in terms of the overall political situation in the country for the SFRY Presidency, availing itself of its constitutional authorities, including the right to drop charges, to resolve the situation by adopting an order on the disbanding of all armed structures and on disarming them with corresponding JNA authorization.

Finally, it is warned that if this approach is not adopted, the JNA criminal prosecutors will be forced to institute and pursue criminal proceedings in keeping with their official duties, with all the ensuing consequences.⁷⁵

Appendix 3

Federal Presidency Order on Surrendering Weapons

(TEXT) Belgrade, 9 Jan (TANJUG) —The SFRY Presidency, it has been reported, at its session today presided over by President Dr. Borisav Jovic, came to the following conclusion:

"The SFRY Presidency, in accordance with its constitutional obligations and competence from article 313 of the SFRY constitution, during examination of the situation in the sphere of protection of the SFRY constitutional order and developments directly threatening the order, came to the conclusion that in certain parts of the country weapons from some neighboring and other countries are being secretly imported and distributed to citizens according to their national and political affiliations, which represents a flagrant violation of SFRY laws and which is aided by some organizations in foreign countries, with full cognizance of their government bodies. This means that within certain political parties illegal paramilitary armed groups are being formed which, by their existence and planned terrorist activities, constitute a direct threat of armed rebellion and large-scale intranational conflicts with far-reaching consequences for the security of our citizens, sovereignty, and the integrity of the country.

In order to thwart such activities and make possible peaceful democratic processes within the SFRY and implementation of the initiated reform, the SFRY Presidency, at its session on 9 January 1991, issued the following order:

1. Under the order, all armed groups on the territory of the SFRY are to be disbanded which are not included within the SFRY armed forces or within internal affairs bodies, and whose organization is not based on Federal regulations.
2. The weapons and equipment referred to in point 1 of this order are to be handed over immediately to the nearest units or institutions of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) regardless of whether they belong to individual organs in the republics or are in the possession of various groups or individuals.

3. Individuals who possess military weapons, ammunition, and other combat equipment are obliged to hand them over to the nearest JNA unit or institution upon which they will be issued with a receipt.

4. The obligations from points 1-3 of this order must be carried out within 10 days of the order's effect date.

Individuals who fully comply with the order within the set deadline will not be called to account. Measures envisaged by law will be taken against individuals who fail to fulfill their obligations from the order.

5. Under a special order from the SFRY Presidency and in connection with the above order, the JNA will take measures to protect all citizens on the entire SFRY territory if other competent organs are not in the position to do the same.

6. In line with its powers from the Law on National Defense (The SFRY Official Gazette, NO. 21/82) The Federal Secretariat for National Defense will oversee the implementation of the order.

7. The JNA units and institutions to be appointed by the Federal Secretariat for National Defense will have the task of ensuring that the order is carried out.

8. The text of the order is to be published in all public information media.

9. The order comes into effect on the day of its adoption.

((SIGNED)) The Presidency of the SFRY
President Dr. Borisav Jovic
BELGRADE, 9 JANUARY 1991

Chart 1
Organization and Select Commanders, Federal Secretariat for National Defense and Yugoslav People's Army, 1990-1991

Federal Secretariat for National Defense (*Savezni Sekretariat za Narodnu Odbranu-SSNO*)

Secretary
Army General Veljko Kadijevic, May 1988 to January 1992 (Mixed Croat-Serb)

Deputy Secretary
Admiral Stane Brovet, 1988 to 1992 (Slovene)

Assistant Federal Secretary for Security
Lieutenant Colonel General Marko Negovanovic, 1989 to April or May 1991 (Serbian)

Major General Aleksandar Vasiljevic, April or May 1991 to 1992 (Serbian)

Assistant Federal Secretary for Morale and Legal Affairs
Colonel-General Simeon Buncic, 1988 to April or May 1991 (Serbian)

Lieutenant Colonel General Marko Negovanovic, April or May 1991 to December 1991 (Serbian)

General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army (*Generalstab Jugoslovenske narodne armije*)

Chief of the General Staff
Colonel General Blagoje Adzic, 1989 to January 1992 (Bosnian Serb)

Colonel General Zivota Panic, September 1991 to 1992 (Serbian)

Third Military District—Skopje (III. *Vojno oblast*)

Commander
Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, 1986 to July 1991 (Serbian)

Lieutenant Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac, July 1991 to January 1992 (Serbian)
(Promoted to Colonel General January 1992)

Fifth Military District—Zagreb (V. *Vojno oblast*)

Commander
Colonel General Konrad Kolsek, 1989 to July 1991 (Slovene)

Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, July 1991 to January 1992 (Serbian)

Military Maritime District—Split (*Vojno pomorska oblast-VPO*)

Commander
Vice Admiral Mile Kandic, 1990 to 1992 (Bosnian Serb)
(Promoted Admiral-three stars, December 1991)

Air and Air Defense Force (*Ratno vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdusna odbrana-RV I PVO*)

Commander
Colonel General Anton Tus, 1985 to June 1991 (Croatian)

Lieutenant Colonel General Zvonko Jurjevic, June 1991 to 1992 (Bosnian Croat)

First Military District—Belgrade (I. *Vojno oblast*)

Commander
Colonel General Aleksandar Spirovski, 1989 to September 1991 (Macedonian)

Endnotes, Annex 5

¹ The following account relies heavily on Borisav Jovic's journal, *The Last Days of the SFRY: Daily Notes From the Period 15 May 1989 to 8 July 1992*, as the only primary source detailing the decision making processes and planning at the highest levels of the Federal Government. Jovic was the only senior political official whom the military briefed in full on their planning for operations against the separatist Croatian and Slovenian Governments.

Therefore, although many of the sections below may often rely on a single source, that source is a singularly reliable one.

² The Federal Secretary for National Defense (*Savezni Sekretarijat za Narodnu Odbranu—SSNO*) was the highest military body in the country. The JNA General Staff reported directly to the SSNO. The SSNO reported directly to the Federal Presidency, the national command authority. In time of war, the Presidency became known as the Supreme Command (*Vrhovna Komanda*) and the SSNO and the JNA General Staff became the staff of the Supreme Command. See Annex 12: "National Command Authority in Yugoslavia."

³ The JNA security service's formal title was "Security Directorate of the Federal Secretariat for National Defense." The term "KOS" (*Kontraobaveštajna služba—Counterintelligence Service*) refers to an early post-World War II designator for the Security Directorate. In 1990-1991, KOS was directly subordinate to the Federal defense secretary.

⁴ For a description of the creation and growth of the HDZ, see Chapter 6, "A Croatian Rifle on a Croatian Shoulder," Silber and Little, pp. 82-91.

⁵ Damir Dukic "KOS is Waking Up Sleepy Friends," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 10 May 1994, pp. 6-7. Kelecevic became chief of the Fifth Military District Security in 1987, after working in security in Croatia for twenty years. Boris Komadina, "Marriage of All Serbian Spies in Plitvice," *Danas* 22 February 1994, pp. 14-15.

⁶ Kelecevic reportedly had "an excellent feeling for organization and exceptional energy." Boris Komadina, "Marriage of All Serbian Spies in Plitvice," *Danas* 22 February 1994 pp. 14-15. Kelecevic apparently did well enough for him to remain an active duty officer throughout the Croatian war, and became the chief of staff in the JNA 5th Corps in spring 1992. He served throughout the Bosnian war in the 5th Corps' successor formation, the Bosnian Serb Army's 1st Krajina Corps. Kelecevic, promoted twice during the war, continues, as a Lieutenant Colonel General (two stars), to serve as the post-war corps chief of staff.

⁷ Sabolovic was a senior officer in the Counterintelligence Group (KOG) of the 5th Air and Air Defense Force Corps. Sabolovic was an ethnic Croat. Dukic, "KOS is Waking Up Sleepy Friends," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 10 May 1994 pp. 6-7. Damir Dukic "A Muzzle for Labrador," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 11 May 1994, p. 6. The group had two other prominent controlled agents or case officers. Radenko Radojcic, a former official in the Central Committee of the Croatian League of Communists, appears to have acted as the group's link to Sabolovic, together with Slavko Malobabic, who was a former chief of staff to Stojan Stojcevic, head of the Croatian League of Communists apparently until the beginning of 1990. Radojcic and Malobabic reportedly had the task of recruiting additional sub-agents into the group. Damir Dukic "A Muzzle for Labrador," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 11 May 1994, p. 6. Radojcic reportedly had full access to the archives of the State Security Service (SDB) of the Croatian MUP, which probably gave him considerable leverage over many otherwise unwilling assets. Uros Komlenovic and Filip Svarm, "The Secrets of a Zemun Cell," *Vreme* 21 December 1992, p. 17. See also Kresimir Meler, "The Truth About the Labrador Group," *Delo* 27 September 1993, p. 5. An interview with Branko Tarzivuk.

⁸ Kresimir Meler, "The Truth About the Labrador Group," *Delo* 27 September 1993, p.5. An interview with Branko Tarzivuk. Prior to his work for the KOS as part of Labrador, Tarzivuk worked for the State Security Service of the Croatian MUP.

For example, while still in the JNA, Croatian Lieutenant Colonel Mile Dedakovic, later Croatian commander at Vukovar, claimed

that in 1991 he passed information on the disposition of the Fifth MD to the ZNG, but left the JNA after the Labrador Group discovered him. Veceslav Kocjan, "Playing Around With Money and Weapons," *Danas* 31 December 1991, pp. 20-21. An interview with Mile "Hawk" Dedakovic.

⁹ Kresimir Meler, "The Truth About the Labrador Group," *Delo* 27 September 1993, p. 5. An interview with Branko Tarzivuk.

¹⁰ According to one Belgrade newsmagazine, the Croatians' partial cracking of Labrador in October 1991 came about when Lieutenant Colonel Sabolovic departed Zagreb in September 1991 and passed his memo book to his superior, Mirko Martic. On 15 September, however, Croatian troops captured the Air and Air Defense Force headquarters in Zagreb, seizing computer codes, disks, and Sabolovic's memo book, which Martic had failed to destroy. It took the Croatian MUP one month to exploit the captured information and announce the arrests of part of the Labrador network. Uros Komlenovic and Filip Svarm, "The Secrets of a Zemun Cell," *Vreme* 21 December 1992, p. 17.

¹¹ Uros Komlenovic and Filip Svarm, "The Secrets of a Zemun Cell," *Vreme* 21 December 1992, p. 17. Also see Kresimir Meler, "The Truth About the Labrador Group," *Delo* 27 September 1993, p. 5. An interview with Branko Tarzivuk.

¹² Damir Dukic "A Muzzle for Labrador," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 11 May 1994, p. 6.

¹³ See Jovic entry for 28 September 1989 and Jovic entry for 19 January 1990.

¹⁴ Jovic entry for 26 April 1990.

¹⁵ Jovic entry for 26 April 1990.

¹⁶ Jovic's notes do not directly mention collusion with the JNA over the confiscation of the TO weapons between 26 April and 16-17 May, before he assumed the Presidency. However, Kadijevic and Jovic consulted regularly in private on concerns over the northwestern republics and Kadijevic often briefed Jovic on things he did not present to any other presidency member. In addition, there is a cryptic note by Jovic on 3 May 1990 that:

Veljko (Kadijevic) tells me that his conversation with Bogic Bogicevic (Bosnian Federal Presidency member) was successful. I had no need to talk to Slobodan (Milosevic). All of this is in keeping with our policy of preserving Yugoslavia, we only have to see what that will look like in practice. Then we will consult.

Jovic entry for 3 May 1990.

Kadijevic's conversation with Bogicevic almost certainly was related to the Federal Presidency decision announced on 16 May that provided the pretext to confiscate the TO weapons. Kadijevic probably presented evidence to Bogicevic about the forming of republican armies in Croatia and Slovenia or other information that would indicate the weapons were not in safe hands. As further evidence of advance planning, Jovic's 15 May inauguration speech was a perfect lead in for the JNA confessions to begin the next day.

¹⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 15 May 1990.

¹⁸ This council consisted of the Federal Secretary for National Defense, the Federal Secretary for Internal Affairs, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, and a chairman, drawn from the Presidency. It dealt with national security and internal security issues.

¹⁹ Jovic's entry for 16 May 1990 does not explicitly state that confiscation of the TO weapons was on the agenda. However, it is clear from the context that Jovic intended the resolution that was adopted to be used to provide him and the JNA justification for their move against the TO forces. Jovic stated on 21 May that "(Slovenian President) Kucan and Drnovsek came to discuss the seizure of Slovene TO weapons, based on the Presidency decision that the weapons be seized from all republic territorial defenses and placed under JNA control." Jovic entry for 21 May 1990. Drnovsek, however, maintained that he was never informed and

that there never had been a vote on the confiscations. See Volume I, Section I on Slovenia, "The JNA's Spring 1990 Efforts to Disable the Slovenian Territorial Defense."

²⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 16 May 1990.

²¹ Jovic entry for 17 May 1990.

²² It is unclear whether TO stocks in Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia were also confiscated, although the Presidency decision called for this.

²³ Svetoslav Spasojevic, "Whether A Coup d' Etat Was Prepared," *Nin* 19 June 1992, pp. 55-58. An interview with then Major General Aleksandar Vasiljevic.

²⁴ Kadijevic and Jovic met on 4 July 1990 to discuss how to ensure that they would have enough votes on the Federal Presidency to get approval for a state of emergency that would allow the army to act. Kadijevic claimed that even if the Presidency was unable to get a majority, the JNA would carry out the orders of only part of the Presidency to implement the state of emergency. Kadijevic's bold statement would later echo hollowly when he failed to grasp such a chance in March 1991. Jovic entry for 4 July 1990.

²⁵ Jovic entry for 13 July 1990.

²⁶ Jovic entry for 4 September 1990. Jovic's note indicates his disapproval of the JNA's approach when he states his belief that the separatist republics had already violated the constitution time and time again and provided more than enough justification for a JNA move. Jovic's disgust and anger at Kadijevic and the JNA's lack of resolve, which he often expressed earlier in his journal, was to become a regular feature of his notes as Kadijevic failed repeatedly to act or to realize that Yugoslavia as Kadijevic knew it could not be saved.

²⁷ Kadijevic told Jovic on 3 October 1990 that only 100 people must be "gotten rid of" under the JNA's plan. Jovic seems to believe that Kadijevic is implying that they would be killed. Jovic entry for 3 October 1990. Given Kadijevic's lack of resolve this is unlikely. Vasiljevic stated in 1992 that the state of emergency planning entailed the arrest of the entire Slovenian and Croatian leadership, but not their "liquidation." Instead, they were all to have been "isolated for a certain period . . . on the territory of Slovenia and Croatia." Svetoslav Spasojevic, "Whether A Coup d' Etat Was Prepared," *Nin* 19 June 1992, pp. 55-58. An interview with then Major General Aleksandar Vasiljevic.

²⁸ Svetoslav Spasojevic, "Whether A Coup d' Etat Was Prepared," *Nin* 19 June 1992, pp. 55-58. An interview with then Major General Aleksandar Vasiljevic. The JNA was particularly concerned about Western intervention in the event of the Croatian and Slovenian Governments being overthrown.

²⁹ For example, KOS assets in Austria reported that a large arms shipment would transit the Hungarian border into Croatia between 8 and 11 October. Vasiljevic personally led the KOS operation to monitor the cross-border shipments, which were supervised by senior Croatian officials and guarded by special police and an estimated 200-300 regular police. Silber and Little p. 110.

³⁰ This account of the KOS-Jagar operation against Spegelj is drawn from Silber and Little pp.110-117, which provides the most complete narrative currently available of the events.

Virovitica was the home garrison of the 288th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade/Fifth Military District.

³¹ Silber and Little p. 111. Kadijevic reportedly heard the first tapes in early October, probably as soon as Vasiljevic had them prepared. Kadijevic then almost certainly shared the information with Jovic. See Appendix 1 for the entry from Jovic's journal on 12 October in which he outlines the information provided by Kadijevic.

³² Kadijevic stated that they needed to be sure that the evidence was solid so that the Croatian officials had no way out legally. Jovic also inquired about whether the JNA intended to charge Janez Jansa, the Slovenian Defense Minister, as well. Kadijevic indicated that:

. . . they are considering that as well, but it seems to him that Jansa has legitimized his actions, that they have acted in accordance with a decision by the Slovene Assembly, while Spegelj and Boljkovac have directly violated Federal laws through their actions; importing arms, recruiting soldiers

and offices, and working to break up the JNA. Thought is being given to arrest them without bloodshed, but they are prepared for that as well.

Jovic entries for 22-23 October 1990.

³³ Jovic stated on 2 November:

The military has conducted a detailed analysis of all the circumstances in connection with the violation of military laws in Croatia. Veljko Kadijevic informs me that there are reasons to spend another few days gathering documentation so that the indictment is unassailable. This involves not only Spegelj, it involves at least a few other participants in this activity.

The negative side is that on the 8th of this month Croatia will adopt its law on national defense, which could legalize these activities.

However, Veljko says, it is crucial that I be in the country when the campaign is launched. My trip . . . hampers their decision-making ability. The military is afraid that in the event of resistance in Croatia, the SFRY Presidency in my absence will be unable to agree on military intervention, and that assumption must be kept in mind.

Strange things: They cannot do anything right now because of themselves, they cannot do anything tomorrow because of me, but all of it is extremely urgent. Veljko claims that there are no other reasons. Why can't they arrest them and then "complete" the indictment? It is obvious that they are hesitating, that they are not resolute.

Jovic entry for 2 November 1990.

³⁴ R. Pavlovic, "Memoirs of the First Man of the Counterintelligence Service," *Politika* 17 July 1992, p. 7.

³⁵ Jovic entry for 23 November 1990, p. 127-128

³⁶ Full text of the interview, Belgrade Tanjug 2 December 1990.

³⁷ R. Pavlovic, "Memoirs of the First Man of the Counterintelligence Service," *Politika* 17 July 1992, p. 7.

³⁸ Jovic entry for 10 December 1990, p. 129.

³⁹ Silber and Little, p. 109.

⁴⁰ Brigadier Ivan Tolj, "There Is No Real Life Without Your Own State," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 1-8. An interview with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman.

⁴¹ Silber and Little p. 109.

⁴² Jovic entry for 9 January 1991; Silber and Little, p. 112.

⁴³ Belgrade Tanjug 10 January 1991.

⁴⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 11 January 1991.

⁴⁵ Vesna Puljak, "Born in the Underground," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 12.

⁴⁶ See description of the actions of MoD volunteer units in Virovitica on 21 January 1991 in Zlatko Djurjevic, "On to Freedom With Patriotism and Courage," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 16 July 1993, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Jovic entry for 15 January 1991.

⁴⁸ The differences became most apparent to Jovic during the climax of the January crisis. Jovic stated on 21 January that:

There is an obvious difference in the positions of the military and of us in Serbia (Slobodan and me). The military is for crushing the Croatian authorities, whereas we are for protecting the Serb population in Krajina, but for now I am not emphasizing that point.

Milosevic had told Jovic earlier in the day that:

As soon as they (the Croatians) declare their secession, we should accept that decision, provided that we hold on to the Krajina opstinas militarily until the people declare by plebiscite where they want to live. He urges me to convince Veljko to accept that variant.

Jovic entry for 21 January 1991.

⁴⁹ Jovic entry for 18 January 1991.

⁵⁰ Jovic entry for 19 January 1991.

⁵¹ Jovic entry for 21 January 1991.

⁵² Belgrade Tanjug 23 January 1991. Text of Federal Secretariat for National Defense statement.

⁵³ Jovic entry for 23 January 1991.

⁵⁴ Jovic entry for 24 January 1991.

⁵⁵ Silber and Little, p. 114.

⁵⁶ Jovic entry for 25 January; Silber and Little pp. 114-117.

⁵⁷ As noted earlier, this was by JNA design in order to allow the Croatians to incriminate themselves and justify a JNA move against them. Of course, this could only work if the JNA was allowed to undertake the operation.

⁵⁸ Silber and Little, p. 117.

⁵⁹ Interestingly, Kadjevic on 25 January refused a request from Milosevic via Jovic to provide military protection to the Croatian Serbs in the Knin Krajina. As Jovic states, "Veljko stubbornly refuses, saying that there is a danger that the military will come to be seen as "Serb," something that he cannot allow." Jovic entry for 25 January 1991.

⁶⁰ This account makes limited use of Silber and Little's dramatic account (Chapter 9: "At Least We Know How to Fight," The Decisive Month, March 1991, pp. 119-133) of the demonstrations in Belgrade and the Presidency meetings at which the JNA pushed for a state of emergency, and instead relies heavily on Jovic's account. Silber and Little appear—from the authors' standpoint—to have overplayed the interaction between the demonstrations and Jovic's call for the Presidency meeting. The drive for the Presidency meeting, although supported by Jovic, appears to have been pushed by the JNA, not the Jovic/Milosevic combination. In addition, they also seem to assume Jovic was Milosevic's puppet, rather than a semi-independent ally. Silber and Little also appear to overemphasize the views of those opposed to JNA intervention. None of the sides had a clear idea of what the other actually wanted or believed—Mesic viewed it through the Croatian prism of a Serbian/JNA communist conspiracy to dominate Yugoslavia, while the JNA believed that foreign-backed Slovenian and Croatian nationalists were attempting to destroy a socialist Yugoslavia. Despite the haze, the JNA's concerns about the demise of Federal Yugoslavia and its bloody consequences—which the Slovenes and the Croatians appeared to ignore—seem to have been underplayed in the debate on the breakup of the Federal state. Many in the international community appear to have wanted it both ways—retention of Yugoslavia, but opposition to the use of force to achieve this. Unfortunately, as in the American Civil War, saving a Federal Yugoslavia without a resort to force would have been impossible. Of course, the use of force at this time could have also made the breakup even more inevitable than it already appeared.

⁶¹ Jovic entry for 11 February 1991.

⁶² Jovic entry for 25 February 1991.

⁶³ Jovic entry for 28 February 1991.

⁶⁴ Jovic entry for 28 February 1991.

⁶⁵ Silber and Little pp. 124-125. The JNA's attempt to constitute the Presidency as the Supreme Command was an attempt to give added legitimacy to the hoped for Presidency decision.

⁶⁶ Jovic entry for 12 March.

⁶⁷ Interestingly, Adzic stated during his monologue:

On the other hand, do not let it be thought that I have arguments for the northwestern parts of the country only. Support for democracy—or what is being called democracy in the streets of Belgrade—is being used to seek the disbanding of the JNA and the formation of a Serbian army; in this regard, they are no different from the others who advocate republican armies and the breakup of the JNA.

Jovic entry for 12 March 1991.

⁶⁸ Jovic entry for 12 March.

⁶⁹ Jovic entry for 13 March.

⁷⁰ Quotation from Jovic entry for 15 March 1991.

⁷¹ Jovic entries for 13-15 March. Mesic—as Vice President of the Presidency, together with Prime Minister Ante Markovic's Federal Executive Council, attempted to keep the Federal Presidency and Government running during the Serb and JNA boycott, with partial success.

⁷² Interestingly, Jovic also states—contrary to many later assessments—that,

We did not pressure them to stage a military coup. They hid from us their intention to do so. I, for example, had no idea that that was the aim of the decisions proposed to the Supreme Command.

Jovic entry for 17 March 1991.

⁷³ Jovic entry for 22 March 1991. On 22 March, Jovic was still livid at the JNA decision, and continued to mull exactly what the military leadership had been thinking. His assessment below probably was accurate:

I tried long and hard to understand why the military had done such a somersault overnight. It is possible that they had not adequately analyzed the difference between acting on the basis of a legal decision by the Presidency and the imposition of a state of emergency and the forcible seizure of the weapons on the one hand and a military coup on the other hand, which serve the same goal. The first case would have minimized while the second case would have drastically increased the repercussions of domestic and foreign resistance, of political and economic isolation, which they probably considered only after they were confronted with the critical moment.

Jovic entry for 22 March 1991.

⁷⁴ Jovic entry for 12 October 1990.

⁷⁵ JNA assessment drawn from Jovic entry for 9 January 1991. The authors have edited some of it by removing what appeared to be Jovic, vice SSNO comments. The JNA assessment is also available in a special edition of the JNA magazine, *Narodna Armija*, from late January 1991.

Annex 6

Scene-Setters for War: Pakrac, Plitvice Lakes, and Borovo Selo

The “battles” at Plitvice Lakes and Borovo Selo in March and May 1991 heard the opening shots and saw the first casualties in the Serb-Croatian war that plagued Croatia in fits and starts throughout the summer of 1991 and heralded full-scale war between Croatia and the JNA in September. The actions eclipsed the first confrontation between Croatian Government and Serb forces in the western Slavonian town of Pakrac in early March 1991, the clash that brought the JNA into action for the first time as a peacekeeping force “to prevent the escalation of intranational confrontations.”¹ Perhaps because no one was hurt in that incident, it failed to excite Croatia’s Serbs and Croatians the way the later battles would. After Plitvice and especially Borovo Selo both sides would begin to absorb the fact that war was an actual likelihood, and make appropriate preparations to meet it.

Pakrac²

In February, as the SAO Krajina moved to extend its control to other Serb regions, Serb spokesmen in Western Slavonia declared their allegiance to the SAO Krajina. Putting their words into action, a group of armed Serbs seized the police station and municipal building in the town of Pakrac—the largest town in Western Slavonia—and, declaring themselves Krajina police, locked up everyone who declined to submit to the SAO Krajina’s authority, including some ethnic Serbs.³

In the light of the debacle at Knin the previous August, the blatant Serb action left President Tudjman no choice but to react forcefully. Croatian Deputy Internal Affairs Minister Perica Juric organized a Special Police force of about 200 troops and directed them to approach the town in several small columns to surprise the Serbs before they realized the MUP was even moving against them.⁴ On 2 March, in a well-executed operation (in contrast to the later Plitvice attack), the MUP Special Police retook the

town, capturing most of the Serb “police” and arresting 180 Serbs. No one was hit in the fusillade that accompanied the operation.

The uproar that followed featured absurd Serb claims of Croatian atrocities and fictional refugee accounts. The Federal Presidency ordered both sides to pull their armed partisans back and sent JNA units into the town to keep the peace. The situation calmed over the next several days, although the challenge to Zagreb’s right to control its own territory remained unresolved.⁵ In addition, although the immediate danger of war had passed, the propaganda and war hysteria that spread throughout the region heated the atmosphere for future clashes.

Plitvice Lakes

The Plitvice Lakes area, in the Lika region of Croatia,⁶ was not just a Yugoslav National Park but a national treasure of sylvan beauty laced with a series of stunning waterfalls. As Silber and Little note, at this time the Croatian Government was attempting to extend purely Croatian authority into Serb-dominated areas like Plitvice by planting MUP police stations there.⁷ On 15 February, 70 Croatian police took over one of the hotels at Plitvice in preparation for establishing a police station in the park.⁸ Although the police eventually departed, the SAO Krajina authorities felt obliged to react to this or any other Croatian move into Serb-declared territory. On 25 March, a large group of Serb nationalist civilians staged a clearly orchestrated march to protest Croatian control of the park. Three days later a mixed Serb force of special police and civilians, variously estimated at 50 to 100 armed men,⁹ occupied Plitvice and expelled the Croatian park managers.¹⁰

The Croatian MUP appears to have begun planning for a military response to the possibility of armed Serb action to claim the park that pre-dated the actual incident.¹¹ The Croatian Government on 30 March demanded that the Serbs return the park to its former managers or face police action.¹² At 0500 the next day

the MUP moved into Plitvice with an estimated 300 Special Police drawn from several units.¹³ Inexperienced at armed tactical operations, the Special Police units proceeded to drive into the midst of the Serb defenses in a column of buses and other soft-skinned vehicles. Bunching up in the pre-dawn darkness and heavy fog, the column hit a Serb ambush about four kilometers inside the park. The Serbs opened fire from behind barricades with a rain of bullets and rifle grenades that paralyzed the column for about 15 minutes. The disaster might have been worse: a rocket grenade hit a bus full of Special Police but failed to detonate.¹⁴ After a bit the Special Police recovered from the shock, and their superior numbers gradually overwhelmed the Serb force holed up in a hotel and the post office. By 0800, the Croatian troops had overcome Serb resistance and began mopping up. One Croatian special policeman and one armed local Serb died in the operation, and six on each side were wounded.¹⁵ The Croatians arrested 29 Serbs—eight special police and 21 armed civilians.¹⁶ The rest of the Serb gunmen apparently withdrew from their positions and escaped.¹⁷

The startling breach of the Federal peace brought swift action from the Presidency, meeting in emergency session under Serbian member Borisav Jovic. They quickly agreed on a series of measures to defuse the situation:

- A full and unconditional cease-fire to be observed by all parties.
- The JNA to deploy units to ensure respect for the cease-fire.
- All police and militia forces from outside Plitvice to be withdrawn.
- Combat readiness among additional JNA units to be raised.¹⁸

The JNA sped armor-mechanized units to the region to execute the presidency decision and cordoned off the area with armed posts on all the roads and bridges into the park.¹⁹ The Croatians objected to the JNA deployment and at first refused to yield.²⁰ They grudgingly began redeploying their Special Police

units early on 2 April, replacing them with 90 regular police from nearby Gospic.²¹ By these actions the JNA's involvement in peacekeeping in Croatia had broadened and deepened.²²

Borovo Selo²³

Borovo Selo was a Serb-populated town near Vukovar in eastern Slavonia. Inflamed by accounts of the Plitvice Lakes battle, tempers flared between Croatians and Serbs in eastern Slavonia-Baranja as local Serb and Croatian village guards began to set up barricades around their respective villages. When four Croatian policemen from Osijek happened to learn that barricades on one of the roads into Borovo Selo had been left unguarded over the May 1st workers' holiday, they mischievously decided to sneak into the town in the middle of the night and replace the Yugoslav flag hanging there with the Croatian flag.

The Serbs, however, ambushed the four as they clambered through the barricades. Two of the pranksters were wounded and captured as their companions escaped. Silber and Little note:

Discipline had broken down in Tudjman's police force. The influx of so many young Croats, promoted to positions of authority which their age and experience did not warrant, had weakened chains of command and accountability. In Osijek . . . (the police chief) had lost control in both the police and the civil administration. Precisely who gave the fateful order for what came next, on the morning of May 2, has never been properly established.²⁴

The morning after the two surviving policemen returned to Osijek, a busload of Croatian Special Police from Vinkovci set out to rescue the two wounded men held by the Serbs at Borovo Selo. The Special Police were enveloped by another ambush of Serb village guards and volunteers from Serbia mounted atop buildings covering the main roads and intersections; 12 Croatian police died and 21 were

wounded before they could withdraw.²⁵ Again the JNA quickly moved in troops to impose peace and interpose a buffer between the Serbs and Croatians.²⁶

Silber and Little judge that the “battle” at Borovo Selo on 1-2 May “arguably, more than any other (event), set Croatia irrevocably on the path to open war. . . . Borovo Selo caused a sea-change in Croatian public opinion.”²⁷

The Croatian Government was stunned.

None (of Tudjman's ministers) had been prepared for loss of life on such a scale. Their mood reflected public opinions. Many began to push Tudjman for an immediate declaration of

sovereignty by the Croatian parliament. Tudjman resisted. But the idea to which Tudjman had clung for months, of reconstituting Yugoslavia as a confederation of states, had lost the confidence of his ministers, who now believed that Serbia—and not just the Serbs in Croatia—was determined to block, by bloodshed if necessary, Croatia's progress to full sovereignty.²⁸

The Serbs and Croatians were facing up to war. The JNA stood in between.

Endnotes, Annex 6

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 2 March 1991.

² Much of this account is drawn from the detailed description of the incident found in Silber and Little pp. 134-136.

³ Silber and Little point out that Pakrac and Western Slavonia had inherited from the Austro-Hungarian Empire a multi-ethnic mix of more than 20 nationalities, including Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Italians, Slovaks, and Hungarians.

⁴ The Croatian MUP troops were drawn from the Antiterrorist Unit Lucko and the Rakitje Special Police Battalion. Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16.

⁵ Silber and Little, p. 135.

⁶ The closest "major" town is Korenica, northeast of Gospic.

⁷ Silber and Little, pp. 136-137, 146n.

⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 16 February 1991.

⁹ The Serb force involved elements of Captain Dragan's "Kninj" Special Police units from the Krajina Secretariat for Internal Affairs (SUP) in Knin (the police force of the Krajina Autonomous Region) and armed civilians from the Korenica area.

¹⁰ Belgrade Domestic Service 25 March 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 29 March 1991.

¹¹ See Slobodan Kljakic, "Carefully Performed Police Terror!" *Politika* 6 May 1991, pp. 7-8, for purported entries from a Croatian security service officer's notebook detailing Croatian planning in March and April for intelligence and police actions against Croatian Serb separatists in the SAO Krajina—especially the Plitvice Lakes—and intelligence and disinformation operations against the JNA.

¹² Silber and Little p. 36.

¹³ The units involved included the Rakitje Special Police Battalion (later forming the core of the National Guard Corps and Croatian Army's 1st Guards Brigade) with an estimated 100 troops, the Lucko Antiterrorist Unit (the Croatian national antiterrorist force) with 100 personnel, and probably county-level Special Police units from the Gospic and Karlovac County Police Administrations with an estimated 50 personnel each. The Croatians could have deployed as many as 800 to 1000 Special Police if all the personnel from these units had been used (the Rakitje Battalion—300, Lucko unit—100-150, and county units, 200 to 300 each). Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16; Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1991.

¹⁴ *Hrvatski Vojnik* 21 May 1993, p. 13; Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1991.

¹⁵ The special policeman was Josip Jovic of the Rakije Special Police Battalion. Vlado Vurusic and Ivo Pukanic, "The Commander of the Fourth Guard Brigade is 25 Years Old, and All the Members of the Lucko ATJ Are Taller Than 180 Centimeters!" Zagreb *Globus* 26 May 1995, pp. 48-49. The Serb armed civilian was Rajko Vukadinovic, a former butcher from Korenica. Silber and Little, p. 136.

¹⁶ Slavko Degoricija, deputy Croatian Minister of Internal Affairs, announced the prisoner totals. Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1991.

¹⁷ Chief of the Krajina SUP Milan Martic claimed that the *milicija* (police) had withdrawn. Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service 31 March 1991.

¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1991.

¹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1991 and 1 April 1991. The JNA deployed one battalion-sized battle group of the 329th Armored Brigade/5th (Banja Luka) Corps from Banja Luka, although the units appear to have staged out of the JNA's huge Bijac Air Base. "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29.

²⁰ Silber and Little, p. 138.

²¹ Belgrade Tanjug 2 April 1991.

²² An article in a Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) military journal on the JNA 329th Armored Brigade (which later became a VRS unit) makes it clear that the JNA troops were to prevent either the Croatian MUP or the Krajina Serb Secretariat for Internal Affairs (SUP) police units from attempting to enter territory controlled by the other side:

The checkpoint on the crossroads in the village of Prijeboj was put in place and organized with the mission to prevent the movement of all SUP vehicles toward (Croat-held) Plitvice and MUP vehicles toward (Serb-held) Korenica or Licko Petrovo Selo . . . After regrouping the brigade's units with the aim of preventing the "march of peace" from taking place, new problems arose.

(The "march of peace" was a march led by Serbian Radical Party (SRS) leader Vojislav Seselj and Milan Martic to protest the capture of Plitvice by the Croatians. That the JNA was trying to block it—see below—underscores the army's efforts to stay between the two sides.)

Nevertheless, the "march of peace" was organized and it took place in the village of Jezerce. Milan Martic and Vojislav Seselj spoke before approximately 2-3,000 people and urged them to expel the "MUPovce" from Plitvice. Some people set off to do so. However, the members of the brigade managed to stop them. Otherwise it all could have ended with unforeseeable consequences.

"The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29. This VRS article is clearly based on the brigade war diary.

²³ This account is drawn from Silber and Little, pp. 140-144, which is the most detailed account available of the incident.

²⁴ Silber and Little, p. 141.

²⁵ Belgrade Tanjug 3 May 1991; Vojislav Seselj, Leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) stated on 8 May that its military wing, the Serbian Chetnik Movement (SCP), had 14 personnel from Serbia at Borovo Selo and the Mirko Jovic-led Serbian National Renewal (SNO) had two. Belgrade Tanjug 8 May 1991. The Serbian SDB and MUP provided all of the weapons used by the Serbs. Seselj noted in 1993 that the SCP cooperation with the MUP began just before Borovo Selo. Miroslav Mikuljanac and Cvijetin Milivojevic, "I Will Travel to the Hague With Milosevic," Belgrade *Borba* 13-14 November 1993, pp. 10-11. An interview with Vojislav Seselj. Silber and Little quote then Serbian Internal Affairs Minister Bogdanovic as saying "If we had not equipped our Serbs, who knows how they would have fared in the attack by the Croatian National Guard on Borovo Selo?" See previous section on "The Organization and Arming of the Krajina Serbs" for a more detailed discussion of the long-term Serbian plan to arm the Croatian Serb police and Territorial Defense.

²⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 3 May 1991.

²⁷ Silber and Little p. 141.

²⁸ Silber and Little p. 142.

Annex 7
Croatian Ultimatum to the
Federal Presidency of Yugoslavia

TO THE PRESIDENCY OF YUGOSLAVIA.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA OF 3 AUGUST, AND THE STANDS ADOPTED AT THE 23D SESSION OF THE SUPREME STATE COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA OF 22 AUGUST, THAT IS TODAY, I SUBMIT TO THE SFRY PRESIDENCY THE FOLLOWING DEMANDS:

1. THAT THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY CALLS ON ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN UP ARMS IN REBELLION AGAINST THE LEGAL GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, ARMED BY THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND THE YUGOSLAV ARMY, TO OBSERVE THE DECISION ON A CEASE-FIRE, AND TO HAND OVER THEIR ARMS TO THE LEGAL GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA OR THE YUGOSLAV ARMY.

2. THAT THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY SHOULD CALL ON THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO IMMEDIATELY HALT THE ORGANIZATION AND ASSISTANCE OF THE ARMED REBELLION AND AGGRESSION AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AIMED AT THE VIOLENT APPROPRIATION OF ITS TERRITORY.

3. THAT IN ITS CAPACITY AS SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY SHOULD ORDER THE YUGOSLAV ARMY, (A) TO IMMEDIATELY CEASE PROVOCATIVE MOVEMENTS AND RECONNAISSANCE AND MILITARY ACTION ON THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND WITHDRAW TO BARRACKS; (B) TO RELEASE SOLDIERS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR MILITARY SERVICE AND RESERVISTS, AND TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF UNITS TO THEIR REGULAR PEACETIME

STATE; (C) TO COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITY ON THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA WITH ITS LEGAL GOVERNMENT.

4. THAT THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY SHOULD BEGIN THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF ALL THOSE OFFICERS OF THE YUGOSLAV ARMY WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR UNCONSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS ON THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, FOR THE ARMING OF THE OUTLAW TERRORIST GROUPINGS FROM YUGOSLAV ARMY SOURCES, FOR PARTICIPATION IN AGGRESSION AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF MATERIAL AND CULTURAL WEALTH, FOR THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY INVOLVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND UNITS OF THE YUGOSLAV ARMY AGAINST THE FORCES OF ORDER IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA.

IN THIS CONNECTION WE ARE SEEKING A RESPONSE TO OUR DEMAND TO THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY OF 10 JULY WITH REGARD TO COLONEL-GENERAL BLAGOJE ADZIC AND COLONEL-GENERAL ZIVOTA AVRAMOVIC.

5. THAT EC OBSERVERS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE SUPERVISION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE DEMANDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BRIONI DECLARATION OF 7 JULY.

IF THE YUGOSLAV PRESIDENCY AND YUGOSLAV ARMY DO NOT SATISFY THESE DEMANDS BY 31 AUGUST, AND IF THE ARMED OPERATIONS TO DESTROY THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ORDER OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND THE

OCCUPATION OF ITS TERRITORIES CONTINUE,
ACCORDING TO THE PLANS TO INCLUDE
THEM IN A GREATER SERBIA OR REMAINDER
OF YUGOSLAVIA, THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
WILL CONSIDER THAT THE YUGOSLAV
PRESIDENCY IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE AGGRESSION AGAINST THE REPUBLIC
OF CROATIA AND THE YUGOSLAV ARMY AS
AN ARMY OF OCCUPATION, AND WE WILL
ACCORDINGLY TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS
FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND THE
CONSTITUTIONAL DECISION OF 25 JULY.

ZAGREB, 22 AUGUST 1991. PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA.¹

¹ Interview with President Tudjman, Zagreb Radio 22 August 1991.

Annex 8

Fighting Escalates, June-September 1991

Serb Operations in Banija and Lika

Serb Planning

In June and July the self-declared government of the SAO Krajina set out deliberately to gain military control over the Banija region. The coordinated military campaign was conducted jointly by Captain Dragan's "Kninjka" Special Police unit and the newly activated Banija Territorial Defense—designated the "7th Banija Shock Division"¹—and its purpose was to eliminate the Croatian MUP police stations, which still provided a measure of Croatian Government control in the region.

The Croatian MUP maintained four municipal police stations in the Serb-claimed areas of Banija—Glina, (Hrvatska) Kostajnica, Topusko, and Petrinja—and had established substations 10 to 15 kilometers south of Petrinja at Kraljevcani and Dragotinci and between Croatian-controlled Kostajnica and Serb-controlled Dvor na Uni at the villages of Kozibrod and Struga. The Serbs apparently planned to eliminate these in a three-stage campaign. During the first phase, the Serbs would eliminate the station at Glina and pick off the substations supported by, but distant from, Petrinja and Kostajnica. The second phase would be an attack on Kostajnica itself, and the last against the stronger forces in and around Petrinja, along with the station at Topusko. As events proceeded, however, before the unilateral Serb operations against Petrinja and Topusko could begin, the JNA would be fully involved in the war, facilitating the capture of both towns by the Serbs.

Glina

On 26 June troops from the Serbs' Glina TO attacked the police station in battalion strength, overrunning the facility.² The Croatians, who estimated their

opponents at about 400, counterattacked with the Sisak Special Police and two or three battalions of active-duty ZNG forces from Zagreb, totaling probably 600-700 troops. This was enough to push the Serbs out of the station and regain control of most of the town.³ The JNA then moved in to separate the combatants, employing armored units—initially about a battalion—from the 10th (Zagreb) Corps garrison in Petrinja.⁴

The Serbs tried again in Glina with at least one more strong attack in early July, and then on 26 July the 7th Banija Division staged a full-scale assault—dubbed Operation "Stinger" (Zoaka)—against the Croatian units deployed in and around the station. Captain Dragan's Special Police battalion, brought in from Knin, spearheaded the attack. Serb forces overran the station and pushed the Croatian troops completely out of the town, clear into the hills northwest of Glina and northeast up the Glina River valley.⁵ JNA forces were then able to restore a buffer zone.

The Croatians had been the first to complain about the JNA in Glina, but now the Serbs called the JNA commander "a traitor to the Serbian people," apparently because they believed he had refused to shoot back when the Croatians had fired on the JNA peacekeepers.⁶ Internal Affairs Minister Martic had already criticized the JNA for guarding the Croatian MUP police stations in Plitvice and Glina. The JNA backed up its commander, asserting that he had acted properly and had returned fire when fired upon; all concerned were reminded that the JNA's mission was to "prevent intranational clashes."⁷

Elimination of the MUP Substations

On 13-14 July TO troops from the 7th Banija Division moved against the MUP substations at the villages of Kraljevcani and Dragotinci, some 10 to 15 kilometers south of Petrinja. Again, the Serbs were initially successful, overrunning the two substations and several Croatian-held villages in the area before ZNG and MUP Special Police reinforcements—probably 300 to 400 troops—arrived to push the Serbs out of

the villages.⁸ The next day, however, the Croatians complained that JNA armored units sent to separate the forces had systematically driven their troops back out of the villages. It was not clear whether the JNA action was unprovoked, as the Croatians charged, or whether the army troops were reacting to real or perceived Croatian fire. The apparent upshot, however, was that the Serbian TO forces then occupied the contested villages.

In coordination with the Serbs' successful attack on Glina on 26 July an estimated two battalions of the Dvor and Kostajnica TO joined elements of the 7th Banija Division⁹ and Captain Dragan's battalion—600 to 800 men in all—in assaults on the substations between Kostajnica and Dvor in Operation "Dvor na Uni." Although reinforced earlier with a ZNG company, the Croatian forces were routed in heavy fighting and pushed some 15 kilometers from the edge of Dvor almost to the outskirts of Kostajnica, which they temporarily abandoned on 31 July.¹⁰ JNA forces from Petrinja began moving into the area on 27 July to act as a buffer yet again, also escorting 300 terrified Croatian refugees out of the battle area on 30 July. The refugees claimed to Western reporters that Serb soldiers had rousted them from their villages and had even used some of their neighbors as human shields during the Serb advance.¹¹ Although this specific incident remains uncorroborated, it was not the last time that Serb troops would be accused of committing war crimes in the course of their military operations.

Battle of Kostajnica—August/September 1991

The Croatian withdrawal from Kostajnica was brief. Croatian MUP and ZNG troops re-entered the town on 2 August and, in an apparent meeting engagement, pushed the advancing Serb forces out.¹² The Serbs, who had won a string of relatively easy victories, were now in for a long, 45-day siege against dug-in Croatian forces, probably numbering from 500 to 750 ZNG and MUP Special Police.¹³ The Serb 7th Banija Division committed the Dvor and Kostajnica TO—probably four battalions numbering 1,000 to 2,000 troops—to the task of ejecting the outnumbered Croatians, who were surrounded on three sides with only a tenuous supply route east to Hrvatska Dubica. Kostajnica TO forces cut this

route on 4 August, but the Croatians apparently were able to reopen it. During the rest of August, the fighting centered on unsuccessful Croatian efforts to oust Serb troops from key hills ringing the town to the north and northwest while the Serbs prepared for a final push against the town.

The Serb assault began on 30 August, cutting the route to Hrvatska Dubica the next day.¹⁴ Croatian efforts to break out failed, and on 8 September TO troops—now stiffened by major elements of Captain Dragan's Special Police—penetrated the town's outer defenses and forced the Croatians into a small defensive ring in the very center of town near the bridge to Bosanska Kostajnica.¹⁵ The Croatians' defenses began to break up over the next several days as they were pressed back against the Una River.¹⁶ On 13 September the defense collapsed, and almost 300 ZNG and MUP soldiers crossed the river into Bosanska Kostajnica, where they were interned by border guards of the Bosnia-Herzegovinia TO.¹⁷

Evaluation of the Banija Campaign

The 7th Banija Division's campaign from June through mid-September appears to have been a well-thought-out and generally well-executed operation tailored to the "national" military strategy of the Croatian Serbs. The operations concentrated initially on the focal point for Croatian control in Banija, the key road junction at Glina, which gave access deeper into the area and to the outpost at Topusko. When Glina was taken, along with the police substations, the 7th Division was able to establish a more territorially secure base of operations for attacks on Kostajnica, a Croatian toehold blatantly deep in Banija. By seizing and holding that town, the 7th Division, even without the help of subsequent intervention by the JNA, placed itself where it could easily have taken Topusko and probably Petrinja by concentrating its forces on either objective.

The 7th Division's successful use of elite, mobile shock troops—Captain Dragan's "Kninja" Special Police Battalion—to spearhead operations conducted

by less capable, territorially-raised infantry units foreshadowed the spread of this doctrinal concept to all of the armies that were to take part in the Yugoslav wars. In Kostajnica especially, it is doubtful that the 7th Division's poorly trained and undisciplined TO troops—mere collections of armed civilians—could have taken on and defeated the highly motivated ZNG defenders without the extra boost in combat power and stiffening that the elite Special Police units provided at critical moments.

Croatian ZNG regular units and MUP Special Police fought well throughout the campaign. That they were unable to halt the Serb offensives was not due to any lack of tactical skill but rather to their inability to concentrate sufficient troops at key points. Their shortage of armed troops was compounded by poor operational-level coordination by the regional crisis staff, which resulted in less than optimum use of the units that were available. When the Croatians were able to concentrate their thinly spread forces, as they did during the first attack at Glina, they generally succeeded in halting or reversing a Serb advance.

Lika: Plitvice Lakes, Round 2

On 29 August “Kninja” Special Police and Korenica TO troops surrounded the Croatian MUP station at Plitvice and took it over after a three-day siege better characterized as a mob action than a military operation. The 76 MUP personnel surrendered only after the JNA agreed to transport them safely to Croatian-held territory.¹⁸ At the start of the attack the JNA had been critical of the Serbs, charging that the Krajina forces “are constantly making threats and provoking . . . Croatian policemen in Plitvice.”¹⁹ Articles in a Bosnian Serb Army journal chronicling former JNA units make it clear that the JNA armored battalion forming the buffer force blamed the clash on the deployment of Krajina troops into the area.²⁰ Considering how long it took the Serbs to seize the station from an outnumbered and isolated force, they probably were content to besiege the station, keep it under fire, and harass the MUP into giving it up rather than trying to storm it.

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja

Baranja Campaign

Although details are lacking, circumstantial evidence makes it clear that the Baranja TO planned and undertook an operation in late August 1991 to wrest complete control of Baranja and its major towns from Croatian forces. On 22-24 August between 1,000 and 2,000 Baranja TO troops seized the area around the Baranja municipal seat of Beli Manistir, the town of Darda, and the town of Knezevi Vinogradi, giving them control of most of the region.²¹ Serb forces had earlier in the month taken control of Beli Manistir itself. The Croatian ZNG defenders probably numbered no more than 750, perhaps as few as 500.²² The Baranja TO operation appears to have been coordinated to hit Croatian defenses across the region simultaneously and prevent the few ZNG/MUP reserves from concentrating. It is not known if the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja TO’s mobile reserve—Arkan’s Serbian Volunteer Guard—was used to spearhead the campaign as Captain Dragan’s Special Police had in Banija. The JNA does not appear to have made any major effort to halt Croatian-Serb fighting in the region.

Osijek

In and around the major regional city of Osijek, Serb and Croat forces also fought regularly after the Serbs began to toss random mortar shells into the city. Meanwhile, ZNG and MUP personnel frequently clashed with elements of the JNA 12th Mechanized Brigade garrisoned in Osijek. The Croatians claimed the JNA started these engagements, and the JNA blamed the Croatians.

Borovo Selo-Borovo Naselje-Vukovar

The area around Vukovar and its two major suburbs, Serb-held Borovo Selo and Croatian-held Borovo

Naselje, suffered almost daily, heavy engagements from June through August, even before all-out fighting for the Vukovar area erupted in September. JNA forces tried to establish a buffer zone between the two suburbs beginning in May, after the “battle” at Borovo Selo, and continued their peacekeeping operations without success until September. Neither the Serbs nor the Croatians seem to have tried very hard to actually seize the opposing suburb. JNA troops in the Vukovar barracks and on peacekeeping duty in the area often claimed that Croatian troops fired on them, while the Croatians usually claimed that the JNA was providing weapons and armored support to the local Croatian Serb TO.²³

Tenja

The dual villages of Novo (Croatian) and Stari (Serb) Tenja formed a frequent hot spot during the escalating clashes in July and August. The heaviest fighting occurred on 7-9 July when ZNG and MUP Special Police troops supported by mortar and recoilless rifle fire attempted to seize the town from Serb TO forces.²⁴ When the attack failed to achieve its objective, JNA troops interposed themselves to establish a buffer zone. The Croatians claimed that the JNA unit had sided with the Croatian Serbs and had caused a large number of the Croatian casualties.²⁵ The JNA almost certainly did fire on the Croatians after an unidentified sniper—which the JNA claimed was Croatian—killed a JNA sergeant in his tank.²⁶ Croatian Deputy Internal Affairs Minister Degoricija claimed that Croatian forces would have defeated the Serb forces had not JNA troops intervened. The Osijek Mayor stated that 4 ZNG soldiers were killed in action and 27 MUP and ZNG wounded.

Dalj-Sarvas-Bijelo Brdo

The area around these three villages saw frequent fighting during the summer, the most prominent of which began on 1 August in Dalj after Croatian Serb TO troops attacked a Croatian MUP police substation in the village. What followed next is still not entirely clear, and is typical of the confusion that often reigned when three different and mutually distrustful military

organizations operated in close proximity during a shooting war. After the Serb attack the Croatian MUP either asked the JNA to intervene between the two sides or the JNA took it on its own to do so. But the Croatians claim that the JNA then sided with the Serbs and demanded the surrender of the police station. When the MUP defenders refused, the JNA opened fire and continued to attack until it had captured the entire village from the MUP.²⁷ The JNA claimed that shots fired at its soldiers by the MUP touched off the pitched fighting, in which the Croatians lost heavily. At least 20 MUP soldiers were killed in action the first day and more died in heavy fighting over the next day.²⁸ Regardless of who fired first, the Dalj incident was one of many that summer that convinced the Croatians that the JNA was on the side of the rebellious Serbs. After the capture of Dalj, fighters of the Croatian Serb TO and Croatian Government forces faced off for the rest of August and into September in a regular series of exchanges between the nearby villages of Bijelo Brdo (Serb) and Sarvas (Croat).

Vinkovci/Mirkovci

The Serb-held village of Mirkovci, less than five kilometers southeast of Vinkovci, was a thorn in the Croatian side throughout this period. TO troops regularly fired mortar rounds into the Vinkovci area and launched sporadic, small-scale ground attacks that underscored the Croatians’ lack of control in the region.²⁹ The heaviest fighting occurred on 22 July when Croatian ZNG and MUP troops attempted to capture the village.³⁰ After penetrating the Serb TO defenses, they were pushed back out, losing at least 14 ZNG troops and 1 MUP soldier killed in action and at least another 14 ZNG and three MUP personnel wounded, with as many as 12 ZNG soldiers missing.³¹ Croatian forces in Eastern Slavonia paid a heavy price for their efforts to resist the Serbs, and they complained bitterly that the JNA had used artillery and aircraft fire against them—a charge the JNA again denied.³²

Laslovo/Palaca

Laslovo (Croatian) and Palaca (Serb) were yet another pair of Serb and Croatian villages, some 15 kilometers south of Osijek, from which the two sides regularly exchanged fire with small arms, mortar, and rocket grenades. ZNG and MUP fighters apparently attempted to take Palaca on 23 July; when they failed, JNA troops interposed themselves between the two villages.³³

JNA Operations and the August Barracks Blockade

Between 22 and 28 August, Croatian forces in Eastern Slavonia moved openly against the JNA with full-scale blockades of its garrisons in Osijek, Vinkovci, and Vukovar. They not only cut off water, electricity, and food supplies but mined the access roads to the barracks.³⁴ Clashes between JNA forces and ZNG/MUP troops in and around the three towns erupted more and more frequently as JNA commanders demanded that the blockades be lifted, while the Croatians made JNA armored patrols their primary targets. As fighting escalated during August, JNA commanders continued to bluster but did little to relieve either Osijek or Vinkovci.

On 28 August, however, the JNA 1st Guards Mechanized Division³⁵ mounted a substantial operation to relieve the Vukovar barracks, which was on the south side of the town.³⁶ Elements of two mechanized brigades, and possibly some Croatian Serb TO fighters, formed a force of some 1,500 to 2,000 troops, 60-70 tanks and 60-70 infantry fighting vehicles. With some support from the air and fire support from the Drava river fleet, they began a slow push directly from Negoslavci on the south and Sotin on the southeast. They met moderate resistance³⁷ as ZNG/MUP forces, probably numbering 600 to 800 loosely organized infantry, readied their defenses at the edge of town.³⁸ On 4-5 September JNA forces ran into stiffer resistance and then ground to a halt against Croatian troops on the south side of town, assisted by pressure on the flanks and base of the Negoslavci axis from the ZNG.³⁹ The Vukovar barracks remained blockaded and the JNA's struggle for Vukovar had begun.

Evaluation of Eastern Slavonia Operations⁴⁰

Serb TO performance in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja was uneven. The late August campaign to seize Baranja appears to have been well-planned and executed. Serb operations elsewhere in the region, however, appear to have been disjointed, with no apparent overall coordination. Attacks to take Borovo Naselje repeatedly failed against a spirited Croatian defense. Generally, Serb forces appeared content merely to harass Croatian villages and towns with random automatic weapons and mortar fire. As in Banija, most of the local Serbs were mere armed civilians with little or no training, tenuously commanded by the regional TO staff.

Croatian command and control in Eastern Slavonia also appeared disjointed; there was no visible attempt to coordinate operations between different areas. Overall, Croatian troops fought hard, both in defense of Croatian villages and towns—such as Vukovar-Borovo Naselje—as well as in their limited offensive operations against Serb-held areas. And they appear to have demonstrated professional tactical skill in defense of key positions—such as the initial defense of Vukovar against the JNA in late August-early September.

Western Slavonia

Okucani and the Belgrade-Zagreb Highway

Heavy fighting erupted in and around Okucani on 16 August following a re-declaration of Western Slavonia's autonomy, although who started the action is not clear. It seems, however, that the Croatians moved first in anticipation of a Serb attempt to consolidate the new SAO Western Slavonia and cut the vital Belgrade-Zagreb Highway at Okucani.⁴¹ The Serbs—probably numbering some 600 to 800 troops in about two battalions around Okucani—either struck at the same time or quickly recovered, pushing east and west along the highway, as well as toward Stara Gradiska—near which the TO probably had another

300 to 400 troops—to secure the main bridge into Bosnia. Troops of the Croatian MUP and local ZNG troops—probably numbering some 300 Special Police, 300-450 ZNG, plus probably 100-200 regular MUP police—resisted fiercely, however, pushing the Serbs back in several places.⁴² A JNA mechanized battalion from the 32nd (Varazdin) Corps/Fifth Military District moved into Okucani on 17 August but failed to halt the fighting.⁴³¹ The same day, Croatian MUP personnel destroyed the bridge at Stara Gradiska to prevent JNA 5th (Banja Luka) Corps/First Military District forces—who they believed would aid the Serbs—from crossing the river. The 5th Corps troops responded by crossing the Sava River on pontoon bridges the following day.⁴⁴

By 27 August, TO forces had slowly gained ground from the Croatian troops, but they claimed even greater success—the capture of 27 of 32 villages in the Okucani municipality.⁴⁵ Croatian forces, however, still hung on to key positions north of Stara Gradiska. The JNA was gradually being drawn more deeply into the fighting around Stara Gradiska, claiming that Croatian forces were continually firing on 5th Corps positions northwest of Stara Gradiska along the Strug Canal.⁴⁶ On 4-5 September direct fighting erupted between JNA and Croatian forces when, in a “final response to Croat provocations,” 5th Corps units appear to have pushed Croatian forces away from the canal and back along the road from Okucani to Stara Gradiska.⁴⁷ This failed to please the Serb TO commander, who complained on 7 September that JNA forces had voluntarily pulled back to the canal from the areas they had captured and allowed ZNG/MUP forces to reoccupy their previous positions.⁴⁸ The Croatians in fact were now in a position to cut off the TO troops, who held a precarious pocket around Okucani some five kilometers to the west and three kilometers to the east on the Belgrade-Zagreb highway. They had only tenuous links through uncontested hills to Serb forces to the north at Pakrac, although the semi-friendly JNA held a patch of territory to the southwest of Okucani that could give the Serbs links into Bosnia. The battlefield situation was to remain tense but static until the JNA intervened directly and massively more than a week later.⁴⁹

¹ See Annex 10: JNA Peacekeeping: A Case Study in Western Slavonia, August-September 1991.

Pakrac

Serb TO troops—probably two battalions numbering 600 to 800 men—moved to seize the town of Pakrac for good on 19 August.⁵⁰ But Croat forces—a collection of Special Police and ZNG totaling no more than 300 men—stubbornly held on to several key villages adjacent to Pakrac.⁵¹ These positions blocked the Serbs from expanding their hold on the surrounding area throughout August and into mid-September.⁵²

Daruvar/Bilogora

Serb TO forces—probably numbering no more than a battalion-size force of 300 to 400 men around Daruvar itself—apparently tried and failed to take the town on 19-20 August.⁵³ No such attempts seem to have been made against Croatian MUP outposts in the numerous Serb villages northeast of Pakrac and south of Virovitica in the Bilogora region, but the villagers’ hostility to the MUP ran high.

Evaluation of Western Slavonia Operations

The piecemeal operations of the Serb TO groups in Western Slavonia were not impressive either in execution or results. An important factor may have been the way much of the Serbian population was squeezed between two Croatian-held towns—Novska and Nova Gradiska—which put limits on the width of any Serb territorial base. Serb villages and hamlets were spread out over a considerable area in a narrow corridor running from north to south, and most of them were concentrated in vulnerable areas around Daruvar instead of near Okucani. Serb command and control appears to have been generally poor: most TO forces fought more or less individual battles, although the larger moves launched in mid-August appear to have been better coordinated. Like most Croatian Serb TO elsewhere, the SAO Western Slavonia forces were poorly organized, badly disciplined, and hardly trained at all—bands of local civilians handed guns and sent into the field.

The better organized Croatian forces demonstrated considerable skill, blunting the first Serb attacks while holding key positions along the Okucani-Stara Gradiska road and between Novska-Okucani and Nova Gradiska-Okucani to limit the Serbs' field of operations. Croatian troops also showed more individual discipline and spirit, tenaciously defending important villages even under strong Serb pressure. The brief Croatian skirmish with JNA 5th Corps units in early September, however, made it clear that Croatian forces facing JNA concentrations of armor and artillery in relatively open terrain would need to be well dug in with some antitank support to hold their ground.

Knin-Northern Dalmatia—Local JNA Commanders Act

9th (Knin) Corps

The 9th (Knin) Corps was an unusual JNA formation: it was a ground forces corps subordinated to the Maritime Military District in Split, which commanded the Yugoslav Navy (*Jugoslovenska Ratna Mornarica-JRM*). The corps was small, with only two motorized brigades—one at cadre strength—instead of the three or four maneuver brigades common to most corps. The 9th Corps had the usual corps components of an artillery regiment, an antitank regiment, a light air defense regiment, and an engineer regiment. Prior to mobilization, the corps had only 2,300 troops assigned to it. As of June 1991, the corps commander was Major General Spiro Nikovic.²

Mobilization and Colonel Ratko Mladic

The JNA activated the 9th Corps during the country-wide mobilization that followed the end of the Ten-Day War in Slovenia (see section below "JNA War Planning and Mobilization, July-September 1991" for a detailed discussion of JNA mobilizations and deployment). At full mobilization, the corps would have numbered about 18,000 troops.

² For a full order of battle see Annex 14: JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July-September 1991.

Significant to its present mission was the fact that most of its reservists reported from the ethnic Serb areas around Knin, Obrovac, Benkovac, and other SAO Krajina areas of Dalmatia, giving the corps personnel a decidedly pro-Serb bent.

At about the same time, on 29 June, the 9th Corps received a new officer, Colonel Ratko Mladic. Mladic was to play the key role in the corps' performance, pushing the corps staff to be more pro-active in combating what he viewed as Croatian aggression against the Serb population. As such, he was a foreunner of the Serbianized officer that was later to become the JNA norm. General Nikovic had apparently selected Mladic from a list of four candidates to fill the key Chief of Operational and Training Affairs slot at the corps headquarters. His choice was a deliberate one, for the two men had earlier served in the Third Military District staff in Skopje, Macedonia, where Mladic was Nikovic's assistant in the War Plans Department. Prior to his arrival in Knin, Mladic had been the Deputy Commander for Rear Services in the important Kosovo-based 52nd (Pristina) Corps, so his assignment was technically a demotion.⁵⁴

General Nikovic himself would make public statements in August supporting the right of other republics to secede, implying that he supported the Milosevic/Jovic view that the Serbs should let the other nationalities go their way, except for the Serb areas in Croatia.⁵⁵ Mladic, coming to Knin with a similar Serbo-centric attitude and an even stronger personality than Nikovic's, rapidly became the driving force in the corps headquarters,⁵⁶ especially after he was appointed corps chief of staff in early August, replacing a Slovene officer.⁵⁷ But Mladic's Serbian nationalist credentials still bore the gloss of their Yugoslav national overlay—as was the case with many pro-Serb JNA officers. He later said,

At the time, to be honest, even I did not yet realize that further co-existence was impossible . . . We were all still infatuated with that

*co-existence. But a man matures with the events that are imposed on him.*⁵⁸

Mladic's attendance at JNA planning meetings in Belgrade—apparently in late July—seems to have changed his mind to a degree.⁵⁹ Representing the 9th Corps in these sessions, he stoutly defended the Federation's integrity and urged direct, strong action against the secessionist Croatians to preserve it. When his strategy was rejected, he appears to have lost respect for his superiors of the JNA high command, and henceforth he would liberally interpret their directives to the corps, looking for opportunities to strike at the Croatians rather than trying to maintain a meaningless neutrality in defense of an undesired peace.⁶⁰ Even Mladic, however, appears to have dutifully obeyed when given direct orders to halt an operation, nor did he try to mount a full-scale corps-wide campaign against the Croatians until the JNA General Staff itself launched its strategic offensive in mid-September 1991.

The erstwhile peacekeeper soon was establishing close contacts with the people and leaders of the SAO Krajina. Mladic later stated,

There was a very high level of understanding and good cooperation between the civilian and the military bodies, especially with Minister of Internal Affairs Milan Martic.⁶¹

Martic has confirmed this:

When Colonel Mladic came to Knin, we saw that we could trust the Army. From then on we suggested that people should volunteer in the army and not the police. That arrangement persisted through the whole war.⁶²

This was Martic's response to Mladic's energetic efforts to recruit local volunteers to fill key specialties in the corps units that mobilization had failed to provide.

“Border” Fighting—July/August

During July and early August, clashes between Serb and Croatian forces occurred principally in two areas: near Obrovac and the Maslenica Bridge area, and in and around the intermixed Serb and Croatian villages some 15 kilometers north of Sibenik. Neither side gained any significant territory, and JNA 9th Corps troops in the area generally succeeded in maintaining their even-handed buffer role, though not without occasional skirmishes with Croatian forces.⁶³

Kijevo

The situation was quite different in Kijevo. The Croatian MUP had established a police substation in the Croatian-populated town, some 15 kilometers southeast of Knin, back in March, and had been sending a stream of MUP/ZNG reinforcements to the area that continued into August. The police station and its supporting troops posed a major impediment and a constant annoyance to both the JNA and the SAO Krajina. Control of the village and the town of Vrlika south of it blocked JNA access to its garrisons in Sinj and separated the SAO Krajina from Serb villages south of Vrlika. Hostility between JNA and Croatian forces hardened, with JNA commanders charging that the Croatians were continually firing on and harassing their troops, while the Croatians claimed (in this case, correctly) that the JNA was supporting the Serbs.

On 18 August, SAO Krajina Internal Affairs Minister Martic issued an ultimatum to the Croatians to withdraw their forces.⁶⁴ When, on 25-26 August, SAO Krajina troops backed the ultimatum with an attack on Kijevo, the JNA cast off its peacekeeping gloves and joined them. Within 24 hours the JNA-Krajina forces had overrun Kijevo, pushed Croatian troops out of the whole Kijevo-Vrlika area, and linked up with the Serb villages south of Vrlika.⁶⁵ On orders from his

superiors, however, General Nikovic then ordered the JNA troops to halt their participation in the operation.⁶⁶ The sequence of events over 24-27 August is not entirely clear.⁶⁷ It looks as if the 9th Corps staff, in reaction to real or perceived Croatian harassment, chose to attack Kijevo to regain free access to its barracks in Sinj and incidentally open a route to the Serb villages south of Kijevo and Vrlika.⁶⁸ The significance of the JNA's involvement in this relatively unprovoked action is as Mladic stated:

That [Kijevo] was when it was decided that we would offer armed resistance. That was the first time since the forces had been separated [a reference to the JNA's peacekeeping mission] that an open showdown was launched.⁶⁹

Now, at least in Northern Dalmatia, JNA forces had openly sided with the Croatian Serbs, and in a "Federal" operation that was not a direct response to a breach of the peace. This brought JNA peacekeeping operations in the area more or less to an end, although even the 9th Corps would not completely repudiate its buffer mission until the JNA as a whole went on the attack in mid-September.

Maslenica Bridge⁷⁰

The next "Federal" action by a combined JNA/Serb force was against Croatian ZNG units deployed on the north side of the strategic Maslenica Bridge. This bridge was vital to the Croatian Government because it was the only remaining direct land link between northern Croatia and the Dalmatian coast.⁷¹ ZNG forces—probably numbering at least 500 troops—had held positions facing Serb forces at the approaches to the bridge in the villages of Krusevo, southwest of Serb-held Obrovac, and Jasenice, northwest of Obrovac, since the beginning of August.⁷² On

9 September, JNA units and Serb TO and Special Police forces—probably totaling 1,250 to 2,000 troops and backed by JNA tanks and artillery—attacked the Croatian defenses in the villages.⁷³ Jasenice and Krusevo fell to Federal forces on 11 September.⁷⁴ Colonel Mladic then ordered JNA troops to pull back from their forward positions as Martic's Special Police came forward to hold them. Lieutenant Colonel Lisica, the JNA commander for the operation, claims that the order to pull back came clear from JNA General Staff chief Adzic, implying that the corps staff had been overruled after again exceeding its authority.⁷⁵

Evaluation of the Dalmatian Operations

Although both "Federal" attacks were relatively straightforward affairs, the JNA gave a good account of itself. Well led by highly motivated commanders, the JNA forces used their advantages in armor and artillery to overwhelm the often outnumbered Croatian MUP and ZNG defenders. Mladic and Lisica also briefly showed their preference and talent for driving quickly through and past enemy defenses; this would be the distinguishing feature of 9th Corps operations in 1991 and of both officers' operations in Bosnia. Employing armor and artillery in ways that compensated for their lack of infantry would become a trademark of the JNA in the Croatian war—and of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) in the Bosnian war—although in later battles such tactics often were unsuccessful. In these small operations, however, Croatian forces had neither the defenses nor the numbers needed to defeat boldly handled armor backed by strong mortar and artillery fire.

Endnotes, Annex 8

¹ The "7th Banija Shock Division" was the World War II designator of a famous Partisan formation raised in the region. Prior to the 1991 war, nearly all JNA and Territorial Defense formations throughout Yugoslavia carried a unit honorific or designator that could be traced to a wartime Partisan unit, and it is likely that this had been the regional TO's official unit designator. The 7th Division was later redesignated as the 39th (Banija) Corps of the SVK.

² Belgrade Tanjug 26 June 1991; Zagreb Radio 26 and 27 June

1991. The Serb troops reportedly employed both mortars and light antitank weapons. The Glina TO later became the 24th Infantry

Brigade of the 39th Corps.

³ The units involved included the 1st Battalion and 2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade and as much as a battalion of the 1st Guards Brigade. Vlado Vurusic and Ivo Pukanic, "The Commander of the Fourth Guard Brigade is 25 Years Old, and All the Members of the Lucko ATJ Are Taller Than 180 Centimeters!" *Zagreb Globus* 26 May 1995, pp. 48-49; Vesna Puljak, "'Thunders' From Banija" *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-21.

⁴ The 622nd Motorized Brigade was garrisoned in Petrinja and equipped with 21 T-55 tanks and 10 M-60 armored personnel carriers.

⁵ Belgrade Radio 26 July 1991.

⁶ Belgrade Radio 26 July 1991. The JNA commander in Glina was Colonel Grujica "Grujo" Boric, a 10th Corps staff officer. By spring 1992 Boric was the corps assistant commander for rear services. Boric took command of the corps in spring 1992, leading it—as the 2nd Krajina Corps of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS)—until late 1994. Boric then assumed command of the VRS training center at Banja Luka, where he remained until 1997.

⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 26 July 1991.

⁸ The troops included the MUP's Lucko Antiterrorist Unit and the ZNG 2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade. Vesna Puljak,

"'Thunders' From Banija" *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-21.

⁹ The Dvor TO later became the 33rd Infantry Brigade of the 39th Corps. The Kostajnica TO later became the 26th Infantry Brigade of the 39th Corps.

¹⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 26-31 July 1991; Zagreb Radio 26-27 July 1991. The number of ZNG and MUP personnel in the area is unclear, but probably initially numbered no more than 200 to 300, including the ZNG 2nd Company/2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade and a volunteer company from the ZNG 57th Sisak Independent Battalion. Vesna Puljak, "'Thunders' From Banija" *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 19-21; Vlado Vurusic and Ivo Pukanic, "The Commander of the Fourth Guard Brigade is 25 Years Old, and All the Members of the Lucko ATJ Are Taller Than 180 Centimeters!" *Zagreb Globus* 26 May 1995, pp. 48-49. Sinisa Haluzan, "The Croatian Heart of the Fighting Men From Banija," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 23 April 1993, p. 18.

¹¹ Paris AFP 30 July 1991.

¹² Belgrade Tanjug 1-2 August 1991.

¹³ ZNG forces were concentrated around most of the 5th (Varazdin) Battalion/1st Guards Brigade, plus elements of the Zrinski Special Battalion, probably a company of 2nd Guards Brigade, and a volunteer company from the 57th Sisak Independent Battalion. This force alone could have numbered 400 to 500 troops. The MUP probably committed a small battalion of Special Police drawn from Sisak and Kutina numbering some 200 to 250 personnel. Relief efforts from Hrvatska Dubica appear to have been mounted by ZNG troops consisting of two companies/120th Sisak Brigade, elements of the 55th Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion, the "Wolves" Combat Group, which probably was a platoon/company size "special operations" unit, and probably some MUP Special Police. Vesna Puljak, "The Varazdin Pumas," *Hrvatski*

Vojnik 21 May 1993, p. 13; Nikolina Sutalo, "Always Ready for the Homeland," *Zagreb Velebit* 6 September 1996, p. 12.

¹⁴ Belgrade Radio 30-31 August 1991.

¹⁵ Belgrade Radio 8 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 8 September 1991.

¹⁶ Belgrade Radio 9 September 1991.

¹⁷ Belgrade Radio 13 September 1991; Zagreb Radio 12 September 1991. It is unclear how many Croatian troops escaped from Kostajnica before it fell. The Serbs claimed that 292 MUP and ZNG personnel were interned in Bosnia on 13 September, although most of these probably were eventually released and returned to Croatia. Another 70 troops reportedly surrendered to the 7th Banija Division. It is unlikely that the Croatians suffered 300+ casualties, so a large portion of the force probably was able to slip out of the pocket before it fell. The 5th Battalion/1st Guards Brigade, for example, went on to fight soon afterward in western Slavonia for the rest of the war. Vesna Puljak, "The Varazdin Pumas," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 21 May 1993, p. 13.

¹⁸ Belgrade Radio 31 August 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 31 August 1991; Zagreb Radio 31 August 1991; "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29. This VRS article is clearly based on the brigade war diary.

¹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 29 August 1991. Major General Milan Aksentijevic, the Fifth Military District Assistant Commander for Morale, Education, and Legal Affairs, on 31 August commented on the JNA's transport of the Croatian policemen out of the danger zone:

This and many other examples show the Yugoslav Army to be also a Croatian army. We have been and we still are an army of all our peoples and nationalities and do not separate ourselves from the people.

Belgrade Tanjug 31 August 1991.

²⁰ "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29. This VRS article is clearly based on the brigade war diary.

²¹ Belgrade Radio 22-24 August 1991. The last Croatian-held village in Baranja, Bilje, just northeast of Osijek, fell to Baranja TO forces on 4 September. Belgrade Radio 4 September 1991.

²² Almost certainly drawn from the 107th Valpovo Brigade. This estimate is based on a presumption that the brigade had weapons for 30 to 40 percent of an estimated 2,000-man force. Although the 107th had four battalions at this time, these were raised from several different towns and probably were dispersed to support operations in many areas of Eastern and Western Slavonia because of the Croatians' shortage of troops.

²³ This narrative/assessment is drawn primarily from Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, and Zagreb Radio reporting from throughout June-August 1991.

²⁴ The ZNG troops were probably drawn from elements of 3rd Guards Brigade, while the Special Police were likely from Osijek. The Croatian force probably numbered no more than about 500 troops, or a battalion.

²⁵ The 12th Mechanized Brigade/17th (Tuzla) Corps, garrisoned in Osijek and commanded by Colonel Boro Ivanovic, was the JNA formation involved. The 12th participated directly in almost every JNA deployment in Eastern Slavonia during this period. In addition to its field deployments, the brigade had elements scattered across several installations including its main Osijek barracks, sub-unit barracks in Nasice and Vukovar, a large training area near Osijek, an airfield near Osijek, and at the 12th Mixed Artillery Regiment's barracks in Vinkovci.

²⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 7 July 1991.

²⁷ The 51st Mechanized Brigade/24th (Kragujevac) Corps (attached to 12th (Novi Sad) Corps), normally garrisoned in Pančevo, was the JNA unit involved in the action.

²⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 1 August 1991; Zagreb Radio 5 August 1991; Zagreb HTV 4 August 1991.

²⁹ Analysis of Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, and Zagreb Radio reporting, June-August 1991.

³⁰ Croatian forces were probably elements of the 2nd Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade, elements of the 109th Vinkovci Brigade, and Vinkovci Special Police for a battalion strength of 500 to 600 troops. The Mirkovci TO probably numbered 300 to 400 personnel.

³¹ Belgrade Tanjug 22-23 July 1991; Zagreb Radio 22-23 July 1991.

³² The JNA garrison commander in Vinkovci—the commander of the 12th Mixed Artillery Regiment/17th (Tuzla) Corps—claimed instead that MUP personnel surrounded the barracks and fired on him. He said he then fired five tank or mortar rounds into an empty field as a warning to cease and desist. Belgrade Tanjug 23 July 1991.

³³ Belgrade Tanjug 23 July 1991.

³⁴ The order to initiate the blockades almost certainly came from Vladimir Seks, a HDZ hard-liner and Chief of the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Crisis Staff.

³⁵ The 1st Guards was part of the large JNA force mobilized in early and mid-July and deployed to the border with Croatia. See the section, "JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July-September 1991" for a detailed description of these movements.

³⁶ Belgrade Radio 28, 30 August 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 28 August 1991.

³⁷ JNA units consisted of at least two battalions/453rd Mechanized Brigade on the Sotin axis and probably at least two battalions/1st Guards Mechanized Brigade on the Negoslavci axis. It is also possible that instead of 1st Guards it was the 453rd that controlled both axes with 1st Guards in reserve. In addition, possibly a company of 12th Mechanized Brigade may have supported the advance further to the northwest on the Bogdanovci-Luzac road. The 1,500 to 2,000 personnel estimate is based on the manning of four armor-mechanized battalions at about 350 to 400 troops per battalion. All of the mechanized brigades were actually at their fully mobilized strength of about 3,500 troops each, but the JNA deployed nowhere near that many troops in the actual fighting, so an estimate of 7,000 would have grossly exaggerated JNA strength in this operation.

³⁸ The Vukovar ZNG forces had been designated the 204th Vukovar Brigade by early September. See discussion of September Vukovar operations for a full picture of the ZNG order of battle.

³⁹ Belgrade Radio 4-5 September 1991. Zagreb Radio 5 September 1991.

⁴⁰ This section will not evaluate JNA combat performance, but the following sections evaluate actions in which JNA forces were more heavily engaged.

⁴¹ The Belgrade-Zagreb highway was the key link between Eastern Slavonia and the rest of Croatia.

⁴² Reports of fighting drawn from Zagreb Radio 14, 16-17 August 1991; Belgrade Radio 14, 16-17 August 1991.

MUP Special Police organization is difficult to identify, but probably consisted of company-size units of about 100 men each from the Pozega and Slovenski Brod Police Administrations near Nova and Stara Gradiska, and the Sisak Police Administration near Novska. ZNG units included the 63rd Slavonska Pozega Independent Battalion and the 4th Battalion/108th Slovenski Brod Brigade near Nova Gradiska and the 56th Kutina and 62nd Novska Independent Battalions near Novska. These battalions probably were limited to 100 to 150 armed personnel at this point because of weapons shortages.

⁴³ Belgrade Tanjug 17 August 1991.

⁴⁴ See Annex 10: "JNA Peacekeeping: A Case Study in Western Slavonia, August-September 1991."

⁴⁵ Zagreb Radio 17-19 August 1991; Belgrade Radio 17 August, 23 August 1991.

The JNA 5th Corps unit involved was an armored or mechanized battalion/329th Armored Brigade garrisoned in Banja Luka.

⁴⁶ Belgrade Tanjug 27 August 1991.

⁴⁷ Belgrade Radio 23 August 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 27 August 1991.

⁴⁸ Belgrade Radio 4-5 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 4 September 1991; Zagreb Radio 4 September 1991.

⁴⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 7 September 1991.

⁵⁰ Analysis of Belgrade Radio and Tanjug 7-12 September 1991 and Zagreb Radio 7-8 September 1991.

⁵¹ Belgrade Radio 19, 23 August 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 20 August 1991.

⁵² The Croatian force appears to have included Special Police from the Bjelovar Police Administration and unidentified ZNG troops, possibly from the 56th Kutina Independent Battalion. Belgrade Radio 19, 23 August 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 10-11 September 1991; Zagreb Radio 8 September 1991.

⁵³ Fighting raged in particular over the village of Kusonje, northeast of Pakrac.

⁵⁴ This is based on Sinisa Haluzan, "Daruvar Cranes," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 16, describing actions by ZNG units from Daruvar. Zagreb Radio reporting from 1991 claimed Serb forces attempted to seize the town on 1 September. Both sources say Croat troops retained control of Daruvar.

Mladić was born on 12 March 1943, near the town of Kalinovik, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. His father was killed in a clash with Croatian fascist troops when Mladić was only two years old. At the age of 15 he went to the Military Industrial High School in Žemun, Serbia, and then attended the JNA Military Academy, finishing first in his class. After graduation in 1965, Mladić served in Macedonia—Skopje, Kumanovo, Ohrid, and Stip—in many posts from platoon commander to motorized brigade commander. From 1976 to 1978 he attended the JNA Command-Staff Academy, again finishing first in his class, and then served in a number of staff positions. In January 1991 he became Deputy Commander for Rear Services, 52nd (Pristina) Corps, where he served until he accepted the post of Chief of Operational and Training Affairs on 26 June 1991 in the 9th (Knin) Corps. Biographical data drawn from Jovan Janjić, *Srpski General Ratko Mladić*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 2.

As indicated, movement from a corps rear services chief to corps chief of operations was technically a demotion. On JNA staffs, the hierarchy consisted of the following: Commander, (Deputy Commander—military districts only), Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff, Assistant Commander for Morale, Education, and Legal Affairs (political officer), and Assistant Commander for Rear Services. Mladić's slot, along with other staff positions, came under the chief of staff, making it a more junior position than rear services chief.

⁵⁵ For a full order of battle see Annex 14: "JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July-September 1991."

⁵⁶ Mladić made the following pro-Serb statements on 6 August 1991:

There will be no peace in the Skradin area, northeastern Dalmatia in Croatia, until Croatian armed forces cease breaking into villages populated by Serbs . . . the people in the Serbian villages in such situations are forced to defend themselves, and that it is then helped by the military formations of the so-called Serbian Autonomous Region Krajina . . . over the past month . . . SAO Krajina formations never made incursions on a single Croatian village.

In order to prevent the conflict and turn the illusory truce to peace . . . both sides must refrain from opening fire and keep at a given distance from members of the (9th) corps . . . from now on the corps forces will respond with all its might and combat force to any fired bullet, no matter who fires it.

Belgrade Tanjug 6 August 1991.

Mladic's seemingly contradictory statements about the JNA acting as a buffer force between the two sides along with his pro-Serb statements probably reveal how Mladic actually viewed himself and the JNA at the time—defenders of Serbs from what he regarded as the actions of Croatian fascism, yet committed to following orders to maintain the buffer zone.

Mladic also was later implicated in the failed internal JNA coup against General Kadijevic in September 1991. The officers involved believed that Kadijevic had not been decisive enough against the Croatians and had not sufficiently purged the army of non-Serb/Montenegrin officers. See section below, "Internal JNA Coup Fails to Remove Kadijevic."

⁵⁷ Major General Janez Ribo previously served as the 9th Corps chief of staff. Janjic, *op cit.* Chapter 2.

⁵⁸ Janjic, Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ Janjic states that the meeting was at the end of June, but given that Mladic only reported to the corps on 29 June, it seems unlikely that he would have been called on to represent the corps at high-level war planning sessions until he had spent some time in the corps headquarters. Janjic, Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ According to Janjic, Chapter 3, Mladic returned to Knin from Belgrade convinced that he could not rely fully on the higher command structure, but that he would instead have to turn primarily to the members of his units and the local population. That is why he initiated even closer cooperation with the Krajina political structures.

⁶¹ Janjic, Chapter 3.

⁶² Silber and Little, p. 172.

⁶³ Mladic acknowledged to his biographer that the JNA's "strategy" at this time was to act as a buffer force. Janjic, Chapter 2. Mladic also acknowledged that during the corps' peacekeeping operations in early August they had a number of minor skirmishes with the Croatians. Janjic, Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ Croatian troops in the area consisted of regular MUP police—probably numbering 50 to 100 in the area—probably a platoon to company of Special Police with another 50 to 100 personnel, at least a battalion of the ZNG 114th Split Brigade, with perhaps 300 to 400 troops, and probably a company of the 4th Guards Brigade, estimated at 100 to 150 troops. Total force: 500 to 750 personnel.

⁶⁵ The JNA force included major elements of the 221st Motorized Brigade—probably a motorized battalion plus a company of tanks and supported by a battery of artillery. The force may have numbered some 750 to 1,000 JNA personnel. Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Lisica commanded the brigade; he was to figure prominently in 9th Corps operations during the rest of the year, as well as in Bosnia during 1992. Lisica was promoted to full colonel on 7 October as a reward for his successful operations. SAO Krajina forces probably included mostly TO troops, probably spearheaded by some of Martic/Captain Dragan's Special Police, for a probable total of some 500 troops.

⁶⁶ Janjic, Chapter 4.

⁶⁷ The Silber and Little account appears to be a bit too simplistic in assuming that the JNA/Serb attack was completely unprovoked. See Silber and Little, pp. 171-172.

⁶⁸ On 24 August the 9th Corps publicly claimed that the Serb village of Otisic was surrounded by Croatian MUP and ZNG troops, although this was never confirmed. Belgrade Tanjug 27 August 1991.

On 25 August, Croatian forces cut off electricity, water, and telephone service to JNA barracks in Sibenik and Sinj, blocking

their approaches and possibly firing on them. That ZNG troops took part in the barracks blockade on 25 August is alluded to in Adjelka Mustapic, "Cetina Fighters—Giants Under the Stars," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 17. This action appear to have occurred almost simultaneously with Croatian actions against JNA barracks in Eastern Slavonia.

Mladic later claimed that Croatian forces also made a concerted attack on Serb TO and JNA positions south of Knin, near Drniš, and from Sinj; he said he observed the Croatian attack from his helicopter. At about the same time a JNA unit on peacekeeping duty appears to have been cut off from JNA troops to the north during this fighting. Mladic provided enough detail to make such an attack sound plausible, although his version remains unconfirmed. Janjic, Chapter 4. There are a few bits of information that seem to indicate the Croatians were engaged in some kind of operation, although it probably was not on the scale Mladic claimed. A Croatian military journal article on the 114th Split Brigade stated that brigade elements were to deploy to Vrlika and Kijevo on 20 August "to remove the blockade at Kijevo." Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18. A Croatian newspaper article on the 114th Brigade claimed that the brigade's first combat mission was in the Svilaja Mountains area on 19 August. Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail On All Battlefields," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 1 June 1996, p. 8. The Svilaja Mountains are near the Serb villages south of Vrlika—such as Otisic—which SAO Krajina leaders viewed with some concern, and which the Serbs claimed were being surrounded by Croatian troops on 24 August.

Bizarrely, Mladic also claimed that the confrontation over Kijevo was partly the result of the Croatian refusal to allow the burial procession of a Serb—who Mladic claimed had been killed under Croatian MUP interrogation—to proceed to the Serb's home village. Janjic, Chapter 4.

⁶⁹ Janjic, Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ From this point forward, the narrative will refer to joint JNA and Serb TO and/or Serb volunteer units as "Federal" forces for convenience, since the combined Serb forces were at least nominally fighting for a Federal Yugoslavia.

⁷¹ Luka Bebic, the then Croatian Defense Minister, stated on 11 September 1991 that loss of the Maslenica Bridge would "definitely divide Croatia into two parts." Belgrade Tanjug 11 September 1991.

⁷² The ZNG forces included the 1st (Active) Company/112th Zadar Brigade and as much as a battalion of 4th Guards Brigade. Gordan Lausic and Dejan Frigelj, "St. Krsevan and 112th Defending Zadar," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 14; Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven Countless Times," Zagreb *Velebit* 19 January 1996, pp. 14-15.

⁷³ Zagreb Radio 9 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 12 September 1991; Janjic, Chapter 5.

Lieutenant Colonel Lisica and his 221st Motorized Brigade—probably one motorized battalion, an armored company, and an artillery battery—again formed the JNA part of the joint JNA/Serb force. See an interview with Lisica, by Ljubomir Grubic, "Pulling Down the Pants," *Nin* 23 July 1993, p. 12-14.

⁷⁴ Zagreb Radio 11-12 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 12 September 1991; Janjic, Chapter 5; Grubic, pp. 12-14.

⁷⁵ Grubic, pp. 14-15.

Annex 9

Military Geography and Weather in Croatia¹

As terrain does in all wars, the military geography of Croatia had important effects on the nature of the fighting and capabilities of the armies during the 1991 war. Overall, about 80 percent of the former Yugoslavia consists of highlands and mountains with steep-sided valleys and a few level basins. These areas can be divided into two different types of terrain, the inland mountain highlands, and the limestone karst hills that mark the length of the Adriatic coast and its hinterlands. The remaining 20 percent of the country runs from flat to gently rolling lowlands. Croatia has all three types of terrain within its boundaries.

The northern plains in former Yugoslavia extend from northern Serbia and Vojvodina into northwest Croatia and northeastern Slovenia; two of the sectors that saw major combat during the war, Eastern Slavonia-Baranja and Western Slavonia, lay entirely in this region, as did some of the Banija-Kordun operations. The plains region, especially in the Slavonia region of Croatia, is bounded by several large rivers, notably the Danube, the Drava, and the Sava. West of the Serbian-Croatian border, the plains become gently rolling, interspersed with only occasional groups of hills and mountains over 1,000 meters. Small, closely spaced agricultural villages and market towns characterize the plains region, with most of the larger towns lying near the rivers. The region generally has a continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. The winters in particular can bring chilly winds sweeping across the plains. Average daily temperature during January is in the mid-30s F, while July is in the low to mid-80s F.

Overall, the Croatian plains are fairly well suited to large military operations. The terrain allows troops and vehicles to move cross-country except during the rainy and snowy winter season, which lasts roughly from late November until mid-April. Then, alternating freezing and thawing create soft, muddy ground conditions that make cross-country movement marginal for most of the winter, impeding tracked vehicles and infantry and keeping most wheeled

vehicles road-bound. The region boasted the best road network in former Yugoslavia, including the four-lane Belgrade-Zagreb highway.

A small but important portion of the combat area in Croatia, in the Banija and Kordun regions, is part of Yugoslavia's interior highlands, steep, hilly mountains mostly covered with shrubland and forests. In the highlands, mountains crest at over 1,500 meters above sea level, while hills generally rise about 400 meters to about 600 meters over neighboring valleys. Numerous streams lace the terrain. Villages and towns are more widely spaced than in the more populous plains region. Most roads follow the main valleys. Overall, steep slopes and limited road nets do not favor large-scale motorized and mechanized combat or permit much cross-country movement. Winter weather, with deep snow, hinders all movement and damages roads.

The fighting in the rest of Croatia—the Lika region, Knin-Zadar-Northern Dalmatia, and Dubrovnik—occurred in the karst region, which stretches along the Adriatic coast and into its hinterlands. Karst consists of dissected, rocky surfaces, almost exclusively limestone, covered with only sparse vegetation. The limestone has been eroded, producing fissures, sinkholes, underground streams, and caverns. Scattered throughout the rocky terrain are “poljes,” which are large, open valley plains. The region’s dispersed mountain ranges have many peaks over 1,500 meters, while the hills crest primarily between 200 to almost 550 meters. The rivers are few and small, less than 60 meters wide at high water, and very shallow at low water. The rocky, steep terrain and the lack of roads make large-scale combat operations a daunting prospect, especially those dependent on mechanized or motorized transport. In winter deep snow makes many roads impassable while movement across the flat poljes is inhibited by floods and mud. The population lives primarily in the poljes and on the coast, with smaller villages scattered across the higher ground.

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja

In the military sector described as the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja sector, lying in the northern plains, fighting was generally bounded on the north by the town of Donji Miholjac, then along the Hungarian border to the Danube River, which forms the Serbian-Croatian border, down to the Croatian border village of Ilok, and then southwest to the Serbian border town of Sid. On the west, combat occurred within an imaginary line running from Vinkovci to Osijek, then along the Drava River to Donji Miholjac. The sector really comprises two separate areas, Baranja and Eastern Slavonia, divided by the Drava River and its marshy banks, which segregate almost all combat activity into one or the other sub-region. The principal towns in the region include Osijek—the largest city with about 105,000 people—Vinkovci and Vukovar in Eastern Slavonia, and Beli Manastir and Darda in Baranja.²

Overall, although generally conforming to the northern plains topography, the region is less favorable to combat operations than it might appear. Many features combine to deter rapid movement by large armor-mechanized forces: The marshes along the major rivers; smaller rivers, streams, and canals; and large concentrations of villages and towns interspersed with small forests surrounded during the growing season by cornfields. These same features, however, offered Croatian light infantry good cover and concealment against the more powerful JNA armor and artillery. A particularly formidable combat environment presented itself in the built-up area of the Vukovar-Borovo Naselje-Borovo Selo triangle in Eastern Slavonia, with its industrial areas and large apartment blocks, along with the concentration of villages between Vinkovci and Vukovar. Throughout the region, from late October muddy conditions brought by wintry weather would make cross-country operations even more difficult. The Drava River north/northwest of Osijek provided a natural border for the Serbs and a natural defensive line for Croatian troops, while the Bòsut River gave Croatian defenders south of Vinkovci another good defensive position.

Good lines of communication to the battle zones were available for both the Federal forces and the

Croatians. The JNA was able to rely on road and rail networks to the border towns and cities of Sid, Srpski Miletic, Apatin, and Sombor, which also assured control over the Danube bridges and logistics and reinforcements for its forces. The Croatian road and rail links to Osijek and Vinkovci were also adequate, although hampered by Federal control of the Belgrade-Zagreb highway at Okucani in Western Slavonia. Generally good roads were also available between towns and villages within the combat zone.

Western Slavonia

The Western Slavonia combat zone also lay in the northern plains, but a sizeable mountain-hill chain interrupted passage over the plains in the central-northern part of the zone. The primary locus of combat within the zone was a triangle bounded by the towns of Jasenovac, Novska, Pakrac, and Nova Gradiska, with Okucani in the middle. A secondary fighting sector was bounded by the towns Daruvar, Grubisno Polje, Virovitica, Podravska Slatina, and Vocijn.

The primary combat zone also included the river plain along the Sava River between Novska and Nova Gradiska, running north-south up to the edge of the Psunj Mountains, just north of Okucani. The strategic Belgrade-Zagreb highway traverses this area. The plain is a typically flat major river plain which also includes the Strug canal, some marshy sections near the Sava, and a number of forested areas. Villages along and astride the Okucani-Nova Gradiska-Novska road provided both sides with ready-made strongpoints.

North of Okucani and the Belgrade-Zagreb Highway, the rest of the primary sector is dominated by the forested Psunj mountain range, with features rising to almost 1000 meters but more like 200 to 400 meters in height as it thins out near Pakrac, the principal town. Pakrac lies in a valley just to the northwest of the mountains, and is connected to Okucani by a road running through a narrow valley in the Psunj. A

number of villages surrounding Pakrac provide defensive depth to anyone holding the town, as well as key chokepoints on the roads leading into it.

The secondary sector to the north/northeast of Pakrac lies in the Ravna Gora, Papuk, and Bilogora Mountains. The Ravna Gora, between Pakrac and Vocić, consists of hills and mountains ranging from 500 to almost 1000 meters, while the western Papuk Mountains near Daruvar crest at 500 to over 900 meters, tapering to 100 to 200 meters near Podravsko Slatina. Most of the Bilogora Mountains, running southeast to northwest between Grubisno Polje and Virovitica, rise 200 to 300 meters in height. Villages are scattered throughout these hilly areas, while the larger towns, such as Grubisno Polje, lie in the valleys. The north-south line of mountains stops abruptly along the southeast-northwest line roughly between Podravsko Slatina and Virovitica and the plains start again. The lines of communication throughout the region appear adequate, with decent roads connecting all of the major towns, but the mountains and hilly terrain are a visible hindrance to cross-country movement by tracked and wheeled vehicles.

Banija-Karlovac/Kordun

The Banija and Karlovac/Kordun regions, while linked, formed separate military sectors during the fighting. The Banija area runs roughly from the town of Glina north to the Kupa River, over to the confluence with the Sava River, down to the Una River, south to Dvor na Uni, and back to Glina. The Kordun runs west of Glina, north to the Kupa, west to Karlovac, and southwest to a line running roughly between Ogulin and Slunj. Both Banija and Kordun are bounded on the south by the Bosnian border.

Banija is a region of plains and highlands bounded by the rivers. The major towns are Sisak, Petrinja, Sunja, Hrvatska Dubica, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Dvor na Uni, and Glina, with the linked towns of Petrinja and Sisak—Sisak has some 45,000 people—representing the center of the region. Banija can be roughly divided into the Zrinska Gora mountains, starting roughly 20 kilometers south of Petrinja, the low hills north of the Zrinska Gora, and the Sava River plain. The

Zrinska Gora rise from 200 meters to over 500 meters in height, generally forested and sparsely dotted with villages. The mountains taper toward the Kupa and Glina Rivers, near Petrinja and Glina, with hills running 100 meters to 200 meters in height. The Sava River plain, near the town of Sunja, is flat, with typical features of a major river plain, such as oxbow lakes, marshes, and canals. Both the Sava and Kupa Rivers provide natural defensive lines or boundaries. Roads in the region are generally adequate but few in number, centering on the hubs of Glina, Petrinja, and Sisak, as well as the Una River valley linking Dvor, Kostajnica, and Hrvatska Dubica. The primary routes run Petrinja-Kostajnica, Glina-Petrinja-Dvor, and Sisak-Sunja-Dubica. Glina is the key road center, connecting both Kordun and Banija, with all main east-west roads running through the town. Glina also is easily approached from the northeast and the Kupa River along the flat plain of the Glina River valley.

In Kordun, the terrain primarily is hilly, with the beginnings of the karst zone. The major population centers include the city of Karlovac—numbering some 60,000 people—and the towns of Vrginmost, Topusko, Vojnic, Slunj, and Ogulin. The crescent-shaped Kordun region can be considered as two areas, divided along the line Karlovac-Vojnic. The northeastern half comprises the forested Petrova Gora mountains at heights of 400 to 500 meters, tapering down to hills about 200 to 300 meters tall toward the Kupa River. The area is dotted with streams. The Kupa River, as in Banija, provides a natural boundary and defensive line. South of the Vojnic-Karlovac area, the hills run about 300 to 500 meters in height from the Korana River to the Bosnian border. The area between the Mrežnica and Korana Rivers flattens in a few wider valleys surrounded by hills rising to 300 to 500 meters, with at least one over 800 meters. From this area, toward the town of Ogulin and southwest toward the small town of Plaski in Lika, the terrain begins to rise at 400 to 500 meters, then 600 to over 1000 meters, as the karst begins. The local road network has four primary routes, Karlovac-Vojnic-Velika Kladusa (Bosnia), Vojnic-Vrginmost-Glina, Karlovac-Slunj, and Ogulin-Slunj.

Gospic-Lika

The Lika area, which lies in the karst region, is far more rugged than the previously described areas, covered with mountains that are interspersed with poljes where the major towns are located. The combat sector in 1991 was bounded by the town of Gracac in the south, east to the Bosnian border, up the border to a point west of the Bosnian town Cazin, west to the small town of Plaski, then south to Otocac and on to the sea at the Velebit Channel. The major towns include Gospic—the largest in the region with 30,000 people in the municipality—Gracac, Korenica, Otocac, and Plaski. Although the entire region is quite hilly and mountainous, three ranges stand out: the Velebit, Mala/Velika Kapela, and Plješevica, all of which have peaks ranging over 1,500 meters in height and are generally forested. The remainder of the area has hills up to 1,000 meters surrounded by poljes. All of the major towns lie in the variously sized poljes, of which at least seven are major ones, the biggest being Licko Polje, including the town of Gospic, and Krbavsko Polje, which includes Udbina Air Base. In addition, the major Yugoslav air base near the Bosnian town of Bihac straddles the Bosnian-Croatian border in Bihaćko Polje. The Yugoslav national park at Plitvice, north of the town of Korenica, also lies within the Lika area. The road network connects Gospic, Korenica, Gracac, and Otocac, while the links to Kordun run through Korenica-Slunj, and to North Dalmatia from Gracac-Knin, and Gracac-Obrovac.

Knin-Zadar-Northern Dalmatia

South of Lika, the Knin-Zadar-Northern Dalmatian area consists of a coastal zone—Ravni Kotari—and the more mountainous and hilly area around Knin, culminating in the Dinara Mountains on the Croatian-Bosnian border. This combat sector in 1991 ran from Zadar northeast toward Obrovac, east to the Bosnian border, southeast along the Bosnian border, cutting southwest at Sinj, and on to the coast at Sibenik. The area has two sizeable cities, Zadar with over 75,000 people, and Sibenik with over 40,000 people. Other towns include Knin with about 12,000 people, Sinj, Drniš, Biograd na Moru, Benkovac, and Obrovac. The Ravni Kotari, running from northwest of Zadar down

to Sibenik, consists of a narrow strip of relatively flat terrain interspersed with hills up to 200 meters in height. It also contains a sort of inland sea, four lakes and the mouth of the Krka River flowing into Sibenik Channel. Roughly north of an imaginary line between Benkovac and Sibenik, the karst starts to rise and angle to the northeast, where southeast of Knin the Kozjak and Svilaja Mountains reach heights of 1,200 to 1,500 meters, culminating in the Dinara Mountains, which rise to almost 2,000 meters just inside the Bosnian border. In this area, the Krka River flows down from Knin, through Drniš, to Sibenik, while the Peruća Lake and Dam runs north of Sinj. A relatively extensive road network links the cities and towns. Strategically, the Maslenica Bridge, which crosses the channel between the small inland sea, Novigradsko More and the Velebit Channel, was to become a vital link between Lika and Ravni Kotari, with Knin and its surroundings controlled by the SAO Krajina; without it, ferries to Pag Island, north of Zadar, and direct to Zadar and Sibenik, would be the area's only link with northern Croatia.

Dubrovnik-Southern Dalmatia

The Dubrovnik sector can be divided into three zones, the Konavli region, the immediate environs of Dubrovnik city, and the coastal sector running from Zaton to Ston and Neum. The Konavli area is the southernmost section of Croatia, culminating in the Prevlaka peninsula overlooking the entrance to Montenegro's Kotor Bay. The region is some 35 kilometers long from Cavtat to the tip of Prevlaka and about 13 kilometers wide at its broadest point from the coast to the Bosnian border. Konavli has two terrain areas, a flat plateau beginning about five kilometers from the Montenegrin border, which is bounded by the other section comprising karstic highlands rising abruptly from the north edge of the plateau to almost 1,200 meters along the Bosnian border. There is generally limited road access from Bosnia and Montenegro, including what were to be the JNA's major staging areas around Kotor Bay and the Herzegovinian town of Trebinje. From

Montenegro and Bosnia, there are two main roads, both running northwest along the plateau, the southernmost being the main Adriatic Highway; both lead to the resort town of Cavtat.

The approaches to Dubrovnik city from Cavtat are dominated by the Zupa Bay and the coastal resort villages around its edge. The Adriatic Highway runs along a narrow ledge between steep cliffs—which rise quickly from about 100 meters to 600 meters—and the bay. On the north side of the bay is another triangle of resort villages centered on Sebreno and Kupari. Dubrovnik itself—with almost 50,000 people—consists of newer areas surrounding the old town, all of which are dominated by militarily strategic hills, such as Zarkovica, Bosanka, and Srdj, ranging from 300 to 400 meters in height; the Bosnian border lies only five kilometers from the center of town. Other key areas include the Gruz harbor area on the north, which is adjacent to the Rijeka Dubrovacka channel. The channel cuts into the coast for some five kilometers, almost turning Dubrovnik into a peninsula. There is an extensive road network around the city, although access in and out of Dubrovnik is limited to one major route toward Trebinje, plus the Adriatic Highway.

The coastal region northwest of Dubrovnik is dominated by the same karstic highlands that run along the entire Dalmatian coast. The region is no more than seven kilometers wide between the coast and the Bosnian border. It has only scattered villages amidst the mountains and hills, with three small ports being the key population centers: Zaton, lying five kilometers northwest of Dubrovnik, Slano some 20 kilometers northwest of the city, and Neum, Bosnia's only access to the sea, sitting almost 50 kilometers to the northwest. Roughly 10 to 15 kilometers west of Slano begins the large Peljesac peninsula which juts awkwardly into the Adriatic. A number of small islands lie close by off the coast. The hills and mountains run from 300 meters to 900 meters in height, with the terrain growing in stature as one moves closer to the Bosnian border. Limited road access is a hindrance to mobility; the primary route is the Adriatic Highway running right up to the coast below the rising mountains. There are only a few secondary roads: the two key ones are the road that runs to Slano from Bosnia, and another route running northwest/southeast parallel to the Adriatic Highway from Slano toward Neum.

Endnotes, Annex 9

¹ This analysis is based primarily on three sources: Miroslav Krleza Lexicographical Institute, *A Concise Atlas of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Zagreb: Graficki Zavod Hrvatske, 1993; *Section 24: Topography, National Intelligence Survey 21: Yugoslavia*, Washington D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1962 (declassified 1980); and analysis of DMA M709 series 1/50,000 scale maps of Croatia.

² The larger villages include Dalj, Tovarnik, Nijemci, Stari and Novi Jankovci, Borovo Naselje and Borovo Selo, Novi and Stari Tenja in Eastern Slavonia, and Valpovo, Bilje, and Knezovi Vinogradi in Baranja.

Annex 10

The Battles of the Barracks—Croatian Offensive Operations September-October 1991*

Planning and Executing the Barracks Offensive

The Croatian offensive against the JNA was a simple yet effective plan of laying siege to all JNA facilities throughout Croatian-held territory, and, if possible, capturing them or forcing their surrender. The strategic objectives of the offensive included:

- Providing Zagreb leverage against Belgrade by making hostages of the barracks
- Removing a large measure of the JNA's combat power in Croatia from the playing field and dislocating JNA plans
- Acquiring enough weapons from the barracks and depots to develop combat forces capable of defending Croatia on the battlefield.¹

The plan clearly was based on that which General Spegelj had been advocating since late 1990. As noted earlier, Spegelj believed—and was proven correct in Slovenia—that many JNA conscripts in their multi-ethnic units would not want to fight. Isolated from support and in untenable tactical positions, the JNA formations would begin to disintegrate.²

The Croatians' lack of a true general staff or regional military headquarters was the primary cause of their command and control difficulties during the summer combat operations. Happily, these deficiencies had little bearing on the barracks offensive, whose effective execution was facilitated by the static nature of the barracks siege and the devolution of command

authority down to the level of local commanders. The Ministry of Defense issued the order to the regional crisis staffs, which simply transmitted the order on to the municipal crisis staffs. It was up to these municipal crisis staffs to block the entrances to the JNA facilities, switch off their utilities, and stop all food shipments, using formations of the local reserve ZNG (soon to be Croatian Army—HV), the National Protection units, and regular MUP police, sometimes reinforced by professional ZNG and Special Police provided by higher commands.³ Some of the Croatian forces appear to have been under orders for immediate assaults to seize barracks or depots outright; the “appropriate actions” authorized to Croatian field commanders in the government’s 13 September order probably is a cryptic reference to this.⁴ The Croatians were in fact able to seize many JNA facilities on the spot, especially small, isolated depots and border watchtowers, most of them held by fewer than 50 soldiers. The Croatians had had plenty of time since 1990 to identify every JNA barracks and depot and support facility and assess the strength of their defenses, and they probably had rehearsed their actions several times. The crisis staff commanders successfully planned and coordinated the actions of the various action elements, armed and unarmed, as well as the civil utilities and commercial firms on which the JNA barracks depended for services and supplies.⁵ (Appendix 1 is a sample Municipal Crisis Staff order regarding the offensive.)

The Croatian seizure of the JNA’s Samobor barracks, housing elements of a communications regiment and a store of confiscated TO weaponry, provides a model of a Croatian attack on a JNA barracks. Details of the action and the units employed were provided by people on the scene shortly afterward, and by Croatian military journals. The attack was launched in conjunction with one against the JNA Velika Buna

* This section discusses the outcome of Croatian blockades and siege operations against JNA garrisons in Croatia. Ground combat operations in and around the barracks, including JNA relief operations for the barracks, will be discussed in the sections and annexes discussing the fall combat operations.

barracks on 6 October, and the barracks fell the next day. The main objective of both attacks was to seize the TO weapons, which would be used to arm several newly mobilizing ZNG brigades; the communications regiment's technical equipment would be a bonus. The original blockading force appears to have been composed of regular MUP personnel and probably some volunteers; for the assault the Croatians brought in ZNG reinforcements, redeploying elements of one reserve brigade and mobilizing parts of new reserve brigade.⁶ The ZNG attack plan appears to have been fairly simple, even crude, judging from the damage observed: Croatian troops pummeled the barracks with mortar fire while others opened up on all the buildings with automatic weapons, both small and large caliber. The heavy volume of fire probably was intended to shock the JNA into surrendering; snipers appear to have been positioned in nearby buildings overlooking the barracks to heighten the intimidating effects. The JNA unit, numbering only about 150 officers and men, put up minimal resistance before surrendering. Although the tactics were effective in forcing the JNA surrender, the indiscriminate fire appears to have been counterproductive: a Croatian military journal reported that the Croatians managed to salvage only 10,000 rifles out of the 16,000 stored at the facility.⁷ The 6,000 lost weapons would have armed at least two full infantry brigades.

Once the Croatians captured a JNA facility, they lost no time in distributing captured weapons to ZNG formations. They desperately needed to put soldiers and especially heavy weapons in the field against the JNA, to the extent that heavy weapons, including artillery and tanks, were sent piecemeal from the captured garrisons as soon as they were repaired and serviced. It was also deemed essential to empty the captured barracks and depots of their equipment, including such non-lethal items as sleeping bags, before the JNA could retaliate with air strikes or artillery barrages to render the facility useless and deny its contents to the Croatian rearmament program.

The JNA Reaction

JNA tactics in response to being blockaded and threatened with capture took several forms. When the

Croatians launched a ground attack against a barracks the troops in the facility defended themselves with their individual direct fire weapons against their attackers. In most of the larger barracks, JNA units had constructed a variety of revetments for armored vehicles, as well as bunkers and trenches around the barracks perimeter. In addition, it was standard JNA practice to sow the perimeters of barracks and depot depots with a thick screen of land mines. In some cases, key facilities lacking their own armor received a platoon or company from an armor or mechanized unit garrisoning a larger establishment to beef up their firepower and, hopefully, scare off an attack.

More controversially, the JNA could and sometimes did retaliate with indirect fire from artillery and mortars and with air strikes, usually against Croatian government and military targets. JNA commanders were moreover given to issuing blustering threats of death and destruction to the civilian surroundings if the Croatians fired on their installations. General Momcilo Perisic recalled in 1993 that he told the local Croatian officials that "we would be forced to destroy Zadar in self-defense" if they shot at the troops of his artillery training center. Later, when he was conducting negotiations for the withdrawal from the barracks, Perisic's men were under orders to ensure that "all of Zadar would be blown up" if he and the commander of an adjacent training center disappeared.⁸ How much indiscriminate JNA return or retaliatory fire actually occurred is difficult to determine, as are accusations that the JNA often intentionally targeted non-military or non-official facilities. Certainly indiscriminate fire occurred, and Croatian propaganda and psychological warfare efforts always played up this angle for foreign and domestic consumers. It does appear to have been JNA policy to respond with overwhelming force to any instance of Croatian fire, although this does not appear to have been uniformly practiced. Perisic certainly advocated it, claiming to have told Croatian officials that "If they threatened us with any caliber, we would respond with the biggest." When the Croatians cut Perisic's telephone communications, he claims that his troops shot the dish antenna off the local telephone

exchange roof, and the Croatians immediately restored his telephone service. The Croatians firmly believe that Perisic's actions constituted war crimes, and they charged and convicted him and a number of his officers, in absentia, for his actions in 1991.⁹

If a JNA commander believed that the odds were good that he would be overrun or forced to surrender or compelled to withdraw, he could undertake to disable most of his equipment, destroy ammunition and weapons stockpiles, and sabotage the facility. This happened frequently, even in the ill-starred 32nd (Varazdin) Corps. When Croatian troops captured more than 50 tanks and 20 infantry fighting vehicles in the 32nd Corps's Koprivnica barracks, they found that the JNA had done a thorough job of incapacitating them for immediate use. Finally, after a barracks or depot had fallen, the JNA routinely called in air strikes to deny its use to the Croatians.

Eastern Slavonia¹⁰

As discussed in Volume I, the Croatians initiated blockades against JNA garrisons in three towns in Eastern Slavonia in late August, following up against garrisons in at least three other towns on 13/14 September. More than half the garrisons eventually surrendered, some in as few as two days, while the JNA relieved Vukovar Barracks on 14 September. The Croatians tried especially hard to capture two major barracks in Osijek and Vinkovci, which supported most of the JNA 12th Mechanized Brigade and the 12th Mixed Artillery Regiment respectively. Heavy fighting ensued. The 12th Mechanized Brigade broke out of its barracks on 17 September and fought its way out to Federal-held territory southeast of Osijek. The artillery regiment held out against strong Croatian attacks until JNA forces relieved the barracks on 26 September.¹¹ (See discussion of JNA offensive operations to relieve the barracks in the following annexes). When the fighting subsided, the Croatians had been able to capture from the JNA an entire antitank brigade, part of the artillery regiment, elements of a mechanized battalion, a pontoon engineer battalion, and a large quantity of Croatian Territorial Defense weapons that the JNA had

confiscated in May 1990, as well as other stockpiled JNA supplies.

Death of the Varazdin Corps

The loss of the 32nd (Varazdin) Corps was to prove one of the JNA's most humiliating defeats of the Croatian war. For the Croatians it was a signal victory, giving them almost overnight substantial amounts armor and artillery, as well as small arms, for their nascent army. On paper, the corps was a powerful force, including two mechanized brigades, a motorized brigade, an artillery regiment, an antitank regiment, and supporting forces that included the JNA's border guards on the Hungarian-SFRY frontier. Another army-level antitank regiment was garrisoned nearby. But the crisis gripping the Federal Republic had already taken a heavy toll of the corps' cohesion, morale, and the willingness of its conscripts, in particular, to fight. The Croatian siege compounded these problems and forced the corps' eventual dissolution and surrender; by 30 September, all of its units had surrendered or been captured. The 32nd Mechanized Brigade in Varazdin, where the Croatians forced a well-equipped mechanized brigade to surrender because its soldiers had melted away, provides a good example of the corps' problems. Barely 600 of the brigade's peacetime complement of about 1300 troops remained to surrender.¹² The only barracks the Croatians had to carry by a full-scale assault was that housing the 265th Mechanized Brigade in Bjelovar. The garrison was already understrength at the time of the blockade, with at least two of its armored or mechanized battalions deployed elsewhere. On 29 September, MUP Special Police stormed the barracks and seized it in heavy fighting. The JNA brigade commander was killed in action; the 400 men remaining surrendered.¹³

The JNA later court-martialed the Varazdin corps commander, Major General Vlado Trifunovic, along with four of his officers, for failing to preserve the corps.¹⁴ During the trials, the pathetic personnel state in the 32nd Corps became apparent. General Trifunovic again emphasized that it was the continual

loss of men through desertions, and the lack of motivation and determination of many who remained, that had caused the corps' disintegration. The 32nd's problems began in the aftermath of the Slovenian Ten Day War, when casualties, captures, and mass desertions had already substantially reduced it, and these losses had not been replaced when the Croatian siege began. Trifunovic criticized the JNA General Staff's orders to hold every facility, no matter how untenable its situation, which had kept him from concentrating his forces at a few defensible facilities before the Croatians imposed their blockade.¹⁵ The judge in the case noted pointedly that desertions eventually left the corps with only a third of its men. In the 32nd Mechanized Brigade, more than 100 officers deserted—over two-thirds of its complement.¹⁶ And he would conclude that "The Varazdin Corps had been put in a hopeless situation." Three of the officers, including Trifunovic, were eventually acquitted.¹⁷

Zagreb-Banija

The Croatian ZNG and MUP blockade of JNA garrisons in Zagreb and the surrounding area effectively destroyed the JNA 10th (Zagreb) Corps as a combat force, immobilizing its two strongest formations, the 4th Armored Brigade in Jastrebarsko and 140th Mechanized Brigade in Zagreb, as well as a large number of JNA support formations and depots. Although these two formations refused to surrender and eventually were allowed to withdraw in November and December, the Croatians were able to take from them large numbers of small arms, including confiscated Croatian TO stocks, as many as 60 stored tanks, a 203mm (8 inch) howitzer battalion, and part of an army-level communications regiment's equipment. They even extracted from the JNA, as part of the agreement covering the withdrawal of JNA forces at Zagreb, the confiscated Croatian TO weapons remaining at the uncaptured barracks.

Karlovac-Kordun¹⁸

The JNA had at least ten separate barracks, depots, and other facilities in and around Karlovac, including

the garrison for an army-level artillery brigade, a light air defense regiment, T-34 tank storage, and engineer training facilities. Three smaller barracks appear to have fallen in mid-September; the remainder, however, held out until at least November, when the JNA evacuated all but two, which were on the Karlovac frontline but in Serb-held territory. The Croatians appear to have been able to capture some JNA stocks, including some T-34s, but many of the heavy weapons were either pulled out earlier or destroyed in the fighting. Most of the artillery brigade appears to have been redeployed prior to the siege, while at least part of the air defense regiment's equipment was caught in a warehouse and burned.¹⁹ The JNA, however, probably had stored a large amount of heavy weapons in Karlovac that the Croatians were able to capture. Croatian troops also were able to seize four large depots/barracks in the Ogulin area, southwest of Karlovac, during September, although a JNA air strike destroyed one of the ammunition depots in October.²⁰

Gospic-Lika

Croatian forces were able to blockade JNA units from the 13th (Rijeka) Corps at four concentrations of barracks/depots in the Gospic-Lika region: the largest group around Gospic city, the town of Otocac, and the villages of Perusic and Sveti Rok, some 12 kilometers north and 30 kilometers southeast of Gospic respectively. Croatian forces seized all of the seven-odd facilities in the Gospic area, including the main barracks, which housed the 236th Motorized Brigade.²¹ The JNA had withdrawn most of the brigade from the town prior to the siege,²² but the Croatians captured six or seven tanks, possibly two mortar batteries, and other equipment, and probably some confiscated Croatian TO stocks. JNA forces also surrendered the barracks and depots in Otocac and Perusic. JNA and Serb TO forces appear to have broken the blockade of the Sveti Rok depot in late September.²³

Zadar-Dalmatia

Croatian ZNG and MUP forces laid siege to JNA facilities in and around Zadar city (including Zemunik Air Base), as well as in the towns of Sinj and Drnis. Although no major ground combat formations were garrisoned in the area, Zadar was the site of the JNA's artillery training center (commanded by Colonel Momcilo Perisic, the future chief of the Yugoslav Army General Staff, quoted earlier), and its air defense training center, which included an SA-6 regiment. Croatian troops were unable to capture either of these facilities, although they did seize at least two other barracks containing large numbers of infantry weapons, probably confiscated Croatian TO stocks.²⁴ Both commanders of the training centers appear to have been excellent leaders who inspired their men and organized their defenses well, and they were able to negotiate the peaceful withdrawal of all remaining JNA barracks and depots in Zadar, including both centers and their equipment, beginning on 11 October, after JNA 9th Corps forces had almost completely broken through Croatian defenses around Zadar.²⁵ The 9th Corps had already lifted the siege of Zemunik Air Base and the Drnis depot in mid-September, while JNA forces in Sinj barracks—which included an engineer regiment—were withdrawn in late September.

The Dalmatian Ports: Split, Sibenik, Ploce²⁶

Croatian MUP and ZNG soldiers blockaded the numerous facilities of the JNA/Yugoslav Navy's Military-Maritime District in Split and Sibenik, although only a few fell to their forces.²⁷ The Navy (JRM) lost four of at least 14 installations in the Split area during September and destroyed another to keep it from falling into Croatian hands. The most significant loss was an ammunition depot holding all of the JRM's brand-new Swedish-made RBS-15 antiship missiles. The JRM hospital staff defected en masse to the Croatians, while Croatian troops also took possession of an air defense unit and a fuel depot. JNA/JRM forces clashed regularly with ZNG/MUP personnel around the remaining barracks from September into December.²⁸ The JRM was able to reinforce at least some of its facilities—primarily the

Divulje Heliport—with JNA ground troops, probably comprising at least an infantry battalion, transported by sea from Montenegro; the others were probably defended by elements of the Military-Maritime District's 86th Protection Regiment.²⁹ JRM warships, based at Vis Island, regularly patrolled the Split harbor areas during the blockade, firing on Croatian positions—and according to Croatian accounts, civilian targets—and supporting the besieged garrisons.³⁰ The vessels also maintained the Split sector of the JNA's Croatian coastal blockade. To counter these movements, Croatian Naval forces (HRM) mined some areas in the approaches to Split and severely damaged the frigate "Split" in November.³¹ JNA/JRM and Croatian authorities agreed to a Federal withdrawal on 22 November, allowing a month for Federal forces to pull out their forces and equipment in exchange for the lifting of the naval blockade along the coast except around Dubrovnik. The agreement delivered to the Croatians confiscated Territorial Defense weapons stocks and apparently allowed them to keep intact the JRM's Naval Academy facilities and infrastructure. The JNA/JRM evacuation from Split began on 25 November and was completed by late December.³²

Croatian forces in Sibenik blockaded JNA/JRM forces belonging to the Military-Maritime District's 8th (Sibenik) Military-Maritime Sector at the start of the nationwide barracks offensive in September. JNA 9th Corps forces immediately launched a relief operation toward Sibenik, which ZNG/MUP forces were able to halt in heavy fighting on 20 September. (See section "Combat Operations, September–December 1991" for more details.)³³ In addition, Croatian forces were able to take possession of at least two of the 8th Sector's roughly 10 facilities at about the same time. The remaining barracks and depots—defended by the understrength 11th Naval Landing Infantry Brigade—held out until the 22 November agreement that allowed the JNA/JRM to pull its forces out of both Split and Sibenik.³⁴ The withdrawal began on 26 November and was completed in late December.³⁵

Croatian ZNG troops also captured two depots near Ploce on 15 September. JNA RV i PVO fighter-bombers, however, immediately struck the depots, and crews claimed to have destroyed much of the facilities, including trucks brought in to carry away captured weaponry.³⁶ JRM warships assisted the Air Force in its retaliatory strikes.³⁷ Croatian sources, however, claim the ZNG salvaged a large number of weapons from the depots despite the JNA attacks.³⁸ No other JNA barracks appear to have remained in the Ploce area after the operation.

Istria and Gorski Kotar: Rijeka, Pula, and Delnice

Compared to other regions, the Croatian blockade of JNA garrisons in the Istrian and Gorski Kotar regions was very peaceful—except for one disputed encounter at Delnice. The JNA 5th Military-Maritime Sector in Pula and the 13th (Rijeka) Corps (commanded by General Marijan Cad, a Slovene) reached a modus vivendi with the local crisis staff headquarters and Croatian MUP and ZNG commanders whereby JNA and Croatian forces agreed to refrain from any military action.³⁹ The truce survived two firing incidents in late September against JNA garrisons in Pula—which the Croatians blamed on combatants not under their control.⁴⁰ JNA/JRM personnel in Pula were observed coming and going freely to the 5th Sector headquarters. At several nearby barracks, JNA-Croatian relations reportedly were also cordial. JNA/JRM forces began pulling out from the Pula area in late October, completing the withdrawal from Pula

and the nearby island of Mali Losinj on 16 December.⁴¹ General Cad worked out an agreement with Croatian authorities on the 13th Corps withdrawal, which he signed with Croatian Minister for Navigation Davorin Rudolf on 9 November.⁴² The 13th Corps completed its pullout on 9 December.⁴³

The surrender of the JNA garrison in Delnice—6th Mountain Brigade/13th Corps—was the only exception to the otherwise peaceful devolution in the region. On 5 November ZNG troops threatened the garrison, which consisted of a barracks and three depots, and demanded that it surrender, which it did. The normally placid General Cad reacted with a stern ultimatum demanding that the garrison be freed immediately or he would order air strikes against Delnice—a threat which the RV i PVO duly carried out on 7 November.⁴⁴ However, this was the only JNA response, and the seizure did not affect the 13th Corps withdrawal agreement signed only two days later.

Easing of the Siege

In late September, the Croatian Army and the MUP eased their blockades of the barracks in non-combat zones and some of the apprehensions of dire crisis began to fade. Overall, though, the situation remained tense; the Croatians had lightened the restrictions imposed on the JNA, but the blockaded troops recognized that they were still prisoners in their own barracks.

Appendix 1
Koprivnica Municipality Crisis Staff Order to
Prepare for Blockade of the JNA⁴⁵

Republika Hrvatska (Republic of Croatia)
Opcina Koprivnica (Municipality of Koprivnica)
Narodna Obrana
Krizni Stab opcine Koprivnica (Crisis Staff)
Drzavna Tajna (State Secret)

Klasa: D. T. 801-03/91-01/1
Urbroj: 2137-01-91-6
Koprivnica 13.09.1991

DP "Izvor" Koprivnica n/r Rukovodioca obrambenih
priprema

This is the resolution of the Koprivnica Crisis Staff in accordance with the order of the Croatian Ministry of Defense and the President of the Republic of Croatia to do the following:

1. Immediately carry out all the necessary preparations to completely stop supplying the

Koprivnica barracks, the House of the JNA, and JNA facilities in Crnoj Gori with food and all other products.

2. Inform the Municipal Crisis Staff at telephone no. 822-038 or at Koprivnica Municipal Center at No. 985 about the readiness for carrying out measures cited above, and give the number to which the signal will be sent for carrying out the measures cited above.

3. Maintain a state of constant readiness for carrying out the above-mentioned measures, which should be implemented upon the reception of the signal by the Crisis Staff of the Koprivnica municipality. The signal will be sent by telephone by the Intelligence Center and the signal will be "TYPHOON 91." Upon receipt of the signal all the operations cited above should be carried out in their entirety.

PRESIDENT OF THE CRISIS STAFF:

Nikola Gregur (signed)

Appendix 2 Estimates of Blockaded Troops and Captured Equipment

It is difficult to determine how much equipment Croatian forces were able to seize from JNA garrisons because the Federal army maintained such an immense amount of weaponry in storage. When a JNA formation surrendered, Croatian troops got not only that unit's equipment but stocks of excess weaponry held in long-term contingency storage and not assigned to any particular unit.⁴⁶ Confiscated TO heavy weapons recaptured by the Croatians are also difficult to enumerate, although these consisted primarily of mortars. The following list, based on the assigned equipment of surrendered/captured JNA units and estimates of stored weapons, is a "best estimate" of the total numbers of tanks and APC/IFVs, and of field artillery, antitank guns, mortars 100mm and above, plus 76mm artillery and antitank guns that Croatian forces captured during the barracks offensive. By comparison, General Tus stated in 1996 that the Croatians had been able to seize nearly 200 tanks, 150 APC/IFVs, and about 400 artillery pieces, caliber and type unspecified.⁴⁷ The blockaded troop numbers are drawn from Milisav Sekulic's study, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*.

Blockaded Troops⁴⁸

6,150 personnel from Fifth Military District
5,500 personnel from Military-Maritime District
2,100 personnel from the Air and Air Defense Force

Total: 13,750 personnel

Main Battle Tanks

200 T-55 tanks
10 to 20 M-84 tanks⁴⁹
30 to 40 T-34 tanks

Total: 240 to 260 tanks

Armored Personnel Carriers/Infantry Fighting Vehicles

20 to 30 M-60 armored personnel carriers
100 M-80 infantry fighting vehicles

Total: 120 to 130 APC/IFVs

Field Artillery, Multiple Rocket Launchers and Antitank Guns 100mm and Above

18 M-2 (M-115) 203mm howitzers
18 M-1 (M-65/M-114) 155mm howitzers
18 M-84 152mm gun-howitzers
18 D-20 152mm howitzers
20 to 30 M-46 130mm field guns
24 2S1 122mm self-propelled howitzers
20 to 30 D-30 122mm howitzers
40 to 50 M-38 122mm howitzers
80 to 100 M-2A1 (M-101) 105mm howitzers
40 to 50 M-56 105mm howitzers
80 T-12 100mm antitank guns
18 M-63 128mm multiple rocket launchers

Total: 395 to 455 field artillery, multiple rocket launchers, and antitank guns 100mm and above

76mm Field Artillery and Antitank Guns

60 to 70 M-48B1 76mm mountain guns
100 ZIS-3 76mm antitank guns

Total: 160 to 170 76mm field artillery pieces and anti-tank guns

Heavy Mortars

600 to 650 120mm heavy mortars
400 former TO mortars
200 to 250 JNA mortars

Total: 1200 to 1300 mortars.

Endnotes, Annex 10

¹ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. Interview with Corps General Anton Tus, first chief of the Croatian Main Staff.

² Silber and Little, p. 109.

³ Based on an analysis of Zagreb Radio reporting from September through December 1991, as well as a variety of articles from the Croatian military journal *Hrvatski Vojnik* in which unit histories describe their involvement in the barracks offensive. Thus, for example, a history of the 3rd (Krizevci) Battalion/117th (Koprivnica) Brigade, describes events on 16 September, at Krizevci, in which local ZNG troops—soon to be formed into the 3rd Battalion—together with National Protection detachments and Special Police surrounded the Krizevci barracks, housing a JNA antitank regiment, and the depot. The depot surrendered on 16 September, and the barracks gave up the next day. Mate Babic, "The Pride of the 3rd Krizevci Battalion," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 30 July 1993, p. 18.

⁴ Darko Pavlicic, "Why I Resigned," Zagreb *Danas* 8 October 1991, pp. 14-15. An interview with former Croatian Defense Minister Luka Bebic. Bebic's description of the mobilization order appears in full in Volume I.

⁵ Mate Babic, "The Pride of the 3rd Krizevci Battalion," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 30 July 1993, p. 18.

⁶ The 8th ZNG Brigade—later redesignated the 151st Samobor Brigade—had already taken part in several barracks operations, as well as combat operations in Banija, from where it was redeployed to Sambor for the attack. Nevin Miladin, "They Responded To Every Assignment," *Velebit* 19 January 1996, p. 12. The 150th Zagreb-Crnomerec Brigade headquarters and 1st Battalion were also mobilized in early October and moved to Sambor for the operation. Vesna Puljak, "Crnomerec is Defending Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 15.

⁷ Nevin Miladin, "They Responded To Every Assignment," *Velebit* 19 January 1996, p. 12.

⁸ Dada Vujasinovic, "The Last Victory on the Neretva," Belgrade *Duga* 31 July-13 August 1993, pp. 19-23. Perisic goes on to state that his men fired on the Zadar municipal president's house (the president was head of the local crisis staff), and commercial factories, which he claims were being used to produce weapons; Perisic proudly stated his troops hit all of these targets accurately.

⁹ "D. B.," "A Happy Father's Grenades," *Hrvatski Obzor* 26 April 1997, p. 6.

¹⁰ Analysis of Eastern Slavonia barracks siege based on August-September Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, and Belgrade Radio reporting.

¹¹ Zagreb Radio on 18 September described the fighting at "Djuro Salaj" Barracks in Vinkovci, claiming that half of the barracks were in flames, that fire had spread to the ammunition dump, and that JNA forces were running short of ammunition. Despite this, the JNA held out for over another week.

¹² Zagreb *Vjesnik* 27 September 1991, p. 5

¹³ Zagreb Radio 29-30 September 1991. Another JNA officer, Major Milan Tepic, posthumously received one of the JNA's highest awards, the National Hero Order, for setting off explosive charges that destroyed one of the Bjelovar underground ammunition depots in order to deny it to the Croatians. Belgrade Tanjug 25 November 1991.

¹⁴ One of the officers, Colonel Berislav Popov, commander of the 32nd Mechanized Brigade, had the misfortune to be charged with

war crimes by both the Slovenes and the Croatians, while also being charged by the JNA with failure to sufficiently defend his unit.

¹⁵ LJ Stefanovic, "Traitor or Corpse," Belgrade *Vreme* 13 April 1992, pp. 25-27. The Fifth Military District commander, General Avramovic, ordered Trifunovic to hold all of the barracks and depots in order to house reinforcements of the 31st (Maribor) Corps withdrawing from Slovenia. These reinforcements never arrived. Even if most of the 31st Corps had arrived, it probably would have been more of a burden than help because of the desertions it had suffered. Both corps had far too much equipment for their few personnel to use or successfully defend.

¹⁶ R. Pavlovic, "General Trifunovic Acquitted," Belgrade *Politika* 18 June 1992, p. 10.

¹⁷ R. Pavlovic, "General Trifunovic Acquitted," Belgrade *Politika* 18 June 1992, p. 10.

¹⁸ The description of the status of the Karlovac Garrison is based primarily on Zagreb Radio 18 September 1991, and November-December Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug reporting.

¹⁹ A photograph of at least a battery of destroyed M-53/59 "Praga" self-propelled air defense guns in Karlovac appears in Eric Michelletti and Yves Debay, *War in the Balkans: 600 Days of Conflict in War Torn Yugoslavia*. Paris: Histoire & Collections, 1993, p. 46. The warehouse the Pragas were stored in caught fire, and the vehicles were destroyed in the conflagration. The storage area appears large enough to hold at least an entire battalion of vehicles (18 Pragas), although only one area was shown.

²⁰ Sarajevo Radio 19 September 1991; Zagreb Radio 13 October 1991; Srdjan Spanovic, "How to Stop the Lawlessness," Zagreb *Danas* 22 October 1991, pp. 24-25. Vesna Puljak, "143rd Ogulin," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 6 May 1994, pp. 25-27.

²¹ Belgrade Tanjug claimed on 20 September the brigade commander sided with the Croatians and the senior Serb officer was killed in action during the fighting at the barracks. Jovic notes on 20 September Serb claims that the Croatians may have killed a large number of Serb soldiers and their families in the barracks after its capture. Jovic entry for 20 September 1991. The Federal Defense Ministry, however, on 22 September denied rumors that all officers and their families had been killed in the barracks, stating that three officers were killed in action and all the families had been previously evacuated from Gospic. Belgrade Tanjug 22 September 1991.

²² The 236th was prominent in the fighting around Gospic throughout September and October.

²³ Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1991.

²⁴ Goran Lasic and Dejan Frigelj, "St. Krsevan and 112th Defending Zadar," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 14. The Croatians also claim that the entire Technical-Maintenance Battalion of the 405th Rear Base—which probably supported the 9th Corps—defected to their side on 20 September. Zagreb Radio 20 September 1991.

²⁵ Belgrade Radio 7 October 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 11-12 October 1991.

²⁶ The description of the activities against JNA facilities in and around the Dalmatian ports is based primarily on Zagreb Radio and Belgrade Tanjug reporting from September through December 1991.

²⁷ As in Eastern Slavonia, Croatian troops initiated some blockades on 25 August, shutting off power and water and disconnecting phone lines. This blockade had only been partially lifted by mid-September, when the Croatian nationwide offensive against the barracks went into effect. Belgrade Tanjug 27 August 1991.

²⁸ Tanjug claimed in late September that the independent Belgrade daily *Borba* had reported that the Croatians were conducting an intimidation campaign against Yugoslav military officers in Dalmatia. The paper reportedly claimed that the names of officers, their addresses, the names of their wives, and their vacation home addresses were being read over Croatian television, implying that Croatians should threaten or harass the men. Belgrade Tanjug 24 September 1991. There has been no independent confirmation of this report, although Federal officials implied that similar things occurred in Sibenik. See below.

²⁹ Tanjug reporting from 1 November discusses Montenegrin complaints about the extent to which Montenegrin JNA personnel had been deployed in Croatia, including at the Divulje Heliport. The troops apparently were from Niksic—possibly the 179th Mountain Brigade or the Niksic TO Partisan Brigade. Belgrade Tanjug 1 November 1991. The troops arrived on 20 September. Zagreb Radio 20 September 1991. The 86th Protection Motorized Regiment was the Military-Maritime District's guard force. Each military district had such a regiment, which comprised motorized infantry and elite military police, and was designed to serve as the district headquarters' bodyguard in the field to protect it against enemy sabotage and commando raids.

³⁰ Zagreb Radio reports from 24 and 30 September 1991 discuss the disposition of JRM warships at Vis Island harbor.

³¹ Zagreb Radio 18 November 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 19 November 1991. JNA/JRM forces had already voluntarily withdrawn from facilities on Korcula Island further south in late September. Belgrade Tanjug 29 September 1991.

³² Belgrade Tanjug 25 November and 18 December 1991; Zagreb Radio 15 December 1991.

³³ Zagreb Radio 20 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 20 September 1991.

³⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 22 November 1991.

³⁵ Belgrade Tanjug 26 November 1991; Zagreb Radio 26 January 1992.

³⁶ Probably 97th Air Brigade/1st Corps aircraft from Mostar.

³⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 15 September 1991.

³⁸ Vesna Puljak, "Units of the Croatian Army: The Neretva Is Still Flowing," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 29 July 1994, p. 26; Lidiya Duvnjak, "Second Anniversary of the 53rd Marine Battalion," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 84.

³⁹ The Rijeka garrison included the headquarters, 13th Corps, and the 13th Mixed Artillery Regiment, 13th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, and the corps light air defense regiment, plus other support troops.

⁴⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 26-27 September 1991.

⁴¹ Zagreb Radio 27 October 1991; Sarajevo Radio 16 December 1991. EC Monitoring Mission personnel assisted with the negotiations for both the Pula and Rijeka withdrawals.

⁴² Belgrade Tanjug 9 November 1991. General Cad in a farewell note to Rijeka and the Gorski Kotar region indicated that he intended to retire and live in Rijeka after the corps was evacuated. Belgrade Tanjug 1 December 1991.

⁴³ Belgrade Tanjug 9 December 1991.

⁴⁴ Zagreb Radio 5 and 7 November 1991.

⁴⁵ Document in Mladen Pavkovic, *Dok Je Srca Bit Ce I Croatie: Iz Porvijesti Domovinskog Rata (While There is a Heart, There Will Be a Croatia: From the History of the Homeland War)* Koprivnica: Club of the 117th Brigade Koprivnica, 1995, p. 92.

⁴⁶ Thus, for example, Croatian ZNG troops seized a JNA barracks in Sisak during September. Although no artillery unit was assigned to the barracks, the JNA apparently had stored artillery there, which was used to help form the 1st Mixed Artillery Battalion (later redesignated the 6th). Djuro Gajdek, "Cannons On Watch Over Sisak," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 8 October 1993.

⁴⁷ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. Interview with Corps General Anton Tus, first Chief of the Croatian Main Staff.

⁴⁸ Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000 p. 222. The blockaded troop numbers appear to be from early September 1991.

⁴⁹ The Croatians may have captured more M-84s, possibly 40 to 50; there are indications that the 32nd Mechanized Brigade in Varazdin may have received a new battalion of M-84s, which it had not even had time to integrate into the brigade. A Croatian newspaper at the time of the 32nd's surrender reported that the brigade surrendered 70 tanks, plus "new equipment for an entire armored battalion." Thus, up to 31 new M-84s, combined with ones and twos captured throughout Croatia, could have equaled some 40 to 50 tanks.

Zagreb *Vjesnik* 27 September 1991, p. 5. However, numbers in Sekulic's study do not include any M-84s, indicating that at Varazdin 74 T-55s, 71 APCs (or IFVs), 10 mortars, 18 howitzers, four M-63 MRLs, and five M-77 MRLs were captured. Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 156-157.

Annex 11

The Croatian Army Rises: September-December 1991

Formation of a General Staff and the Croatian Army

The chaotic command and control of Croatian forces that characterized the summer 1991 fighting continued to plague ZNG and MUP forces during the early stages of the war with the JNA in September 1991. As a result of this ongoing debacle, the State Supreme Council decided on 22 September to create a general staff—the Main Staff (*Glavni Stožer*) of the Croatian Army (*Hrvatska Vojska—HV*)¹—with Colonel General Anton Tus as Chief of the Main Staff.¹ In addition, Major General Petar Stipetic and Colonel Ante Roso were appointed as Tus's deputies; at least 14 other former JNA generals or colonels were appointed to serve on the staff. The new Main Staff absorbed the ZNG Command, which was still headed by its chief of staff, Colonel Imra Agotic, after General Spegelj's resignation in August. In conjunction with the formation of the Main Staff, on 27 September a new Croatian defense law came into effect, laying down the structure of the Croatian armed forces and the terms of military service for Croatian citizens.²

Tus had previously served as the commander of the Yugoslav Air and Air Defense Force until May 1991. He told an interviewer in 1996 that a month before leaving his post he had publicly condemned JNA war preparations and declared that the air force would not fight against a fellow nationality. Tus also stated that despite his air force background, his JNA training at the command and staff school and the JNA war college had prepared him for all types of operations, including ground warfare. Tus claimed that in the JNA, regardless of the service, the schooling was the same at the operational and strategic levels.³ Tus's

¹ Notwithstanding the formal establishment of the Croatian Army, the Croatians themselves continued to refer to their combat units as "ZNG" formations. The practice will be continued here up to the end of the fighting early in January 1992. The army will be referred to as the HV starting with operations in 1992.

primary deputy was Major General Petar Stipetic, who had served as Chief of Operations in the JNA Fifth Military District. Tus stated in 1996 that Stipetic was considered "the best operations man in the entire JNA," and he was to play a major role in planning the new army's operations during 1991, as well as in later years.⁴ Colonel Ante Roso had previously served in the French Foreign Legion and had earlier helped organize and train MUP Special Police units and the ZNG's special forces. General Spegelj, ignoring his earlier resignation, served as an unofficial advisor to the new Main Staff.

Tus's objective was to centralize and streamline the Croatian command and control system. His first mission was to gain control over the disparate and feuding Croatian armed forces. By late September all forces, including ZNG, MUP Special Police, and MUP reserve units, were at least nominally under his operational control. This step forward would not prevent command and control problems from plaguing the Main Staff throughout the 1991 fighting. Asked in mid-October if he had complete command and control of the Croatian forces, Tus replied, "In principle, yes; legally, yes; in practice, not totally."

Prior to the formation of the Main Staff, the Ministry of Defense had played the primary role in supplying and also commanding the ZNG, despite the creation in July of the ZNG Command. As the Main Staff took shape, however, the MoD began to focus more on its support and administrative role, especially the acquisition of weapons from abroad and increased production of indigenous weapons, ammunition, and equipment.⁵ Its primary mission, however, was the management of the mobilization process through its local National Defense Secretariats. The secretariats were responsible for creating and maintaining the mobilization records of military-age males in their area of responsibility.⁶ Despite shifts in the MoD's bureaucratic focus, Defense Minister Susak remained one of President Tudjman's key advisors and a principal decisionmaker on the use of the military, regardless of the Main Staff's control of day-to-day operations.

Activation of Corps and Operational Group Headquarters

A crucial aspect in Tus's move to organize and manage the Croatian military was his establishment of competent regional military commands to replace the ineffective crisis staffs. To this end he divided Croatian territory into six corps-level "operational zones" that would form the command framework for the Main Staff's conduct of combat operations.⁷ When the operational zones had been established, division-level task force headquarters—operational groups—were set up to cover sub-regions within the operational zones. Thus, for example, the 2nd (Bjelovar) Operational Zone, under the command of Brigadier Miroslav Jerzecic, by late October was overseeing the Posavina and Pakrac Operational Groups.

Formation of New Brigades⁸

The other key component of Tus's new Croatian Army, made possible after the recapture of the former Croatian TO weapons and the seizure of JNA stocks, was to form and arm new combat brigades and insure that existing brigades were fully equipped. In September 1991, just prior to the outbreak of full-scale war, the National Guard Corps consisted of four professional Guards brigades, at least 20 reserve infantry brigades, and at least 14 independent infantry battalions. Analysis of Croatian military journal articles indicates that by the end of October another 25 reserve infantry brigades appear to have been formed (some through the expansion of independent battalions into brigades), followed by about another 10 brigades in November, and apparently another five to seven brigades in December.⁹ Two armored battalions were formed in October and incorporated into 1st and 2nd Guards Brigade; a mechanized brigade was also formed to act as an administrative headquarters for much of the captured armor which was dispersed in platoon and company-sized packets across Croatia. A final armored battalion was formed in late November.¹⁰ The ZNG also began organizing such supporting formations as antitank, artillery, air defense, and engineer battalions during September and October, moving on to the formation of military

police and corps logistics units in November. The addition of artillery units and the incorporation of captured JNA armor, however, still left the ZNG an infantry-rich, firepower-poor force in comparison to the JNA, which fielded upwards of 1,000 tanks compared to the 250 or so available to the ZNG in the 1991 fighting.

By the beginning of 1992, according to General Tus, the ZNG consisted of some 200,000 ZNG troops and another 40,000 MUP personnel (probably including regular police) under arms. Expanding the army to these levels and filling out the reserve brigades had been the product of thoughtful planning, careful implementation, and not a little political courage. Croatian hardliners had been demanding that President Tudjman order general mobilization but, with Tudjman's stout backing, Tus instead directed a selective mobilization of thousands of reservists that began in October with brigade activations and continued as other units were organized through December. With its many constraints and deficiencies in organization, logistics and weapons availability, the Croatian Army almost certainly could not have absorbed the conscription of all available manpower. Rather, the Main Staff tried to match manpower to equipment, seeking, for instance, to identify personnel who had previously served in the JNA as tank crewmen, to take over newly captured JNA weapons and equipment. This was complicated, however, by the ad hoc calls for volunteers that had been used to fill out early units. Thus, after the JNA was forced to turn over the equipment of a reinforced armor battalion from its 73rd Motorized Brigade in Koprivnica, the ZNG was unable to mobilize the Croatian reservists who had been associated with the armored battalion under the JNA because most had already volunteered for service in MUP and ZNG infantry units.¹¹

Training

One of the key shortcomings of most ZNG reserve brigades, particularly those newly raised, was that

there was not enough time to give them individual and unit training before they were committed to combat. Most of the new reserve brigades spent no more than two weeks *in existence* before their deployment to the battlefield.¹² Some of the brigades were fortunate in being built around the nucleus of an already existing independent infantry battalion, most of which had already seen combat. Even in these veteran infantry battalions, however, many of the reservists had little or no formal training. The situation in specialized units was even worse, given the limited degree of technical expertise available on how to operate more complex weapons systems and armored vehicles, not to mention orchestrating their use in a unit or with other types of units. This greatly hindered the Croatians' ability to exploit many of the weapons seized from the JNA, and they were forced to more or less create new arms and services (armor, artillery, etc.) as they went along, identifying personnel within the army or among the newly mobilized who had some knowledge of these systems, and then using these key men as the nucleus of new specialized units.

Logistics

The ZNG's budding logistics system was ill-prepared for such a large expansion of the army, and proved inadequate even to distribute the captured JNA weapons and equipment adequately. Distribution of weapons following the seizure of the JNA barracks and depots was utterly chaotic, but it improved considerably in October and November as the ZNG began to establish logistics commands for each operational zone. Even so, at the end of the Croatian war the ZNG was still unable to fix many of its basic distribution problems.

Relations with the MUP

Despite the creation of the Main Staff and its assumption of nominal operational control over all Croatian armed forces, the lack of coordination between MUP and ZNG formations continued into the fall. Tuš acknowledged in October 1991 that he was still having command problems with the police; insisting that "The police cannot have its own army"

he announced that the MUP paramilitary forces—the Special Police—would be transferred to the army. Many ZNG commanders reported serious problems with the MUP. In Vukovar, for instance, ZNG chief of staff Branko Borkovic and Ivica Arbanas, one of his battalion commanders, complained that the MUP commander there barely cooperated with their forces, hoarding scarce antitank rockets and refusing to let them allocate the rockets to critical sectors. They claimed they had to forcibly transfer MUP reserve personnel into the ZNG in order to unify command and control during the defense of the town.¹³ The MUP's independent attitude stemmed partly from the view that its troops were much better than the ZNG's reserve troops, which it regarded as undisciplined and untrained.

The conflict between the MUP and the ZNG represented more of an interservice rivalry than an indication that either side was lacking in zeal to fight the Federal forces. The causes and consequences were easy to discern, and both had some basis for their complaints. The MUP's concerns about the ZNG troops' lack of training and discipline were valid, but such conditions were only to be expected in military formations that consisted of recent civilians thrown into the heat of combat. The MUP Special Police units were often superior to the ZNG battalions they served with, but they had the advantage of being much smaller and more easily trained and controlled, and their regional police administrations had been functioning long enough to have established an effective chain of command. With the expansion of the ZNG into a formal army, however, the MUP—which had borne much of the burden of the earlier fighting—was being eclipsed in the public eye as the defender of Croatia, adding to its professional jealousy. These feelings of professional superiority and jealousy often were manifested in foot-dragging when MUP units were required to operate under ZNG orders and cooperate in the defense of a given area. And so, like any interservice rivalry, the MUP-ZNG dispute on occasion hindered military operations and hampered the defense of Croatia.

Case Study: Formation of a Reserve Brigade

The formation of the 145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade was a fairly typical example of the process by which one of the new ZNG reserve brigades was created. The Ministry of Defense called up reservists from the Zagreb suburb of Dubrava beginning on 6 October 1991. The reservists, mostly married men in their 30s, gathered at two nearby elementary schools. Dressed in a variety of civilian clothes, they formed up with a motley collection of hunting rifles, older military weapons, and little ammunition. On 13 October, an eclectic column of Zagreb city buses, commercial trucks, vans, and personal vehicles transported 800 of them to the village of Vukovina, some 20 kilometers south of Zagreb, for a week of training and outfitting. The brigade probably received its real weapons during this week, probably drawn from the former Croatian TO stocks recovered at the nearby JNA Velika Gorica barracks and earmarked for the 145th Brigade's TO predecessor in Dubrava. On 22 October, newly equipped and a bare two weeks from their civilian homes, the brigade arrived in the combat zone along the Kupa River in Banija, just west of the town of Sisak. The 145th was to serve the rest of the 1991 war in this sector, conducting both offensive and defensive operations against JNA and Serb TO formations.¹⁴

Case Study: Creation of the Armor-Mechanized Battalion/117th (Koprivnica) Brigade¹⁵

The formation of the Armor-Mechanized Battalion of the 117th (Koprivnica) Brigade provides a good case study in how the Croatians incorporated captured JNA heavy weapons into their force structure, and how they deployed them to the battlefield. It also illustrates in particular the difficulties of building and equipping a complex technical unit like an armored battalion, including the repair of a large number of damaged armored vehicles without a functioning logistics and maintenance system.

The JNA barracks at Koprivnica, housing the 73rd Motorized Brigade and a detached armor-mechanized battalion of the 265th Mechanized Brigade normally stationed at Bjelovar, surrendered on 30 September. Its table of equipment included 2 BTR-50 command

APCs, 3 PT-76 light reconnaissance tanks, 38 T-55 main battle tanks, 20 M-80 IFVs, 2 armored recovery vehicles, and 3 armored bridge-launching vehicles.¹⁶ The JNA units, however, had disabled all of the equipment before they surrendered. The 117th Koprivnica Brigade, the local ZNG unit, wanting to get the equipment back in working order and out to the field as soon as possible, managed to find some mechanically inclined men willing to attempt the necessary repairs, but none of them had any experience with tanks. Nevertheless, by 9 October three tanks were up and running and were immediately sent to the Karlovac Operational Zone halfway across the country, to be followed the next day by three more. Four more went to the 117th's immediate command, the Bjelovar Operational Zone on 11 October for service in Western Slavonia.

The repair crews, however, had run out of parts to fix the remaining vehicles. The Main Staff in Zagreb put out a call to all of the captured depots for the needed parts and sent three trained mechanics to Koprivnica to assist in the repairs. Meanwhile, local firms and the work crews managed to fabricate some parts for the tanks and IFVs, which allowed six more tanks to deploy south to Novska on 13 October, where they were immediately engaged in support of an attack. After the battle, the tanks were sent back to Koprivnica for incorporation in a new armor-mechanized battalion which the Main Staff was attempting to form.

Then, another problem surfaced: the lack of trained crewmen for the new battalion. Most of the Croatian reservists assigned previously to the JNA 73rd Motorized had already volunteered in MUP and ZNG infantry formations and were now unavailable for the new unit. The battalion finally acquired sufficient personnel in early November, when the call-up was broadened to other towns around Koprivnica. Despite the battalion's lack of readiness, another tank platoon was temporarily deployed south to support more ZNG offensive operations in Western Slavonia on 12 November.

Meanwhile, the ZNG fully outfitted the battalion with personal equipment, weapons, and ammunition.

Thirteen M-80 IFVs were repaired and put through firing drills. Finally, on 7 December, the battalion was ready to deploy. Of the vehicles originally captured, the battalion now fielded 1 BTR-50, 12 T-55s, 13 M-80s, and 1 armored recovery vehicle, plus a number of support vehicles with a total strength of 15 officers, six NCOs, and 216 soldiers. The battalion was railed first to a village near Nasice before deploying under its own power to the frontline south of Osijek, where it arrived in mid-December. But the

men of the battalion seem to have stayed only about 10 days in the field before being sent back to Koprivnica on "vacation," leaving their equipment near the frontline. During the December "vacation" yet another platoon was detached to support a Croatian offensive in Western Slavonia. The battalion returned to its original sector near Osijek on 29 December and stayed there until the end of July 1992, when the equipment was turned over to the 132nd Nasice Brigade and its men placed on reserve status.

Chart 1

Order of Battle, Croatian Army, October 1991-January 1992

Main Staff of the Croatian Army (*Glavni Stožer Hrvatske Vojska*)

Colonel General Anton Tus, Chief of the Main Staff
Major General Petar Stipetic, Assistant Chief of the Main Staff
Colonel Ante Roso, Assistant Chief of the Main Staff
Headquarters: Zagreb

Protection Battalion of the Main Staff
(66th Military Police Battalion from mid-November)
Headquarters: Zagreb

Zrinski Special Purpose Battalion
Headquarters: Zagreb (deployed in elements throughout the country)

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja

1st Osijek Operational Zone

Headquarters: Osijek
Brigadier Karl Gorinsek, Commander
Ivica Vrkic, Deputy Commander

68th Military Police Battalion (formed late November)
Headquarters: Osijek

Drava Detachment/River Fleet
Forward Headquarters: Osijek

Operational Group “Osijek”

Colonel Branimir Glavas, Commander

1st (Osijek) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade
Headquarters: Osijek (Reserve)

101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade (from late November)
Colonel Jozo Petrasevic, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Beketinci

106th Osijek Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Osijek

107th Valpovo Brigade
Slavko Baric, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Valpovo

130th Osijek Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Cepin

132nd Nasice Brigade (-) (from mid-December)
Forward headquarters: vic Cepin

135th Baranja Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: NW Osijek

160th Osijek Brigade (formed November?)
Forward Headquarters: S Osijek

Armor-Mechanized Battalion/117th Koprivnica Brigade
Marijan Pavlic, Commander (from mid-December)
Forward Headquarters: Beketinci

Operational Group “Vinkovci-Vukovar-Zupanja”

Lieutenant Colonel Mile Dedakovic-Jastreb, Commander (to 20 November)
Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Vrbanec, Commander (from 20 November)
Headquarters: Vinkovci

2nd (Vinkovci) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Vinkovci

3rd (Slavonski Brod) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Nustar

105th Bjelovar Brigade (from October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Privlaka

109th Vinkovci Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Nustar

122nd Djakovo Brigade (formed October)
Foward Headquarters: NE of Djakovo

124th Vukovar Brigade (formed December)
Major Ivica Arbanas, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Vinkovci

131st Zupanja Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Komletinci

204th Vukovar Brigade (surrendered 18 November 1991)
Lieutenant Colonel Mile Dedakovic-Jastreb, Commander (to mid October)
Branko Borkovic, Commander (from mid-October)
Foward Headquarters: Vukovar

Western Slavonia

2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone (formed 1 October)
Brigadier Miroslav Jerzecic, Commander
Brigadier Ivan Plasaj, Deputy Commander

1st Mechanized Brigade
Headquarters: Varazdin (Deployed in platoons and
companies in support of field units)

69th Military Police Battalion (formed late November)
Headquarters: Bjelovar

Operational Group "Posavina"
Brigadier Rudi Stipcic, Commander

1st Guards Brigade
Josip Lucic, Commander (to late December)
Marijan Marekovic, Commander (from late December)
Forward Headquarters: NE of Novska (Probable attack/counterattack reserve)

8th (later 151st) Samobor Brigade (from early October)
Forward Headquarters: NE of Novska

1st Battalion/101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade
(from 28 September to mid/late October)
Zeljko Cipris, Commander
Forward Headquarters: SW of Novska

117th Koprivnica Brigade (-)
Colonel Dragutin Kralj, Commander Forward Headquarters:
NW of Lipik (to December);
W/SW of Lipik (from December)

3rd (Kriveci) Battalion/117th Koprivnica Brigade
(8 November-29 November)

2nd Battalion/153rd Velika Gorica Brigade
(probably attached from early December)

125th Novska Brigade (formed late October)
Rozario Rozga, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic Novska/E of Novska

51st Independent Vrbovec Battalion
Forward Headquarters: probably SW of Novska

53rd Independent Dugo Selo Battalion (from October)
Forward Headquarters: probably SW of Novska

56th Independent Kutina Battalion
Forward Headquarters: NE of Novska

62nd Independent Novska Battalion
(merged into 125th Brigade in late October)
Forward Headquarters: E/SE of Novska

64th Independent Battalion
(formed early October; merged into 125th Brigade late October)
Forward Headquarters: E/SE of Novska

65th Independent Ivanic Grad Battalion (from October)
Forward Headquarters: NE of Novska

19th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion
(from late September to mid October)
Major Miodrag Hokman, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Novska

Operational Group “Pakrac”

104th Varazdin Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic NW of Lipik-Pakrac

123rd Slavonska Pozega Brigade (formed October)
Miljenko Crnjac, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic N of Slavonska Pozega (October-November)
vic Psunj Mountains (December)

127th Virovitica Brigade (formed October)
Djuro Decak, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic NE of Daruvar (October)
vic E of Pakrac (December)

132nd Nasice Brigade (formed October) (to mid-December)
Forward Headquarters: vic W of Nasice (October-November)
vic E of Pakrac (early/mid-December)

136th Podravska Slatina Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: SW of Podravska Slatina (to December)
NE of Pakrac (from December)

4th Battalion/108th Slavonski Brod Brigade
(merged into 123rd Brigade in October)
Forward Headquarters: vic N of Slavonska Pozega

2nd (Orahovica) Battalion/132nd Nasice Brigade (from mid-December)
Forward Headquarters: E of Pakrac

50th Independent Virovitica Battalion
(merged into 127th Brigade in October)
Djuro Decak, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic NE of Daruvar

52nd Independent Daruvar Battalion
Major Milan Filipovic, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic Daruvar/North of Pakrac

63rd Independent Slavonska Pozega Battalion
(merged into 123rd Brigade in October)
Forward Headquarters: N of Slavonska Pozega

77th Independent Bilogora Battalion
Forward Headquarters: probably NW of Daruvar

15th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion
19th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion (from mid-October)
Major Miodrag Hokman, Commander
Forward Headquarters: NE of Pakrac

Operational Group “Gradiska”/1st Osijek Operational Zone

3rd (Slavonski Brod) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade (to November)
Forward Headquarters: vic Nova Gradiska

99th Zagreb-Pescenice Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic NE of Stara Gradiska

108th Slavonski Brod Brigade
Vinko Stefanek, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic SW of Nova Gradiska

121st Nova Gradiska Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Nova Gradiska

139th Slavonski Brod Brigade (formed November)
Forward Headquarters: vic SW of Nova Gradiska

Banija-Karlovac/Kordun-Lika Operations

3rd Zagreb Operational Zone
Brigadier Stjepan Matesa, Commander

Armor-Mechanized Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade
(deployed in platoons and companies in support of field units)

11th Mixed Howitzer Artillery Battalion
(deployed in batteries in support of field units)

23rd Self-Propelled Antitank Artillery Battalion
(deployed in batteries in support of field units)

67th Military Police Battalion (formed late November)

Operational Group “Sisak-Banija-Posavina”

1st Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic Sisak
(probably in reserve for attack/counterattack)

Mixed Artillery Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade
100th Zagreb Brigade
Forward Headquarters: SE of Sisak

120th Sisak Brigade
Vlado Hodalj, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Sisak

1st Sesvete (later 144th Zagreb-Sesvete) Brigade

145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade
Forward Headquarters: West of Sisak

165th Sunja Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Sunja

57th Independent Sisak Battalion
Forward Headquarters: Sisak

1st Mixed Artillery Battalion
Forward Headquarters: Sisak

Command of the Defense of City of Zagreb
Functioned as an operational group headquarters for several brigades W. of Sisak

2nd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: ?
(probably in reserve for attacks/counterattacks)

8th Samobor (late 151st Samobor) Brigade
(from late September to early October)
Forward Headquarters: ?

10th Velika Gorica (later 153rd Velika Gorica) Brigade
(formed early October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Pisarovina

101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade
(from late October to late November)
Colonel Jozo Petrasevic, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic Pokupsko
Elements, 99th Zagreb-Pescenice Brigade (attached)

102nd Novi Zagreb Brigade
Forward Headquarters: E of Pokupsko

148th Zagreb-Trnje Brigade (formed early October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Pisarovina

149th Zagreb-Tresnjevka Brigade (formed early October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Pisarovina

4th Karlovac Operational Zone
Brigadier Izidor Cesnjaj, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Karlovac

3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Duga Resa
(probably in reserve for attack/counterattack)

103rd Krapina-Zagora Brigade (from October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Duga Resa

110th Karlovac Brigade
Forward Headquarters: S/SE of Karlovac

111th Rijeka Brigade (to November)
Forward Headquarters: vic Gospic

118th Gospic Brigade (to November)
Forward Headquarters: Ribnik

129th Karlovac Brigade
Forward Headquarters: E of Karlovac

133rd Otocac Brigade (to November)
Forward Headquarters: vic Otocac

137th Duga Resa Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic Duga Resa

140th Jastrebarsko Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic East of Karlovac

143rd Ogulin Brigade (formed mid-November)
Forward Headquarters: vic Ogulin

150th Zagreb-Crnomerec Brigade
(from late October/early November)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ogulin

4th Battalion/110th Karlovac Brigade
(merged mid-November to form 143rd Brigade)
Forward Headquarters: vic Ogulin

70th Military Police Battalion (formed November)
Headquarters: Karlovac
Lika Operational Group (formed November)
(from Headquarters, 5th Rijeka Operational Zone)
Forward Headquarters: Krasno

111th Rijeka Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic Gospic

118th Gospic Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Ribnik

3rd Battalion/128th Rijeka Brigade (attached)
128th Rijeka Brigade (-) (from early December)
Forward Headquarters: vic Klanac

133rd Otocac Brigade (to November)
Forward Headquarters: vic Otocac

5th Rijeka Operational Zone (formed 30 September 1991)
Brigadier Anton Racki, Commander
Headquarters: Rijeka

119th Pula Brigade (formed December)¹⁷
Headquarters: Pula

128th Rijeka Brigade (1 battalion formed October;
remainder formed November)
(to early December)
Forward Headquarters (1st Bn): vic between Rijeka and Delnice

138th Delnice Brigade (formed early November)
Headquarters: Delnice

154th Pazin Brigade (formed November)¹⁸
Headquarters: Pazin

155th Rijeka Brigade (formed November)
Headquarters: Rijeka

71st Military Police Battalion (formed November)

Zadar-Northern Dalmatia Operations

6th Split Operational Zone Brigadier Mate Viduka, Commander

2 battalions/4th Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: ?
(Probably in reserve for attack/counterattack)

113th Sibenik Brigade
Forward Headquarters: NW of Sibenik

114th Split Brigade (to late October; from early December)
Forward Headquarters: SE of Drnis

126th Sinj Brigade
Forward Headquarters: vic Sinj

141st Split-Kastel Brigade (formed mid-November)
Forward Headquarters: S of Drnis

142nd Drnis Brigade (formed early December)
Forward Headquarters: vic SW of Drnis

158th Split Brigade (formed mid/late December)
Forward Headquarters:

“Zadar” Sector Colonel Josip Tulicic, Commander

2 battalions/4th Guards Brigade
Forward Headquarters: Zadar
(probably in reserve for attack/counterattack)

112th Zadar Brigade
Colonel Ante Culina, Commander
Forward Headquarters: vic NE of Zadar

134th Biograd Brigade (formed October)
Forward Headquarters: vic Biograd

159th Zadar Brigade (formed December)
Forward Headquarters: Galovac (SE of Zadar)

Dubrovnik-Southern Dalmatia Operations

Southern Sector/6th Split Operational Zone

Colonel Dzanko, Commander
Forward Headquarters: Metkovic

114th Split Brigade (from late October to early December)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

115th Imotski Brigade (formed early October)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

116th Metkovic Brigade (formed early October)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

156th Makarska Brigade (formed November)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

163rd Dubrovnik Brigade (formed November or December)
Forward Headquarters: Dubrovnik

Metkovic Battalion
(merged October into 116th Brigade)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

Makarska Battalion
(merged November into 156th Brigade)
Forward Headquarters: N of Ston/NW of Slano

Dubrovnik Battalion
(merged November or December into 163rd Brigade)
Forward Headquarters: Dubrovnik

Endnotes, Annex 11

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 22 September 1991. The exact status of the National Guard Corps upon formation of the HV is unclear. It does not appear to have ceased to exist, but remained within the HV. Despite the new title of "Croatian Army," the HV Main Staff itself continued to refer to its maneuver brigades as ZNG units.

² Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1991.

³ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. Interview with Corps General Anton Tus, first Chief of the Croatian Main Staff. Born in 1934, Tus served as a fighter pilot for many years. During his JNA RV i PVO service, he was stationed at Zagreb-Pleso Air Base, Batjanica Air Base, and the training center in Rajlovac. He became successively a squadron commander, a brigade or regiment commander, an air corps commander, and assistant chief of staff of the RV i PVO until he was appointed commander. "A Chief of the Croatian General Staff is Being Sought," Zagreb *Globus* 13 September 1991, p. 7.

⁴ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59.

⁵ The Ministry of Defense organized an office for "special purpose production"—as the Yugoslavs called defense industries—in September 1991. The production priorities focused on relatively simple items that could be immediately used on the battlefield, such as mortars, mortar shells, and rifle and hand grenades. In December 1991, the Croatians were able to begin producing explosives, as well as artillery shells and multiple rocket launcher rounds. Tihomir Bajtek, "Development of Croatian Military Industry: Your Partner in Defense," *Hrvatski Vojnik* March 1997, pp. 10-13.

⁶ For example, on 10 November, Susak issued a statement indicating that on the basis of President Tudjman's decision ordering general mobilization in the Dubrovnik Municipality:

All citizens of the Dubrovnik Municipality who have not been mobilized into the Croatian Army, the Civil Protection (civil defense), or who are not under compulsory work orders are charged to report to the Secretariat for National Defense of Dubrovnik Municipality or to the bodies and legal entities to which they are assigned in line with their wartime posts of duty.

In addition to this, all the men who are listed on the military register of the Dubrovnik Municipality Secretariat for Defense, but who are staying in other municipalities are charged to report to the defense administration of the municipality where they are staying at this time, so that they can be registered and incorporated into the defense system of the Republic of Croatia.

The defense administration authorities in charge of those who have been called up will receive compulsory instructions regarding this announcement from the Ministry for Defense. Those who have been called up and do not act in accordance with the announcement will face measures envisaged by the provisions of the law on defense and the criminal penal code . . .

Zagreb Radio 10 November 1991.

⁷ Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59.

⁸ This section is based primarily on articles in the Croatian military journals *Hrvatski Vojnik* and *Velebit* covering the period 1993 through 1997, which provide invaluable details of ZNG/HV unit histories, including most brigades' formation dates. In addition, the previously cited interview with General Tus provided an overview of the ZNG's expansion efforts.

⁹ Tus said in his 1996 interview that by the time of the 2 January 1992 cease-fire he had 65 brigades in the field. Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. The ZNG was also able to mobilize another one or two brigades in early 1992.

¹⁰ Vesna Puljak, "Thunderbolts in Armor," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 20 May 1994, pp. 13-15. Sinisa Haluzan, "Croatian Knights in Armor," *Hrvatski Vojnik* February 1995, p. 23.

¹¹ Mladen Pavkovic, *Dok Je Srca Bit Ce I Croatie: Iz Porvijesti Domovinskog Rata (While There is a Heart, There Will Be a Croatia: From the History of the Homeland War)* Koprivnica: Club of the 117th Brigade Koprivnica, 1995, p. 34.

¹² The ZNG was fortunate that most JNA brigades and TO units were mobilized rapidly as well and thus had received only minimal refresher training; the result was that the majority of the rank and file on both sides were untrained reservists. The JNA and its TO, however, were far better armed, which gave the JNA an edge, even though its reservists' lack of training limited the JNA's ability to exploit this advantage.

¹³ Dr. Juraj Njavro, *Glava Dolje, Ruke na Leda (Head Down, Hands Behind)* Zagreb: Quo Vadis, 1995, pp. 85-99. Dr. Njavro served in the Vukovar hospital during the 1991 battle. His book includes narratives by both Arbanas and Borkovic. Njavro, in fact, does not identify Arbanas by name, but only his nom de guerre, "Crni" (Black), who he states was the commander in the Sajmiste suburb of Vukovar. Arbanas was in fact the first commander of the 1st Battalion/204th Vukovar Brigade, defending Sajmiste.

¹⁴ Information drawn from Gojko Drljaca, "From Dubrava to Dubrovnik," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 12.

¹⁵ This account is drawn from Mladen Pavkovic, *Dok Je Srca Bit Ce I Croatie: Iz Porvijesti Domovinskog Rata (While There is a Heart, There Will Be a Croatia: From the History of the Homeland War)* Koprivnica: Club of the 117th Brigade Koprivnica, 1995, pp. 33-47.

¹⁶ Mladen Pavkovic, *Dok Je Srca Bit Ce I Croatie: Iz Porvijesti Domovinskog Rata (While There is a Heart, There Will Be a Croatia: From the History of the Homeland War)* Koprivnica: Club of the 117th Brigade Koprivnica, 1995, p. 95.

¹⁷ Not combat ready until January 1992.

¹⁸ Not combat ready until January 1992.

Annex 12

National Command Authority in Yugoslavia

The highest political body in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was the Federal Presidency, which consisted of eight members, one for each of the six republics, plus one each for the Autonomous Provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Rising to power through the 1980s, Serbian President Milosevic came to control four votes on the Presidency during 1991, the Serbian member, Borisav Jovic, the Montenegrin member, Branko Kostic, plus those of Vojvodina and Kosovo.

The Federal Secretariat for National Defense (*Savezni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu-SSNO*) and the JNA General Staff were the highest military bodies in Yugoslavia, and acted in peacetime in an advisory role to the Presidency. In time of war, the Federal Presidency was designated the Supreme Command (*Vrhovna Komanda*) and acted as the national command authority. The SSNO and the General Staff became the Staff of the Supreme Command (*Stab Vrhovna Komanda—SVK*).

“Group of Six”—The De Facto Federal-Serbian Supreme Command

During the Croatian War in 1991, the Federal Presidency more or less ceased to function in its pre-war incarnation. Instead, a de facto combined Federal/Serbian Supreme Command emerged, what Borisav Jovic called the “group of six.” The six prime movers were Serbian Federal Presidency member Borisav Jovic, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Montenegrin Federal Presidency member Branko Kostic, Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic, Federal Defense Secretary General Veljko Kadijevic, and Chief of the General Staff General Blagoje Adzic. Nominally, the Federal Presidency continued to act as the national command authority, under Vice President of the Presidency Branko Kostic. This stemmed from a decision made on 3 October, with only Milosevic’s

supporters present, that a 1 October Presidency declaration of “immediate war danger” allowed the Presidency to rule by less than a majority of its eight members and with decrees that had the force of law. Thus, Milosevic’s four members could meet and outvote the remaining Macedonian and Bosnian members. Croatian member Stipe Mesic, who was supposed to be the President of the Presidency, along with Slovenian member Janez Drnovsek, refused to attend the meetings for obvious reasons.

Federal Secretariat for National Defense and General Staff Organization

The Federal Secretariat for National Defense was the highest defense policy body in the nation. It was headed by the Federal Secretary for National Defense, Army General Veljko Kadijevic. Kadijevic's deputy was Admiral Stane Brovet. In addition to its policy role, the SSNO handled support functions for the army and supervised defense production. The SSNO was made up of a number of departments, the two most powerful of which were the Department for Morale and Political Affairs and the Security Directorate. Other key departments included the Department for Military Economy and Production, the Department for Scientific Research, the Department for Rear Services, and the Department for Territorial Defense.

The General Staff, headed by Colonel General Blagoje Adzic, controlled the day-to-day activities of all Yugoslav military forces, and represented more of a joint staff than a traditional general staff. Adzic had a deputy chief of staff for ground forces, air force/air defense, and the navy. In addition, the separate commander of the Air Force and Air Defense (RV i PVO), the commander of the Military-Maritime District, which controlled the Yugoslav Navy, and the commanders of the regular military districts all reported to Adzic. The charts below depict the hierarchy of the Yugoslav military and the General Staff's organization.

Chart 1

Military Hierarchy in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Federal Secretariat for National Defense

Inspector General

General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army

Assistant Chief of Staff for Operational-Staff Affairs

Assistant Chief of Staff for Ground Forces

Assistant Chief of Staff for Air and Air Defense Force

Assistant Chief of Staff for the Navy

Assistant Chief of Staff for Rear Services

Assistant Chief of Staff for Territorial and Civil Defense

Commander, First Military District

Commander, Third Military District

Commander, Fifth Military District

Commander, Military-Maritime District

Commander, Air and Air Defense Force

Chart 2

Organization of the General Staff, Yugoslav People's Army

Chief of the General Staff

Assistant Chief of Staff for Operational-Staff Affairs

Operations Directorate

Military Intelligence Directorate

Mobilization Directorate

Training Directorate

Finance Directorate

Assistant Chief of Staff for Ground Forces

Infantry Directorate

Armor Section Directorate

Artillery Section Directorate

Electronics and Communications Directorate

Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Directorate

Engineer Directorate

Assistant Chief of Staff for Air and Air Defense Force

Air Force Directorate

Air Defense Artillery Directorate

Air Technical Directorate

Assistant Chief of Staff for the Navy

Naval Forces and Coastal Defense Section

Naval Technical Section

Assistant Chief of Staff for Territorial and Civil Defense

Territorial Defense Section

Civil Defense Section

Endnotes, Annex 12

¹ Belgrade Tanjug 3 and 4 October 1991. A 3 October Tanjug statement claimed that

The manner of work of the Yugoslav Presidency in conditions of an immediate danger of war is regulated by a decision adopted by the collective head of state in November 1984 and which is a State Secret.

The Yugoslav Presidency informed the public today that it was now operating in conditions of an immediate danger of war.

The Presidency at its session on 1 October concluded that an "immediate danger of war" existed in the country. Six out of the body's eight members were present at the session, sufficient for a quorum.

Today's Presidency meeting was attended by four of its members and the leadership of the armed forces.

General Secretary of the Yugoslav Presidency told Tanjug this evening that the "1984 decision empowers the President of the Presidency, or the Vice-President in the President's absence, to take on his own certain actions which are in the competence of the Presidency."

If during the implementation of the actions listed in the 1984 decision, the President or Vice-President is "unable to establish contact with all the members of the Presidency, he will consult with those he has succeeded in contacting," Stari said.

² Former JNA officer and later Krajina Serb Army Major General Milisav Sekulic blames Mesic for the breakdown of the Presidency, stating in his book on the 1991 break-up that,

On 1 October, the SFRY Presidency faced stonewalling by its chairman, Stjepan Mesic, who had not convened a single session of the Presidency from 6 September to 1 October. Nevertheless, the collective chief of state did meet on 1 October, and the meeting was held without Mesic. It was presided over by Vice Chairman Branko Kostic. The meeting was attended by Gen. Veljko Kadijevic, Gen.

Blagoje Adzic, and Adm. Stane Brovet, the three key functions in the Armed Forces: the Federal Secretary for National Defense, and Chief of the Supreme Command Staff, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and the Deputy Federal Secretary for National Defense. The political and security situation in the country was considered at the session. The unanimous assessment was that the country faced the danger of all-out war and that it was in a state of the immediate danger of war. Thus, the conditions were in place for the SFRY Presidency to function and act in the way provided for in the SFRY Constitution under conditions of an immediate danger of war in accordance with the SFRY Presidency's Decision 36 of 21 November 1984. It was declared that by crossing over to the conditions for functioning during an immediate danger of war, the SFRY Presidency was eliminating the possibility of its work being stonewalled and assuming certain authorities of the SFRY Assembly, which was unable to convene.

At that session the SFRY Presidency adopted a decision on how it was to function under the conditions of an immediate danger of war, thereby ensuring the continuity of the SFRY Presidency's work. Under this decision, the member of the SFRY Presidency from the Republic of Slovenia was stripped of his right to command the SFRY Armed Forces . . .

Through this session, the SFRY Presidency 'gained the upper hand' over its chairman, Stjepan Mesic, and lifted the blockade on its work, an immediate danger of war was declared even though war had been going on for months.

Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 178-179.

Annex 13

JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July-September 1991

This annex outlines the five campaigns into which the JNA's strategic offensive plan against Croatia was divided. The plan's main operation was to be launched out of Eastern Slavonia, from which JNA armored-mechanized forces would drive west to link up with the second operation in Western Slavonia, and then continue on toward northwestern Croatia. Another campaign was to have been undertaken to sever the Zagreb region from Lika and southern Croatia by an attack near Karlovac. The operation near Zadar would cut communications along the Dalmatian coast, while the larger operation—split into two sub-campaigns—would attack from Mostar toward Split and from Herzegovina toward Dubrovnik. Through these five campaigns the JNA would then have militarily dissected the Croatian state, leaving the Zagreb government prostrate before Belgrade's armed authority. The JNA General Staff mobilized some of the forces for this offensive in early July. Additional forces were mobilized in mid-September, after the Croatians began their offensive on the JNA barracks.

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operation

The First Military District was assigned command of this campaign, utilizing the 1st Guards Mechanized Division, 12th (Novi Sad) Corps, and 17th (Tuzla) Corps, reinforced with major elements of the 24th (Kragujevac) Corps, the corps-level Belgrade City Defense Headquarters, and other units from the First and Third Military Districts. The First Military District headquarters was used to form the headquarters of Operational Group 3, which exercised overall command in eastern Slavonia-Baranja and reported directly to the JNA General Staff. JNA forces in this campaign were to break through the Vinkovci-Osijek line and link up with JNA forces in western Slavonia near Daruvar.¹ Kadijevic described this force as the "main maneuvering force of the Supreme Command in penetrating toward Zagreb and Varazdin."²

Implicit in Kadijevic's statement was the fact that the First Military District components would compose the JNA's strongest array of armored-mechanized forces. During the first mobilization in late June-early July, the JNA mobilized and deployed five mechanized brigades to the border area with Eastern Slavonia. Another mechanized brigade and an armored brigade were mobilized and ready to deploy on order, while one mechanized brigade absorbed its mobilized reserves but continued its peacekeeping role in Eastern Slavonia. Three motorized brigades stationed in Bosnia experienced call-up problems but managed to achieve partial mobilization. One artillery regiment was mobilized and deployed, while another was mobilized along with an army-level artillery brigade and made ready to deploy on order. Support troops needed to sustain the deployment were also called up.

In the second phase mobilization from 10 to 20 September, the JNA deployed the formations mobilized in the first phase and mobilized and deployed major elements of the 24th (Kragujevac) Corps and Belgrade City Defense Headquarters (*Obrana Grad Beograd*—OGB)—six additional motorized brigades, a partisan (light infantry) division headquarters, and at least two partisan brigades—plus one armored brigade from the Third Military District. The support troops for the 1st Guards Mechanized Division and the 12th (Novi Sad) Corps, as well as some 24th Corps support units, were also mobilized. According to Kadijevic, several more infantry formations were to have been mobilized at this time—probably up to four partisan (light infantry) brigades from the Vojvodina TO—but these troops either failed to report or their orders were canceled because of political concerns and popular opposition to the call-ups. Many of the 24th Corps' motorized and partisan brigades also disintegrated when many of their troops failed to report for mobilization, and they were simply dropped from the order of battle for the Vukovar operation.

The absence of these infantry units was to have a devastating effect during the attack on Vukovar, and the general shortage of regular infantry would force the JNA to call for the organization of volunteer units. It was these volunteer formations, which attracted Serb extremists, riffraff, and other undesirable elements, that would be responsible for many of the atrocities committed in Eastern Slavonia. The JNA's mobilization problems and its concerns about the reliability of its Bosnian Muslim and Croat soldiers also restricted the planned use of the 17th Corps. As its difficulties in achieving its objectives mounted, the JNA had to order a third mobilization in October during which three additional Serbian motorized brigades were deployed. (The mobilization issue is discussed in detail below.)

The forces assessed as having been earmarked for this campaign as of July 1991 consisted of the following:³

- 1st Guards Mechanized Division—about 32,000 troops, about 380 tanks, 320 IFV/APCs, 220 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 75 heavy mortars.
- 12th (Novi Sad) Corps—about 32,000 troops, about 240 tanks, 190 IFV/APCs, 150 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and 95 heavy mortars.
- 17th (Tuzla) Corps—more than 27,000 troops, about 85 tanks, 80 APCs, 135 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 85 heavy mortars.
- 24th (Kragujevac) Corps—more than 14,500 troops, 36 field artillery tubes, and some 48 heavy mortars.⁴
- Belgrade City Defense—more than 9,000 troops, 36 field artillery tubes, and some 36 heavy mortars.
- Vojvodina TO forces (attached to 12th Corps)—at least 8,000 troops and 24 heavy mortars.

Total Forces: at least 122,000 troops, 700 tanks, 590 IFV/APCs, 575 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and 365 heavy mortars.

Western Slavonia Operation

The 5th (Banja Luka) Corps, assigned to the First Military District—Operational Group 3 headquarters—was to be the main force for this operation. The 32nd (Varazdin) Corps presumably was to make some attempt to link up with the 5th Corps during its drive along the Okucani-Pakrac-Daruvar line to split Slavonia from the rest of Croatia.

The 5th Corps mobilized in late June/early July. It comprised one armored brigade, two motorized brigades, an artillery regiment, and support troops. Only minor elements of the corps deployed at this point, detailed to peacekeeping operations and duels with the Croatians in Western Slavonia in mid-August. The rest of the corps appears to have remained in Bosnia for refresher unit training during July and early August.⁵

With the JNA's general mobilization in September, the entire 5th Corps deployed to Western Slavonia and began offensive operations. Four partisan brigades were mobilized and deployed—including three Bosnia-Herzegovina TO partisan brigades—to join the 5th, followed by two more in November-December,⁶ and later a partisan brigade from Serbia. Kadijevic's statements that the 5th Corps received only one and a half of the its designated five brigades suggest that these formations were seriously understrength and/or that they were not the formations originally intended for this sector.⁷ The 5th Corps would be further hampered by Croatian operations that disrupted all 32nd Corps attempts to link up with 5th Corps, which decreased the JNA's combat power in this sector even more.

As deduced from the announced deployments, the forces earmarked for the campaign as of July 1991 consisted of the following:⁸

—5th (Banja Luka) Corps—about 23,500 troops, some 80 tanks, 55 IFV/APCs, over 100 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 60 heavy mortars.

—Another five unidentified brigades, estimated at some 10,000 to 23,000 troops, depending on whether the five were all partisan brigades, all motorized brigades or some mix. The five brigades' heavy weapons could have included anywhere from 30 heavy mortars (five partisan brigades) to 150 tanks, 90 field artillery tubes over 100mm, and some 90 heavy mortars (five motorized brigades).

Total Forces: about 33,500 to 46,500 troops, some 80 to 230 tanks, 100 to 190 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 120 to 150 heavy mortars.

Karlovac Operation

The JNA plan called for four maneuver brigades to operate along the axis from Vojnic through Karlovac to the Slovene border, which would have split northern and southern Croatia at a narrow point near Karlovac, probably under the command of the "Banija and Kordun" Operational Group 1 headquarters (drawn from the Fifth Military District HQ). The JNA plan did not call for any of the four brigades to mobilize and deploy to the region during the first phase; rather they appear to have been regarded as supplemental to the troops normally garrisoned in the Banija, Kordun, and Lika regions, and which were mobilized in the first phase. These consisted of two motorized brigades, an artillery regiment, an army-level artillery brigade and other support units. Only one or two brigades of the four required, however, were in under the second phase.⁹ Compounding these shortages, Croatian operations against 10th (Zagreb) Corps' barracks paralyzed two-thirds of the corps' maneuver brigades, including an armored brigade and a mechanized brigade, leaving the corps all but incapable of supporting the Karlovac campaign. This shortage of forces was to drastically curtail this portion of the JNA offensive plan, and force OG 1 to take a primarily defensive stance.¹⁰

The assessed total forces earmarked for the campaign as of July 1991 consisted of the following:¹¹

—Operational Group 1—some 20,000 to 25,000 troops, 30 to 90 tanks, 130 to 170 field artillery tubes or MRLs over 100mm, and some 35 to 60 heavy mortars.¹² As many as 9,000 additional troops, with some 60 tanks, some 35 field artillery tubes over 100mm, and 35 heavy mortars would have been involved in local operations in Lika and Banija.

Zadar-Northern Dalmatia Operation

The 9th (Knin) Corps/Military-Maritime District was to undertake this operation. The corps eventually operated directly under the control of the Supreme Command Staff because the barracks blockade prevented the Military-Maritime District from exercising command.¹³ It mobilized the forces prepared for phase one in early July, consisting of two motorized brigades, an artillery regiment, and support troops. The corps had received an additional armored battalion in early 1991 at the height of the tensions over Krajina and acquired some minor reinforcements during phase two.

The assessed total forces earmarked for this campaign as of July 1991 consisted of the following:¹⁴

—9th (Knin) Corps—about 18,000 troops, at least 50 tanks, 50 IFV/APCs, 85 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 35 heavy mortars.

Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Operations

JNA operations in southern Dalmatia were divided into two sub-operations, one grouping slated to drive from the Neretva valley up the coast toward Split and another grouping earmarked to push on the Trebinje-Dubrovnik axis and "impose a land blockade" on the Dubrovnik area.¹⁵ The general purpose of this part of

the offensive was to cut off southern Dalmatia and Dubrovnik along the Mostar-Ploce line.¹⁶ The operations were to come under the command of the "Herzegovina" Operational Group 2, formed from the Montenegrin TO headquarters.

The 4th (Sarajevo) and 37th (Uzice) Corps were to have undertaken the Mostar-Split sub-operation. The 4th (Sarajevo) Corps' three motorized brigades, one mountain brigade, and an artillery regiment were partially mobilized in July 1991. But the large number of Croat and Muslim reservists assigned to the corps posed political problems, and many of these men failed to report for duty. The breakdown in mobilization appears to have left the 4th Corps too weak for its assignment, and for the most part it was confined to protecting JNA facilities in the Mostar area. The 37th (Uzice) Corps, comprising two motorized brigades, one mountain brigade, at least one Serbian Territorial Defense partisan brigade, and possibly an artillery regiment, also came up short during the second phase mobilization in September, and it was assigned two partisan brigades assembled in a third mobilization. As a result, according to General Kadijevic, the Mostar grouping managed to assemble and move only one-third of the forces provided for in the plan of operations. Because of that, even its initial mission had to be altered and limited to securing the Mostar airport and, by relying on eastern Herzegovina, creating operational bases for potential activities toward Split in cooperation with the forces of the Knin grouping and the navy. The Mostar grouping executed the limited mission, although it created many problems in the field.¹⁷

The southern Dalmatian campaign had thus been deprived of a key element in its execution.

The total forces earmarked for the sub-campaign as of July 1991 are assessed as the following:¹⁸

—4th (Sarajevo) Corps—about 26,000 troops, up to 80 tanks, 20 IFV/APCs, some 100 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 85 heavy mortars.

—37th (Uzice) Corps—about 23,000 troops, possibly 60 tanks, up to 85 field artillery tubes

and MRLs over 100mm, and some 85 heavy mortars.

—Total Forces: about 49,000 troops, about 140 tanks, 20 IFV/APCs, some 185 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 170 heavy mortars.

The 2nd (Titograd) Corps and the 9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector, augmented by the Montenegrin TO, were to undertake the Dubrovnik sub-operation. The 2nd Corps initially appears to have included two mountain brigades, a partisan brigade, and an artillery regiment. The 9th Sector initially included a motorized brigade, another motorized brigade attached from the 2nd Corps, and other supporting units. The Montenegrin TO contingent comprised four partisan brigades, one of which appears to have been assigned to the 2nd Corps and three to the 9th Military-Maritime Sector.

The assessed total forces assigned to the sub-campaign as of July 1991 consisted of the following:¹⁹

—2nd (Titograd) Corps—about 20,500 troops, some 50 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and about 75 heavy mortars.

—9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector—about 18,000 troops, some 30 tanks, about 30 field artillery tubes over 100mm, and some 55 heavy mortars.

Total forces: about 38,500 troops, some 80 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and about 130 heavy mortars.

Air Support

The Ground Forces of the JNA (*Kopnena Vojska JNA—KoV JNA*) clearly had primacy in such a large-scale ground offensive, but the Yugoslav Air and Air Defense Force (*Ratno vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdusna odbrana—RV i PVO*) was to play an

important supporting role. The RV i PVO would provide close air support, interdiction and reconnaissance missions while guarding Yugoslav air space against any outside intervention. Its helicopter units provided direct support to ground units, transporting troops and supplies, evacuating wounded, and providing fire support with missile-equipped Gazelles.

The RV i PVO's 1st Corps was to provide support to First Military District operations in Eastern Slavonia. On average, for combat operations the corps had under command the equivalent of two fighter-bomber regiments or brigades with some five to six squadrons of combat aircraft—some 80 to 90 fighter-bombers/reconnaissance aircraft or light strike planes. In addition, the corps had a helicopter/transport brigade with about 15 transport helicopters, 15 light attack helicopters, and a half dozen An-26 transport aircraft. The 5th Corps and the Academy and Training Command supported the Fifth Military District using four fighter-bomber regiments or brigades with 11 combat aircraft squadrons—some 100 fighter-bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, or light strike planes, plus a helicopter/transport brigade with about 15 transport helicopters, 15 light attack helicopters, and six An-26 transports. Units from the 1st Corps and the Academy and Training Command supported the Military Maritime District using two fighter-bomber regiments or brigades with about four to six combat aircraft squadrons—some 55 to 75 fighter-bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, and light strike planes. In addition, one transport helicopter squadron, a naval/antisubmarine helicopter squadron, and a Gazelle helicopter training regiment were available for support.

Naval Support

The Yugoslav Navy (JRM) played a less active role in the JNA's strategic planning. The JRM's primary mission was to maintain the blockade of the Croatian coastline, but around Dubrovnik it also provided fire support to ground operations along the coast and helped supply these operations using landing craft. The Danube River Fleet also provided fire support to First Military District operations in Eastern Slavonia.

The JRM's main combat forces in 1991 consisted of four frigates, five diesel submarines, 16 missile boats, 14 torpedo boats, and 10 large patrol boats. In addition, the JRM maintained a large fleet of minesweepers, landing craft, and light riverine craft.

Evaluation of the Plan

On paper the JNA General Staff's strategic offensive was an excellent study in theoretical staff planning. It correlated the several levels of warfare and integrated the campaign objectives necessary to fulfill the JNA's strategic objective—the subjugation and territorial dissection of Croatia and, as a corollary, the military defeat of its armed forces. If successfully implemented, the plan would have achieved that objective. Unfortunately, the JNA was in no condition to execute such a complex and involved attack nor—having been oriented for decades as a strategic defense force—was it even organized or trained to undertake this kind of offensive. The new plan threw all previous contingency planning out the window. The JNA 37th (Uzice) Corps, for example, had never planned for offensive operations on the Dalmatian coast; its wartime contingency plan called for the defense of central Serbia.²⁰ All of the commands involved were forced almost overnight to comprehend and orchestrate operations on a scale and in a manner never previously contemplated. The result was often chaos.

Ironically, the same civil war conditions that impelled the General Staff to plan such a large and intricate offensive put its objectives out of reach, for the army, like the nation, was wracked by ethnic and political strains that degraded its internal cohesion. The General Staff, however, was too isolated from the military forces it would require for the offensive and it had not fully comprehended the stresses that were playing upon them. The planning and organizational difficulties afflicting the command levels were compounded by the defection of many key JNA officers to the opposing side, and by the unanticipated reluctance of conscripts and reservists—including

many Serbians—to fight. It was a tribute to the JNA's essential professionalism, despite the ideological and careerist tendencies of many officers, that it could even undertake multi-front offensive operations under such chaotic conditions and achieve some measure of success.

Evaluation of the Proposed Serbian Strategic Plan

As discussed earlier, the top leaders in Serbia—Serbian President Milosevic and Serbian Federal Presidency member Borisav Jovic—wanted the JNA to adopt quite a different strategy that would serve Serbian rather than strictly Federal war aims. They considered the army leaders' objective of defeating the Croatians unnecessary and unfeasible, and for much of 1991 they urged the JNA to withdraw from most of Croatia to the "borders" of Serb-populated areas in Croatia and defend them.²¹ The Milosevic/Jovic concept for JNA strategy, although certainly not

a detailed plan, rested on a far more realistic appraisal of the JNA's capabilities and envisioned far more attainable war aims. The essentially defensive strategic posture they wanted the JNA to adopt would have been much easier to implement and support logistically than the difficult offensive the army actually undertook. A defensive, reactive strategy would have cast the JNA in a much more favorable light in the propaganda/morale war, mollifying both the Croatians and the international community and giving its conscripts and reservists a better cause to fight for. It would also have conceded the end of the multi-ethnic Yugoslavia that the JNA was sworn to defend, which is why the Yugoslav patriots of the JNA opposed it. But in the summer of 1991 most people in Yugoslavia already viewed the JNA as a Serbianized institution, even if its leaders and many of its officers felt otherwise.

Appendix 1 **Organization and Equipment** **of the JNA Ground Forces** **(*Kopnena Vojska JNA—KoV JNA*)**

Organization of JNA Command Staffs

The command staffs of the JNA higher level commands and lower formations had a near identical organization at all command levels, with perhaps some slight variation at the military district level. JNA command staffs included a commander, the staff, and three supporting organs or bodies. The staff, headed by the chief of staff who was also the command's deputy commander, consisted of officers responsible for operations, intelligence, personnel, and each of the operations branches—armor, infantry, artillery, air defense, engineers, NBC defense, electronic intelligence, and communications. There was also an assistant commander for moral education and legal affairs, an assistant commander for rear services, and a chief of security who was equivalent to an assistant commander. The military district level appeared to differ from this in having a deputy commander position separate from the chief of staff, making him a second assistant commander.

Strategic and Operational Command Level

The highest level of field command in the JNA was the military district (*Vojno oblast*—VO/*Vojnopomorska oblast*—VPO), equivalent to a western field army headquarters. In contrast to traditional western field armies, however, the military district was a static area command charged with the defense of a given region. For example, the First Military District, headquartered in Belgrade, was responsible for northern Serbia, eastern Croatia, and virtually all of Bosnia. As such, it had six corps under its command. These corps (*korpus*)—the primary operational-level command in the JNA—were likewise normally static area commands rather than mobile field units. The Navy-led Military-Maritime District, in addition to one ground forces corps, commanded three military-maritime sectors (*vojnopolomski sektor*—VPS), which acted essentially as corps-level commands covering

the long Yugoslav coastline with both naval units and coastal defense ground forces.

As noted earlier, the JNA had converted from a Soviet-style army-division-regiment organization to the military district-corps-brigade structure during the late 1980s. Each of the new corps typically had three or four maneuver brigades which were primarily motorized formations, although many corps often had a mix of a mechanized brigade or armored brigade and two or three motorized brigades.²² Each corps maintained at cadre strength one or two partisan division headquarters, each usually responsible for two partisan brigades that would conduct guerilla operations in wartime. The corps also had a variety of support formations, including an artillery regiment, an antitank regiment, and a light air defense regiment.

During combat operations in Croatia, the JNA formed a number of ad hoc “operational group” headquarters. The exact subordination of some of the operational groups remains unclear, although OG 1, 2, and 3 reported directly to the JNA General Staff.²³ Even if the OGs were subordinate to the military districts, the districts appear to have become more responsible for administrative matters while the operational group headquarters directed the actual military operations in each sector. Corps headquarters reported to the OG commands and were the highest tactical-level formation. The OGs were formed on the basis of existing headquarters. The following operational groups were formed in 1991:

Operational Group 1, formed from elements of the Fifth Military District. It controlled the Banija, Kordun, and Lika regions.

Operational Group 2, formed from the Headquarters, Montenegrin TO, and responsible for the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik campaign.

Operational Group 3, formed from elements of First Military District headquarters and responsible for the Eastern Slavonia and Western Slavonia campaigns.

OG-1 and OG 3 appear to have formed subordinate operational groups to improve the control and organization of its sub-operations. OG-1 appears to have formed three operational groups for Banija, Kordun, and Lika. OG-3 formed:

Operational Group "North" based on the 12th (Novi Sad) Corps headquarters and responsible for the northern half of the Vukovar sector.

Operational Group "South," from the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade headquarters, responsible for the southern half of the Vukovar sector.

OG 2 also may have formed two subordinate operational groups to control each of its sub-operations.

Operational Group "West," possibly formed from the 37th (Uzice) Corps headquarters and responsible for the Mostar-Split sub-operation

Operational Group "Dubrovnik," possibly formed from the 2nd (Titograd) Corps headquarters and responsible for the Dubrovnik sub-operation.

Other JNA sub-operations may also have been run by their own operational groups.

The OGs notwithstanding, command and control between various command levels was often a problem for the JNA during the war, according to Major General Bozidar Djokic—a Yugoslav Army (VJ) corps commander who in 1991 had been chief of staff of the 2nd (Titograd) Corps on the Dubrovnik front. In 1993 he noted that the Supreme Command frequently encountered problems in controlling distant frontline units, even though the whole purpose of the OG concept was to increase the understanding and linkages between the General Staff/Supreme Command and field units. The problem, he said, was that the officers of the ad hoc OG commands did not know each other well enough, not having trained and exercised together like the brigade-level commands. Their command and control performance suffered accordingly.²⁴

JNA Tactical Organization

The JNA and Territorial Defense in 1991 employed five types of maneuver brigades and two types of artillery formations in Croatia, as well as brigade-level task forces called "tactical groups." It also made extensive combat use of the military police units, whose pre-war anti-terrorist training made them the best infantry units in the JNA. The varying force mixture fielded by the JNA in each campaign plan was to have an important impact on some key sectors—especially Eastern Slavonia.

Armored Brigade (*oklopna brigada—okbr*). The JNA deployed three armored brigades during combat operations in Croatia, and a fourth remained under blockade for most of the fighting. A JNA armored brigade consisted of three armored battalions (27 or 31 tanks, 10 IFVs), and a mechanized battalion (27 or 30 IFVs, six 120mm mortars), an artillery battalion (usually twelve 122mm self-propelled howitzers and four 128mm multiple rocket launchers), an air defense battalion, and supporting units. Two of the brigades were equipped with the Yugoslavs' best tank, the M-84. An armored brigade's wartime strength totaled about 3000 personnel, of which some 400 were infantry.

Mechanized Brigade (*mehanizovana brigada—mbr*). The JNA deployed seven mechanized brigades—all in Eastern Slavonia—while an additional three mechanized brigades were under blockade for most of the Croatian war. A JNA mechanized brigade consisted of two armored battalions (one with 30 tanks and another with 39 tanks) and two mechanized battalions (39 APCs or IFVs and six 120mm mortars each), an artillery battalion (usually twelve 122mm self-propelled howitzers and four 128mm multiple rocket launchers), an antitank battalion, an air defense battalion, and supporting units. Mechanized brigades had a total wartime strength of 3500, of which only 475 to 680 were infantry, depending on whether the brigade had APCs or IFVs. The relatively small number of infantrymen—especially in proportion to the overall size of

the brigade—became a critical weakness when JNA operations in Eastern Slavonia degenerated into urban and village warfare in and around Vukovar.

Motorized Brigade (*motorizovana brigada—mtbr*). Motorized brigades made up the bulk of the JNA's wartime force structure. Most motorized brigades were organized into three motorized (truck borne) infantry battalions (approximately 700 personnel, six 82mm mortars, six 120mm mortars each), an armored battalion (39 tanks, 31 tanks, or 21 tanks and 10 APCs) an artillery battalion (18 105mm or 122mm howitzers) an antitank battalion (some brigades, six ATGM vehicles and twelve 90mm self-propelled tank destroyers or eight 76mm antitank guns), an air defense battalion, and supporting units. Motorized brigades had a total wartime strength of 4,600 personnel, of which some 2100 were infantrymen, three to four times as many as in a mechanized brigade.

Mountain Brigade (*brdska brigada—bbr*).²⁵ The JNA deployed a small number of mountain brigades—no more than four—during its combat operations, all on the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik front, and one mountain brigade was under blockade. Some Montenegrin TO brigades may also have been designated mountain brigades. A mountain brigade comprised five mountain battalions (700-800 personnel, six 82mm mortars, six 120mm mortars each), a light artillery battery (six M-48 76mm mountain guns), and supporting units. Mountain brigades were typified by the pack animals they used to move heavy equipment and other burdens through the rugged Balkan terrain. Mountain brigades had a total wartime strength of 5,000 personnel, of which some 3,500 to 4,000 were infantrymen.

Partisan Brigade (*partizanska brigada—partbr*). Partisan brigades—which were all-reservist formations—made up a large percentage of the JNA's peacetime force structure and the bulk of the republican Territorial Defense forces. Essentially light infantry brigades, partisan brigades were organized to conduct World War II-style partisan/guerilla actions against an invader. It was as conventional light infantry that JNA and TO partisan brigades acted in the Croatian war, holding less active sectors and supporting offensive operations by more powerful

JNA formations. A typical partisan brigade consisted of three partisan infantry battalions (about 500 men and six 82mm mortars each), a heavy mortar battery (six 120mm mortars), and a few supporting units. Most wartime partisan brigades had a strength of about 2,000, although some brigades were larger.

Protection Motorized Regiment (*zastitni motorizovana puk—zmtp*). Protection motorized regiments were elite formations whose mission was to guard the General Staff and military district headquarters and associated command posts in wartime. These regiments were comprised of one military police battalion (*bataljon Vojna Policija—bVP*), one to two motorized battalions, an air defense battalion, an engineer battalion, and a rear services battalion. At least two and probably three protection regiments were involved in the Croatian war.

Tactical Group (*takticka grupa—TG*) In addition to the standard combat brigades, the JNA formed a number of tactical group headquarters. A tactical group was essentially a brigade-level task force headquarters consisting of a semi-permanent or temporary collection of battalions and brigade elements designed to carry out a specific mission or control a specific sector.

Battle Group (*borbena grupa—BG*) A battle group was a battalion/company-level task force consisting of a semi-permanent collection of companies/platoons designated to carry out a specific mission or control a specific sector.

Military Police (*Vojna policija—VP*). The primary JNA military police unit was the battalion, numbering about 500 troops. Each military district's protection regiment had a military police battalion, as did the elite 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, which had two, and each JNA corps was assigned one. They carried mostly small arms, and each battalion included a platoon or company of M-86 BOV-VP military police APCs. Military police roles included assault infantry, rear-area security, counter-sabotage and "antiterrorist" activities, maintenance of civil order in occupied

areas, and dealing with internal army crime and discipline problems. Each maneuver brigade had a military police company.

Reconnaissance-Sabotage (*izvidacka-diverzantska*). All primary JNA formations had their own reconnaissance-sabotage elements. Each corps had a company or a “detachment” that ranged between a company and a battalion in size, while most regular JNA brigades had companies. Partisan brigades appear to have had platoons. Together with military police units, these units were the elite elements of the army, used not only in their intended reconnaissance and sabotage roles, but also as shock troops to spearhead offensive operations or as “intervention” units to drive back enemy attacks. In addition to the corps and brigade reconnaissance troops, the JNA General Staff’s 63rd Airborne Brigade—actually a battalion-sized unit—consisted primarily of reconnaissance and sabotage companies.

Mixed Artillery Brigade/Regiment (*mesoviti artiljerijski brigada/puk—mabr/map*). The JNA employed two artillery formations in Croatia—one of its two army-level artillery brigades and a corps-level artillery regiment. The two army-level brigades were formed of three artillery battalions (18 130mm field guns each) and one multiple rocket launcher battalion (12 self-propelled 128mm MRLs). These brigades had about 3,000 personnel. The corps-level regiments each had two artillery battalions (each battalion had 18 122mm or 152mm or 155mm howitzers, or in some cases 130mm or 155mm field guns), and a multiple rocket launcher battalion (12 128mm MRLs). The regiments had about 2,000 personnel.

The JNA also maintained a single FROG-7 (R-65 LUNA-M) rocket artillery brigade headquartered in Banja Luka and normally assigned to the First Military District. It appears to have been attached to Fifth Military District or responded directly to the General Staff during the 1991 war. The brigade consisted of three rocket battalions, each with four launchers, plus supporting units.

Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigades and Regiments. At the military district-level the JNA operated mixed antitank artillery brigades and corps-level mixed

antitank artillery regiments. The army-level brigades were organized into three antitank artillery battalions (12 T-12s each) and one self-propelled antitank rocket battalion (18 ATGM vehicles), one howitzer battalion (18 122mm), and a motorized (infantry) battalion. The corps-level regiments had two antitank artillery battalions and a self-propelled antitank rocket battalion.

Composition of Unit Personnel

The JNA traditionally filled its active duty units with conscripts drawn from all over Yugoslavia to make sure that no single formation drew more than a set percentage of its personnel from the republic in which it was stationed so that conscript formations would be multi-ethnic. Upon mobilization, however, brigades drew upon the local and regional populations to bring their complement up to wartime strength. Because a conscript formation was never manned at greater than 50 percent strength in peacetime, mobilization rapidly transformed it into one dominated by the local ethnic group. Reserve formations, which were territorially raised, already consisted exclusively of one ethnic group, although many Bosnian formations were a mixture of the groups living in the same region.

Traditions/Honorifics

The JNA was proud both of its World War II Partisan heritage and its Communist ideology; it actively promoted unit traditions from the Partisan war against the Germans while seeking to indoctrinate its personnel ideologically. Most JNA formations and units bore an alternate unit designator or honorific corresponding to a World War II partisan formation, celebrating their “unit day” and honoring the unit’s heroes of World War II. The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, which made the final push into Vukovar, was the exemplar of JNA unit traditions.²⁶ It celebrated its formation day as 4 November 1942, when the Partisan high command had organized a protective Escort Battalion. In October 1944 the battalion was expanded

and redesignated the Guards Brigade. The brigade earned a number of battle honors for its actions, the most famous of which was the German attempt to capture Marshal Tito at Drvar in 1944. After the war the brigade became the "Tito Guard," in which all nationalities and ethnic groups were represented, and provided honor guard units for Tito and for key government buildings and national events in Belgrade. After Tito's death the brigade provided the honor guard for his mausoleum.

Equipment

JNA armored equipment was a mixture of Soviet, US, and indigenously produced tanks, armored vehicles, and guns.

Of the three major types of tanks employed in the 1991 fighting the most prevalent was the Soviet designed T-54/55, followed by the M-84—the Yugoslav variant of the Soviet T-72—and the World War II design Soviet T-34. The JNA's two types of APC/IFVs were indigenously produced, the M-60, which was a standard APC similar to the US M-113 mounting a 12.7mm machine gun (some variants also mounted a pair of 82mm recoilless rifles), and the M-80, which was an IFV similar to the Soviet BMP-2, mounting a 20mm cannon and a twin AT-3 antitank missile launcher. The JNA also used several variants

of the indigenously produced BOV APC, including the M-86 BOV-VP military police APC, the M-83 BOV-1 ATGM vehicle, and the BOV-3 air defense vehicle.

The JNA artillery consisted of an even greater variety of weapon types than the armored units' tanks and AFVs. Brigade artillery units fielded primarily 105mm and 122m systems. The 105mm artillery included Yugoslav produced M-56 105mm (derived from German World War II M-18 105mm) and US World War II era M-2A1/M-101 105mm howitzers. The 122mm artillery included modern 2S1 122mm self-propelled howitzers and D-30 122mm towed artillery, plus World War II-era M-30/M-38 122mm howitzers. Army and corps level artillery comprised 130mm field guns and 152mm and 155mm howitzers. These weapons included the Soviet M-46 130mm field gun, the Soviet D-20 152mm howitzer, the Yugoslav M-84 152mm gun-howitzer, the Yugoslav M-46/84 155mm gun-howitzer, and the US-designed World War II-era M-1/M-65/M-114 155mm howitzer and M-2/M-59 155mm field gun. The JNA used three types of multiple rocket launchers, all Yugoslav-designed: the towed M-63 128mm "Plamen," the self-propelled M-77 128mm "Oganj," and a handful of M-87 262mm "Orkan."

Chart 1

Skeleton Order of Battle of JNA Forces Earmarked for Strategic Offensive, July 1991

JNA General Staff

Colonel General Blagoje Adzic, Chief of General Staff

First Military District (Operational Group 3)—Eastern and Western Slavonia Campaigns

Colonel General Aleksandar Spirokovski, Commander

1st Guards Mechanized Division (+)

12th (Novi Sad) Corps

17th (Tuzla) Corps

Major Elements, 24th (Kragujevac) Corps

Major Elements, Belgrade City Defense

Major Elements, Vojvodina Territorial Defense

5th (Banja Luka) Corps—Western Slavonia Campaign

Fifth Military District (Operational Group 1)—Karlovac Campaign

Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, Commander

Military-Maritime District

Vice-Admiral Mile Kandic, Commander

2nd (Titograd) Corps (attached)—Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Campaign

4th (Sarajevo) Corps (attached)—Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Campaign

9th (Knin) Corps— Knin-Zadar Campaign

9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector—Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik
Campaign

37th (Uzice) Corps (attached)—Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Campaign

Chart 2

Order of Battle, JNA Forces in Croatia and Mobilized Formations in Bosnia and Serbia, July-August 1991^{27 28}

First Military District (*I. Vojno oblast—I. VO*)

Colonel-General Aleksandar Spirovski, Commander²⁹

Lieutenant Colonel General Mladenko Maksimovic, Deputy Commander

Lieutenant Colonel General Andrija Silic,

Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

95th Protection Motorized Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica (probably)

317th Communications Regiment (Mobilized?)

Peacetime Headquarters: Bijeljina

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

1st Guards Mechanized Division

Major General Mico Delic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

1st Guards Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

Colonel Milorad Vucic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremski Karlovci/Sid

2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Stisovic, Commander

(to mid-August 1991)

Colonel Dusan Loncar, Commander

(from mid-August 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Valjevo

Forward Headquarters: Sabac

3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized)

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Antonic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Pozarevac

252nd Armored Brigade (Mobilized)

(attached from 37th Corps)

Colonel Jovan Vuckovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Kraljevo

453rd Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

(attached from 12th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

Forward Headquarters: Sid

1st Guards Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized/Deployed)

Lieutenant Colonel Andjelko Djokic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Kragujevac

Forward Headquarters: Valjevo

1st Guards Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Cvetkovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

1st Guards Military Police Battalion

Major Jovan Susic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

152nd Mixed Artillery Brigade (Mobilized)

(attached from First Military District)

Peacetime Headquarters: Cuprija

4th (Sarajevo) Corps

Major General Vojislav Djurdjevac, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

6th Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Doboј

10th Motorized Brigade (-) (Mobilized)

Colonel Milojko Pantelic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Mostar

49th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized)

Colonel Enver Hadzhihasanovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

216th Mountain Brigade (Mobilized)

Lieutenant Colonel Dragomir Milosevic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Han Pijesak

4th Mixed Artillery Regiment
Peacetime Headquarters: Kiseljak

4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment
Peacetime Headquarters: Visoko

346th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment
Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

288th Military Police Battalion
Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

5th (Banja Luka) Corps
Lieutenant Colonel General Nikola Uzelac, Commander
Colonel Momir Talic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: Bosanska Gradiska

16th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized)
Lieutenant Colonel Simo Marjanovic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

329th Armored Brigade (Mobilized/Elements Deployed)
Lieutenant Colonel Ratomir Simic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: Stara Gradiska

343rd Motorized Brigade (Mobilized)
Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Arsic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Prijedor

5th Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)
Lieutenant Colonel Desimir Garovic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

454th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Derventa

5th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

12th (Novi Sad) Corps
Major General Mladen Bratic, Commander
Major General Andrija Biorcevic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

36th Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

Colonel Drago Romic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Subotica

Forward Headquarters: Batina/Sombor area

51st Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

Colonel Enes Taso, Commander

(attached from 24th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Pancevo

Forward Headquarters: Bogojevo

16th Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)

Lieutenant Colonel Milorad Vaskovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Ruma

12th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment (Mobilized/Deployed)

Lieutenant Colonel Petar Grahovac, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Novi Sad

Forward Headquarters: Sid area

12th Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Novi Sad

17th (Tuzla) Corps

Major General Savo Jankovic, Commander

(elements probably deployed along Sava River)

12th Mechanized Brigade (Mobilized/Deployed)

Colonel Boro Ivanovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Osijek

Peacekeeping duty—Eastern Slavonia

92nd Motorized Brigade (Partially Mobilized/Elements Deployed)

Peacetime Headquarters: Tuzla

Forward Headquarters: ?

327th Motorized Brigade (Partially Mobilized/Elements Deployed)

Peacetime Headquarters: Derventa

395th Motorized Brigade (Partially Mobilized)

Peacetime Headquarters: Brcko

12th Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)

Peacetime Headquarters: Vinkovci

158th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade (Mobilized?)
Peacetime Headquarters: Djakovo

17th Military Police Battalion
Peacetime Headquarters: Tuzla

Fifth Military District (*V. Vojno oblast—V. VO*)
Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, Commander
Lieutenant Colonel General Andrija Raseta, Deputy Commander
Lieutenant Colonel General Dobrasin Prascevic,
Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb
Forward Headquarters: Slunj

65th Protection Motorized Regiment (Mobilized?)
Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb?
Forward Headquarters: Slunj?

389th Rocket Artillery Brigade
(attached from I Military District)
Colonel Tomislav Obradov, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

580th Mixed Artillery Brigade (Mobilized)
Colonel Svetozar Marjanovic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Karlovac

288th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Virovitica

149th Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-6/KUB-M)
Colonel Milan Torbica, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb-Pleso

367th Communications Regiment
Peacetime Headquarters: Samobor

10th (Zagreb) Corps
Lieutenant Colonel General Dusan Uzelac, Commander
Major General Ivan Stimac, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

4th Armored Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Jastrebarsko
Elements on Peacekeeping Duty: Kordun/Banija

140th Mechanized Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

622nd Motorized Brigade (Mobilized/Elements Deployed)

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Tarbuk, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Petrinja

Elements on Peacekeeping Duty: Banija

6th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Garrison: Petrinja

6th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Garrison: Petrinja

608th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

10th? Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

13th (Rijeka) Corps

Lieutenant Colonel General Marjan Cad, Commander

Major General Trajce Krstovski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka

Forward Headquarters: Plitvice

6th Mountain Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Anton Racki, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Delnice

13th Motorized Brigade (withdrawing)

Peacetime Headquarters: Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia

236th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized?)

Peacetime Headquarters: Gospic

13th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka

13th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka

306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Karlovac

32nd (Varazdin) Corps

Major General Vlado Trifunovic, Commander

Colonel Sreten Raduski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

32nd Mechanized Brigade

Colonel Berislav Popov, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

73rd Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Koprivnica

265th Mechanized Brigade (Elements deployed)

Colonel Rajko Kovacevic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Bjelovar

Elements on Peacekeeping Duty: Okucani/Western Slavonia

32nd Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

417th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Krizevci

32nd Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

42nd Border Guard Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Koprivnica

43rd Border Guard Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Virovitica

Military-Maritime District (*Vojno pomorska oblast—VPO*)

Vice Admiral Mile Kandic, Commander

Major General Nikola Mladenic, Deputy Commander

Vice Admiral Fredrih Moreti, Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff

Peacetime Headquarters: Split

86th Protection Motorized Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Split

183rd Communications Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Sinj

9th (Knin) Corps

Major General Spiro Nikovic, Commander

Major General Janez Ribo, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff (to August)

Colonel Ratko Mladic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff (from August)

180th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized/Elements Deployed)

Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Zivanovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Benkovac

221st Motorized Brigade (+) (Mobilized/Deployed)

Armored Battalion/10th Motorized Brigade (attached)

Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Lisica, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

9th Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)
Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

557th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)
Lieutenant Colonel Milica Potpara, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Benkovac

9th Military Police Battalion
Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

5th (Pula) Military-Maritime Sector
Rear Admiral Marijan Pogacnik, Commander (to 3 August)
Rear Admiral Vladimir Barovic, Commander (from 3 August)
Warship Captain Marko Kimer, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
(to 3 August)
Warship Captain Dusan Rakic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
(from 3 August)
Peacetime Headquarters: Pula

139th Motorized Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Pula

8th (Sibenik) Military-Maritime Sector
Vice Admiral Djuro Pojer, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Sibenik

11th Naval Landing Brigade
Peacetime Headquarters: Sibenik

Fleet Command
Rear-Admiral Nikola Ercegovic, Commander

Frigates: Two Split class, two Kotor class
Patrol Submarines: Two Sava class, three Heroj class
Corvettes: Two Mornar class
Missile Fast Attack Craft: Six Koncar class, 10 Osa I class
Torpedo Fast Attack Craft: 14 Shershen class
Patrol Fast Attack Craft: 10 Mirna class
+ other light forces and landing craft

Chart 3

Order of Battle, JNA Forces in Croatia and Mobilized Formations in Bosnia and Serbia, Late September to 1 January 1992³⁰

Operational Group 3 (Headquarters, First Military District—

I. Vojno oblast—I. VO)

Colonel-General Aleksandar Spirovski, Commander³²

(to late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel General Zivota Panic, Commander
(from late September 1991)

(Colonel General from 29 November 1991) Lieutenant Colonel General Mladenko
Maksimovic, Deputy Commander

Lieutenant Colonel General Andrija Silic, Assistant Commander and Chief of
Staff (to late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters, Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

95th Protection Motorized Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica (probably)

(Elements possibly attached to Operational Groups “North” and/or “South” for
Vukovar operation)

317th Communications Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Bijeljina

Forward Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

389th Rocket Artillery Brigade

(attached from First Military District)

Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

Forward Headquarters: ?

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations

Operational Group “North”

(Headquarters, 12th (Novi Sad) Corps)³³

(activated 30 September; deactivated post-Vukovar when reverted to 12th Corps
designator)

Major General Mladen Bratic, Commander
(to 4 November 1991—Killed in Action)

Major General Andrija Biorcevic, Deputy
Commander and Chief of Staff
(Commander from 4 November 1991)
Forward Headquarters: Borovo Naselje

18th Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Novi Sad

Forward Headquarters: vic. Borovo Naselje; after
18 November to vic. Sarvas

51st Mechanized Brigade

Colonel Enes Taso, Commander

(attached from 24th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Pancevo

Forward Headquarters: vic. Borovo Naselje; after
18 November to vic. Tenjski Antunovac

211th Armored Brigade

(attached from 21st Corps)

(Mobilized and Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Stisovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Nis

Forward Headquarters: vic. Tordinci

12th (Novi Sad) Corps³⁴

Major General Andrija Biorcevic, Commander

Forward Headquarters: Dalj

12th Mechanized Brigade (-)

(reassigned from 17th Corps)

Colonel Boro Ivanovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Osijek

Forward Headquarters: vic. Tenja/Bobota

Elements, 36th Mechanized Brigade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Sodolovac/Ernestinovo

151st Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Ernestinovo

169th Motorized Brigade (-)

(Mobilized and Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Loznica

Forward Headquarters: vic. Palaca

* OG "North" appears to have been responsible only for operations on the north side of Vukovar. The 12th Corps forces not engaged in the Vukovar fighting, primarily south/southeast of Osijek, may have reported to the corps chief of staff while the corps commander dealt directly with Vukovar as commander, OG "North."

505th Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Tordinci

544th Motorized Brigade (-)³⁵

(Mobilized and Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Sabac

Forward Headquarters: vic. Bijelo Brdo

16th Mixed Artillery Regiment

(Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Milorad Vaskovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Ruma

Forward Headquarters: vic. Vera

12th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Petar Grahovac, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Novi Sad

Forward Headquarters: vic. Erdut

Defense of Danube bridges

Operational Group "South"

(Headquarters, 1st Guards Motorized Brigade)³⁶

(activated 30 September; deactivated late November and all units reverted to 1st Guards Mechanized Division)

Colonel Mile Mrksic, Commander

(Major General from 29 November 1991)

Forward Headquarters: vic. Negoslavci

1st Guards Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991;

redeployed to home garrison December 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Negoslavci

1st Guards Mechanized Brigade

(from 30 September to 7 October 1991)

Colonel Milorad Vucic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Negoslavci

252nd Armored Brigade

(Deployed late September 1991)

(from 30 September 1991)

(attached from 37th Corps)

Colonel Jovan Vuckovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Kraljevo

Forward Headquarters: vic. Petrovci-Marinci

453rd Mechanized Brigade

(from 30 September 1991)

(attached from 12th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

Forward Headquarters: vic. Petrovci-Bogdanovci

20th Partisan Division (-)³⁷

(from late September 1991)

(attached from 24th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: probably Kragujevac

Forward Headquarters: probably vic. Petrovci-Bogdanovci

152nd Mixed Artillery Brigade

(Deployed mid/late September 1991)

(attached from I Military District)

Peacetime Headquarters: Cuprija

Forward Headquarters: Negoslavci

1st Guards Military Police Battalion

(from 30 September)

Major Jovan Susic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Negoslavci?

24th Military Police Battalion

(attached from 24th Corps)

(Probably mobilized/deployed September-October 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Milorad Vojnovic, Commander

1st Guards Mechanized Division

Major General Mico Delic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Negoslavci

1st Guards Mechanized Brigade

(to 30 September; from 7 October 1991)

Colonel Milorad Vucic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Negoslavci/southern Vukovar

(to 7 October 1991);

probably vic. Nijemci (from 7 October 1991)

2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade

Colonel Dusan Loncar, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Valjevo

Forward Headquarters: vic. Mirkovci

3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade

(Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Antonic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Pozarevac

Forward Headquarters: vic. Stari Jankovci

80th Motorized Brigade

(attached from 24th (Kragujevac) Corps)³⁸

(Mobilized mid-September; deployed by mid-October 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Kragujevac

Forward Headquarters:

130th Motorized Brigade

(attached from 24th (Kragujevac) Corps)³⁹

(Mobilized mid-September; deployed by mid-October 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Papic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Smederevo/Smederevska Palanka

Forward Headquarters: vic. Mirkovci

252nd Armored Brigade

(Deployed late September 1991)

(from late November 1991)

(attached from 37th Corps)

Colonel Jovan Vuckovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Kraljevo

Forward Headquarters: vic. Petrovci-Marinci

453rd Mechanized Brigade

(to 30 September; from late November 1991)

(attached from 12th Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Sremska Mitrovica

Forward Headquarters: southeast of Vukovar

1st Guards Mixed Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Andjelko Djokic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Kragujevac

Forward Headquarters: vic. Sid

1st Guards Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

(Deployed mid/late September 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Cvetkovic, Commander

Forward Headquarters: vic. Petrovci-Marinci

1st Guards Military Police Battalion

(from late November)

Major Jovan Susic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Belgrade

Forward Headquarters: Negoslavci?

12th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Dragisa Masal, Commander
(Colonel from 4 October 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Vinkovci

Under blockade 25 August to 26 September, when elements captured while remainder withdrawn; probably attached to 1st Guards Mechanized Division upon withdrawal)

Operational Group "Baranja"⁴⁰

Forward Headquarters: vic. Beli Manistir

36th Mechanized Brigade (-)

Colonel Drago Romic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Subotica

Forward Headquarters: vic. Beli Manistir

17th (Tuzla) Corps⁴¹

Major General Savo Jankovic, Commander

Mechanized Battalion/12th Mechanized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Nasice

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 21 September, when surrendered)

17th Partisan Brigade (Mobilized?)

Peacetime Headquarters: Bijeljina

92nd Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Tuzla

Forward Headquarters: Bosanski Samac/Orasje? (elements probably deployed along Sava River)

327th Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Derventa

(elements probably deployed along Sava River)

Forward Headquarters: Bosanski Brod

395th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized)

Peacetime/Forward Headquarters: Brcko

(elements probably deployed along Sava River)

158th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Djakovo

(Under blockade to 20 September, when surrendered)

* Involved in defensive role along Sava River; did not engage in major combat operations.
17th Corps deployed in September/October to Sava River/Croatian border to support Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations, but did not cross into Croatia.

Western Slavonia Operation

5th (Banja Luka) Corps⁴²

Lieutenant Colonel General Nikola Uzelac, Commander
(Colonel General from 29 November 1991)
Colonel Momir Talic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: Bosanska Gradiska

2nd Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized September 1991; deployed October 1991?
—Bosnia-Herzegovina TO)
Major Milorad Savic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: multiple locations; southeast of Lipik

5th Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized July/September 1991; deployed October 1991?
—Bosnia-Herzegovina TO)
Major Pero Colic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Prijedor-Omarska
Forward Headquarters: multiple locations

6th Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized September 1991; deployed October 1991?
—Bosnia-Herzegovina TO)
Lieutenant Colonel Branko Basara, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Sanski Most
Forward Headquarters: vic. Jasenovac

11th Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized September 1991)
Lieutenant Colonel Ratomir Marinkovic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Bosanska Dubica
Forward Headquarters: Jasenovac

16th Motorized Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Simo Marjanovic, Commander
(to 13 October 1991, when killed in action)
Lieutenant Colonel Milan Celeketic, Commander
(from late October 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Novska

122nd Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized November 1991; deployed
December 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Skender Vakuf
Forward Headquarters: Southwest of Lipik

Battle Group/265th Mechanized Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Milan Celeketic (to late October 1991)
Forward Headquarters: Okucani

329th Armored Brigade (-)

Lieutenant Colonel Ratomir Simic, Commander
(Colonel from 4 October 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: Stara Gradiska

343rd Motorized Brigade

Colonel Vladimir Arsic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Prijedor
Forward Headquarters: vic. Pakrac

5th Mixed Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)

Lieutenant Colonel Desimir Garovic, Commander
(Colonel from 4 October 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Stara Gradiska

5th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment (Mobilized)

Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Okucani

5th Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Stara Gradiska

**32nd (Varazdin) Corps (Under blockade to
19 September, when surrendered)⁴³**

Major General Vlado Trifunovic, Commander
Colonel Sreten Raduski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

32nd Mechanized Brigade (22 September)

Colonel Berislav Popov, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

73rd Motorized Brigade (+) (30 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Koprivnica

265th Mechanized Brigade (-) (29 September)

Colonel Rajko Kovacevic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Bjelovar

28th Partisan Division (17 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Daruvar

2nd Partisan Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Daruvar

21st Partisan Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Pakrac

32nd Mixed Artillery Regiment

(19 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

417th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

(17 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Krizevci

32nd Military Police Battalion

(19 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Varazdin

42nd Border Guard Battalion

(Border Watch Towers—16 September; remainder
22 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Virovitica

43rd Border Guard Battalion

(Border Watch Towers—16 September; remainder probably 30 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Koprivnica

288th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade

(Fifth Military District Troops)

(Under blockade until about 22 September, when surrendered)

Peacetime Headquarters: Virovitica

Fifth Military District (V. Vojno oblast—V. VO)*

Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, Commander

Lieutenant Colonel General Andrija Raseta, Deputy Commander

Lieutenant Colonel General Dobrasin Prascevic, Assistant Commander and Chief
of Staff

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

Forward Headquarters: Slunj

65th Protection Motorized Regiment (Mobilized?)

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb?

Forward Headquarters: Slunj?

149th Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-6/KUB-M)

Colonel Milan Torbica, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb-Pleso

(Under blockade to 24 November, when redeployed to Banja Luka)

* The exact role of the Fifth Military District and Military-Maritime District Headquarters during these combat operations remains unclear. Operational Groups 1, 2, and 3 appear to have reported directly to the JNA General Staff, rather than the military districts, probably leaving the military districts in a logistical support role.

367th Communications Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Samobor

Forward Headquarters: Slunj (Major Elements)

(Minor Elements under blockade to 6 October, when surrendered)

Banija-Karlovac/Kordun-Lika Operations**“Banija and Kordun” Operational Group⁴⁴**

Major General Spiro Nikovic, Commander

(Lieutenant Colonel General from

29 November 1991)

Forward Headquarters: Dvor

Banija Operational Group

Forward Headquarters: probably vic. Petrinja

Armored Battalion/4th Armored Brigade

Forward Headquarters: vic. Petrinja

592nd Motorized Brigade

(mobilized September 1991)

(attached from 42nd Corps)

Peacetime Headquarters: Kumanovo

Forward Headquarters: vic. Glina

622nd Motorized Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan Tarbuk, Commander

Peacetime/Forward Headquarters: Petrinja

Composite Brigade (or tactical group)

(deployed late September to Banija)

Elements, 169th Motorized Brigade

Elements, 544th Motorized Brigade

Unidentified Montengrin Brigade⁴⁵

(Arrived Banija 23 October)

6th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Garrison: Petrinja

6th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Garrison: Petrinja

Operational Group “Kordun”

Forward Headquarters: probably Vojnic

9th Motorized Brigade

(attached from 21st (Nis) Corps)

(Mobilized and Deployed mid/late September; arrived vic. Karlovac October 1991)

Lieutenant Colonel Momcilo Momcilovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Zajecar

Forward Headquarters: vic. Karlovac

580th Mixed Artillery Brigade (Deployed)

(attached from Fifth Military District)

Colonel Svetozar Marjanovic, Commander

Peacetime/Forward Headquarters: vic. Karlovac

Operational Group "Lika"⁴⁶

Forward Headquarters: Plitvice

5th Partisan Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Zrenjanin

Forward Headquarters: vic. Licki Osik

236th Motorized Brigade (Deployed)

Peacetime Headquarters: Gospic

Forward Headquarters: vic. Licki Osik

1st Armored Battalion/329th Armored Brigade

Major Branko Suzic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Banja Luka

Forward Headquarters: vic. Plitvice Lakes

10th (Zagreb) Corps (-)⁴⁷

Lieutenant Colonel General Dusan Uzelac, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 12 October, when redeployed to Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

4th Armored Brigade (-)

Lieutenant Colonel Radovan Tacic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Jastrebarsko

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 13 November, when redeployed to vic. Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

140th Mechanized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 30 November/11 December, when redeployed to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

608th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Zagreb

13th (Rijeka) Corps (-)

Lieutenant Colonel General Marjan Cad, Commander
Major General Trajce Krstovski, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka
(Rijeka Garrison under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-
10 December, when withdrawn to Bileca, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

6th Mountain Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Anton Racki, Commander (to 9 September)⁴⁸
Lieutenant Colonel Ljubomir Buljin, Commander (from 9 September)
Peacetime Headquarters: Delnice (Under blockade 14/15 September to
5 November, when surrendered)

13th Motorized Brigade (withdrawing)

Peacetime Headquarters: Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia

13th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka
(Under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-10 December)

13th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Rijeka
(Under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-10 December)

306th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Karlovac
(Under blockade 14/15 September to 8 November; destroyed in barracks)

13th Military Police Battalion

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-10 December)

Military-Maritime District (Vojno Pomorska Oblast—VPO)*

Vice Admiral Mile Kandic, Commander
(Admiral from 22 December 1991)
Vice Admiral Fredrih Moreti, Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff/VPO,
Commander (to late September)
Major General Nikola Mladenic, Deputy Commander/VPO,
Commander (from late September)
Peacetime Headquarters: Split (Under blockade 14/15 September to
25 November)
Forward Headquarters: Vis Island

* The exact role of the Fifth Military District and Military Maritime District Headquarters during these combat operations remains unclear. Operational Groups 1, 2, and 3 appear to have reported directly to the JNA General Staff, rather than the military districts, probably leaving the military districts in a logistical support role.

86th Protection Motorized Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Split (Under blockade 14/15 September to 25 November, when evacuation begun)

183rd Communications Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Sinj (Under blockade in Sinj 14/15 September to 3 October, when withdrawn)

Forward Headquarters: Split and Vis Island?

5th (Pula) Military-Maritime Sector

Rear Admiral Vladimir Barovic, Commander (to 28 September)

Warship Captain Dusan Rakic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff (to 28 September); Commander (from 28 September)

Peacetime Headquarters: Pula (Under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-10 December, when withdrawn)

139th Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Pula

(Under blockade 14/15 September to 18/21 November-10 December, when withdrawn)

8th (Sibenik) Military-Maritime Sector

Vice Admiral Djuro Pojer, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Sibenik (Under blockade 14/15 September to 26 November, when evacuation begun)

11th Naval Landing Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Sibenik

Fleet Command

Rear-Admiral Nikola Ercegovic, Commander

Frigates: Two Split class, two Kotor class

Patrol Submarines: Two Sava class, three Heroj class

Corvettes: Two Mornar class

Missile Fast Attack Craft: Six Koncar class, 10 Osa I class

Torpedo Fast Attack Craft: 14 Shershen class

Patrol Fast Attack Craft: 10 Mirna class

+ other light forces and landing craft

Zadar-Sibenik Operation**9th (Knin) Corps***

Major General Spiro Nikovic, Commander (to mid-September 1991)

Major General Vladimir Vukovic, Commander (from mid-September 1991)

* Reported directly to the Supreme Command Staff (SSNO/JNA General Staff) because VPO unable to exercise effective command due to barracks blockade.

(Lieutenant Colonel General from 29 November 1991)
Colonel Ratko Mladic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff (Major General from 4 October 1991)

180th Motorized Brigade (+)

Armored Battalion/10th Motorized Brigade (attached)
Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Zivanovic, Commander
(Colonel from 4 October 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Benkovac

221st Motorized Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Lisica, Commander
(Colonel from 4 October 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

9th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

557th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Milica Potpara, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Benkovac

9th Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Knin

Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Operations

“Herzegovina” Operational Group 2

(Headquarters, Montenegro Territorial Defense)
Lieutenant Colonel General Pavle Strugar, Commander
(Colonel General from 29 November 1991)
Colonel Radomir Damjanovic, Deputy Commander
Forward Headquarters: Trebinje

4th (Sarajevo) Corps*

(attached from I Military District)
Major General Vojislav Djurdjevac, Commander
Major General Ante Karanusic,
Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

6th Motorized Brigade

Peacetime Headquarters: Doboj

49th Motorized Brigade (Mobilized)

Colonel Enver Hadzhihasanovic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

* Both the 4th and 37th Corps were originally earmarked for an operation in the direction of Split which JNA was unable to carry out. As a result they were not involved in major combat operations, but served in a supporting role within OG 2.

216th Mountain Brigade (Mobilized)

Lieutenant Colonel Dragomir Milosevic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Han Pijesak

4th Mixed Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Kiseljak

4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

Peacetime Headquarters: Visoko

288th Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Sarajevo

37th (Uzice) Corps

Major General Milan Torbica, Commander
Colonel Dragoljub Ojdanic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff
Forward Headquarters: Nevesinje (Corps elements deployed vic. Neum-NW
of Slano; which of the corps' peacetime subordinates deployed remains
unclear)
Peacetime Headquarters: Uzice

10th Motorized Brigade (-) (Mobilized)

(attached from 4th Corps)
Colonel Milojko Pantelic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Mostar

19th Mountain Brigade

(mobilized September 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Pozega

37th Motorized Brigade

(probably mobilized September 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Raska

57th Mountain Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
(attached from 2nd Corps)
Peacetime Headquarters: Pljevlja
Forward Headquarters: Mostar Airfield (Brigade appears to have been
used solely in internal security around Mostar)

134th Partisan Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed November 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Uzice

Valjevo Partisan Brigade

(Serbian Territorial Defense)
(Mobilized and Deployed September 1991)
Lieutenant Colonel Milisav Marinkovic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Valjevo
Forward Headquarters: Nevesinje

208th Mixed Artillery Regiment
(Probably did not mobilize)
Peacetime Headquarters: Valjevo

37th Military Police Battalion
Peacetime Headquarters: Uzice

2nd (Titograd) Corps
Major General Radomir Eremija, Commander
(Lieutenant Colonel General from 22 December 1991)
Colonel Bozidar Djokic, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff

7th Partisan Brigade
(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
Lieutenant Colonel Momcilo Radevic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Kolasin
Forward Headquarters: ?

179th Mountain Brigade
(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Niksic
Forward Headquarters: Possibly north of Slano

1st (Niksic) Partisan Brigade
(Montenegro TO)
(from mid/late Oct)
(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
Colonel Milan Milicic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Niksic
Forward Headquarters: Velican/Ravno

Bijelo Polje Partisan Brigade
(Montenegro TO)
(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Bijeljo Polje
Forward Headquarters: NE of Dubrovnik

326th Mixed Artillery Regiment
(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)
Peacetime Headquarters: Danilovgrad
Forward Headquarters: Provided artillery support to both 2nd Corps and 9th VPS

2nd Military Police Battalion
Peacetime Headquarters: Titograd

9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector

Warship Captain Krsto Djurovic, Commander

(to 5 October when died of wounds)⁴⁹

(Posthumously promoted to Rear Admiral 5 October 1991)

Vice Admiral Miodrag Djokic, Commander (from 5 October)

Peacetime Headquarters: Boka Kotorska

5th Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991) (attached from 2nd Corps)

Colonel Simo Kricak, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Titograd (Podgorica)

Forward Headquarters: vic. Debeli Brijeg

472nd Motorized Brigade

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Trebinje

Forward Headquarters: South of Trebinje

1st (Niksic) Partisan Brigade

(Montenegro TO) (to mid/late Oct) (Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)

Colonel Milan Milicic, Commander

Peacetime Headquarters: Niksic

Forward Headquarters: Konavli (via Dubravka/Dobrusa)

Cetinje Partisan Brigade (TO)

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Cetinje

Forward Headquarters: vic. Debeli Brijeg

5th (Titograd) Partisan Brigade (TO)

(Mobilized and Deployed late September 1991)

Peacetime Headquarters: Titograd (Podgorica)

Forward Headquarters: vic. Debeli Brijeg

Unidentified Military Police Battalion

Peacetime Headquarters: Kumbor

Forward Headquarters: vic. Debeli Brijeg

Chart 4

Order of Battle, Air and Air Defense Force of the JNA, Combat Operations in Croatia, September to 1 January 1992

Headquarters, Air and Air Defense Force*

(*Ratno vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdusna odbrana—RV i PVO*)

Lieutenant Colonel General Zvonko Jurjevic, Commander
(Colonel General from 29 November 1991)

Headquarters: Belgrade-Zemun

1st Air and Air Defense Force Corps

(Supporting Eastern Slavonia and Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik)

Major General Bozidar Stevanovic, Commander
Headquarters: Belgrade-Batajnica Air Base

Eastern Slavonia Campaign

138th Transport Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 177th Air Base⁵⁵ at Belgrade-Batajnica

1 GAMA attack helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)

1 Mi-8 transport helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)

1 An-26 transport squadron (6 aircraft)

204th Fighter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 177th Air Base at Belgrade-Batajnica

1 MiG-29 fighter squadron (12 aircraft)

2 MiG-21 fighter squadrons (25 aircraft)

252nd Fighter-Bomber Squadron

(G-4—15 aircraft)

Headquarters: 177th Air Base at Belgrade-Batajnica

Forward HQ/185th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: Tuzla-Dubrave Air Base

Two to three squadrons of J-22 Orao, MiG-21s, and G-4 Super Galebs, some 30 to 40 aircraft, usually forward deployed at this base. Aircraft drawn from 172nd Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment and 185th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment (probably attached to 1st Corps for combat operations).

Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik Campaign

107th Helicopter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 171st Air Base at Mostar

(attached from RV i PVO Training Command)

* Please note that the air order of battle, especially aircraft disposition, is arbitrarily presented to give the reader a general idea of the number of aircraft available in a given sector. Aircraft were moved frequently between bases, and totals at a given location would vary accordingly.

2 GAMA/Gazelle attack/observation helicopter
training squadrons (26 aircraft)

172nd Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 423rd Air Base at Titograd-Golubovci
(probably attached to 1st Corps for combat operations)
1 J-22 Orao squadron (12 aircraft)
2 G-1 Galeb squadrons (30 aircraft)
1 G-4 Super Galeb squadron (12 aircraft)
(1 to 2 squadrons usually on rotation to Tuzla)

97th Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 500th Air Base at Split-Divulje (Under blockade
14-15 September to 26 November-10 December)
1 Galeb-Jastreb squadron (12 aircraft)
1 Orao reconnaissance squadron (12 aircraft)
1 Mi-8 transport helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)
1 ASW helicopter squadron (9 aircraft)

5th Air and Air Defense Force Corps

(Supporting Banija-Kordun-Lika, Western Slavonia, and Knin-Zadar)
Colonel Ljubomir Bajic, Commander (Major General from 8 October 1991)
Forward Headquarters: Bihać Air Base (Relocated from Zagreb)

350th Air Monitoring, Information, and Navigation Regiment

(Under blockade from 14/15 September to 30 November 1991)
Headquarters: Zagreb-Pleso Air Base

155th Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-2)

Colonel Slavko Biga, Commander
(Under blockade from 14/15 September to 30 November 1991)
Headquarters: Zagreb-Kerestinec Rocket Base

350th Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-3)

Colonel Bozo Novak, Commander
Headquarters: Vrhnik, Slovenia
(Relocating to Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

105th Flight Training Regiment

Headquarters: 84th Air Base at Zadar-Zemunik (to Oct 91) and at Udbina
(from Oct 91) (probably attached from RV i PVO Training Command to 5th
Corps for combat operations)
1 G-4 Super Galeb squadron (15 aircraft)
1 G-1 Galeb squadron (15 aircraft)
1 UTVA-75 squadron (20 aircraft)

111th Transport Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 151st Air Base at Zagreb-Lucko
(Aircraft relocated to Bihać and Banja Luka-Zaluzani and Mahovljani Air Bases—September 1991)
1 GAMA attack helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)
1 Mi-8 transport helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)
1 An-26 transport squadron (6 aircraft)
151st Air Base at Zagreb-Pleso and Zagreb-Lucko (under blockade from 14/15 September to 24 November 1991, when relocated to Banja Luka-Zaluzani Air Base)

117th Fighter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 200th Air Base at Bihać
2 MiG-21 fighter squadrons (24 aircraft)
1 MiG-21 reconnaissance squadron (6 aircraft)

185th Fighter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 258th Air Base at Pula
(aircraft to 200th Air Base at Bihać—September 1991)
(probably attached from RV i PVO Training Command to 5th Corps for combat operations)
1 MiG-21 fighter squadron (15 aircraft)
(to Bihać Air Base—September 1991)
1 G-4 fighter-bomber squadron (12 aircraft)
(to Tuzla Air Base—September 1991)
1 G-1 Galeb fighter-bomber squadron (12 aircraft)
(to Bihać Air Base—October 1991)
258th Air Base at Pula (under blockade from September to December 1991, when relocated to Banja Luka-Zaluzani)

474th Air Base

Headquarters: Banja Luka

82nd Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 474th Air Base at Banja Luka-Mahovljani (relocated from Cerkle, Slovenia July 1991)
1 J-21 Jastreb squadron (12 aircraft) (at Udbina Air Base) (possibly attached to 105th Flight Training Regiment)
1 G-1 Galeb squadron (12 aircraft)
1 J-22 Orao reconnaissance squadron (12 aircraft)

Chart 5

JNA Military Schools and Training Centers in Croatia, 1991

Naval High Military School Center “Marshal Tito”

Vice Admiral Dragoljub Bocinov, Commander

Headquarters: Split

Command and Staff School for Tactics and Operations

Naval Military Academy

Military Academy of the Air and Air Defense Force

Headquarters: Zemunik Air Base

Artillery School Center

Colonel Momcilo Perisic, Commander

Headquarters: Zadar

Air Defense School Center

Colonel Trpko Zarakovski, Commander

Headquarters: Zadar

Engineer School Center “Bogdan Orescanin”

Headquarters: Karlovac

Ground Forces Military-Technical School Center “Army General Ivan Gosnjak”

Headquarters: Zagreb

Military-Technical Academy

Driver Training School Center

Headquarters: Slavonska Pozega

Endnotes, Annex 13

¹ Jovic entry for 20 September 1991.

² Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 137. For discussion of mobilization, see Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 177-231.

³ Note that many of the troops included here would have been assigned to combat support and combat service support formations, in contrast to the Croatian National Guard Corps/Croatian Army and MUP forces, which maintained a much higher tooth-to-tail ratio.

⁴ It is unclear if the corps artillery brigade was also to be called up. If so, this would add another 2,000 troops with 48 artillery tubes and MRLs. These numbers also assume that the 80th and 130th Motorized Brigades were not planning to deploy with their T-34 tank battalions. Each battalion had 31 tanks.

⁵ Belgrade Tanjug 7 August 1991.

⁶ These brigades also appear to have mobilized initially in July and then stood down.

⁷ Kadijevic, p. 138.

⁸ See note 3.

⁹ Kadijevic claims that only one of four brigades arrived.

Kadijevic, p. 138. However, at least another motorized brigade, a composite motorized brigade, and one Montenegrin partisan brigade were dispatched to Banija. Belgrade Tanjug 21 September 1991. The formations, however, may not have been earmarked for the actual Karlovac attack.

¹⁰ JNA forces normally garrisoned in the Banija, Kordun, and Lika regions—plus the reinforcements noted in note 8—were to become involved in a large number of subsidiary operations, primarily in conjunction with SAO Krajina TO formations. These operations were separate and distinct from the JNA Karlovac operation, although they provided added pressure on thinly stretched Croatian troops. After October, these subsidiary operations became the JNA's primary focus as the army shifted strategic direction to assume a more defensive posture protecting the SAO Krajina.

¹¹ See note 3.

¹² This force mix is based on a range of one motorized and three partisan brigades or three motorized brigades and one partisan brigade, plus the 10th Corps' support troops, including an artillery regiment, and the Fifth Military District artillery brigade. Two of the corps' own maneuver brigades were almost certainly not earmarked because of their position deep in Croatian territory or were already involved in local operations in Banija.

¹³ Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 231. The text indicates that the "Air Defense" [Protivvazdušne odbrane—PVO] was unable to command the 9th Corps and was therefore directly controlled by the Staff of the Supreme Command. This is almost certainly a typographical error in which "VPO"—the Maritime Military District, under whose command the 9th Corps was—was misabbreviated "PVO" and then incorrectly spelled out as "Air Defense."

¹⁴ See note 3.

¹⁵ Kadijevic, p. 138.

¹⁶ Jovic entry for 20 September 1991, p. 220.

¹⁷ Kadijevic, pp. 139-140.

¹⁸ See note 3.

¹⁹ See note 3.

²⁰ The 37th Corps prepared a study on its actions during the 1991 war. The study indicated that:

. . . because no unit was used according to the use (contingency) plan, and this made it exceedingly difficult to carry out the tasks of rear support. The geo-topographic characteristics of the zone where units of the corps were involved were specific and essentially unknown to command personnel. Units were forced to go into combat in a short time on the basis of orders from the highest level of direction and command, which manifested a discrepancy between theory and practice applied out of necessity, which had very adverse consequences for the effectiveness of direction and command.

Colonel Dusan Loncar, "A Time of Bad Decisions," Belgrade *Vojska* 9 September 1993, pp. 14-15.

²¹ For example, on 20 June 1991, during a meeting between Jovic and Kadijevic/Adzic, Jovic asked the generals,

. . . to give us a precise answer on whether they will conduct a redeployment of the military along the new (Serbian) borders of Yugoslavia, in order to prevent major losses by the Serb nation and to defend its territory. . . . We will resist any policy of forcibly keeping the Croats and Slovenes in Yugoslavia, as well as of forcibly removing Serbs from it.

Jovic entry for 20 June 1991.

²² The only remaining non-partisan division in the army was the 1st Proletarian Guards Mechanized Division, headquartered in Belgrade. Despite its title, the division was organized along the lines of a mechanized corps, with mechanized brigades rather than regiments.

²³ Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 231.

²⁴ R. Popovic, "The Mistakes Must Not Be Repeated," Belgrade *Vojska* 16 December 1993, pp. 8-9. An interview with Major General Bozidar Djokic.

²⁵ Not to be confused with the JNA's single alpine brigade (*planinska brigada*), the 345th, which was previously garrisoned in Slovenia.

²⁶ Other examples of JNA unit honorifics drawn from World War II Partisan formations included:

1st Proletarian Guards Mechanized Division

1st Proletarian Guards Mechanized Brigade "1st Proletarian Brigade"

2nd Proletarian Guards Mechanized Brigade "3rd Sandzak Proletarian Brigade"

3rd Proletarian Guards Mechanized Brigade "3rd Krajina Proletarian Brigade"

5th Proletarian Motorized Brigade

9th Motorized Brigade "9th Serbian Brigade"

36th Mechanized Brigade "8th Vojvodina Brigade"

57th Mountain Brigade "5th Sandzak Brigade"

179th Mountain Brigade "6th Montenegrin Brigade"

²⁷ Please note that the following order of battle generally does not show all military district and corps support troops. Each military district's army troops consisted of:

- protection motorized regiment (headquarters security)
- artillery brigade
- antitank artillery brigade
- one to two medium self-propelled air defense rocket regiments (SA-6)
- reconnaissance company or detachment
- military police battalion
- engineer brigade or regiment
- communications regiment
- transport battalion
- NBC defense regiment or battalion
- reserve or "supplementary" regiment (probably replacement/draft holding formation)
- medical battalion
- rear base (logistics/rear services) (one per corps)

For each JNA corps these usually consisted of the following units:

- artillery regiment
- antitank artillery regiment (usually were not mobilized and deployed)
- light air defense artillery regiment
- reconnaissance company or detachment
- military police battalion
- engineer regiment
- pontoon battalion
- NBC defense battalion
- communications battalion
- transport battalion
- medical battalion

In addition, the order of battle does not show the large number of JNA training centers and other depots that were scattered throughout Croatia.

²⁸ This order of battle does not include all JNA cadre-strength partisan division headquarters or brigades.

²⁹ Commanders and chiefs of staff will be included where known down to brigade level.

³⁰ See note 26. In addition, the order of battle does not show the large number of JNA training centers and other depots that were scattered throughout Croatia.

³¹ A JNA document included in Milisav Sekulic's account of the 1991 war states,

The Supreme Command Staff, through the Operations Center, has a direct link to the Banja Luka and Knin Corps and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Operational Groups. At this time the Air Defense Command [typographical error, should be VPO, Military Maritime District] is not able to command the Knin Corps. The situation with the Banja Luka Corps and the commands of the three operational groups (at Banija, Kordun, and Lička) is similar. The command of the Fifth Military District has not been able to exercise command successfully.

Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 231. The OG-1, 2, and 3 referred to are different than the operational groups in Banija, Kordun, and Lička.

³² Commanders will be included where known down to brigade level.

³³ Does not include blockaded formations; only those corps and OG involved in ongoing combat operations.

³⁴ OG "North" appears to have been responsible only for operations on the north side of Vukovar. The 12th Corps forces not engaged in the Vukovar fighting, primarily south/southeast of Osijek, may

have reported to the corps chief of staff while the corps commander dealt directly with Vukovar as commander, OG "North."

³⁵ Reservist mobilization difficulties delayed brigade deployment.

³⁶ The operational group also included "several territorial and volunteer detachments, and several independent units at the battalion/artillery battalion level." Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 200.

³⁷ Normally comprised of two partisan brigades. Reservist mobilization difficulties delayed deployment and compromised the division's employment.

³⁸ Reservist mobilization difficulties delayed brigade deployment.

³⁹ Reservist mobilization difficulties delayed brigade deployment.

⁴⁰ The subordinate formations of OG "Baranja" are unclear. The 36th Mechanized Brigade appears to have been the only major JNA formation with elements deployed east/northeast of Osijek. The OG may have been formed to act as a command and control authority over the Baranja Territorial Defense.

⁴¹ Involved in defensive role along Sava River; did not engage in major combat operations. 17th Corps deployed in September/October to Sava River/Croatian border to support Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations, but did not cross into Croatia.

⁴² Under command OG-3, although the Supreme Command Staff (SSNO/JNA General Staff) also had direct links to the corps and may have exercised direct control.

⁴³ All major corps formations forced to surrender; date next to unit designator indicates date of capitulation. The corps was assigned to Fifth Military District, but is shown here with other commands associated with the Western Slavonia campaign.

⁴⁴ The Fifth Military District and Military-Maritime District Headquarters were unable to exercise effective command over their forces during the 1991 combat operations. As a result, Operational Groups 1, 2, and 3 and the 9th Corps appear to have reported directly to the Supreme Command Staff (SSNO/JNA General Staff.)

⁴⁵ OG-1 appears to have been formed from the Fifth Military District headquarters. Nikovic served as the 9th Corps commander until mid-September when he appears to have become Chief of Operations and Training on the Fifth Military District staff, at which point he also became commander of the task-organized OG-1. He later took over the 10th Corps in January 1992.

⁴⁶ Assessed as possibly the Ivangrad (Berane) Partisan Brigade/Montenegrin Territorial Defense.

⁴⁷ Unclear when this OG was formed; possibly combined with OG "Kordun."

⁴⁸ Corps does not appear to have exercised any tactical control over deployed JNA and TO forces in Banija and Kordun, but only over blockaded 10th Corps forces.

⁴⁹ Rakic defected to the Croatians on 9 September. Zagreb Radio 22 September 1991. He was assigned to command the Croatian Army's corps-level Rijeka Operational Zone upon its formation on 22 September.

⁵⁰ Died of wounds suffered when Croatian forces shot down his Gazelle helicopter.

⁵¹ In addition to any subordinate flying units, an air base also had under command an airfield air defense battalion or regiment (equipped with antiaircraft artillery, generally a combination of 40mm Bofors and 20mm M-55s, plus SA-7 equipped teams), a combat battalion to act as airfield ground defense troops, and a variety of technical and rear services units.

Annex 14

Mobilization and the Failure of the Strategic Offensive

The JNA ordered its second phase mobilization on 16 September 1991, in response to the start of the Croatian offensive against the JNA's facilities throughout Croatia that began on 14-15 September.¹ To the consternation of the General Staff, the mobilization order was greeted almost immediately by the refusal of many reservists to join their units, and this phenomenon was followed by the desertion of entire units from the front. The General Staff capped this disaster by instituting an unofficial policy of limiting reservists' tours to 45 days, a decision that played havoc with the entire reserve system.

Support for War Low, Mobilization Response Poor²

The JNA call-up of formations in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia was a mixed success that included some stunning failures. The general unpopularity of the war against Croatia led many reservists to ignore their call-up orders or to desert after joining, and in some cases entire units refused their deployment orders. The opposition of Bosnian Muslims and Croats to mobilization and involvement in the war meant that the JNA was unable to rely on the considerable forces available in Bosnia to fight the Croatians. The Bosnians were not alone in their opposition; all over Yugoslavia many Serb reservists complained that they were willing to defend Serbia but saw no point in attacking Croatia. The mobilization of several Territorial Defense brigades from multi-ethnic Vojvodina earmarked for Eastern Slavonia collapsed by 20 September.³ On 19 September most of a 24th (Kragujevac) Corps motorized brigade from Smederevska Palanka in central Serbia refused their orders to deploy to Eastern Slavonia.⁴ A senior officer of the 24th Corps later stated that more than 6,000 of the corps' reservists had failed to respond to call-ups.⁵

In addition, thousands of men deserted. Over 1,000 troops from the elite 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade deserted from the Eastern Slavonia front in late September.⁶ A former JNA officer recently said he knew of three motorized brigades that deserted en masse after mobilization.⁷ Some 600 reservists from Valjevo—probably Territorial Defense personnel—deserted from their forward-deployed position at Nevesinje, Bosnia on 28 September; their brigade was assigned to support the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik campaign.⁸ Many of the defaulting reservists and their parents staged public protests and deluged authorities with letters justifying their actions. Some 150 reservists who deserted from Eastern Slavonia after 45 days at the front protested at the JNA club in Kragujevac in December.⁹ Some 200 reservists from central Serbia went to Belgrade on 4 December 1991 after two months at the Knin-Zadar front, complaining about Krajina Serb atrocities and demanding to be demobilized.

Mobilization Failures and their Impact

The failure of the JNA and the respective republic governments—Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—to mobilize the units the JNA required for its plan was to prove the offensive's death knell. General Kadijevic states in his memoirs that:

The one, exclusive reason for modifying the initial plan was the semi-successful mobilization of and the organized desertions from the JNA reserve structures. Not only was the response poor; even the weakened units were not allowed to set out for their deployment positions, or those who did set out left the front as soon as they arrived there. All the problems of a strategic and operational nature during the execution of the operation, especially the problems associated with the time of arrival of necessary or

fresh forces at specific locations, were caused exclusively by the failure of mobilization and by desertions, especially in certain parts of the country . . . the failure to get the forces that were counted on . . . (meant) that the operation was executed with curtailed demands and with incomparably greater problems and losses than there would have been otherwise.¹⁰

The JNA's inability to commit sufficient combat formations on critical axes of the offensive ensured that key aspects of the plan went unfulfilled. For example, call-up problems and the questionable reliability of the Bosnian Muslim and Croat reservists in the 4th (Sarajevo) and 17th (Tuzla) Corps limited the JNA's ability to use these corps in their intended roles. The loss of the 4th Corps practically halved the JNA forces available for the Mostar-Split sub-operation on the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik front. The JNA decided to use the 17th Corps for the static defense of the Bosnian-Croatian border along the Sava River rather than commit it in what might have been decisive move against the right flank of Croatian forces in Eastern Slavonia. In Eastern Slavonia, the disappointing mobilization from the 24th Corps and the subsequent lack of adequate infantry formations for Eastern Slavonia was to cripple JNA offensive operations in that vital sector—the JNA's main effort.

The refusal of so many reservists to respond to call-ups and the desertions of both conscripts and reservists not only diminished the forces available but vitiated the JNA's cohesion and will to fight.¹¹ As Yugoslav Army General Staff chief General Perisic stated in 1993,

The break-up of Yugoslavia also shattered the most important factor, what we call the human factor, because division of the state into diverse ethnic groups also divided the army into those ethnic groups. The capability of the human factor we had up to that point was thereby diminished from the numerical standpoint. Second, mobilization was destroyed, and third, replenishment with recruits was destroyed, and this undoubtedly diminished the combat capability of the former army.¹²

In many ways this collapse in morale and motivation among the JNA's rank and file appears to have been even more damaging than the shortage of combat formations. Higher motivation among the units the JNA did manage to mobilize probably could have compensated in most cases for the brigades missing from the pre-war staff plan. Low troop morale and motivation often nullified the JNA's massive armor and artillery advantages over the spirited Croatians.

The mobilization failures affected morale even among the JNA's most senior leadership, who appear to have lost confidence in the army's ability to succeed in its plans. General Kadijevic himself seemed almost paralyzed by the events of September. Jovic described Kadijevic during a meeting of the de facto Supreme Command on 24 September:

Veljko seems very confused, almost lost. He talks about defeat of the military, about desertion, about the lack of motivation, about the danger of treason by the still-large number of Croats in the military, about the Serbs' major mistrust even of loyal non-Serb officers, about the drama of people and families. He says that right now 2,000 officers should be replaced in order to avoid the worst, which is very difficult. . . . The military will lose the war against Croatia unless motivation and the success of mobilization are ensured.¹³

The desperate tone of Kadijevic and Adzic, reflected in Jovic's notes over the period 20 September into mid-October, as units disintegrated, operations failed, and barracks fell, is bleak testimony to their concern about the effect of the mobilization chaos on the army.

The unpopularity of the war led to an unofficial Federal decision to limit reservist tours to 45 days. This well-meant decision caused a complete breakdown in the JNA reserve system and profoundly affected overall army morale, readiness, and cohesion.

Narodna Armija, the official JNA mouthpiece, stated in December 1991 that,

. . . hundreds of reservists immediately “seized upon” that statement (the Federal decision) . . . No sooner have the personnel of a war unit been welded into a firmer military collective—after overcoming the change in the way of life and being placed in the combat situation when there is a danger of losing one’s life . . . a certain combat experience, self-confidence, and confidence in the weapons are gained . . . and the commanding officer must release them to go home and again receive on the battlefield inexperienced people who will have to experience all the specific features of war from the beginning.

The reservists, aware that this (the frequent replacement of personnel) was to their advantage, took up this proposal, which was not officially adopted anywhere, as though it were a legal decision and as an “acquired” right. They used it as the basis for presenting demands to unit commanders, in some places engaging in blackmail and abandoning positions in groups.¹⁴

The 45-day tour policy had a particularly detrimental effect on technical and specialized units, like armor and artillery, that required extensive training on their

equipment; much of their reservists’ 45 days of service was eaten up by refresher training, leaving only a few weeks for actual combat service.¹⁵ The Federal Presidency finally revoked the 45-day reserve limit on 10 December, extending it to six months. But the damage had already been done.

Mobilization problems also reduced the overall effectiveness of the offensive plan by disrupting the timetable for the individual campaigns. Although several started at roughly the same time in mid-September, at least two of the campaigns—Karlovac and Dubrovnik—did not get under way until October. Even when the campaigns set off on time their internal operations were disrupted by the absence of essential combat formations. Instead of a swiftly moving, multi-front blitzkrieg, the offensive degenerated into a ponderous, disjointed affair. As Kadjevic notes, “Because the planned forces were not present, it was not possible to execute the operation in one fell swoop and thus quickly defeat the main body of Croatian forces . . . instead it had to be executed gradually and over a longer period of time.”¹⁶

Appendix 1

JNA Mobilization Statistics

Milisav Sekulic, a former JNA, Yugoslav Army (VJ), and Krajina Serb Army officer, provides several sets of 1991 JNA mobilization statistics in Chapters 12 and 13 of his book *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*. While the data are not broken down through each individual corps, brigade, and independent battalion, they do provide a good feel for the general decline in reservist response rates during the year.

Sekulic divides the mobilization data into three time periods: up to 31 May 1991, late June through early July 1991, and 10 to 20 September 1991. Although the number of reservists called up and units mobilized during the first period are not stated, Sekulic says that 96.5 percent of those mobilized reported for duty.

During the second period in June and July, Sekulic lists the following numbers of “war units” called up—a reference to mobilization to wartime manpower levels, probably comprising all brigades and independent battalions.

- 40 war units from First Military District
- 23 war units from the Third Military District
- three war units from the Military-Maritime District
- 16 war units from the Air and Air Defense Force.¹⁷

Of these, 38 were Category A units consisted primarily of active duty officers and conscripts, topped off with reservists, 13 Category B units comprised mostly of reservists but with some measure of active duty officers and conscripts, and 31 Category R units comprised almost exclusively of reservists. Sekulic indicates that the response rate for units “within the specified time” (the response times required of different units varied) was as follows:

- 4 hours—46 percent
- 12 hours—65 percent
- 18 hours—53.6 percent
- 24 hours—50 percent
- 36 hours—46.9 percent

Total—55.7 percent¹⁸

To improve the overall manning level of these units, personnel were transferred among them and some battalions were eliminated within brigades.

As a result, the JNA had mobilized by 9 September the following forces:

- 1st Guards Mechanized Division
- four partisan divisions
- 22 Ground Forces brigades
- three partisan brigades¹⁹
- two artillery brigades
- five support regiments
- 20 independent battalions (including artillery)
- two companies
- 15 bases (probably rear bases, the JNA term for corps-level logistics units)
- three Territorial Defense brigades (partisan brigade equivalents)²⁰
- 19 Territorial Defense detachments (battalion-size units)²¹

These units were at 73 percent of their authorized wartime strength with a total manpower of 112,443 troops, divided into 96,625 JNA personnel and 15,518 TO personnel, out of some 142,058 called up.²² Sekulic claims that of these troops, 26,000 were actually engaged in combat operations at the time—probably early September.²³

During the third period of mobilization in September, 91 war units were called up, with the following response rates:

- First Military District—64 percent
- Third Military District—70 percent
- Military-Maritime District—58 percent
- Air and Air Defense Force—6 percent²⁴

Overall—62 percent²⁵

The response rate “within the specified time” was only 27 percent, but eventually reached 69 percent. But, as noted, a number of units that did mobilize suffered from mass desertions after or just prior to deployment.²⁶ Although they were subsequently remobilized and deployed, the damage to the JNA’s strategic offensive had already been done.

Endnotes, Annex 14

¹ Analysis of Belgrade Tanjug and Belgrade Radio reporting 14-16 September 1991.

² See Appendix: JNA Mobilization Statistics.

³ Jovic entry for 20 September 1991. The Vojvodina populace was a tense, multi-ethnic mixture of Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, and a few much smaller groups, such as Slovaks. Most of the population clearly lacked enthusiasm about fighting in what they viewed as a Serbian war.

⁴ A soldier in the 130th Motorized Brigade from Smederevska Palanka said panic and confusion broke out in the unit after the soldiers were informed they would be deploying to Eastern Slavonia. The soldier complained that the unit had received poor ammunition and many of the men were given weapons they had never fired before. He claimed that over 50 percent of the soldiers were not trained or ready to go to war. Belgrade Studio B TV 19 September 1991. The brigade eventually deployed to the front.

⁵ Belgrade Radio 16 December 1991.

⁶ Jovic entry for 28 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 29 September 1991. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade personnel had come under "friendly fire" during operations, which apparently was the spark that touched off the desertions, although previous problems contributed.

⁷ These included the 80th Motorized Brigade from the 24th Corps, the 544th Motorized Brigade from the 12th Corps, and the 19th Motorized Brigade from the 37th Corps. Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 207. Most of these brigades eventually deployed in strength to the front.

⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 29 September 1991. The Valjevo TO reservists also reportedly claimed that they had received insufficient training and inadequate weapons, which the JNA denied.

⁹ Belgrade Radio 16 December 1991.

¹⁰ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 136-137.

¹¹ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 136-137.

¹² Miladin Petrovic and Radovan Popovic, "A Successful Officer is a Natural and Legitimate Leader," *Vojска* 24 September 1992, pp. 3-5. In 1991, Perisic was a colonel commanding the JNA Artillery Training Center in Zadar, Croatia.

¹³ Jovic entry for 24 September 1991.

¹⁴ Ivan Matovic, "Solidarity in Sharing the Burden of War," *Narodna Armija* 14 December 1991, p. 5.

¹⁵ Ivan Matovic, "Solidarity in Sharing the Burden of War," *Narodna Armija* 14 December 1991, p. 5; See also Milisav Sekulic, op. cit., p. 205 for additional discussion of the 45-day (Sekulic says it was 40 days) limit on service. Sekulic also charges that JNA commanders employed the mobilized formations poorly, allowing brigades to be mobilized and then sit idle and unused for long periods so that discipline declined, when the time could have been used for training and explaining the purpose of the mobilization.

¹⁶ Kadijevic, p. 137.

¹⁷ Milisav Sekulic, pp. 206-207. The authors are not able to correlate all of these units to those identified in the order of battle; the order of battle probably is missing a number of JNA units that were in fact mobilized and deployed.

¹⁸ Milisav Sekulic, pp. 206-207.

¹⁹ These brigades are apparently in addition to those from the partisan divisions.

²⁰ These are not to be confused with the SAO Krajina Territorial Defense, but are official Serbian, Bosnian or Montenegrin Republic TO units.

²¹ Milisav Sekulic, p. 222. The authors have been unable to correlate all of these unit totals with the order of battle that has been compiled; some Ground Forces brigades, the partisan divisions and brigades, and the TO brigades probably are not shown in the JNA order of battle charts in Annex 13.

²² The troop number 112,443 is actually 79 percent of 142,058; the source of the discrepancy is unclear.

²³ Milisav Sekulic, pp. 206-207, 222. Sekulic does not specify the date for these manpower numbers, but states that they are from the "second half of 1991." Given the large-scale mobilization in September, the context of his discussion, and its juxtaposition with the 9 September count of mobilized units, it is likely that these manpower numbers only cover the June/July mobilization. In addition, his emphasis that only 26,000 of these troops were engaged in combat operations is not entirely relevant since the JNA had not yet launched its strategic offensive.

²⁴ This number seems absurdly low. It is unclear whether there was a typographical error or if the number does not reflect response rate but the number of additional units called up.

²⁵ Milisav Sekulic, pp. 206-207.

²⁶ Milisav Sekulic, pp. 206-207.

Annex 15 **Mobilization and the JNA-Serbian Political-Military Conflict**

Through September and October 1991 acrimonious debate raged between JNA military leaders and the Serbian political leaders over what their political objectives or war aims should be and the best strategy to achieve them. The failure of the mobilization order and the JNA's demand for general mobilization to compensate for it became the symbolic issue within which the parties' differing views were debated. Jovic and Milosevic stubbornly refused Kadijevic's repeated pleas for general mobilization, leading to furious debates in the Federal/Serbian de facto Supreme Command. Thus, on 24 September, after Kadijevic's desperate statement that the army would lose without (general) mobilization, Jovic noted: "We discussed things and argued for a long time."¹ On 28 September, Kadijevic stated that "If mobilization had succeeded, not one garrison would have fallen," to which Jovic silently observed, "He does not explain why he did not withdraw them to the new borders when we told him to, and when that was still possible."

The debate erupted in full force again in early October, after the chief of the JNA's Political Administration, Lieutenant Colonel General Marko Negovanovic, had claimed on 2 October to a retired general that Milosevic and the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) were responsible for the mobilization failures. General Negovanovic charged that "The basic culprit is the Serbian state and the SPS because they are not combating the enemies of the JNA and the desertion from its ranks."² The row exploded at a meeting on 5 October, at which Jovic and Milosevic again denied Kadijevic and Adzic general mobilization. In his diary, Jovic proposes instead a political solution, since in his and Milosevic's view the liberation of all Serb territories—their war aim—had been achieved.

Adzic and Veljko are desperate, they accuse us of leaving the Serb nation in the lurch. [Montenegrin Federal Presidency member] Branko

Kostic takes their side, overall, without taking into account the actual situation in Europe and Serbia.

How can they think that we are leaving the Serb nation in the lurch if all Serb territories have been liberated? Surely we must move to a political solution eventually?³

On 6 October, Jovic and Milosevic decided on their own to accept European Community demands for a cease-fire in order to lift the siege of the barracks and force the military to defend only "liberated" territory. Milosevic and Jovic were not about to let the JNA dictate to them what their war aims should be, nor were they willing to allow the JNA to continue executing a strategy that they viewed as harmful and counterproductive to achieving their objectives. As Jovic put it, "We are not a supermarket for satisfying the generals' needs. Policy must proceed from us, not from them."⁴

The debate over war aims was partially settled on 9 October when Kadijevic defined the JNA's goals as "protection of the threatened Serb nation in Croatia and withdrawal of the military from besieged barracks," which Jovic silently interpreted thus: "The overthrow of the Croatian leadership, which he has long demanded, has now been replaced by withdrawal of the military."⁵ Despite the proclaimed change in objectives, the JNA still seemed unsure of its aims. At the same meeting in which he outlined the JNA's new objectives, Kadijevic stated that "The JNA does not have enough strength to completely defeat the Croatian forces; although they might fall in 10 days if it were not for the problem of the besieged garrisons," prompting Jovic to ask him ". . . why they did not do that before the garrisons came under siege and why he is still thinking about the complete defeat of the Croatian forces, if he has accepted the new goals." Kadijevic unconvincingly replied that the JNA needed more troops to threaten the Croatians with enough force to persuade them to accept a peace agreement.⁶ Even so, the meeting marked a partial shift in Kadijevic's thinking, though it was battlefield realities

that drove the change far more than Jovic or Milosevic's persuasive arguments.

The continuation of the mobilization debate even after this meeting showed how hard it was for Kadijevic to abandon his strategic offensive and wholeheartedly adopt the strategic defensive. On 22 October, Kadijevic stated at a Presidency meeting,

For the last time I propose that the SFRY Presidency, as well as the corresponding legitimate bodies of the nations who have opted to continue living together in a new Yugoslavia, immediately assume the function of the institutions of the Yugoslav state and declare a state of war and general mobilization.⁷

Jovic meanwhile noted on 25 October that

. . . Kadijevic right now is very unhappy about how Serbia is not providing enough reservists for the war and how Slobodan (Milosevic) and I are not doing more (politically) to combat deser-

tion. At every meeting, he tries to emphasize that we could easily win the war if we (I and Slobodan) only wanted to!

Ten days ago, he asked for 30,000 reservists in order to end the war in 15 days . . . He has already received half of that. . . Now he wants 250,000! How can that be, when nothing essential has changed on the battlefield?⁸

The Serbian civilian leaders not only viewed mobilization as unnecessary but, given the war's unpopularity, feared that general mobilization would cause "massive protests and political defeat" for Milosevic's government.⁹ The last clash in the unresolved debate over war aims and mobilization appears to have come when the JNA prepared to resume its offensive march westward after capturing Vukovar. Milosevic put an end to the debate and the JNA's war plan with an order, ratified through a Federal Presidency decision, halting the operation. Belgrade did not need Croatia defeated, only Serb territory defended.^{10 11}

Endnotes, Annex 15

¹ Jovic entry for 24 September 1991.

² Jovic entry for 2 October 1991.

³ Jovic entry for 5 October 1991.

⁴ Jovic entry for 6 October 1991.

⁵ Jovic entry for 9 October 1991.

⁶ Jovic entry for 9 October 1991.

⁷ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 133.

⁸ Jovic entry for 25 October 1991.

Not surprisingly, the debate had alienated the JNA from the Serbian leadership. Jovic noted that Milosevic had come to dislike Kadijevic, complaining that he meddled in political affairs while not taking care of the military issues. Kadijevic appears to have become equally displeased with the political leadership, only

half-jokingly claiming that he would join the Serbs from Western Slavonia who had threatened to "settle scores" with the leaders in Belgrade, who they regarded as having abandoned them. Jovic noted that at one meeting with Milosevic, "Veljko was so agitated that he said, 'If you are not going to accept what I propose, then I am going to disband the military!!!'"

⁹ Jovic entry for 30 October 1991.

¹⁰ Silber and Little, pp. 186-187.

¹¹ See "Vukovar Aftermath: The JNA Continues the Offensive" in Annex 18: Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations: The Road to Vukovar.

Annex 16

“What is the Goal?”—JNA vs. JNA: The Army Debates Its Role and Future

As Kadijevic argued war aims and strategy with Jovic and Milosevic, JNA officers were debating the same issues among themselves, and arguing as well about the ethnic composition of the JNA and their perception that under Kadijevic and Adzic the army was becoming rudderless. No fewer than three coup-like attempts against Kadijevic and other senior officers grew out of the intense debates among mid-level officers that September.

One of those near the center of the debate was Kadijevic's chef de cabinet, Colonel Vuk Obradovic. Obradovic says there were two camps in the JNA: These consisted of

Individuals . . . for the proclamation of a general mobilization and the initiation of an army offensive which would break the resistance of the Croatian regime on the entire territory of Croatia.

This camp almost certainly consisted of Kadijevic, Admiral Brovet, and other diehard Yugoslav loyalists. Obradovic, however, observed that

Most of the generals were against this: they more or less openly supported the withdrawal of the JNA to the ethnic borders of the Serbian people. It was believed that this could be the north-western border of some new Yugoslavia.

Drawing on the arguments of the second side in the heated debate, Colonel Obradovic took the initiative on 17 and 18 September to present to General Kadijevic and the Staff of the Supreme Command proposals that would revise the foundations from which the JNA derived its composition, its ideological orientation, and its very existence. The proposals appear to reflect the views of those JNA officers whom Obradovic had referred to as the majority.¹ The main points consisted of the following paraphrased concepts:

- It must be recognized that the SFRY no longer exists, rendering the JNA an army without a state.
- Since a new state has not yet been created, the JNA should rely on those people who accept the army as their own —Serbians and Montenegrins, and to a lesser extent Muslims and Macedonians. The ethnic boundaries of these people are the borders the army must defend.
- Since “An Ustashi and Fascist regime is in power in Croatia” and is waging a “brutal” war against the JNA, the army should use all its resources to oppose the Croatians and attack their vital installations.
- The “transformation of the JNA into an army of the people who accept it as their own must be urgently carried out” by purging it of all ethnic groups who do not support the JNA.
- The “de-ideologization of the JNA” should be effected immediately and symbolized by removing pictures and busts of Marshal Tito from all JNA facilities to military museums.²

Obradovic's proposals—which tracked closely with those of the Serbian political leadership—were debated at a meeting of the “Staff of the Supreme Command” (i.e., the JNA General Staff, including General Adzic, plus key SSNO officers) on 19 September. Obradovic perceptively pointed out, in agreement with one of the more junior generals, that,

. . . the war aims for which we will all fight together must be clearly defined. It is also my belief that the aims for which we are fighting at this time are not clear to a great, great part of the army cadre and, from this, huge consequences are resulting. I think, personally, that these aims must move within the boundaries of the protection of ethnic borders of the people to whom we belong and, second, the rescue of our comrades outside these ethnic borders through a

combination of political, international, military, and all other activities. . . If our aims are at variance with the readiness of the Serbian people to fight for certain things, we will experience both a political and military debacle.

Although General Adzic appears to have accepted Obradovic's basic viewpoint, General Vasiljevic, Chief of the Security Administration, and many others rejected the proposals, particularly the de-ideologization of the JNA.³ Despite his apparent philosophical agreement with his officers, Adzic would continue to follow Kadijevic's lead in discussions with the de facto "supreme command."

Kadijevic himself seems to have come around to agreeing with some of Obradovic's proposals but, with characteristic indecisiveness, appears not to have followed through with them. During a 28 September meeting of the de facto "supreme command," he aired some of the ideas in the course of a briefing on the state of the army. Jovic recorded that "Veljko has now come to the conclusion that if the previous commitment of the JNA is narrowed to the Yugoslav regions, its combat commitment will be reduced in practice to protecting the Serb nation and those who wish to remain with it in the same state." Kadijevic concluded that "a formula should be found for turning the JNA over to those nations that want to remain in Yugoslavia." Jovic took this to mean that Kadijevic was proposing to redesignate the JNA a Serbian Army, which was the last thing the Serbian Government wanted at this point. What Kadijevic seemed to be proposing would rip the Federal mantle from the Serbian Government, undercutting the claim

by Belgrade and the Croatian Serbs that it was they who wanted to stand by Federal Yugoslavia and the Croatians who were seceding from an internationally recognized state.⁴

Before the meeting there had been several moves by mid-ranking JNA officers—apparently at Milosevic's instigation—to put an end to Kadijevic's vacillation. The most serious of these occurred on 28 September 1991 when the commander and security officer of the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, Colonel Mile Mrksic and Major Veselin Sljivancanin, entered the SSNO/General Staff building in Belgrade and demanded that Kadijevic be replaced, apparently by Adzic, so that a clear and decisive policy could be laid down through the acceptance of Obradovic's proposals or similar concepts. The conspirators were headed off, however, by General Vasiljevic, who—perhaps alerted by Obradovic's roundtable discussion—had discovered that a group of lower ranking colonels and generals had begun planning a coup against the SSNO and the General Staff. Vasiljevic infiltrated one of his officers into the circle of conspirators and so received warning of the impending coup in time to rush to Belgrade and persuade Mrksic and Sljivancanin to give up the putsch.⁵ Vasiljevic's pre-emptive success ended any further efforts to remove Kadijevic and spun out his half-hearted, simultaneous commitment to both Yugoslavia and Serbia. The debate over the future of the JNA was left to be played out on the battlefield and in the arguments between Kadijevic and Adzic on one side and Milosevic and Jovic on the other.

Appendix 1
**Views of Colonel Vuk Obradovic, Chef de Cabinet to Federal Secretary for
National Defense Army General Veljko Kadijevic,
18 September 1991**

"PROPOSAL OF SOME VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS"

1. THE SFRY NO LONGER EXISTS. ALL FEDERAL ORGANS HAVE BEEN BLOCKED AND EFFECTIVELY BROKEN UP. ALL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL REPUBLICS AND THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN STOPPED. FURIOUS WAR BETWEEN THE CROATIAN AND SERBIAN PEOPLE IN CROATIA. SLOVENIA AND CROATIA BELONG TO YUGOSLAVIA ONLY IN THE INTERNATIONALLY LEGAL SENSE. THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL ARMY HAS, THUS, REMAINED WITH ITS OWN STATE AND HAS FOUND ITSELF IN A VACUUM.
2. SINCE NEW STATE CREATIONS HAVE STILL NOT BEEN CONSTITUTED ON THE RUINS OF THE CURRENT YUGOSLAVIA, THE JNA CLEARLY AND FIRMLY MUST RELY ON A NATION THAT ACCEPTS IT AS THEIR OWN. THAT NATION IS THE SERBIAN AND MONTENEGRIN PEOPLE, AND TO SOME EXTENT THE MUSLIM AND MACEDONIAN PEOPLE AS WELL. THEREFORE, THE ETHNIC BOUNDARIES YUGOSLAV CRISIS, ARE ALSO BECOMING BORDERS THAT THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL ARMY CAN AND MUST DEFEND. ONLY A YUGOSLAVIA IN THESE FRAMEWORKS IS THE REAL HOMELAND FOR MEMBERS OF THE JNA. WE CANNOT AND DARE NOT REMAIN WITHOUT A FATHERLAND.
3. AN USTASHI AND FASCIST REGIME IS IN POWER IN CROATIA. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA HAS INITIATED AND IS LEADING AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING AND MOST BRUTAL WAR AGAINST THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL ARMY. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS WAR ARE ALREADY MUCH GREATER THAN THE ONE IN SLOVENIA. BECAUSE OF ALL THAT, CONTACT SHOULD BE ENDED WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT PROCLAIMS THE ARMY AN OCCUPYING ARMY, PLACES IT BEYOND THE LAW, AND ATTACKS WITH ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES, AND ATTACKS SHOULD BE INFILCTED ON IT USING ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES. THEY ARE NOT SPARING US. WE SHOULD NOT SPARE THEM EITHER. ATTACK VITAL INSTITUTIONS AND INSTALLATIONS (THE SUPREME COMMAND, TV, ETC.).
4. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE JNA INTO AN ARMY OF THE PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT IT AS THEIR OWN MUST BE URGENTLY CARRIED OUT, WITHOUT WAITING FOR A DEFINITIVE SOLUTION ON THE FUTURE MAKEUP OF THE COUNTRY. PROCEED WITH OFFICERS/NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS WHO DO NOT ACCEPT SUCH A CONCEPT, AS WITH THE SLOVENE, AND WITHOUT A DECISION BY THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SFRY ABOUT THIS. ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN

INTERNAL CLASHES AND A DRASTIC FALL IN THE REPUTATION OF THE JNA BE AVOIDED.

5. THE SO-CALLED DE-IDEOLOGIZATION OF THE JNA IS OF DECISIVE IMPORTANCE AT THIS TIME. IT MUST BE ALL-ENCOMPASSING AT LEAST TWO DECISIONS MUST BE MADE QUICKLY: (1) A DECISION WHEREBY ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ARMY ARE PROHIBITED FROM JOINING ANY POLITICAL PARTY OR WORKING IN IT, AND (2) A DECISION ON THE REMOVAL BY COMMISSION OF PICTURES AND BUSTS OF J. B. TITO FROM ALL OFFICIAL PREMISES OF THE JNA, EXCEPT FOR MUSEUM ESTABLISHMENTS (MUSEUMS, MONUMENTS).

6. THE STATUS IN THE SLAVONIAN (VUKOVAR) GROUPING IS ALARMING. THE COMMAND IS FRAGMENTED AND EXTREMELY INEFFICIENT, AND THE GROUPING AND USE OF UNITS ARE ERRONEOUS. I PROPOSE THAT A TEMPORARY COMMAND BE IMMEDIATELY FORMULATED WHICH WOULD UNITE AVAILABLE FORCES AND THUS PREVENT A MILITARY AND POLITICAL DEBACLE. THE TASK IS TO CHECK THE GUARDIST DIVISION.

COLONEL DR. VUK OBRADOVIC

Endnotes, Annex 16

¹ For the full text of Obradovic's proposal, see Appendix 1.

² Major General Vuk Obradovic, "General Vuk Obradovic on the Elimination of the 'Tito Hat' and Five-Point Star in the JNA—The Tangled Web Has Begun to Unravel," Belgrade *Danas* 14-15 June 1997, p. 8.

³ Major General Vuk Obradovic, "General Vuk Obradovic on the Elimination of the 'Tito Hat' and Five-Point Star in the JNA—The Tangled Web Has Begun to Unravel," Belgrade *Danas* 14-15 June 1997, p. 8.

⁴ Jovic entry for 28 September 1991.

⁵ Vasiljevic, in report on the coup to the Federal Presidency and the JNA, later claimed that a 28 September meeting finalized the decision to move against Kadijevic. The conspirator group reportedly included retired Air Force security officer Major General Nedjelko Boskovic, who was the immediate orchestrator of the effort, Colonel Mrksic, Major Slijivancanin, Lieutenant Colonel General Bozidar Stevanovic, Commander of the 1st Air and Air Defense Force Corps, Major General Ljubomir Bajic, Commander of the 5th Air and Air Defense Force Corps, and apparently Colonel Vuk Obradovic. The conspirators appear to have acted at the behest of Milosevic and the leadership of the Serbian Government. It is unclear whether Jovic was involved or not. Kresimir Meler, "How to Get Rid of An Unwanted Witness," Ljubljana *Delo* 24 April 1993, p. 7. Most of the material from the *Delo* article appears to have been drawn from Vasiljevic's memoirs, which were published and excerpted in the Belgrade magazine *Nin* during summer 1992. It has not been possible to acquire a copy of that part of the *Nin* excerpt or of Vasiljevic's memoirs.

In addition to the move against Kadijevic, there appears to have been an effort by General Stevanovic to remove Colonel General Zvonko Jurjevic—a Bosnian Croat—from his position as commander of the Air Force. Uros Komlenovic, "Ferment in the Army: The Fog Riders," *Vreme* 29 March 1993, pp. 31-32. Stevanovic later denied he was trying to remove Jurjevic, saying that Jurjevic had misinterpreted criticism by the 1st Corps of Air Force policies and unit deployments. Slavoljub Kacarevic, "I Am Not A Putschist," *Interview* 3 April 1992, pp. 4-7. An interview with General Stevanovic after he had assumed command of the Air Force in early 1992.

Kadijevic reported at the 28 September "supreme command" meeting that,

Over the last three days, three putsches have been attempted: in the air force, the VMA (Military Medical Academy), and the Guard Brigade. . . . The same slogans and the same demands everywhere. They want the SFRY Presidency, the Supreme Command, and the military to be purged of traitors and that only Serbs and Montenegrins be left. There is no faith in Kadijevic and Brovet. They want people who will "purge, overthrow, kill . . ." Jovic entry for 28 September 1991.

Annex 17

Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Operations—The Road to Vukovar

The Battle of Vukovar so consumed the First Military District that it would be too late for it to perform its assigned role as the main component in the JNA's strategic offensive. Thanks to the First Military District's operational and tactical failures, it took three separate tries to take the town, running roughly from 14 to 25 September, 30 September to 27 October, and 29 October to 20 November. The Croatians' excellent defense network in Vukovar kept the JNA at bay until mid-November. Not until the JNA had evaluated the lessons from its failed attempts was it able to overwhelm the town. Adding to the command's disgrace, the volunteer and TO units the JNA threw into the battle, and some of the JNA's own people, committed a number of atrocities during the fighting.

Organization of Vukovar Defenses

Like the Croatian forces everywhere, those in Vukovar were split between ZNG and MUP commands. In mid-August the ZNG formalized its presence by infiltrating into the town about 50 to 100 men of the 1st Guards Brigade under Ivica Arbanas to stiffen and reorganize the ZNG forces.¹ At that time the ZNG probably consisted of an underarmed reserve battalion of 200 to 300 personnel. The MUP, which up to this point had been the primary defense force, probably comprised 400 to 500 active and reserve regular and Special Police personnel. Coordination between Arbanas and the MUP commander, Stipe Pole, however, was poor, and no one was in charge of the hundreds of local volunteers defending their own homes.²

Then, on 30 August, the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Mile Dedakovic-Jastreb, known as "Hawk," and his chief of staff, Branko Borkovic—both ex-JNA officers—provided the catalyst to establishing the city's defenses. Together they set about unifying the

town's defensive command and reorganizing its armed units.³ Borkovic later stated,

When we arrived in Vukovar, the defenses were quite fragmented. Basically each local community had its ZNG or MUP forces and organized its headquarters, which were under nobody's control. Everyone really did what he thought and wanted. A number of free riflemen and small groups were falling apart in some local communities. Coordination among them and a headquarters to which they were responsible and from which they received orders were for the most part missing. All that had to be united, organized in a military manner, and placed under one command.⁴

Dedakovic and Borkovic created a city defense command from the local ad hoc ZNG elements and subordinated the local communities to it. By 4 October, under the authority of the Osijek Operational Zone, they had created a single brigade from the assorted defenders, designated 204th Vukovar Brigade.⁵

Borkovic, who took command in Vukovar when Dedakovic was shifted to Vinkovci in mid-October, later described the brigade's formation,

The 204th Brigade arose because we received an order from Osijek to form a brigade. Then I divided the existing forces into units, with each local community being one company. Depending upon certain ties and the situation in the field, I designated which companies would join which battalion. There were thus four battalions in the Vukovar area . . . The First Battalion was the Active Guard and [units from] the southern part of Vukovar, that is, Sajmiste, I May, and Vukovar Stari. The Second Battalion was Mitnica. The Third Battalion was Borovo . . . Vukovar Novi and Bogdanovci joined the Fourth Battalion.⁶ I

also planned the development of an independent antiaarmor company that would be armed with Maljutkas [AT-3 ATGMs], which we managed to obtain at 10 posts. We obtained a lot of captured Maljutkas, as well as artillery, one division [“division” = “divizion,” a JNA term used to denote an artillery battalion]. Just then we obtained howitzers, and so I concentrated the howitzers, mortars, and B-1 and ZIS cannons.⁷ Some of the artillery was brought in from Djakovo immediately before the fall of Mitnica.

[Note: the Mitnica district was the last Vukovar sector to surrender on 18 November.] We did not manage to finish forming that part. Part of Gotalo’s antiaarmor group was also there, but because of Gotalo’s death, I did not manage to complete that antiaarmor group, since there was no one who would know how to lead it, especially for working with the Maljutkas. It all therefore remained at the company level, i. e. wherever someone knew how to use an Osa or Zolja. [Note: “Osa” is the M-79 90mm antitank rocket launcher and the “Zolja” is the disposable M-80 64mm antitank rocket launcher copied from the US M-72 LAW]. We managed to prepare the artillery, and it was later concentrated, but we chose our targets carefully, because we had little ammunition. Kreso Brnas from the Land Registry calculated on the map the coordinates of the targets that I assigned.⁸

The troops defending Vukovar included a high percentage of non-Vukovar natives. Borkovic estimated in 1995 that only 60 percent of his forces were from Vukovar Municipality.⁹ The remainder consisted of volunteers and bits of units infiltrated into the town.

Borkovic estimates that at the end of September he had fewer than 1,500 soldiers in the town, while Mile Dedakovic indicates that the 204th Brigade had 1800 personnel on 1 October.¹⁰ This does not include MUP special police troops, of which Dedakovic indicates there were 1,100 in the entire Vukovar-Vinkovci region. About 500-550 of these may have been in Vukovar itself with probably 200 local personnel who began the siege, reinforced by possibly 300 to 350 troops from the Varazdin and Slavonski Brod Special Police units. Thus, the maximum number of Croatian forces defending the town probably was

some 2,000 to 2,300 personnel.¹¹ Of his troops, Borkovic states that he believes there were about “400-500 real fighters,” probably referring only to the ZNG.¹² This likely includes only those who functioned as mobile attack/counterattack troops, compared to the remainder who served primarily in a static defense role. In addition to the 2,000 to 2,300 Vukovar personnel, the Croatians in September-October probably had another 1,000 or so troops in the 2nd Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade, one to two battalions of the 109th Vinkovci Brigade, and other smaller units deployed around the village of Nustar, east of Vinkovci and to the east. These forces took part in the battles along the Croatian supply route to Vukovar. The rest of the 109th Brigade, plus the remainder of the MUP forces, guarded the line from halfway between Osijek and Vinkovci to south of Vinkovci during September. In total, on 1 October the forces around Vinkovci-Nustar numbered some 3,300, based on analysis of Dedakovic’s numbers.¹³ Deployed around Vinkovci, the ZNG had some 29 field artillery pieces over 100mm, plus six 76mm ZIS-3, five T-12 100mm antitank guns, and seven M-36 90mm tank destroyers—all with limited ammunition.¹⁴ By mid-October, the formation of new brigades gave the new “Vinkovci-Vukovar-Zupanja” Operational Group a total of five-six brigades defending the same line. Few of these units, however, were deployed to fight in the Nustar/Vukovar supply corridor area. In addition, some reinforcements were deployed to the sector for the two failed Vukovar relief operations described below.

The tactics adopted by the ZNG, and to some degree the MUP, to combat the JNA were highly effective in stopping an armor-heavy, infantry-poor force in an urban environment. The central aspects of Croatian defensive operations consisted of large-scale mining, roving antitank teams, snipers, and the organization of a heavily fortified defensive stronghold system.¹⁵ The stronghold or fortified zone system appears to have served as the backbone to the Croatian defensive network, based on US military analysis of JNA writings and analysis of the battle.¹⁶ The fortified zones consisted of a single neighborhood or community cluster of buildings and streets supplemented with observation and sniper posts in high-rise apartments or other tall buildings.¹⁷ The JNA

later noted that the Croatian strongholds were arrayed such that overlapping fires covered each primary axis. The town's sewer system provided a secure route between the town's fortified zones. The approaches to the strongholds were also liberally covered with mines. The mines "severely channeled" JNA/TO movement. ". . . fortifications, such as ditches, forms of cover, wire obstacles, bunkers, and barricades" augmented the mines.¹⁸ The US military analysis noted that Croatian forces used mines, on a 'massive' scale, to buy time and inflict losses on Serbian forces:

*. . . Mining occurred on a massive scale along roads, approaches to populated areas, and at almost all objectives within the populated areas themselves.*¹⁹

The Croatians appropriately positioned covering fire for these obstacles, making their removal far more difficult.²⁰ The US military analysis notes,

*The system of fires consisted essentially of a series of smaller systems of fire sacks formed by carefully situated weapons . . . at the exit from the strongpoint, was a system of fire sacks based on antitank systems.*²¹

The fortified zones also served as rallying points for Croatian counterattacks against JNA penetrations and as bases of operations for mobile antitank teams.

The Croatian counterattacks usually attempted to cut off the JNA spearheads—often using the antitank teams as described below—and Croatian troops then cleared out Federal positions along the attack axes. But shortage of troops apparently often forced the ZNG to withdraw from recaptured positions to their main defensive line. Branko Borkovic later stated,

*Because of the Chetniks' activity in the city, we had to undertake clean-up operations, from house to house. First we would throw grenades, and when they jumped out of the house or an entire street, we gathered up the weapons and returned, because we did not have the personnel to stay in the street. We often had to clean out the same houses three times.*²²

Based on this and analysis of subsequent Croatian defensive operations, Dedakovic, Borkovic, and their commanders appear to have conducted a modified defense in depth, utilizing the debris-strewn and mine-laden no-man's-land between Federal and Croatian forces as a "battle zone" to wear down a JNA drive. If Croatian defenders could not stop the JNA in this forward area, they could hope that by the time they reached the main strongpoints the attackers would be too weak to penetrate the main line of defense, or that a flanking counterattack that would push them back out of the "battle zone."

The antitank teams, equipped with hand-held antitank rockets—especially the M-79 90mm "Osa"—exploited the cumulative effects of the mines and the confined urban environment, which slowed JNA movements in the town, and the JNA armor's lack of infantry support.²³ The teams in at least one sector, Borovo Naselje, each consisted of 10 to 15 personnel, mostly young men 18 to 25 years old. Each group carried automatic rifles, pistols, at least one sniper rifle, and two antitank rocket launchers, probably "Osas."²⁴ It would appear that most of the group's soldiers concentrated on providing protection to the rocket launcher personnel and separating the JNA infantrymen from the armor. Ivica Arbanas describes below how the Croatians usually achieved such separation,

*In the beginning, the infantry did not go in front of the tanks. It went behind them. You let a tank come in, you throw a grenade behind it, they scatter, and they do not even have any place to run to in those small and narrow streets.*²⁵

The tanks and APC/IFVs, their vulnerable flank and rear armor exposed by the flight of the foot soldiers, were now open to attack from Croatian antitank gunners concealed in houses and buildings lining the streets.²⁶ Another tactic was to allow armor to move into a Croatian kill-zone or fire-sack and then systematically eliminate the vehicles. Arbanas describes how the Croatians dealt with an abortive JNA armor attack during the late August clashes:

We agreed to let two or three [tanks] pass, and then when they were deep inside our ranks, we would take them one by one.²⁷

The lack of effective infantry to counter these antitank units was to cost the JNA dearly.²⁸

Vukovar—Round One, September 1991

The first major JNA attack to test these defenses, after the opening skirmished in August, came in mid-September. On 14 September, just as the full-scale Croatian barracks blockade began, the First Military District announced that it had begun a small operation to relieve the Vukovar barracks, which had been blockaded earlier on 25 August.²⁹ The JNA probably expected to overawe the Croatians with their armor and quickly occupy the town.

The 14 September attack was much better prepared and organized than the JNA's 28 August effort. The attack plan called for the 453rd Mechanized Brigade from the 12th (Novi Sad) Corps to push toward the Vukovar suburbs of Bogdanovci and Dukinci and the town's southwestern sector. Elements of the 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade (apparently attached to the 453rd), with infantry support from elements of the Brsadin and Negoslavci TO units, made the main thrust from Negoslavci into the Sajmiste district, where the barracks was located.³⁰ The 51st Mechanized Brigade from 12th Corps appears to have made a supporting attack, aided by elements of the Bobota and Trpinja TO units, into Borovo Naselje. JNA artillery and RV i PVO fighter-bombers were to provide fire support. Overall, the attack probably involved some 2,000 JNA troops—including up to 350 infantry. As many as 1,600 TO infantry may have been involved, although the number probably was considerably less.³¹

Artillery preparation and air strikes began about mid-day on 14 September, followed by the ground advance.³² The 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade broke through Croatian defenses and quickly reached the barracks. Branko Borkovic, the ZNG chief of staff in the town, indicates that the JNA was not even slowed down by the antitank minefields – and, he claims, only 20 soldiers—he had been counting on to stop the attack. He recalled,

On 14 September, when the 'Chetniks' reached the barracks without any problems, I was at Sajmiste and experienced it directly . . . The tanks were simply passing over the mines, and did not even go around the mines, as if they knew they would not explode . . . They did not even stop . . . and just passed over the metal mines . . . They broke through us along both the Negoslavci and Petrovac road . . . There were a total of about 20 Guard members there . . . We got out by crawling for two hours through the sunflowers . . . [Borkovic blamed treachery by the soldier who was to have laid the mines].³³

This success was not enough to carry the JNA farther into the town, and the JNA/TO secondary attack on Borovo Naselje failed to dent the Croatian defenses there.

The 14 September attack marked the beginning of a two-week JNA/TO effort to consolidate Federal positions around the Vukovar barracks and cut the Croatian forces' primary link to Croatian-held Vinkovci, which ran through the village of Bogdanovci to just southwest of Borovo Naselje. These operations appear to have been designed to seize jumping-off positions and ensure that the defenders were completely cut off when the arrival of JNA reinforcements would permit new and bigger effort to seize the town in its entirety. On 18 September one to two battalions from 453rd Mechanized and 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade and as many TO light infantry "battalions" were sent toward the Luzac bridge across the Vuka River—the eastern terminus of the Croatian supply route. JNA and TO troops attacked together on the north side of the Vuka. A battalion from 51st Mechanized Brigade drove down the Trpinja-Borovo Naselje road while Arkan's Serbian Volunteer Guard and the Brsadin TO battalion attacked just north of the Vuka to seize a key observation point in a grain silo and a Croat-held forest that led to the north side of the Luzac bridge. By 21 September the JNA claimed its armor had broken through to the south side of the bridge, but it appears that ZNG/MUP troops pushed Federal forces back and reopened the link. The SDG and Brsadin TO troops appear to have seized their important silo objective on

25 September, but were unable to clear the forest. By 22 September, as the operation ended, JNA armor and TO infantry had partially cleared several streets around the Vukovar barracks.³⁴ The next phase in the struggle for Vukovar was about to begin, but not until the JNA's reinforcements could arrive.

Vinkovci Interlude: A Barracks Relieved, Late September 1991

On 20 September, while JNA troops at Vukovar were battling for a toehold in the town, the remainder of 1st Guards Mechanized Division, reinforced with elements of the 24th (Kragujevac) Corps, arrived at the town of Sid, the JNA's main staging area in the southwestern Vojvodina province of Serbia.³⁵ But before it could reinforce the units engaged around Vukovar, it had first to relieve the JNA barracks at Vinkovci and seize the cluster of villages and roads to the southeast. This would give the JNA more security to expand its staging areas south of Vukovar for operations to reduce the town. The JNA would then use the same base to prepare to break out from the Vinkovci area and drive west according to its original campaign plan.

The 1st Guards Division attacked toward Vinkovci immediately upon its arrival on 20 September. From right to left, the division appears to have arrayed the attached 252nd Armored Brigade north of Sid; the 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade northwest of Sid; and the 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade, possibly supported by elements of the 130th Motorized Brigade, west of Sid. An army-level artillery brigade, and possibly the divisional artillery regiment, supported these units. The division's initial objective was the Croat-held border town of Tovarnik, which stood directly on the main road to Vinkovci. The 2nd Guards pushed into Tovarnik while the 252nd Armored bypassed opposition to the south and moved towards the villages of Orolak and Stari/Novi Jankovci on 20-24 September.³⁶ Meanwhile, the 3rd Guards moved along the left of the 252nd, drove for Vinkovci, brushing aside weak Croat resistance, and arrived at the Serb TO-held village of Mirkovci on 21 September.³⁷ Over the next three days 3rd Guards edged in toward Vinkovci, forcing the Croatians into an agreement to lift their blockade of the Vinkovci

barracks on 25 September.³⁸ The remnant of the JNA artillery regiment garrisoned there pulled out on 27 September.³⁹

Back in the small town of Tovarnik, 2nd Guards was having a more difficult time against at most a battalion of ZNG and MUP troops. Although much of the town apparently fell on 21 September after fairly heavy fighting, it took the brigade another three days to mop up Croat pockets of resistance in Tovarnik and the nearby village of Ilaca.⁴⁰ On 21 September, Croatian forces actually cut off one armor-mechanized battalion after allowing it to pass toward the village, and then hit and pinned down the rest of the brigade as it moved into the town; the battalion remained isolated for three days.⁴¹ The 2nd Guards also had to suffer the morale-bruising experience of friendly fire when RV i PVO fighter-bombers accidentally bombed brigade elements near Tovarnik on 21 September, inflicting numerous casualties.⁴²

Vukovar—The Second Phase, Late September–October 1991

The JNA began preparations for a new advance against Vukovar with the arrival of reinforcements around 26 September for both the 12th Corps and 1st Guards Division, sent by the 24th Corps, Belgrade City Defense, and Third Military District. The First Military District also received a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel-General Zivota Panic, who previously had served as Deputy Chief of the JNA General Staff for Ground Forces. Panic had earlier been the First Military District's chief of staff under the now former commander, Colonel General Spirokovski, who was fired for his lack of success at Vukovar—and probably because of concerns about his Macedonian ethnicity as well. Panic and Adzic visited the Vukovar sector to find out why the JNA offensive had stalled. Silber and Little write,

There were appalled by what they found there. There was no clear chain-of-command, and no demarcation of tasks between the various units deployed. There was, by Panic's own account, 'chaos.' Many soldiers appeared not to know who their commanding officer was. There was desertion from the ranks, particularly among

reservists who had been mobilized and sent to the front with no clear idea of why they were there and no notion of what they were trying to achieve.⁴³

Panic was determined to regain control of the chaotic and unruly conglomeration of JNA, TO, and newly arriving volunteer units and coordinate them for a more effective attack on Vukovar. He had revamped the command structure by about 30 September, creating two new operational group (OG) staffs, "North" and "South" from elements of the 12th Corps headquarters, under the command of Major General Mladen Bratic (the 12th Corps commander), and the newly arrived 1st Guards Motorized Brigade headquarters under the command of Colonel Mile Mrksic. He gave each of them clearly defined sectors and responsibilities.⁴⁴ The brigades that had been conducting the attack on Vukovar were reassigned to the new operational groups, and the newly responsible headquarters tried again to bring the local TO and volunteer units firmly under JNA control, with mixed results. The remaining forces, under the rest of 12th Corps headquarters and the 1st Guards Mechanized Division, were to act primarily as sector formations providing support to the Vukovar attack and maintaining pressure on the Croatian supply corridor to Vukovar through Bogdanovci and on Croatian Osijek Operational Zone units at Vinkovci and Osijek. Panic's new command arrangements, however, would not prevent another JNA debacle.

The JNA reinforcements, called up in the second phase of mobilization from 10 to 20 September, began to arrive around 26 September. In the north, the 12th Corps received an additional armored brigade, the 211th, and five motorized brigades, the 18th, 169th, 544th, 151st, and 505th. The 18th Motorized Brigade and possibly elements of the armored brigade were committed to the fighting around Vukovar and the Vinkovci-Vukovar supply corridor, although elements of the other brigades may have also bolstered these forces. The other four brigades were deployed to hold the frontline between Osijek and Vinkovci, supporting the 12th Mechanized Brigade, which had escaped from its barracks in Osijek, while the bulk of the armored brigade was positioned on the frontline north/northwest of Nustar. The 252nd Armored arrived in the area after its movement through Vinkovci

described above. The JNA also brought an army-level artillery brigade for additional fire support, and the divisional artillery regiment would operate from positions in Serbia. The elite 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, which included an entire battalion of crack military police antiterrorist troops, also began arriving on 30 September, just in time for the new attack.⁴⁵ The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade was augmented with elements from the 20th Partisan Division/24th Corps. The 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade, together with the shaken 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade and probably elements of the 80th and 130th Motorized Brigades/24th Corps, remained in their newly acquired positions near Vinkovci to guard against ZNG troops massed in that town.

The JNA had now amassed a considerable force around Vukovar and its supply route from Vinkovci. Those units comprised up to 25 armor-mechanized battalions, four motorized infantry battalions, four military police or antiterrorist battalions (used as elite infantry), one infantry battalion, three to six partisan infantry battalions, up to 13 field artillery battalions, and 3 MRL battalions.⁴⁶ In addition, the JNA probably fielded three or four volunteer infantry battalions or "detachments" (soon to be joined by several more volunteer units) plus Arkan's elite Serbian Volunteer Guard (SDG) "Tigers," and as many as seven low-quality battalion-sized TO units. Elements of the JNA's elite 63rd Airborne Brigade—a special operations formation—may also have been sent to the theater to provide shock troops.⁴⁷ In total, the JNA and TO deployed in the Vukovar sector an estimated 37,000 to 44,000 troops assigned to combat units—not including assorted support formations—of which at only 13,000–16,000 were infantry. Most of these were poorly trained and badly motivated, and many of the TO personnel were not fit for anything more than guarding their villages.⁴⁸ Overall, the First Military District's force around Vukovar was ill suited for the operation it was entrusted with. Its massed armor was any impressive array that was almost useless against Vukovar; since only four or five armor-mechanized battalions, each on single axes, could be sent against the town at one time. In the confined streets they would be unable to mass to achieve much shock effect, and their infantry escorts would either be TO volunteers apt to disperse at the first sign of stiff

resistance or conscripts and reservists too frightened to dismount from their misnamed infantry fighting vehicles.

The JNA plan for the 30 September attack called for the new Operational Group “South” to use elements of three brigades, 1st Guards Mechanized and 453rd Mechanized, and the newly arriving 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, to expand the JNA/TO foothold around the Vukovar barracks and push directly toward the center of town. This force probably comprised two armor-mechanized battalions and two TO battalions, and probably some elite military police antiterrorist or Guards Divisional reconnaissance “special units.” Meanwhile, 1st Guards Mechanized Division, using additional elements of the 453rd Mechanized Brigade plus the 252nd Armored and 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigades, would attempt to cut the Vukovar-Vinkovci supply corridor. The 12th Corps and TO elements would conduct some supporting attacks from Bršadin toward Borovo Naselje.

Three days of heavy fighting brought the JNA/TO forces close to Vukovar’s center as JNA and TO units pushed street by street. The thick carpet of mines along all the attack routes, however, slowed the advance. On 3 October the Croatians launched a devastating counterattack that forced Federal troops to relinquish many of their gains and apparently left some of them isolated at the tip of the advance.⁴⁹ A renewed push on 10 October gained little ground.

The attack against the supply corridor fared somewhat better as JNA troops seized the villages of Marinci and Ceric, severing the supply route, on 1-3 October.⁵⁰ However, ZNG/MUP forces managed to hold onto Bogdanovci, which would remain a thorn in the JNA’s side. JNA troops then attempted to seize Nustar, northeast of Vinkovci, on 4/5 October, but failed.⁵¹ Despite this shortfall, the JNA move had severely restricted Croatian access to Vukovar, all but blocking the Croat supply line.⁵² Borkovic has claimed that Croatian forces in Vukovar received no ammunition resupply after 1 October.⁵³ The 12th Corps/TO supporting attacks against Borovo Naselje made little headway.

The JNA tried again to bite into the Croatian defenses on 16 October. The main effort this time was in the

north against the ZNG’s 3rd Battalion/204th Brigade, commanded by Blago Zadro, in the major Croatian stronghold of Borovo Naselje. Zadro had commanded the Croatian defense in the Vukovar suburb since the start of the fighting; he and his forces had been a major frustration to the local Serbs and the JNA for some time. Arbanas described Zadro as “. . . an essential name in the defense of Vukovar.” He said in 1995 that Zadro

. . . was born 50 years ago in Herzegovina, came to Borovo Naselje as a child, graduated from secondary school, and was hired by the Borovo combine. He was one of the HDZ organizers for the Vukovar municipality, and an organizer of the defense from the first days. He participated in all of the battles in Borovo Naselje until his death. His sons also distinguished themselves in the battles.⁵⁴

The JNA/TO Operational Group “North” push against Zadro’s men consisted of three prongs. Two of the thrusts came from the northwest near the Trpinja-Borovo Naselje road, and from Borovo Selo in the northeast along the Danube, probably involving the 18th Motorized Brigade, supported by armor-mechanized units from the 51st Mechanized Brigade and a TO battalion.

A third prong hit the 4th Battalion/204th Brigade, defending the key village of Luzac, between Vukovar town and Borovo Naselje. This attack involved a move probably by 453rd Mechanized Brigade from the south, while Arkan’s SDG plus one to two TO battalions, and probably with armor support from 51st Mechanized Brigade elements, attacked from the west. The assault from Borovo Selo went well, seizing an abandoned sport airfield and some adjacent buildings at the northeast corner of the village on 16 October. JNA and TO troops battled to the Borovo Naselje railroad station on 17 October, penetrating about one and a half kilometers to create a narrow and precarious salient adjacent to the Danube, which they appear to have been able to hold. JNA claims on 16 October that the attack was “the beginning of the final operation” for the capture of Borovo Naselje were premature. Croatian defenses stiffened, and the drive stalled; the attack from the northwest also appears to have made little progress. At Luzac,

meanwhile, JNA armored units had laid a pontoon bridge over the Vuka River and entered the town on 17 October, with support from JNA/TO troops in the nearby Djergaj Forest to the west. The Croats' 4th Battalion, however, launched a spirited counterattack the next day, pushing the JNA out, destroying the pontoon bridge, and eliminating the TO positions in the forest. Croatian defenses had held yet again. The battle, however, had cost Blago Zadro his life. He was killed in action on 16 October.⁵⁵

The JNA's final operation in October came against the Vukovar district of Mitnica, in the far southeast corner of the town, where the JNA had been generally content to harass Croatian forces with shellfire but no major ground attacks. On 26 October, however, the JNA troops hit the district along with one or two battalions of volunteers and TO troops. As in most JNA advances, Federal forces made initial progress, claiming to have seized the town water tower some two kilometers from their start line, as well as a key hill. Croatian troops, however, as usual, appear to have pushed the JNA/TO units from most of the district by the end of 27 October.

Serbian Warriors and Undisciplined Rabble—The Volunteer Units

The second phase of the battle saw the introduction of a new factor into the intense street fighting: Serbian volunteer units, often referred to as paramilitaries. The mobilization failures that had plagued the JNA throughout Croatia, combined with the lack of infantry in the armor-heavy force besieging Vukovar, impelled the JNA to call for volunteers willing to serve the Serbian cause with arms. General Adzic, briefing the Federal-Serbian Supreme Command on 28 September, stated,

Many forces were needed for Slavonia; they have no infantry. He asks where the Slavonian Serbs are; do they really think that other people are going to defend their land?

Adzic drew several conclusions from the situation, including,

- Units must be supplemented by volunteers;
- Slavonia must have infantry to exercise control over the liberated territory.

The volunteers would be that infantry.

The JNA attempted to regulate its volunteer recruitment with official instructions issued on 13 September 1991 on the acceptance of volunteers.⁵⁶ A follow-on order in December 1991 attempted to bring recalcitrant volunteer units into line:

Volunteer formations currently engaged outside the Armed Forces for the carrying out of certain military assignments . . . must bring their position in the Armed Forces of the SFRY into accord with the regulation in this order within 10 days. Within the same period, all individuals and volunteer formations not included in the Ground Forces of the SFRY . . . shall be removed from the territory under the responsibility of the commands, units, and institutions of the SFRY.⁵⁷

An example of the Federal authorities' volunteer recruitment is the public statement issued by the Novi Sad Military District of the Serbian Ministry of Defense on 1 October:

The command of the Novi Sad Military Sector (or District) has issued a call to all citizens living or staying in the territory of Vojvodina to report voluntarily to municipal Secretariats for National Defense.

The call applies to all persons between 20 and 50 years of age who have not been registered with municipal Secretariats for National Defense and want to take part in war activities as volunteers.

Municipal Secretariats for National Defense will register all volunteers and will send them right away to the Slobodan Bajic-Paja Barracks in Novi Sad. The volunteers will be sent to battle zones in accordance with needs of war units of the armed forces . . .⁵⁸

The JNA was to get its wish for more infantrymen, but many JNA officers did not like what they received.

Serbia had a long history of raising small, irregular military bands for its defense, designated *komitadjis* or *chetniks*, and they figured heavily in Serbia's wars of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, fighting independently as guerrillas or serving as auxiliaries to the regular Serbian Army. These units were infamous for the extensive atrocities and looting they committed during these wars. A Serbian Army officer stated during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars that,

Responsibility for atrocities lies, however, only to a minor extent with the regular forces . . . The komitadjis were worse than you can possibly imagine. Among them there were intellectuals, men of ideas, nationalist zealots, but these were isolated individuals. The rest were just thugs, robbers who had joined the army for the sake of loot. They sometimes came in handy, because they held life cheap—not only the enemy's but their own as well. At the village of Nagorican, near Kumanovo [in Macedonia], no fewer than two hundred of them fell, fighting bravely. But in the intervals between battles they were just out-and-out brigands . . . There were partisan units of twenty, fifty, and even one hundred men, each under the leadership of its vojvoda (commander). When war came, they were attached to particular army units for outpost duty and scouting, and some regular officers were appointed to command them. As long as the partisans were with the army, things went well enough; but when an operation was completed and the army moved forward, leaving the partisans behind to disarm the population, without anybody to keep an eye on them, that was when the horrors began.⁵⁹

The JNA's experiences with Serbian volunteer units in 1991 would be a resounding echo of those of the old Serbian Army.

The JNA and the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) often used Serbian nationalist political parties, particularly Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party (SRS), to help find and organize willing personnel for the new units, while the JNA provided officers to

command the "detachments"—a company or a battalion-sized unit.⁶⁰ Many of party recruits were men who only a few years before would have been arrested by the Federal Government, and the JNA in particular, as nationalist agitators. Most of the volunteer units took on a distinctly Serbian royalist cast that was anathema to the communist JNA, whose direct ancestor, the World War II communist National Liberation Army, had fought bitterly with the royalist *chetnik* guerrillas. Both the SRS and another nationalist party, the Serbian National Renewal party (SNO), had helped to recruit men for the defense of Eastern Slavonia in early 1991, such as at Borovo Selo, with the help of the MUP. Typical of how a volunteer unit was formed is the case of an SRS company-size element organized in November 1991. Ljubisa Petkovic, head of the SRS Crisis Headquarters, and responsible for organizing the party's volunteers, announced on 13 November that 100 volunteers were preparing to go to Croatia. He said the unit would first be equipped in the JNA's "4 July" Barracks in Belgrade, and then "at the request of the Territorial Defense of Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem" go into battle.⁶¹ Petkovic later boasted that two SRS "battalions" and one SNO "battalion" took part in the capture of Vukovar. Many volunteer units had begun reporting to JNA commands in September, followed by even more in October, probably in response to the JNA's repeated call for troops. By the time of the cease-fire in January 1992, each JNA maneuver brigade in Eastern Slavonia probably had a detachment of volunteer infantry assigned to augment its regular component—estimated at 3,000 to 4,500 personnel.

Many volunteer units technically formed part of the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Territorial Defense and nominally came under command of the JNA with the rest of the TO. Others were directly formed as JNA volunteer units. As Adzic had planned, the JNA used these zealously nationalist fighters to help spearhead JNA attacks against Vukovar; but the JNA appears to have used them more especially to mop up areas seized by elite JNA antiterrorist/MP units. The volunteers generally proved far more willing to close with the determined Croatian defenders than many of the JNA's conscripts and reservists, or, in most cases, the local TO units. Off the battlefield, however, the JNA had to pay a price for the volunteers' combat

effectiveness. Like the units associated with the old Serbian Army, the new volunteer units' discipline was miserable, and the JNA's control over them was often tenuous. Typical was the experience of Major Veselin Sljivancanin, Chief of Security for Operational Group "South" (Headquarters, 1st Guards Motorized Brigade) who encountered serious difficulties when he tried to extend a unified chain of command over the various volunteer units when the Guards took over the southern Vukovar sector. It was bad enough that the volunteers disparaged the Federal soldiers as "Communists," a pejorative in their nationalistic lexicon. Sljivancanin observed that many of volunteer bands didn't get along even with each other, so that, for example, SRS units could not be put with Vuk Draskovic's somewhat more moderate Serbian Renewal Movement (SNP) personnel.⁶² Finally, the volunteers exceeded most JNA soldiers in their drinking habits, both on and off duty, which made them even less subject to discipline.

The many professional JNA officers who were appalled by these troops' refusal to follow orders were even more troubled by their criminal behavior against civilians, as illustrated below. The JNA officers had good reason to complain about the volunteers' nationalist disdain, their disorderly and unsoldierly behavior, their reluctant and incomplete subordination to the JNA, and especially their atrocities. Still, granted the ample evidence for the volunteers' many shortcomings, it was also true that many of them fought hard and valiantly against the grim defenders of Vukovar, and they helped substantially to overcome the JNA's shortage of infantry.

The volunteers had a major part in the many atrocities committed during the operations in Eastern Slavonia, and especially after the fall of Vukovar. The Belgrade newspaper *Vreme* commented on a First Military District official's report in October that confirms the atrocities many volunteer units committed, the distaste felt by some JNA officers for the volunteers, and how little the JNA could or would do about their war crimes. *Vreme* states,

How far things have gone is best evidenced by a dispatch sent on 23 October 1991 from the Slavonian battlefield by the First Military District command headquarters. In it, the

responsible officer reports on the seven-day state of morale in the division and accompanying units.

After first emphasizing what was being done most of all with the army ('The development of a proper attitude toward the population, especially that of Croat nationality and their property,' among other things), the colonel refers to 'activities and phenomena that are having a positive influence on morale.'—including 'proper treatment of prisoners.' Finally, however, the colonel also mentions the following in the context of 'activities and phenomena that are having a negative influence on morale':

Vreme includes a direct quote from the report,

In the 1st Proletarian Guards Mechanized Division's combat zone there are several groups of various paramilitary formations from Serbia—from Chetniks to 'Dusan the Powerful' [SNO] detachments and various self-styled volunteers whose basic motivation is not to fight the enemy, but rather to plunder property and give vent to their base instincts against the innocent population of Croat nationality.

During the capture of 80 residents of Croat nationality in the town of Lovas by the Lovas TO and 'Dusan the Powerful' detachments, they were physically abused, after which four residents were killed.⁶³

After the arrival of the 'Valjevo' detachment in Lovas, the captured residents were used to clear minefields, during which 17 residents were killed.

Wounded residents were denied medical assistance by the medical staff of the Sid Health Center.

The officer proposed that,

The disarming of the paramilitary formations be undertaken in an organized fashion, especially

of the 'Dusan the Powerful', 'Chemik,' and 'Arkan's Soldiers' detachments, and that the institutions of government and of the Republic of Serbia be involved in that action.⁶⁴

Although the JNA and the Federal-Serbian leadership recognized the problem, they did little to ensure that the volunteers were reined in.

The JNA and Urban Warfare Operations and Tactics—Shortcomings and Lessons Learned

A campaign to seize a defended town or city usually can be described as a three phase operation.⁶⁵⁶⁶ The first phase involves the isolation of the town or city to prevent the enemy from reinforcing the defenders, and to achieve dominating positions from which to attack the area. The second phase consists of the assault or break-in to gain a foothold in the town or city. The third phase comprises the usually slow and systematic clearance of the enemy forces from the town.⁶⁷ First Military District (Operational Group 3) did a poor job of working through most of these phases at the operational level, which probably contributed to General Spirokovski's removal from its command. Even after General Panic's arrival the District did a poor job of orchestrating the attacks of its tactical commands, which resulted in disjointed and uncoordinated assaults that allowed the Croatians to focus their limited resources on stopping one attack at a time. The JNA failed to isolate Vukovar completely until two weeks after the start of the campaign, so the Croatians were able to infiltrate men and equipment almost up to the end of the operation. Nor did the JNA focus from the beginning on severing the corridor between Vinkovci and Vukovar, satisfying itself with the relief of its barracks. Even after the main supply corridor was crushed, Croatian forces could threaten the blockade from their hold on the village of Bogdanovci; the JNA's many subsequent attacks to seize the village did not succeed until the final week of the operation. The JNA was able to break in to Croatian defenses as early as mid-September, but failures at the operational and tactical level resulted in a prolonged and costly clearance phase. It was not until November that First Military District finally put together an excellent operation plan that, combined

with tactical improvements described below, produced an all-out attack that finally overwhelmed the Croatian defenses.

During the first period of the campaign, in September, the three principal JNA combat arms—armor, infantry and artillery—were poorly coordinated. The JNA's lack of motivated and well trained infantrymen to operate with the tanks in systematically clearing the town in classic urban warfare forced the JNA to use armor and artillery to bludgeon the Croatians into submission.⁶⁸ Croatian troops, however, were too well prepared and motivated for these crude tactics to work. When the JNA forces advanced, their conscript and reserve infantrymen were reluctant to emerge from the deceptive protection of their infantry fighting vehicles to engage the fearsome Croatian fighters and protect their tanks. JNA tank-infantry operations were conducted exactly opposite to what is normally required in an urban environment: with the infantry trailing behind and vulnerable in their thin-skinned IFVs or APCs, both tanks and soldiers were exposed to the fire of the Croatians' mobile anti-tank teams. While the infantry clung to their own vehicles, the tanks would often be cut off and forced to fight their way out of Croatian fire pockets.

In addition to poor tank-infantry cooperation, artillery support appears to have consisted of imprecise and uncoordinated battering of Croatian positions, while JNA armor and infantry did a poor job of exploiting artillery support.⁶⁹ The conduct of mortar fire was probably even worse, controlled at a lower level or by the TO and therefore probably more susceptible to indiscriminate firing.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the mortar crews were also likely to be responsive to calls from infantry or armor commanders engaged in heavy fighting. But JNA armor and infantry units were generally ineffective in their use of the artillery support. Finally, the JNA's reliance on heavy weapons fire, although often necessary to support a given attack, created tons of debris that impeded movement in narrow urban streets and provided rubble and cover for the Croatians' defenses.⁷¹

During the second period, from the end of September throughout October as new levies of volunteer and JNA infantry were arriving, the JNA began to shift away from its armor-heavy tactics. Armor-infantry coordination, however, was still poor, and the army was still relying too much on firepower alone. The JNA's October attacks generally started well, penetrating some depth into Croatian defenses. But the infantry, whether JNA, TO, or volunteer, seemed unable to hold their captured ground. Because they neglected to clear and occupy nearby buildings, Croatian infantry and antitank teams were able to infiltrate behind the advance units' flanks and make counterattacks that drove the JNA forces back and often cut off their forward units.⁷²

For its third campaign against Vukovar the JNA at last put all the pieces together tactically, making detailed preparations for the attack and fully integrating the various arms. The JNA first clearly identified tactical objectives to be achieved during each part of the attack, specifically selecting key terrain features, buildings and other commanding positions.⁷³ More thorough intelligence and reconnaissance preparations gave attacking units better information on enemy dispositions and fortifications.⁷⁴ Finally appreciating that special training in urban warfare was a prerequisite for success against Vukovar, the JNA brought in more elite infantry formations—primarily 1st Guards Motorized Brigade—to spearhead the attack. The JNA now had enough infantry to tailor its assault units with an appropriate mixture of forces, completely integrating all arms.⁷⁵ Rather than sending out armor to spearhead the attack, infantry and engineer units led the way, with armor in support and used as mobile artillery.⁷⁶ Mortar units provided direct support, while field artillery was able to provide far more accurate fire because the JNA had seized key observation points.⁷⁷ With its new and better trained combined arms formations the JNA revamped its tactics. To ward off the devilishly effective Croatian counterattacks, it systematically and thoroughly cleared each objective, trying to ensure that units advanced evenly along the front, and restraining units from making unsupported deep penetrations.⁷⁸ Captured areas were thoroughly mopped up so that advancing units would not be attacked from behind.⁷⁹

The Air Force and Air Defense (RV i PVO), which made regular, daily strikes on Vukovar, did not shine owing to the organization's inherent limitations, the nature of the urban combat, and problems with air-ground cooperation. In the absence of an official tally of RV i PVO sorties, one semi-reliable source claims that about 80 percent of the 1st RV i PVO Corps's 2,000 flights were against Vukovar. For a three-month campaign, that works out to roughly 18 a day.⁸⁰ This does not seem to be a very high number in relation to the intense combat in and around the town, particularly since some of the flights would have been reconnaissance missions, and possibly included helicopter sorties and casualty evacuation flights. Some JNA personnel and Serbian journalists, in fact, complained about the general absence of the RV i PVO's. During the second combat period, even Belgrade Radio was moved to observe, "The cooperation between all branches of the army is assessed very highly, except for the air force, whose support, in the view of many participants, has been unjustifiably lacking."⁸¹ A JNA officer, Captain Darko Savic, wrote in a JNA military journal article on urban warfare tactics in Vukovar that,

A particular problem in the coordination of forces participating in the attack involved cooperation with aviation. Although aviation is coordinated at a higher level, as a rule, the actual executors of the attack were acquainted with the details. Each deviation resulted in very undesirable consequences.⁸²

Flying close air support missions in such close, confined combat was almost impossible because of limitations in target acquisition and the accuracy of the RV i PVO's older fighter-bombers, which were mostly equipped with unguided rockets, iron bombs, cluster bombs, and cannons. The likelihood of friendly fire incidents—Captain Savic's "very undesirable consequences"—was high, as the 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade, which was not even conducting urban operations, found out at Tovarnik. Most air strikes probably hit supply routes, suspected command posts, and heavy weapons positions further

into the town and away from the contact line. Finally, with so much artillery in and around Vukovar, even with its initial observation difficulties, it was much easier and probably more efficient for the JNA to rely on its big guns for fire support than on the RV i PVO.

Last Stand at Vukovar—November 1991

The plan by General Panic and the First Military District for what was to be the last attack on Vukovar differed significantly from previous efforts in that it provided for simultaneous coordinated attacks from all quadrants in order to stretch Croatian troop reserves to the breaking point. The operation called for Colonel Mrksic's OG "South" to make one push straight into central Vukovar from its lodgment north of the Vukovar barracks. Meanwhile, OG "South" would make an assault river crossing from Serbia across the Danube into the Vukovar port area, between Vukovar town and Borovo Naselje. Here it would link up with General Bratic's OG "North" troops, whose objective was the village of Luzac. Together these two thrusts would cut Croatian defenses in half, isolating Borovo Naselje and Vukovar town from each other. OG "North" would then systematically reduce Borovo Naselje, and OG "South" would do the same with Vukovar town.⁸³ OG "South," supported by 1st Guards Mechanized Division, would make supporting attacks against the Croatians' salient around Bogdanovci to ward off any Croatian attempts to relieve or reinforce their positions.

Mrksic's first attack, launched from the south around the barracks into the center of town, was carried out by elements of his own 1st Guards Motorized Brigade and probably elements of the 453rd Mechanized Brigade, 63rd Airborne Brigade, 1st Guards Military Police Battalion, one to two TO battalions, and likely one or two volunteer detachments.⁸⁴ Elements of the 453rd Mechanized Brigade probably attacked in support from the west/southwest corner of the town. OG "South's" assault river crossing appears to have been made by elements of the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade also. They were to link up with General Bratic's forces spearheading the advance into Luzac—Arkan's "Tigers," a TO battalion, and elements of 51st Mechanized Brigade, possibly supported by 453rd

Mechanized Brigade/OG "South" from across the Vuka. Meanwhile, OG "North," using elements of the 51st Mechanized Brigade, probably the 18th Motorized Brigade, and possibly other JNA brigades, supported by volunteers and TO troops, would attack down the Trpinja Road and from Borovo Selo into Borovo Naselje.

The supporting attack against Bogdanovci kicked off on 29 October as JNA armor units, probably elements of the 252nd Armored Brigade, the Sumadija Volunteer Detachment, and other volunteer and TO units, attempted to seize the village; elements of the 211th Armored Brigade/OG "North" probably pushed south from the Tordini/Ostrovo area in support. Heavy fighting ensued; one Sumadija volunteer told a Serbian reporter that his unit had suffered 49 killed and 78 wounded in action during the fighting.⁸⁵ By 3 November both sides claimed to hold the village; the Croatians, however, held out until 10 November.⁸⁶

The main assault against Vukovar-Borovo Naselje commenced on 30/31 October, with OG "South" beginning its drive toward central Vukovar street by street. By 1 November OG "South," supported by RV i PVO fighter-bombers hitting MUP and ZNG headquarters, claimed to have cut one of the 204th Brigade's main lateral supply routes between the town's defensive sectors. On 3 November, the battle for the "Bosko Buha" community, which sat on a key height overlooking central Vukovar, began, and raged for six days against a furious Croatian defense until JNA, TO, and volunteer troops took it on 9 November.

As the fight for "Bosko Buha" started, the JNA executed the key maneuver in the final phase at Vukovar as OG "North" and OG "South" forces converged between Borovo Naselje and Vukovar town. OG "South's" surprise river crossing, supported by the JNA's Danube River Flotilla, appears to have easily seized the Vukovar port facilities on 3 November. Simultaneously, OG "North," led by Arkan's SDG and JNA armor, battled its way into the Luzac area, moving to surround the village rather than trying to storm it with a frontal assault.⁸⁷ They then

linked up with OG "South" and captured a former animal feed factory near the port, which Croatian troops had turned into a sniper and machine gun nest. A supporting attack by elements of two TO battalions gained a foothold in the southwestern corner of Borovo Naselje. Over the next two days JNA forces widened the corridor between Luzac and the Vukovar port, making it impossible for a Croatian counterattack to reopen the critical link between Borovo Naselje and Vukovar town. OG "North" also attacked Borovo Naselje from the direction of Borovo Selo and Trpinja on 4 November, meeting strong resistance from Zadro's former 3rd Battalion/204th Brigade. Elements of three volunteer detachments "penetrated deep into Borovo Naselje and held their positions for seven days . . ."⁸⁸ Major General Mladen Bratic, commander of OG "North" and 12th (Novi Sad) Corps, was killed by an antitank missile on 4 November during the fierce fighting around Borovo Naselje. His chief of staff, Major General Andrija Biorcevic, took command.

Despite these successes, the JNA/TO/volunteer forces still had to clear and occupy Vukovar and Borovo Naselje against desperate Croatian troops. As OG "South" prepared to clear Vukovar town, Biorcevic—directing the battle from the commanding heights of the Brsadin grain elevator—ordered OG "North" to launch concentric attacks from north, south, and west against Borovo Naselje, starting on 8/9 November after the arrival of elite JNA infantry—probably additional MP/antiterrorist troops or possibly 63rd Airborne Brigade. JNA, TO, and volunteer troops, including the "Tigers," slugged their way into the industrial suburb over the next week, with the main effort coming from the south/southwest. On 10 November, the key height of Milovo Brdo, near the Vuka River, was captured. Heavy fighting also occurred in the town's worker district, and industrial areas along the Danube; the heavily fortified Borovo Naselje grain silo fell on 13 November.⁸⁹ The remnants of the 3rd Battalion/204th Brigade began to disintegrate; the same day, a group of ZNG commanders from the suburb made their way out to the Vinkovci area, followed by some of their men. By 15 November, the remaining defenders held only a part of the main road through town and the rubber/shoe factory, where most of the civilians were hidden.⁹⁰ The last Croatian resistance appears to have

collapsed on 16 November as the converging drives took their toll on the exhausted Croatian troops. Federal forces proceeded to mop up Borovo Naselje over the next three days, capturing a number of ZNG troops as they attempted to break out and exfiltrate back to Vinkovci.

Meanwhile, in the newly formed corridor to the Danube, Mrksic's OG "South" troops moved toward Vukovar town from the north, in support of the drive from the barracks area. Although victory was in sight, they still faced the daunting task of clearing the remaining defenders street by street from the center of town. After the fall of Bosko Buha, Federal troops slowly cleared each surviving area. By 15 November, JNA forces, spearheaded by 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, more or less controlled central Vukovar, having seized the bridges over the Vuka River and the areas around the town's main Orthodox and Catholic churches. Croatian troops continued to fight, although now in disjointed bands, as Borkovic almost certainly had little or no way to control the isolated fragments of his command. On 18 November, the ZNG and MUP forces holding out in central Vukovar, along with those in the isolated Mitnica district, agreed to surrender.

The Death of Vukovar

The Battle of Vukovar destroyed the 204th Vukovar Brigade as a fighting force. The brigade, led first by Mile Dedakovic, and then by Branko Borkovic, suffered at least 60 percent casualties, together with MUP Special Police forces. Croatian Government medical authorities estimate that the combined ZNG/MUP forces suffered 450 killed in action, and, up to 6 November, 748 ZNG troops and 161 MUP were wounded.⁹¹ Given a rough average of 250 a month, the ZNG and MUP probably suffered at least 125 and 25 wounded respectively in the last two weeks of fighting. Thus, of the estimated 2,000 to 2,300 defenders of Vukovar, some 1,500 became casualties. (More than 300 of the wounded personnel captured at Vukovar hospital were brutally executed by some of Mrksic's men, local TO personnel, and volunteer

troops on 20 November near the village of Ovcara, south of Vukovar.)⁹² The 204th Brigade's senior officers also suffered heavily; the 1st Battalion alone lost one battalion commander wounded (Arbanas), and two killed in action, while the last commander was captured attempting to break out of the pocket as the town surrendered. Two other battalion commanders, including Blago Zadro, were killed or missing in action. Borkovic and Arbanas, however, managed to escape to Vinkovci as Vukovar fell.

The civilian cost in Vukovar was also immense. Subtracting military deaths, some 1131 civilians are confirmed dead, while another 2,600 were reported missing. The official Croatian record keeper for the Vukovar Municipality (which comprised the entire area around the town, including small towns and villages such as Tovarnik, Bogdanovci, etc.) estimated in 1993 that the total number of dead—including military deaths—in Vukovar was between 4,500 and 5,000.⁹³

The JNA and TO lost heavily as well. One former JNA officer states that the Federal forces suffered some 1,180 officers and men killed in Vukovar alone—apparently not including the rest of the Eastern Slavonia-Baranja operations.⁹⁴

Croatian Relief Operations, Recriminations, Responsibilities, and Implications

The Croatians made only two serious attempts to relieve Vukovar during the 86-day siege, one in mid-October and one in November. Neither amounted to much, and the loss of the town after Zagreb's failure to make any major effort to relieve it would lead to a welter of recriminations, infighting, political fallings out among the Croatian political leadership, the ZNG Command and Croatian Main Staff, including Dedakovic—who had been shifted to Vinkovci as the regional commander in mid-October—and Borkovic.

The first attempt, ordered by General Tus, the Main Staff chief, was planned for 13 October. The Main Staff reinforced the units around Vinkovci with the 83rd Independent Zagreb Volunteer Battalion, plus a battalion from the 122nd Djakovo Brigade, a ZNG

special operations unit (possibly the Zrinski Battalion), and the Lucko Antiterrorist Unit. They also brought in company-size special police units from Varazdin, Osijek, Vinkovci, and Slavonski Brod Special Police for a total of about 1,000 additional troops. Dedakovic was to command the attack, while Osijek Operational Zone commander Karl Gorinsek was in overall control. The attack's objective was to push JNA forces away from the Vinkovci-Vukovar road and reopen a link to the town, apparently through a drive from south of Vinkovci, near the village of Marinci. The operation jumped off at 0530 on 13 October, spearheaded by the elite MUP units. The attack failed almost immediately at the cost of 10 MUP troops killed and 25 wounded.⁹⁵ The JNA forces then arrayed south and east of Vinkovci—an armored brigade, two mechanized brigades, and a motorized brigade—were just too strong.

The last operation began early in November with most of the same units from the October operation, with the addition of 800 more troops from the 3rd Guards Brigade. On 2 November ZNG and MUP special operations units set out on a drive to create a corridor through the villages of Ceric and Marinci toward Bogdanovci and on to Vukovar. Other units would try to harass JNA forces on the flanks and keep their reserves pinned down. The units making the main attack toward Ceric sought to infiltrate the JNA lines but quickly bogged down in the extensive minefields the JNA had laid along the approach routes. Supported by armor and artillery fire concentrated on the approaches, the JNA halted the drive only a short distance beyond the Croatians' jumping-off point.⁹⁶

Dedakovic tried again to get a relief column through on 13 November. The plan this time called for bypassing Ceric and cutting off the JNA 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade in the village, then moving from Nustar through Marinci to Bogdanovci. Once the first troops had punched through, MUP and ZNG special operations units would strike out to widen the corridor's base.⁹⁷ But this operation also failed. Dedakovic tells the story:

Mercep [a notoriously independent MUP commander] came at a time when the breakthrough was being planned, on the 12th and 13th. He

*interrupted in his particular style and said,
“Tomorrow, I will be in Vukovar with my men.”*

When he told me that, it was clear to me that nothing would come of the breakthrough. I showed him where the artillery guns were, where the tanks were, where everything was, and I proposed to him that he and his people move from the left flank along the Vuka and strike from the flank at Marinici. While another group would strike from the other flank via Djeletovci, and a third head on, and all of this supported by artillery. . . he said that was out of the question.

When I saw that he was going to be arrogant, I told him straight out: “Mr. Mercep, I am the commander here, and what I say goes.” However, Mercep said that he would do as he pleased, and he went off to Osijek. In any case, I wrote to the Supreme Command that the breakthrough we were working on at their command was political rather than military. They sent me one brigade, 800 of whose men arrived, while 400 fled.⁹⁸

The ZNG and MUP forces—although they included many of the best Croatian units—lacked the manpower and the firepower needed to overcome the JNA defenses. The Croatian artillery around Vinkovci was woefully short of ammunition to support the drive, and there were not enough engineers to deal with the extensive minefields that slowed any force making the attempt.

The loss of Vukovar, and the perception among many of the Vukovar commanders that Zagreb had failed to provide adequately for its defense or relief drew complaints from Dedakovic and others even before the town fell. The Croatian Government and President Tudjman had heaped praise on Dedakovic's leadership in the defense of Vukovar, but as conditions in the town worsened and no help came, Dedakovic and the political chief in Vukovar, Marin Vidic—"Bili," spoke out publicly and privately to criticize the government's lack of support. On 23 September, Dedakovic sent a report to ZNG headquarters in Zagreb, which included the statement that,

We are still not getting the requested aid in manpower and infantry arms and we do not know how long it is thought to leave us without a reply and in uncertainty . . . if you are not in a position to meet [our requests], you are at least in a position to answer them, paper being cheap.⁹⁹

Dedakovic had earlier gone to Zagreb via Vinkovci on 11 October to plead with the government to provide more assistance to help defend and relieve Vukovar, and to organize a relief operation for the town himself.¹⁰⁰ He met with both President Tudjman and Defense Minister Susak. Dedakovic states that,

In order to defend Vukovar, we needed long-range artillery from Vinkovci. I told the President that we did not have any shells, and at that point Minister Susak pulled out a fax and said: “Here, Mr. President, 2,000 rounds are arriving at 1300 hours.” However, they did not arrive. When I called him and told him that, he said that there were problems with transport . . . When I offered to facilitate the transport, he said that he would work it out and that they would arrive during the day. But they did not arrive . . .¹⁰¹

On another occasion, Dedakovic charged that Susak had sent eight truckloads of supplies meant for Vinkovci-Vukovar to Herzegovina. In October, Dedakovic held a telephone press conference to demand more support. At the same time, Vidic sent an appeal that was read aloud at the Croatian Assembly, criticizing the government and the Assembly for not doing enough to help the town.¹⁰²

Two days after the failure of the last relief operation on 13 November, Dedakovic sent one of his final reports as the operational group commander in Vinkovci to Tudjman, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, General Tus, the Minister of Internal Affairs, and the President of the Croatian Assembly. In it he reported the failure of the attack and described the deteriorating situation in Vukovar, and made a

plea to save those left in the town. He ended with a demand that,

This time I request that you finally deign to reply to me, in writing, that you will take action in the context of saving lives, and do so URGENTLY, and what you expect of me, and in this context give me specific orders, forces, and material.¹⁰³

The plea did not fall on deaf ears. But the government responded, not by providing reinforcements, but by arresting Dedakovic, his chief of staff Nikola Toth (a former Vukovar battalion commander), and Borkovic immediately after the fall of the town.

Tudjman and the Croatian Government feared the political blowback of Dedakovic's charges—most of which appear to have been accurate. Zagreb's propaganda machine, which had built Vukovar up as the new Stalingrad, now launched a smear campaign against Dedakovic and the others. It claimed that Dedakovic was working for JNA KOS, was conspiring to overthrow the government in collaboration with the neo-fascist Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) leader Dobroslav Paraga, and had stolen funds meant for the defense of Vukovar. Dedakovic underwent interrogations by the military police in which he apparently was beaten and then charged in court with conspiracy against the government. Although he was finally found innocent in April 1994,¹⁰⁴ neither he nor any of the others arrested by the government ever received an official apology. Of the Vukovar commanders who had commanded its long and valiant defense, only one was ever promoted to general officer rank—Blago Zadro, who received his promotion posthumously.

Post mortem analyses question whether a much stronger Croatian effort in the Vinkovci sector would have enabled the Croatians to hold Vukovar, and whether the forces for such an effort were available. If Zagreb had provided the considerable numbers of troops, equipment, and supplies that Dedakovic and Borkovic demanded, they could certainly have caused the JNA even more problems, but it seems unlikely that they could have permanently relieved the Vukovar garrison. Arguably, a larger body of ZNG/MUP troops trying to break through to Vukovar might

have forced the JNA to scale back its offensive operations against the town. But while the JNA made a poor showing on the offensive for reasons already stated, it excelled on the defense and might well have held off a strong relieving force without compromising its eventually successful assault. As to whether Zagreb had the troops and resources available to meet Dedakovic's requirements, it will be seen in the sections that follow that there were few quiet sectors in Croatia during fall 1991, and with all available troops more or less committed, a stronger effort in Eastern Slavonia would have stripped forces from other sectors.

Strategically, Vukovar fulfilled its role without reinforcements. Cold-hearted as they may have seemed, General Tus and the Croatian Main Staff did not need to relieve Vukovar, and the forces there were best expended in diverting and delaying the substantial JNA forces required to overcome them. By the time Vukovar fell in mid-November, the timetable for the JNA's strategic offensive had been utterly dislocated, through the complete disruption of what General Kadjevic called his "main maneuvering force." The staunch Croatian defense of Vukovar ensured that the JNA's intricately contrived strategic offensive plan was dead in the water the moment JNA tanks set off to relieve their Vukovar barracks on 14 September. Thanks to this diversion, the Croatian Main Staff could afford to use its assets elsewhere to achieve more useful objectives than Vukovar's relief.¹⁰⁵

Vukovar Aftermath: The JNA Continues the Offensive?

After the fall of Vukovar, the JNA moved immediately to reposition forces to resume its belated strategic offensive by threatening the Croatian defenses between Osijek and Vinkovci.¹⁰⁶ The operation's objective would have been to cut off the two towns and follow on with a drive toward Western Slavonia and then Zagreb, as called for in the original

plan. General Panic, First Military District commander, later stated,

We had orders to take Osijek and Zupanja the moment Vukovar fell, and to march towards Zagreb with two columns, along the Drava and Sava Rivers. And we could have accomplished that in two days.¹⁰⁷

To this end, beginning about 20 November, the JNA 12th Corps attacked from southeast of Osijek to seize key villages on the southwestern approaches to Osijek, launching secondary attacks from directly east on the main Osijek-Dalj road. Two villages, Ernestinovo and Laslovo, appear to have been taken or cut off on 21 November, and another, Tenjski Antunovac, fell on 24 November. A 12th Corps communiqué said the capture of the villages “significantly worsens the operational and tactical positions of the Ustasha formations to the southwest of Osijek.”¹⁰⁸ JNA forces were now only 10 kilometers from the main north-south road from Osijek to Djakovo, which appears to have been the ZNG’s main lateral supply link between Vinkovci and Osijek. Reacting to the advance, ZNG forces from the Osijek Operational Zone, supported by a newly arrived brigade from Zagreb, counterattacked, and fighting raged along the new line into December.¹⁰⁹ The last JNA push appears to have come on 11 December, when its troops drove another two kilometers toward the road, but the ZNG again drove them back. Heavy, profitless fighting along this line continued until the January 1992 cease-fire.

It was not the ZNG, however, that halted the JNA’s strategic offensive. In the last battle between the army and the Serbian leadership over war aims and strategy, Milosevic and Jovic finally prevailed over the JNA and put an end to its determined campaign to defeat Croatia and return it to the Federation. As General Panic again relates,

... I was ordered to go back. I talked to Jovic and [President of the Federal Presidency Branko] Kostic. And I also talked to President Milosevic. It was his decision, Milosevic’s decision, and it was approved by the rump presidency. He simply said, ‘We have no job there in Croat populated areas. We have to pro-

tect the Serb areas,’ and that was the line. And I said if the task was to protect Yugoslavia we should go further . . . But President Milosevic said, among other things, that we must stop. And that was the order from the defense minister [Kadijevic] and I just obeyed.¹¹⁰

The JNA had finally given up on Yugoslavia.

Could the JNA have successfully prosecuted its offensive war plan? With the forces made available to First Military District by Vukovar’s fall—the entire 1st Guards Mechanized Division and 12th (Novi Sad) Corps—it is likely that the JNA could have broken the Croatian Osijek-Vinkovci defense line, although it would have taken longer than the two days Panic predicted. The terrain involved was far more open and armor-friendly than the congested urban environment of Vukovar. Croatian antitank defenses and field fortifications were weak, and without the cover of the city cellars they had used as bunkers in Vukovar, it is unlikely that the ZNG reservists could have withstood armored drives or concentrated artillery fire in the open fields between Osijek and Vinkovci. And First Military District, rather than becoming bogged down in more street fighting, probably would have bypassed both cities. Nonetheless, the battle would have been costly and it remains questionable how deep into Croatia the JNA’s logistics system could have sustained such a large force. The more mountainous terrain that looms out of the Slavonian plains as one nears the battlefields of Western Slavonia also would have given the Croatians better defensive positions against the armor on which the JNA relied. Even without advancing all the way to Varazdin and Zagreb, however, a JNA breakout from Eastern Slavonia would have placed immense pressure on the Croatian Government and probably would have forced it to accept less favorable peace terms than it won from the final “Vance Plan.” The mere existence of the threat to Osijek, demonstrated by the tentative advances the JNA made in November, appears to have influenced Zagreb’s willingness to agree to the terms Vance negotiated in December.¹¹¹

Appendix 1

The Serbian Volunteer Guard—Arkan’s Tigers

One of the most famous (or infamous) volunteer units fielded in the former Yugoslavia was the Serbian Volunteer Guard (*Srpska Dobrovoljacka Garda—SDG*), more popularly known as “Arkan’s Tigers” from the nom de guerre of its leader, Zeljko Raznjatovic. The SDG, however, was unlike any of the other volunteer units in that it was the covert creature of the Serbian Department for State Security (RDB). Arkan’s charisma and his reliable service to the Yugoslav State Security Service during the 1980s made him a natural choice to command such a unit.

Origins

The SDG or “Tigers” appear to have been organized in October 1990 by the Department for State Security of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) as part of the RDB’s plan to covertly arm the Croatian Serbs. Key actors in the unit’s formation included then Minister of Internal Affairs Radmilo Bogdanovic, then RDB deputy chief Jovica Stanisic, as well as senior RDB officer Franko Simatovic—“Frenki.”

Military Training and Capability

Under the tutelage of the very professional Serbian Special Police, the SDG quickly became a well-trained and well-equipped light infantry shock formation, which Arkan described in September 1991 as an “assault” unit of about 600 men.¹¹² Already a notably effective fighting force in the operations in eastern Slavonia of 1991, the SDG stood out from the poorly run, ill-disciplined, irregularly formed paramilitary/volunteer units. Arkan often insisted that alcohol was banned in his unit, which was almost certainly true, and he also asserted that “discipline in the

Serbian Volunteer Guard was such that orders were carried without ever being questioned. Beatings were one of the methods. This might appear very unrefined and harsh, but I have to tell you that discipline brings order to a Serb.”¹¹³ Photo and film footage of the unit from 1991 to 1995 testify to the unit’s superior bearing and discipline.

Combat Operations

Arkan was not only the SDG field commander directing combat operations in eastern Slavonia in 1991, but he also ran the “Center for Training Volunteers” in Erdut. His headquarters in Erdut was in the same facility as the headquarters of the East Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Srem Territorial Defense (TO) under the command of Serbian Special Police officer Radovan Stojicic.¹¹⁴ Stojicic appears to have been in overall command of the SDG, although it came under the operational control of the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) during combat operations. Throughout the campaign it functioned as assault infantry, primarily in support of the JNA 12th (Novi Sad) Corps. The SDG played a particularly important role in the 1991 Vukovar operation, helping capture the key Croatian strongholds of Luzac and Borovo Naselje.

Despite its creation and reputation as an elite combat unit, the SDG played the leading role in a number of war crimes and atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia and was involved in a number of others. Given the level of SDG discipline, it seems clear that most of the SDG atrocities were committed as an express act of policy or methodical cruelty as distinguished from the barbarity and drunken excesses of lesser paramilitary formations. Arkan himself let it be known in September 1991 that the SDG would no longer accept the surrender of any Croatian troops dressed in the black uniforms of the Ustasha.¹¹⁵

Endnotes, Annex 17

¹ Jasna Babic and Eduard Popovic, "Not A Single Fighter From Vukovar Among the Some 30 Croatian Generals," Zagreb *Globus* 3 June 1994, pp. 2-4.

² Dr. Juraj Njavro, *Glava Dolje, Ruke Na Leda (Head Down, Hands Behind)*, Zagreb: Quo Vadis, 1995, pp. 85-99. Interviews with Arbanas and Borkovic; Jasna Babic and Eduard Popovic, "Not A Single Fighter From Vukovar Among the Some 30 Croatian Generals," Zagreb *Globus* 3 June 1994, pp. 2-4.

³ Borkovic later detailed Dedakovic and his efforts to reorganize ZNG forces in the town.

We arrived on 30 August and were immediately taken to the MUP to see Pole. After the talk, we convened all the commanders of all the posts, however many there were in the city and the nearby villages . . . I received reports from the commanders on the numbers, weapons, and positions. After that, we moved to the National Defense Secretariat, where we found a big table full of bottles and a stretcher on which people slept below another table. I had it cleared away immediately. I took the maps, arranged them according to what I had written down regarding the positions and commanders, and drew a war map. We moved all the equipment from the upper rooms into the basement. On the same day, I toured all the positions in Mitnica. On the second day, I was in Sajmiste, and after that I visited Luzac and Borovo. I relayed all my observations to Dedakovic. We jointly issued [cover names] to all commanders.

Borkovic goes on to describe what sectors each of the local commanders were designated to cover, and their efforts to ensure that commander in local villages and Vukovar districts would respond to their orders.

There were some problems with the local communities, because I demanded just one commander from each local community. The most problems were with the King Tomislav local community, because several commanders reported. Their potential was only 100-150 people, and they were divided into two or three groups of different factions. We insisted that one commander report from each local community. We conducted the defense through direct communication with the local communities . . .

Borkovic also described his efforts to reestablish a working National Defense Secretariat to catalogue available manpower in Vukovar and increase the number of active duty ZNG personnel in Vukovar.

. . . a National Defense Secretariat turned out to be necessary. We could not count on the existing one, because there was not a single Croat there who would know what to do. That is why I took over the Secretariat, and then we gathered a group of people whom I taught to work. First of all, I recorded the status and the people, issued cards to volunteers, and recorded all those who wanted to join the Active Guard. [Note: the ZNG differentiated between professional or "Active" ZNG and Reserve ZNG personnel; even in ZNG reserve brigades, there often was an Active component, often a company or battalion], because there was an order to make the Active Guard a battalion instead of a company. During that period, we accepted 40 people. On the other hand, there were not enough weapons or uniforms.

Borkovic also had to reorganize the Civil Defense structures: There were problems in Civil Defense (civilna zaštita—CZ), because there were no trained people, and so we created the kind of organization in which the military commanders of the local communities were also simultaneously the commanders of the civilian structures . . . Along with HPT (Croatian Post and Telecommunications) we also kept the electrical industry, but when the electrical system and the long-distance power line were destroyed, it was all reduced to maintaining the electrical generator. We more or

less managed to keep the water pipeline open and we brought water from "Commerce" [Note: apparently a building in Vukovar] in tank trucks, and by patching up water pipeline installations relatively well, and, until just before the very end, one could say satisfactorily in view of what the conditions were like. Mitnica, Borovo [Naselje], and Trpinja Road had some wells. Things were critical inside Vukovar itself, because there were abandoned wells that were not prepared, and no one took them into account. Things were most difficult in Vukovar Novi, and it was the center of the city.

Borkovic noted that he and Dedakovic disagreed in early September over exactly how to organize the town headquarters: I felt that all the essential commanders should be directly involved in the work of the headquarters, that constant duty should be organized at the headquarters. [Note: Borkovic appears to be referring to establishing a duty/watch officer system to man the headquarters] and that it should not be reduced to him and me. We would thus gain freedom of movement, and from each of the stronger local communities . . . one person would sit in headquarters, receive reports, and react immediately to every attack, and we [i.e., he and Dedakovic] could work in the field. There were disagreements because Dedakovic did not agree with that, but I managed to insist on my own view and that was the case from 14 September on.

Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic.

⁴ Branko Borkovic, *Rusitelj Ustavnog Poretka (Destroyer of the Constitutional Order)*, Zagreb, 1995, p. 10.

⁵ Borkovic included a copy of the order assigning the battalion commanders of the new brigade in his account. Branko Borkovic, p. 38.

⁶ The brigade apparently was supposed to have six battalions; this, however, apparently did not come to pass, despite a later statement by Dedakovic that the 204th had six battalions. The brigade formation order shows five battalion commanders, with a sixth to be named later. Borkovic, however, clearly indicates that only four were ever active. Any formed elements of the other two probably were dispersed among the rest. See Dedakovic's comments in Veceslav Kocijan, "Playing Around With Money and Weapons," Zagreb *Danas* 31 December 1991, pp. 20-21. See the brigade formation order in Branko Borkovic, *Rusitelj Ustavnog Poretka (Destroyer of the Constitutional Order)* Zagreb, 1995, p. 38.

⁷ As of 24 September, the then Defense Headquarters, Vukovar District, had the following heavy weapons,

- 3 60mm mortars
- 15 82mm mortars
- 9 120mm mortars
- 5 M-48B1 76mm mountain guns
- 3 ZIS-3 76mm field/antitank guns
- 2 M-71 128mm single barrel rocket launchers
- 2 M-55 triple 20mm antiaircraft guns
- 1 M-75 single barrel 20mm antiaircraft gun
- 1 Bofors 40mm antiaircraft gun
- 6 SA-7b (S-2M) hand-held surface to air missile launchers
- 7 M-57 RPG
- 4 other RPG
- 20 unidentified "Wasp" antitank rocket launchers
- 7 M-79 "Osa" antitank rocket launchers
- 14 AT-3 launchers

From a copy of a report from the Vukovar District Defense Headquarters to ZNG Headquarters in Zagreb and Osijek included in Branko Borkovic, *Rusitelj Ustavnog Poretka (Destroyer of the Constitutional Order)*, Zagreb, 1995, p. 48.

⁸ Dr. Juraj Njavro, 1995, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic.

⁹ Branko Borkovic, p. 14.

¹⁰ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, *Bitka za Vukovar (The Battle for Vukovar)* Vinkovci, Vinkovacke jeseni/FWT, 1997, map between pp. 100-101. Dedakovic's account became available just as this study was being completed, so this resource has not been fully exploited.

¹¹ Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic; Branko Borkovic, *Rusitelj Ustavnog Poretka (Destroyer of the Constitutional Order)*, Zagreb, 1995, p. 14.

¹² Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic.

¹³ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, *Bitka za Vukovar* map between pp. 100-101.

¹⁴ Dedakovic provides information from 8 November as to the artillery and mortar holdings assigned to Operational Group "Vinkovci" and apparently deployed around Vinkovci town, together with the available ammunition totals:

5 M-84 152mm gun-howitzers—64 rounds
9 D-20 152mm howitzers—no ammunition
4 105mm howitzers—200 rounds
4 D-30 and M-30/M-38 122mm howitzers—no ammunition
2 M-46 130mm field guns—105 rounds
5 2S1 122mm self-propelled howitzers—180 rounds
7 120mm mortars—400 rounds
5 82mm mortars—250 rounds
7 M-36 90mm tank destroyers—280 rounds
5 T-12 100mm antitank guns—150 rounds
6 82mm recoilless rifles—15 rounds
6 ZIS-3 76mm antitank/field guns—120 rounds

The mortar totals seem low and may not include all mortars assigned to the infantry formations. Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, p. 135.

¹⁵ For an overview of the Croatian defenses as viewed by the JNA, see Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, "Combat Actions for Centers of Population: East Slavonian Battlefield 1991/92," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* May-August 1996, pp. 105-111. *Novi Glasnik* is the postwar Yugoslav Army's professional journal.

¹⁶ The JNA journals from which the US analysis was done only note the Croatian defenses described as being in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem, and do not specifically describe them as being in Vukovar. However, Vukovar clearly is the town in question. Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, "Croatian and Serbian Tactics in 1991 Fighting in Former Yugoslavia," *How They Fight: Armies of the World*, Charlottesville, VA: US Army National Ground Intelligence Center, 1997, pp. 19-22. Winkler and Patrick refer to these strongholds as "strongpoints," although this term would appear to give too narrow a picture of the defensive network they describe. Therefore, this analysis uses the terms "strongholds," "fortified area," or "fortified zone" interchangeably to describe the fortified neighborhoods or communities which were the foundation of the Croatian defense.

¹⁷ LTC Postic notes that in the Croatian defenses,

The fire plan is the main strength of the defense of the enemy armed forces in defending centers of population. It is organized at entrances, throughout the entire depth and beyond the center of population . . . The fire plan was organized as a system of antitank and antipersonnel fire, the framework being infantry arms fire . . . In battles in centers of population and near them, enemy armed forces made massive use of sniper fire in the fire plan to destroy major isolated, open . . . and camouflaged live targets . . . attention was given to using sniper teams on many targets in a multi-tiered fire plan.

Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, "Combat Actions for Centers of Population: East Slavonian Battlefield 1991/92," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* May-August 1996, pp. 105-111.

¹⁸ Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, "Croatian and Serbian Tactics in 1991 Fighting in Former Yugoslavia," *How They Fight: Armies of the World*, Charlottesville, VA: US Army National Ground Intelligence Center, 1997, pp. 19-22.

Postic observes that,

Antitank obstacles . . . were very well organized . . . Anti-tank obstacles were also made from materials that release large amounts of smoke when ignited, filling streets and divisions of the center of population with smoke. These

obstacles were ignited as soon as our tanks and armored vehicles appeared, so that the crews, because of the smoke, would lose orientation and be forced . . . to turn off the road . . . onto the grass and dirt section of the street and hit antitank mines that had been buried . . . or upon emerging from the smoke screen would be in the sights of antitank weapons. An attempt was made to fully block all approaches to the settlement, crossroads in it, all entrances to gardens, orchards, yards, and buildings, entrances . . . everything was mined that an attacker might approach and move. All obstacles were monitored and protected by all kinds of firepower, especially by ambush from the side.

Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, "Combat Actions for Centers of Population: East Slavonian Battlefield 1991/92," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* May-August 1996, pp. 105-111.

¹⁹ Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, pp. 19-22.

²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, pp. 105-111.

²¹ Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, See also Postic quote above.

²² Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic.

²³ Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, pp. 105-111.

²⁴ Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Arbanas.

²⁵ Dr. Juraj Njavro, 1995, pp. 85-99. Interview with Arbanas.

²⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, pp. 105-111.

²⁷ Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Arbanas.

²⁸ In addition, the ZNG mounted some of its fire support assets, such as mortars, and other heavy weapons on trailers, trucks, and other vehicles to act as ad hoc self-propelled artillery that could move around quickly in the town to threatened areas, and also avoid enemy shelling. Branko Borkovic, p. 14; Tammy Arbuckle, "Yugoslavia: Strategy and Tactics of Ethnic Warfare," *International Defense Review* January 1992, p. 19-22.

²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 14 September 1991.

³⁰ Milišav Sekulić, *Jugoslavija Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 221 indicates that battalions from the 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade were attached to the 453rd.

³¹ Estimated at two armor-mechanized battalions each for 1st Guards Mechanized and 453rd Mechanized Brigades and one armor-mechanized battalion for 51st Mechanized Brigade. The TO battalions are estimated at 300 to 400 personnel each. Although all four identified TO battalions were involved in the attack, it is possible that only elements, possibly one to two companies, were committed from each, which would decrease the size of the TO commitment to possibly only 600 to 800 men.

³² Zagreb Radio 14 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug and Belgrade Radio 14-17 September 1991.

³³ Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Borkovic.

³⁴ Zagreb Radio 18 September 1991; Belgrade Tanjug and Radio 18-26 September 1991.

³⁵ Zagreb Radio 20 September 1991; Belgrade Radio 20 September 1991.

³⁶ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, pp. 95-113.

³⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 21 September 1991.

³⁸ Zagreb Radio 25 September 1991.

³⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1991.

⁴⁰ Belgrade Radio 21-22, 24 September 1991.

⁴¹ R. Kostov and P. Boskovic, "All the Spices of the Valjevo Porridge," *Narodna Armija* 2 November 1991, p. 11.

⁴² The JNA admitted 84 wounded personnel to the hospital in Sremska Mitrovica from three days of fighting, many of which included the friendly fire casualties. Belgrade Tanjug 22 September 1991. During a briefing on 28 September to the Federal/Serbian Supreme Command, General Adzic reportedly stated that "The entire 2nd Mechanized Brigade (Valjevans) has fled . . . All of the equipment of the 2nd Mechanized Brigade is now in Sid, without any forces to man it." Jovic's entry for 28 September 1991. Adzic's statement, or Jovic's interpretation of it, probably exaggerated the status of 2nd Guards, but it would appear that at least some major elements of the brigade broke after their experiences in Tovarnik and in particular the friendly fire incident.

The JNA's official journal, *Narodnja Armija*, claimed in November that 2,000 reservists—which may be exaggerated—deserted the brigade for Valjevo (it would appear temporarily), after the fiasco in Tovarnik. One reserve captain attempted to justify the reservists' desertion, claiming the JNA mishandled the advance on Tovarnik, using inappropriate tactics and failing to provide sufficient intelligence. He stated,

As far as morale is concerned, we left Valjevo completely prepared. However, without any previous preparations, including psychological, from the march we headed for Tovarnik. We weren't told what the strength of the enemy was or what equipment he had. We went in a column; this was also a mistake. The Ustashi allowed part of the column to pass, while 18 of our tanks and seven troop carriers were cut-off without food and water for three days. In addition to all this . . . our artillery fired on our positions, because of a lack of coordination, fortunately without tragedy . . . I claim that there weren't any advance guards, and that it was also an error for them to order us to pass quickly through Tovarnik instead of firing from a distance with our tank guns. We lacked data on where the mines were and whether and where there were bunkers. We did not even know when one operation was completed and when the next began. All this contributed to an appearance of mistrust and doubt.

R. Kostov and P. Boskovic, p. 11. The brigade eventually cleared and secured the collection of villages southeast of Vukovar, including Sarengard and Illok, and then moved to positions southeast of Vinkovci.

⁴³ Silber and Little, p. 177.

⁴⁴ Major Veselin Sljivancanin, Chief of Security for the new OG "South" (Headquarters, 1st Guards Motorized Brigade), stated in 1996 that "We took over command on approximately 30 September . . . We tried to put everything under one command, regardless of the price. This was very difficult." Momcilo Petrovic, "Sljivancanin: Who I Am, What I Am, and What I Did in the War," Belgrade *Interview* 29 March 1996, pp. 16-25. Former JNA, Yugoslav Army (VJ), and Krajina Serb Army (SVK) officer states,

The Operational Group "South" was to be involved in the fighting for Vukovar. Besides the Guard Brigade, that operational group included units of the 20th Partisan Division, several territorial and volunteer detachments, and several formations on the battalion level.

Milisav Sekulic, p. 200.

⁴⁵ The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade was to play a key role in the capture of Vukovar. The brigade was a unique formation in the JNA. In September 1991, the formation was organized into the following sub-units:

- 1 armor-mechanized battalion (360 men, 21 M-84 main battle tanks, and 10 M-80 IFVs)
- 1 military police antiterrorist battalion (500 men)
- 1 military police battalion (500 men, 18 M-86 BOV-VP APCs)
- 1 honor guard battalion (500 men)
- 1 "artillery" battalion (200 men, 12 M-75 120mm mortars)
- 1 antitank rocket battalion (200 men, 8 M-83 BOV-1 anti-tank missile vehicles)
- 1 light self-propelled air defense artillery-rocket battalion (200 men, 18 BOV-3, 6 SA-9)
- 1 reconnaissance company (100 men)
- 1 engineer battalion (385 men)
- 1 communications company (100 men)
- 1 rear services battalion (375 men)

The brigade had total estimated wartime strength of 3,500 troops. Colonel Mile Mrksic was the brigade commander with Colonel Miodrag Panic as chief of staff. Major Veselin Sljivancanin was the brigade chief of security. Lieutenant Colonel Dobrovoje Tesic appears to have commanded one military police battalion, probably the antiterrorist battalion, while Lieutenant Colonel Branislav Lukic commanded the other.

Milisav Sekulic states,

The beginning of the battle for Vukovar was marked by the arrival of the Motorized Guard Brigade at the theater of operations on 30 September 1991. This brigade was brought in and deployed in the period from midnight on 30 September to 0500 on 2 October. That action took 53 hours . . .

The activities to prepare the Guard Brigade for deployment at the theater of operations lasted 14 days (from 16 to 29 September) and comprised additional mobilization, training, and organizational preparations. All of that was done in the region of a peacetime location.

Milisav Sekulic, p. 200.

⁴⁶ These numbers include all of the units under Operational Groups "North" and "South" shown in Chart 3 of Annex 13, plus 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade and 1st Guards Mixed Artillery Regiment from 1st Guards Mechanized Division and 16th Mixed Artillery Regiment from the 12th Corps. These numbers do not include the rest of the 1st Guards Division or the rest of the 12th Corps.

⁴⁷ Of the seven identified TO units, some may have been company rather than battalion-size, further decreasing the available infantry.

⁴⁸ Note that this manpower estimate does not include all JNA/TO personnel in Eastern Slavonia-Baranja, but only those assessed to have taken part in the siege of Vukovar or operations against it.

⁴⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the narrative is derived from Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug reports covering the period of the engagement.

⁵⁰ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, map between pp. 36-37, plus captured JNA 252nd Armored Brigade operations order pp. 95-99.

⁵¹ Postic describes a JNA attack on Nustar, probably this one, in which an armored-mechanized battle group entering Nustar, likely from 252nd Armored Brigade, was ambushed as it exited the village, suffering heavy casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, "Combat Actions for Centers of Population: East Slavonian Battlefield 1991/92," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* May-August 1996, pp. 105-111.

⁵² Branko Borkovic, p. 19.

⁵³ Branko Borkovic, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Dr. Juraj Njavro, Interview with Arbanas.

⁵⁵ Jasna Babic and Eduard Popovic, "Not a Single Fighter From Vukovar Among the Some 30 Croatian Generals," Zagreb *Globus* 3 June 1994, pp. 2-4. Zadro was promoted posthumously to general officer rank, and the Croatian Army Command and General Staff School at the HV Military University "Petar Zrinski" was named after him.

⁵⁶ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 91.

⁵⁷ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 91-92.

⁵⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 1 October 1991.

⁵⁹ Leon Trotsky, "From the History of a Brigade," *The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913*, pp. 117-131.

⁶⁰ The volunteer units are usually referred to as "detachments" (*odred*), a unit usually between a company and battalion in size. Most of the detachments probably numbered some 200 to 300 personnel.

⁶¹ Belgrade Radio 13 November 1991.

⁶² The lack of discipline forced the Federal Presidency to issue a statement in late November that

The SFRY Presidency paid tribute to all volunteer units and individuals who, together with the JNA, made a large contribution to the struggle against Nazi-Fascism and its

pogrom policy against the Serbian population in Croatia. At the same time, the SFRY Presidency points out that all units and volunteer detachments must strictly observe orders from relevant JNA commands . . . the SFRY Presidency has . . . authorized the JNA to take all necessary measures against those units, armed detachments, and individuals who fail to obey orders from their relevant commands.

Belgrade Tanjug 25 November 1991.

⁶³ Lovas fell on 27 September during JNA mopping-up operations around Tovarnik. Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1991. The JNA had earlier bypassed the Croat-held villages northeast of Tovarnik and near the village of Ilok when moving into the Vukovar area.

⁶⁴ Milos Vasic, "War Crimes: Time of Shame," Belgrade *Vreme* 24 February 1992, pp. 12-14. Another JNA officer described a similar experience. Colonel Milorad Vucic, commander of the 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade, which was one of the most heavily engaged JNA formations during the battle, stated in December 1991 that,

Negative occurrences happened, particularly in relation to the treatment of the population, the treatment of their property and their personal security. Personnel from some of [our] brigade's sub-units protested to me with vehemence when they witnessed first-hand the criminal behavior by some individuals from various [paramilitary] groups, and sought earnestly that a stop be put to that. They simply do not want to die for such things.

From an interview with Colonel Vucic in the 25 December edition of the JNA journal, *Narodna Armija*; quoted in Norman Cigar, "The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991: Political and Military Dimensions," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 297-338.

⁶⁵ The discussion of phases in urban combat at the operational level is derived from Colonel Michael Dewar's study, *War in the Streets: The Story of Urban Combat from Calais to Khafji*. UK: David & Charles, 1992, pp. 9-10. Dewar's book helped the authors acquire a more thorough understanding of urban warfare. The Russian Army's experience in Grozny during 1994-1995 has also been examined.

⁶⁶ Not to be confused with the three phases described in the Vukovar campaign. The theoretical three phases of an urban operation describe the missions being accomplished, while the three phases of the Vukovar campaign describe a series of actual combats over distinct time periods.

⁶⁷ The JNA divides urban combat into more or less the same three phases that Dewar does, although the first phase under JNA doctrine appears to include more preliminary actions than just isolation of the town. The JNA preliminaries include reconnaissance of enemy dispositions and reconnaissance in force to seize prisoners for intelligence, identification of the best attack axes, coordination of all arms, and the containment of the populated area to be attacked. Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, "Croatian and Serbian Tactics in 1991 Fighting in Former Yugoslavia," How They Fight: Armies of the World, Charlottesville, VA: US Army National Ground Intelligence Center, 1997, pp 19-22.

⁶⁸ Postic states that,

Because of the shortage of infantry personnel . . . it was not possible to act in accordance with the principles of assaulting a center of population: by assault detachments, teams, and sapper groups.

Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, "Combat Actions for Centers of Population: East Slavonian Battlefield 1991/92," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* May-August 1996, pp. 105-111.

⁶⁹ A postwar Yugoslav Army analysis of JNA artillery operations during the 1991 war noted that,

It was found that artillery preparations for attack on centers of population were more effective when they were of shorter duration . . . fire was most effective when shooting at open targets in salvos, and the poorest results were achieved by systematic firing, because the enemy retreated to shelter immediately after the first few shells, and firing

was wasted, especially when not observed. Artillery teams were often given the mission of destroying an isolated target, which was impossible because of consumption of ammunition and resistance of the target. . . . the efficiency of artillery fire was inadequately used by infantry units.

Colonel Milan Miletic, "Artillery in Military Operations of 1991," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* 6 November 1996, pp. 97-103.

⁷⁰ Miletic also was highly critical of JNA target acquisition methods or lack thereof during fighting throughout Croatia, noting that organic artillery observation units were under-utilized, and basic techniques remained unpracticed. Colonel Milan Miletic, pp. 97-103.

⁷¹ A similar situation had developed during the 1943 Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy.

⁷² Postic indicated that Federal forces insufficiently consolidated the positions which they had seized, allowing hidden enemy troops to continue engaging JNA/TO troops, as well as permitting Croatian personnel to re-infiltrate the position. Lieutenant Colonel Milos Postic, pp. 105-111.

⁷³ Based on analysis of objectives reported captured during initial attacks of the final phase. Belgrade Radio and Tanjug reporting for November 1991.

⁷⁴ Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, pp 19-22.

⁷⁵ A sample assault force from a JNA attack on one of the Croatian fortified zones comprised a combined arms battalion consisting of the following elements:

- two tank companies
- one mechanized company
- one military police company (-)
- one reconnaissance company
- one 120mm mortar battery

The battalion was then further task-organized into four assault groups, each with:

- five tanks
- three to four APC/IFVs
- one to two infantry platoons
- half a squad of combat engineers

The battalion attacked down three axes, with one assault group per axis, while the fourth remained in reserve.

Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, pp 19-22.

⁷⁶ It appears that the elite Military Police/Antiterrorist units, when used as infantry, were split up into companies and acted as the main assault infantry element, while volunteer and TO infantry provided the second echelon, mopping up a captured sector and consolidating its defense. The elite shock troops were then pulled out to prepare for the next move. Borkovic's comments on JNA tactics in November support this judgment:

At that time a group of their specialists [special operations troops] were in action at Sajmiste for two hours daily. They took one house at a time, and at each one they left chetniks [i.e. volunteers] to guard the positions.

Branko Borkovic, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Ivica Arbanas notes that the JNA's capture of the Brasadin grain silos gave the JNA artillery a big advantage.

From the silo, they could see clear as day where we were walking, what we were doing, where trucks were coming to us, and where the cars were. They simply knew our routes and paths. Then our people began to suffer: one lost an arm, one died, and five or six were wounded precisely for that reason. But while the silo was ours, the shells fell in the gardens.

Dr. Juraj Njavro, pp. 85-99. Interview with Arbanas.

⁷⁸ Charles M. Winkler and Charles R. Patrick, pp 19-22.

⁷⁹ A Belgrade reporter observed volunteer troops during mopping up operations after Vukovar's fall as they cleared underground passageways beneath the Vukovar museum. Unattributed, Interview with Major Veselin Slijvancanin, Belgrade *Nin*, 29 November 1991, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁰ Vladimir Jovanovic, "Taking Ambushes," Podgorica *Monitor* 22 October 1993, p. 12.

⁸¹ Belgrade Radio 3 October 1991. Silber and Little cite a 5 November 1991 Belgrade Tanjug report that claims the air force flew 65 sorties that day against Vukovar and elsewhere. Silber and Little, p. 178. At the time, there were seven combat sectors in Croatia. If Vukovar received 18 sorties that would have left about seven for the rest of Eastern Slavonia and the other six areas, which seems reasonable in terms of priority.

⁸² Captain Darko Savic, "Use of Armored-Mechanized Units in a Populated Place," *Vojni Glasnik* January-February 1992, pp. 25-28.

⁸³ Note that this analysis of the JNA plan is based on how the battle played out, and not any specific elucidation of the operation from JNA commanders or planners. However, it is clear from a detailed reading of the battle that this was more or less the plan.

⁸⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Tesic, in command of one military police battalion, led the attack on the left. One of his companies appears to have been commanded by Captain Miroslav Radic. Lieutenant Colonel Branislav Lukic, in command of the other military police battalion, led the attack in the center. Radic's company appears to have been augmented with additional volunteer troops, bringing the force under his command from company to battalion strength of 500 men. International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 94.

The long-suffering 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade, under Colonel Vucic, which had borne the brunt of operations in this sector since August, had been pulled out of the line after the failed early October attack and returned to the control of 1st Guards Mechanized Division. It was apparently redeployed to the Nijemci sector, some 25 kilometers southeast of Vinkovci.

⁸⁵ Mirko Bekic, "Soldier's Incidental Story; Don't Pick Up Anything, Brother," Belgrade *Borba* 4 November 1991, p. 9.

⁸⁶ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, map between pp. 36-37, and chapter on Bogdanovic, pp. 161-175.

⁸⁷ Momcilo Djorgovic, "It Seems We Will Have To Go To Zagreb," Belgrade *Borba* 1-2 January 1992, p. 12. An interview with Arkan, Branko Borkovic, p. 23.

⁸⁸ Quote "From the War Diary of the Novi Sad Corps," which apparently was published in part in the Serbian press. Branko Borkovic included a copy of several excerpts in his book. Branko Borkovic, p. 50.

⁸⁹ Quote "From the War Diary of the Novi Sad Corps," Branko Borkovic, p. 50.

⁹⁰ Branko Borkovic, pp. 24-25.

⁹¹ Branko Borkovic, p. 100.

⁹² Jasna Bebic and Eduard Popovic, pp. 2-4. The UN war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia in The Hague later indicted Colonel (now Lieutenant Colonel General) Mile Mrksic, commander Operational Group "South" and 1st Guards Motorized Brigade. Major (now Colonel) Veselin Slijivancanin, Chief of Security Operational Group "South" and 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, and Captain Miroslav Radic, probably a company commander in one of the MP battalions/1st Guards Motorized Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dobrovoje Tesic, for the war crimes committed at Ovcara.

Two JNA personnel, one officer, possibly in a transport unit, and the other an enlisted Military Police reservist, later described the atmosphere in Vukovar after the town's fall and at Ovcara just prior to the massacre. The officer states,

I was a member of the unit in charge of the evacuation of the civilian population from Vukovar. We came to Vukovar on 18 November 1991. In Eastern Slavonia, that day is celebrated as the day of the liberation of Vukovar.

We parked several coaches on the street above the hospital. I had enough time, so I decided to see what the town looked like. I went down to the hospital. In front of the hospital someone put the arm of a young man into a black garbage bag. The arm was leaning against the wall, the bag was rolled down. I saw a reporter with a camera who photographed the scene from various perspectives. On the other

side there was a huge pile of bandages full of blood. The picture was horrible. In front of the entrance several Yugoslav People's Army ambulances were parked. The wounded were being evacuated.

People were being taken out, youngsters between 18 and 25 years. I remember that they were all shaven and that they were wearing clean light-blue pajamas with vertical stripes. Military Police were standing in front of the hospital. Under a tree in a corner I saw Captain Radic. I knew him: I knew most of the Yugoslav People's Army officers from the Topcider Barracks. He had worked there before the war. I also knew the officers from the "4 July" Barracks in Vojsdovac, Belgrade, since I visited various barracks as part of my duties.

I went to him and greeted him. He murmured something. He had an icy look directed at the stretchers and the wounded that were being brought out. I asked him: "How many patients are there?" He did not answer my question. I said: "The more there are, the better to exchange them for our prisoners." He replied: "These are dead people." I asked him: "How can you say that they are dead. You can see that they are alive, well shaven." I was a little bit naive. I felt that no conversation could be made. I felt ill at ease. He did not reply to anything, and I went away without a word.

There is a wall to the left of the hospital. An International Red Cross official was standing there. I recognized him since I had seen him once on television. It was the man with whom Major Slijivancanin had an unpleasant television duel several months earlier.

I met two nurses who had just come out of the hospital. One of them was crying. They were both young and beautiful. I heard one of them saying to the other crying: "How can they say that we are all Ustashas?"

The dusk was falling, and I noticed a group of civilians across the road. It was a group of 100 to 150 people. Across the street, at the entrance to a park, there was a fuel stockroom. The room was full of coal and wood. A big porch was in front of it. This is where the people were standing, and I approached a woman in the group. I asked her what they were waiting for, since night was falling. She told me: "We are Croats. What will happen with us, Mister?"

"You will be evacuated, there are problems at the moment." I replied. She grasped my hand and said: "I am scared." I told her not to worry, that I was told that the Croats would be evacuated to Croatia and the Serbs to Yugoslavia. A truck came at that moment and soldiers threw out bags with food, normally used by the Yugoslav People's Army. Cans, packages for army units. The people still clung together. Only a few of them made a step forward and took the packages. The group consisted of women, old people, and children. There were no young people among them.

The people were over 60, mostly women, approximately 150 of them. The space was huge, and they were standing there in groups.

I stayed there for 15 minutes. I did not see the Military Policeman who came to me. It was dusk. He took me by the hand and brought me out of the group. He said: "There is no need for you to stay here. When trucks come, they will be taken away." He was polite, but he practically dragged me out. The night fell in the meantime. The convoy started moving. Vukovar bade farewell to us with buildings that were still burning.

As the officer moved into the town he found,

I met soldiers in various uniforms in the town. Some of them were wearing black fur hats and cockades [Distinguishing features of Serbian nationalist "chetnik" units]. Most of them had yellow boots hanging down from their shoulders that were stolen from the "Borovo" factory and shop [a manufacturer of rubber goods and shoes]. Some of them drove bicycles, motorbikes, or cars pierced with holes and without windows. I stopped in front of the adult education center. Flames were swallowing the building. The town was still burning, and it was very stuffy. There was a bank

across the road where a stack of savings books lay on the street. Glass was falling out of the window frames. Approximately 80 bodies were lined up across the street. In rows. A section of the park was covered with bodies. They were covered with plastic sheets. There I came across some reporters and news photographers. There were no traces of violence on the bodies. The reporters told me that they died during the three-month clashes. Many of the bodies were naked. They were a horrible sight, especially the women. I could bear the men somehow, but I felt sick and ashamed when I saw young, and especially old naked, dead women. It was relatively warm, and they had begun to discolor and develop an offensive smell. There were no children among them.

"The Testimony of a Yugoslav People's Army Officer Who Was in Vukovar During the Last Days of the Drama: I asked Radic How Many Prisoners There Were in the Hospital, and He Told Me: 'These Are Dead People,'" Belgrade *Dnevni Telegraf*, 12 October 1996, p. 3.

After the officer's story was published, the MP reservist came forward anonymously to describe the fate of the prisoners being carried from the hospital. The reservist almost certainly was a member of the 24th Military Police Battalion, attached to Operational Group "South" from the 24th Kragujevac Corps. The 24th MP Battalion took over responsibility for Vukovar after its capture. Lieutenant Colonel Milorad Vojnovic mentioned below, the battalion commander, was appointed town commandant. Belgrade Radio 18 December 1991; Belgrade Radio 16 December 1991.

My detachment was located on the exit from Negoslaveci toward Vukovar, on the junction with the road that leads to Sotin, where Ovcara was located. About 15 to 20 of us had been ordered to guard the prisoners of war at Ovcara. There, we encountered members of the 'Petrova Gora' Movement [a volunteer unit], Territorial Defense units from Vukovar, and a Chetnik unit whose military affiliation I did not know. Altogether there were about 40 of them, either drunk or completely insane.

In front of the hangar with the prisoners, there was an enormous pile of clothes and shoes, through which the Chetniks were rummaging and dividing up the money they found. The people inside the hangar were turned with their faces toward the wall and with their hands against the wall. A group of Chetniks was taking off their necklaces, rings, watches . . . Those people were virtually naked and barefoot, standing on the concrete, in the cold. There were many more of them standing there, more than double, in comparison with the 200 bodies that were dug up at Ovcara. Perhaps there were 500 people. They were of all ages, from 17 to 80, mostly men, a few older women, and only one young woman.

Our detachment, then headed by Lieutenant Colonel Vojnovic, was supposed to identify them. The identification was interrupted by a group of Territorial Defense soldiers who broke into the hangar, singled out more than 30 men and women, loaded them on a truck, and took them to Sotin. I can never forget a prisoner who complained to me that he was 'not guilty of anything, that he was a driver in the Vukovar hospital and had no connection with the Croatian National Guards.' I found out from some other people that he was married to a Serb woman and had three children. My first reaction was to get him out of that group and get him over to the side that was supposed to be released. Then one of my commanding officers came up and slapped me, saying: 'Do you want these drunken fools to kill us all?' The same group that released some people interrogated others in ways that you could only see in the movies. Prisoners suspected of having taken part in the fighting were rounded up in the middle of the hangar, while the others were ordered to sit on the floor, in a circle, with their backs to the wall. Each one of us guarded about 10 to 15 people. I was

guarding a corner area where that young woman was. Then a Chetnik walked up to me and said: 'You guard this one for me, tonight she will belong only to me and God.' When I replied that I was guarding all of them equally, he told me not to be a smart-aleck. The woman's name was Vesna. She was probably in her fifth or sixth month of pregnancy, and I found out that, as it was rumored then, she was the wife of one of the most notorious Ustashas, a man called Markubasic. They told stories about how he made chains out of children's fingers.

Our commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Vojnovic, was arguing with some 'non-formation' troops, trying to draw them away from the prisoners, but the slaughter had already begun. It was then that I saw, for the first time in my life, a man breaking another man's head to bits with his rifle butt. The Chetnik called Cetinje was the most 'active' in that group. He found a Sqiptar (ethnic Albanian) among the prisoners. Kemo was his name, and beat him to death, forcing him to learn to sing 'O Vojvodo Sindjelicu' (Serb nationalist song). Not a single bone in his body, including his little finger, remained intact. One of the Territorial soldiers was kicking Vesna in the stomach, cursing her Ustasha mother. They jumped on the wounds of many of the people. I can say with certainty that they were drunk and crazy enough to open fire on us and kill us all had we attempted to save the prisoners. We could do nothing. There were many more of them too.

We arrived at Ovcara around 1600 or 1700, and, at around 2100, two military transport vehicles arrived at the hangar, plus a truck and a dredge. They filled the truck with prisoners and drove away toward a small forest area, a few hundred meters away from Ovcara. Then Lieutenant Colonel Vojnovic ordered our unit to retreat and thus avoided our involvement in the liquidation. We left when they drove the first group away.

I know that those were the prisoners that were dragged out of the basements and cellars of the Vukovar hospital. There were also many wounded men, but I am quite certain that there were more than 200 people. After we left, we heard shots being fired until about an hour after midnight. Those people were killed only because they were Croats, and I would not be surprised that, among them, in that chaos and madness, there might also have been Serbs. I cannot recall the exact date when this happened, but I am certain that it was between 18 and 20 November 1991.

Two days before the events in Ovcara, we were guarding prisoners from Mitnica, with commander Zdenko Karaula. There were 172 of them, and they were captured by the [Military] Police Guard commander, Karanfil. (Note: the officer's unit is not given; he may have been part of the military police from 1st Guards Motorized Brigade or possibly 1st Guards Military Police Battalion). My platoon was guarding the hangar with the prisoners. We stretched a rope in the middle of the hangar and told them that if anyone touched it, they would all be dead. There were only 15 of us guarding all of them, but no one tried anything.

The following morning, a man came from the Red Cross in Zurich (whom Major Slijivancanin had insulted on television) and thanked us for having observed the convention on prisoners of war. We gave the prisoners fruit juice and toast, and later they were transferred to the prison in Sremska Mitrovica. I mention this in order to show the difference between us, the mobilized reservists, and those who took part in the war and killed all those people at Ovcara.

The purges continued in Vukovar as well, but there were no more mass killings. The purges were mainly conducted by teams from Borovo Selo. Those people were real animals, they went Croat-hunting at night, and they would kill if anyone even pointed a finger at someone else for having cooperated with the Croats. The Chetniks were motivated by money, while these other soldiers did it out of revenge.

- While the liberation of Vukovar was under way, we worked together with all of them, and later they caused us a lot of problems. The Chetniks behaved like professional plunderers, they knew what to look for in the houses they looted . . . "Crazed and Drunken Chetniks Broke People's Heads With Their Rifle Butts, Stomped on People's Wounds, and Threw Dead Bodies Into a Well," Belgrade *Dnevni Telegraf* 14 October 1996, p. 3.
- ⁹³ The Vukovar Municipality records listed 1,851 names as killed in Vukovar as of March 1993; the 450 MUP/ZNG deaths must be subtracted from this total, based on information in Borkovic's account. The records also show another 2,600 missing, including 300 from the Vukovar hospital (these 300 probably are the wounded ZNG troops mentioned earlier). Zeljko Luborovic, "Count the Dead and the Name of the Living," Zagreb *Danas* 5 March 1993, pp. 19-21.
- ⁹⁴ Milisav Sekulic, p. 220.
- ⁹⁵ Borkovic includes a copy of Tuš's operation order, as well as a description of the attack. Branko Borkovic, 1995, pp. 45, 105. See also Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, pp. 176-182 for more tactical details, including the map between pp. 180-181.
- ⁹⁶ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, pp. 182-188.
- ⁹⁷ Mile Dedakovic with Alenka Mikrovic-Nad and Davor Runtic, see map between pp. 192-193.
- ⁹⁸ Veceslav Kocjan, "Playing Around With Money and Weapons," Zagreb *Danas* 31 December 1991, pp. 20-21.
- ⁹⁹ Quoted from Dedakovic's report, identified as "Regular Daily Report," dated 23 September 1991, from the Headquarters for the Defense of the District of Vukovar to Headquarters of the Croatian National Guard of the Republic of Croatia—Zagreb. A copy is included in Borkovic's book. Branko Borkovic, p. 35.
- ¹⁰⁰ Dedakovic told Borkovic, "Branko you stay here. We will soon come back. We will organize a breakthrough to Vukovar from Vinkovci." Branko Borkovic, p. 16.
- ¹⁰¹ Veceslav Kocjan, pp. 20-21.
- ¹⁰² Veceslav Kocjan, "When the Hawk Was Away on Business," Zagreb *Danas* 26 November 1991, pp. 14-15. Borkovic and Vidic also were highly critical of the Vinkovci political/crisis staff leadership, prior to Dedakovic's arrival to take command. See Branko Borkovic, pp. 15-16, 104.
- ¹⁰³ Borkovic included a copy of the report in his book. Branko Borkovic, p. 52.
- ¹⁰⁴ Jasna Babic and Eduard Popovic, pp. 2-4. Borkovic was held for three weeks before being released. He was hounded the rest of his career and resigned from the Croatian Army in early 1993. Branko Borkovic, p. 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ As will be seen, the effort in Western Slavonia to keep open the lines of communication from the Zagreb region to the rest of Eastern Slavonia around the Osijek and Vinkovci areas was to become a key focus, drawing in many of the available troops and supplies.

¹⁰⁶ The fighting around Osijek during the Battle of Vukovar typically consisted of regular, fairly intense local clashes and JNA/TOS shelling of the city. There were no major battles, judging by analysis of Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug reporting for this time period. Around Vinkovci—separately from the battles along the Croatians' Vinkovci-Vukovar supply corridor—the JNA did mount two attacks, both in mid-November, prior to Vukovar's fall. The first appears to have come on 10 November, when the 12th Corps, probably spearheaded by the 211th Armored Brigade, tried and failed to penetrate along the Jarmina-Ivankovo line and cut off Vinkovci. The second occurred on 14-16 November when elements of 1st Guards Mechanized Division, probably 1st and 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigades, attacked near Nijemci, some 25 kilometers southeast of Vinkovci, striking toward Lipovac on the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, probably to clear a larger buffer zone along the Serbian border and putting yet another crimp in the highway.

¹⁰⁷ Panic was quoted in Silber and Little, p. 186.

¹⁰⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 21 November 1991. Troops from Arkan's SDG "Tigers" and armored units from the JNA 12th Mechanized Brigade spearheaded the attacks. Momcilo Djordovic, "It Seems We Will Have To Go To Zagreb," Belgrade *Borba* 1-2 January 1992.

¹⁰⁹ The 101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade arrived in the threatened sector almost simultaneously with the beginning of the JNA advance.

¹¹⁰ Panic was quoted in Silber and Little, pp. 186-187.

¹¹¹ General Kadijevic also claims that this was the case, stating: The JNA grouping in eastern Slavonia won that battle [Vukovar], defeated the main body of the Croatian forces, and after the liberation of Vukovar was ready to continue on westward. Although relative to the initial plan of operation it was too late for the second mission, for the reasons that I have indicated, its success and the threat of it penetrating to Zagreb were significant factors in Croatia's acceptance of the Vance Plan.

Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 137.

¹¹² Dusan Masic, "They Will Never Capture Me Again," Belgrade *Nin* 13 September 1991, p. 26. Interview with Arkan.

¹¹³ BK Television interview with Arkan 4 June 1997.

¹¹⁴ Dada Vujsasinovic, "Secret File On Arkan: Early Jobs, Paths of Revolution, and Parliamentary Rehabilitation: Pedagogic Poem," Belgrade *Duga* 30 January-12 February 1993, pp. 16-21; BK TV Interview with Arkan 4 June 1997.

¹¹⁵ Dusan Masic, p. 26. Interview with Arkan.

Annex 18

Western Slavonia Operations—Croatia Strikes Back¹

The 5th (Banja Luka) Corps, under Lieutenant Colonel General Nikola Uzelac, on 21 September began assembling its main force, comprising one armored brigade, two motorized brigades, and four, later six, partisan brigades, plus an artillery regiment and other support units. The JNA force would eventually total about 20,000 troops with 90 tanks, 75 IFV/APCs, more than 100 field artillery tubes and MRLs over 100mm, and some 70 heavy mortars.² The West Slavonian TO provided an additional 7,000 personnel in seven local detachments. Some 5,000 volunteers probably joined the JNA and TO ranks some time later.³

The 5th Corps' campaign plan called for it to drive north from the Bosanska/Stara Gradiska area along the Pakrac-Daruvar-Virovitica axis with the object of severing Slavonia from the Zagreb region. A bridgehead across the Sava consolidated by flank guards would be widened along east and west axes toward Novska and Nova Gradiska. The 5th Corps would then link up with the main JNA operational grouping—the 1st Guards Mechanized Division and the 12th (Novi Sad) Corps—coming from the direction of Osijek-Vinkovci. Together these forces would then push toward Varazdin and Zagreb.

The opposing ZNG/MUP forces of the Bilogora-Podrava Crisis Staff (2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone from 1 October) more or less matched the JNA/TO in manpower along all three axes but were much less well armed.⁴ In the Nova Gradiska sector (under 1st Osijek Operational Zone), the ZNG and MUP had arrayed by late September a force of as many as 5,500 to 6,000 troops, which grew to 10,000 by mid-October. These were organized in one Guards battalion, four reserve infantry brigades, and three Special Police battalions.⁵ In the north, near the town of Virovitica and the Bilogora Mountains, the ZNG/MUP initially had some 3,000 troops, expanded to 9,000 by mid-October and organized in four reserve

infantry brigades and two independent battalions. In and around Pakrac town, the ZNG's original 1,500 grew to some 3,500 troops organized in one reserve infantry brigade and two independent battalions.⁶ Between Pakrac and Novska, the ZNG/MUP had assembled an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 men, increasing to 7,000 troops in early October, organized in one to two battalions of a Guards brigade, two reserve infantry brigades, and two independent battalions, plus elements of four Special Police battalions.⁷ Between Okucani-Novska and the Sava River, the ZNG initially deployed an estimated 5,000 troops in late September, growing to some 6,000 by mid-October.⁸ These included most of a Guards brigade, one reserve infantry brigade, and four independent battalions. In total, the ZNG/MUP eventually deployed about 35,000 troops in the Nova Gradiska-Virovitica-Pakrac-Novska area.⁹

While most of the 5th (Banja Luka) Corps began mobilizing on 15 September, its forward deployed "peacekeeping" units from the 329th Armored Brigade, augmented by a battle group from the 16th Motorized Brigade, attacked ZNG/MUP elements near the town of Stara Gradiska and nearby Okucani. It was apparently the 329th's mission to create a bridgehead to which the rest of the corps would deploy, a mission it completed in good order.¹⁰ A week later the understrength 343rd Motorized Brigade, with an attached battalion from 5th Partisan Brigade, joined the 5th Corps forces across the Sava. With these forces the 5th Corps now began a two-pronged advance from its bridgehead. The 329th—supported by a battle group from the 265th Mechanized Brigade (the former peacekeeping unit)—moved against ZNG/MUP forces deployed southeast of Okucani and west of Nova Gradiska. At the same time the 343rd advanced through Okucani, moving on the 5th Corps' main axis (see below). In hard fighting the 329th Armored Brigade advanced some six kilometers toward Nova Gradiska over a two-week period, putting it within five kilometers of

the town by 7 October.¹¹ At this point the drive either stalled or the JNA halted. Inconclusive fighting continued in the area through the end of the month.

Following on the consolidation of the 5th Corps bridgehead and the advance of the 329th and 343rd Brigades, the JNA attacked on the left flank in early October. Over 5-9 October, the 16th Motorized Brigade, with a battalion of the 5th Partisan, drove the 1st Guards Brigade and the 62nd Novska Battalion back along the Okucani-Novska road until the JNA drew within one kilometer of Novska.¹² Simultaneously, the 6th and 11th Partisan Brigades pushed along the bank of the Sava River, capturing Jasenovac on 7 October. Sharp firefights continued until the end of October—one of which killed the 16th Brigade's commander on 13 October—but neither side appears to have mounted any major actions.¹³

Meanwhile, the Pakrac sector—which TO and ZNG/MUP troops had fought hard for back in August—heated up in September and would become one of the most fought-over areas in the Croatian war. With the advance of the 343rd Motorized Brigade through Okucani on 23/24 September, the JNA began its move toward Pakrac, which 5th Corps probably hoped to clear quickly so that it could push on toward its true objective, Virovitica. Rather than directly attack the town, the JNA's 343rd Motorized Brigade instead attempted to outflank Croatian defenses and cut Pakrac off.¹⁴ Heavy fighting ensued in the villages of Kusonje, Bair, and Bujavica. A 27 September ZNG and MUP counterattack reversed the initial JNA successes around the key road junctions of Lipik and Dobrovac, some three to five kilometers southwest of Pakrac; at the same time the ZNG 76th Pakrac Battalion, elements of the 104th Varazdin Brigade, and Special Police troops succeeded in holding off repeated TO efforts to seize the town itself.¹⁵ The JNA renewed its advance in early October, this time seizing the important crossroads at Gornji Caglic on 3 October, then pushing on against Lipik and Dobrovac, which fell on 11 October. This reduced Croatian access into Pakrac to a single tenuously-held road link.¹⁶ But the intensity of the Croatian defense and the need for continued mopping-up operations had sapped the JNA's strength, and its attack ran out of steam. The 5th Corps was no longer in a position to

reach Virovitica, although its gains, combined with the large TO-held areas north of Pakrac, substantially reduced the road connections between Eastern Slavonia and the rest of Croatia. Before long the Croatian forces would steal the initiative from the JNA and begin to redraw the map.

The Second Phase—The Croatians Go On the Attack

At the end of October, the 2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone, under the command of Brigadier Mirislav Jezercic, launched an offensive—Operation "Bilogora." The new operation was aimed at TO positions in the Bilogora Mountains near Virovitica and southwest of the town of Podravska Slatina at the northern tip of the large Serb/Federal-held salient in Western Slavonia.¹⁷ This offensive was the first major ZNG/MUP offensive operation and marked a shifting of the initiative to Zagreb's forces. The Bilogora-Podravska Slatina area made a perfect target for the Croatians' offensive debut, as only weak TO forces defended the sector; the JNA's 5th Corps' units were all tied up further south, limiting JNA help to air support. The pocket of Serb villages southwest of Virovitica in the Bilogora Mountains had blocked the main road between Virovitica and Daruvar since early 1991, and the elimination of the TO-held area north of Pakrac would also generally facilitate greater communications with Eastern Slavonia.

The Croatian advance was to move on several axes. In the Bilogora area, the ZNG/MUP were to mount converging attacks from Grubisno Polje and Virovitica along the main road between the two with over 2,000 troops.¹⁸ Meanwhile, further east, elements of three brigades, possibly some 1,000 to 2,000 personnel, attacked south toward the center of Serb-held territory near Podravska Slatina around the village of Miokovicevo.¹⁹ Elements of another battalion attacked toward the same village from northeast of Daruvar.²⁰ Serb forces in the Bilogora area probably numbered only 300 to 400 disorganized TO personnel, probably deployed more to guard their

own villages than along any specific frontline. TO forces around Miokovicevo likely comprised almost 1,000 troops, possibly reinforced with up to 600 Serbian or Bosnian Serb volunteer personnel.

The Croatian attack jumped off around Podravska Slatina on 26 October against a stiff TO defense aided by repeated RV i PVO air strikes. The drive against the villages in the Bilogora Mountains southwest of Virovitica began on 1 November and rapidly defeated TO troops in this area, sending the remaining Serb forces and thousands of Serb refugees streaming south. Following this success, the ZNG/MUP forces increased their pressure on TO positions between Daruvar and Podravska Slatina. Croatian attacks over the next two weeks, however, failed to make any significant gains.

At the same time as Operation "Bilogora," ZNG troops launched an attack northeast of Novska, probably timed to divert JNA attention from the larger operation. The 28/29 October attack, involving elements of three brigades and two independent battalions led by the 1st Guards and Special Police—some 5,000 troops—probably hit elements of the thinly spread 16th Motorized, 2nd Partisan, and 343rd Motorized Brigades.²¹ The JNA lost several key villages, and the ZNG moved into a position to threaten the main Federal road link between Okucani and Pakrac.

The Third Phase—The TO Collapses and the Croatians Advance

Croatian offensive operations shifted into high gear late in November and December, as Operation "Bilogora" routed TO forces north of Pakrac and ZNG troops between Novska and Pakrac pressed JNA troops hard. This time, Croatian forces hit the JNA first about 23 November, renewing operations between Novska and Pakrac. The 2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone's Operational Group "Posavina," led again by 1st Guards Brigade, took a key hill area some 10 kilometers northeast of Novska on 29 November.²² By 7 December, hard-fought battles enabled ZNG forces to recapture Lipik and push to within a kilometer of the main road from Okucani to

Pakrac near the key village of Donji Caglic. A JNA counterattack around Lipik on 30 November briefly blunted the Croatian drive. Then on 10 December ZNG forces spearheaded by 117th Koprivnica Brigade troops launched a major drive to cut the road. They ran into elements of the 122nd Partisan and 343rd Motorized Brigades, backed by a wall of JNA armor and artillery.²³ One Croatian account, from the 117th Brigade, states,

In the early morning hours of 10 December 1991, a coordinated assault began. This action will long remain etched in the memories of all those who participated in it. This was the attempt to occupy Caglic Donji. The action did not succeed because all indications are that the [JNA] were stronger. The [JNA] deployed their forces along the entire line. They had extremely strong artillery forces, as well as armored-mechanized units. They pounded us the entire time as our defenders were withdrawing.²⁴

Fierce fighting continued near the road until the January cease-fire, but neither side was able to take any new ground.

The largest Croatian advance, however, came northeast and east of Pakrac as Operational Group "Pakrac" forces—over 6,000 troops from the 127th, 132nd, and 136th Brigades, plus Special Police—finally smashed through TO defenses between Daruvar and Podravska Slatina on 7-10 December. Broken TO units poured south from the Miokovicevo and Vocić areas toward the road junction of Kamensko, some 25 kilometers east of Pakrac. The retreating TO troops found no respite as the ZNG 123rd Slavonska Pozega Brigade and elements of the 132nd and 136th Brigades launched a new attack on 17 December from the direction of Slavonska Pozega toward Kamensko while additional ZNG troops attacked from south of Daruvar in order to link up west of Kamensko. However, TO defenses northeast of Pakrac—reinforced by the JNA's 5th Kozara Partisan Brigade which had been rushed to the area—had stiffened somewhat, and managed to block the juncture of the

two columns for a week. Then the ZNG/MUP's superior numbers overwhelmed the JNA and TO, forcing their remnants to retreat to positions around Pakrac and Okucani by 27 December.²⁵

Evaluation of Forces, Operations, and Tactics

The key to the development of the operations in Western Slavonia for both the JNA/TO and the ZNG/MUP was the JNA's inability to rapidly break out of its bridgehead on the Sava and drive quickly toward Virovitica. The weaknesses of the JNA, combined with the ZNG/MUP's staunch defense of key strongholds, gave the Croatians time to mobilize and arm additional forces. As a result, by mid-October the JNA had no chance of defeating Croatian troops in the region and had insufficient units with which to defend the sprawling TO holdings in the north. Croatian forces, better organized and armed than the weak TO, were able to choose when and where to attack Serb forces, while tying down the stronger JNA in the south. Without the presence of JNA combat units, the TO was doomed to defeat. Despite their growing strength, however, the Croatians remained unable to achieve anything other than local victories over the better equipped and more professional JNA.

The JNA 5th Corps' difficulties in late September and early October stemmed initially from JN campaign plan. These problems were to magnify the effects of the JNA's dependence on firepower alone, and the limited training of 5th Corps' reservists. Consequently, things began to unravel immediately for 5th Corps when it was forced to undertake its operation without the full complement of forces earmarked for it in the JNA General Staff's plan. General Kadijevic has stated that the 5th Corps was supposed to have received five combat brigades over and above its own forces (it is unclear if he includes the mobilized Bosnian TO brigades among 5th Corps' own units). Kadijevic concludes that the 5th Corps

...executed only part of its mission. The most important reason was that because of the unsuccessful mobilization that group [5th Corps] did not get the planned five brigades, only the equivalent of one and a half brigades

. . . If the envisaged brigades had arrived, even late, the majority of the problems that emerged later would not have even arisen. Nowhere did the failure of mobilization that I have noted have such a negative effect as on the situation in Western Slavonia.²⁶

The result was that the JNA did not have the planned combination of overwhelming heavy weapons and superior numbers that would have allowed it to push quickly through Croatian defenses. With more infantry to exploit the JNA's firepower advantages the 5th Corps could have compensated for the training deficiencies of its reservists by sheer weight of numbers; without it, the heavy guns could create only tactical gains based on brute force.²⁷ The 5th Corps' crucial problem was that the reserve replacements that filled out its ranks had received little or no tactical training, while few of its reserve combat formations had conducted the kind of field training and exercises needed to create cohesive, well-trained units. The bald fact was that most JNA personnel—other than the command staffs—had hardly more training than most of the ZNG troops.²⁸ By the time the JNA had taken steps to correct these deficiencies, the Croatians had become far better organized, acquired a number of heavy weapons, and moved enough troops to the sector to ensure that the JNA would be unable to repeat its initial successes. The Croatians might not be able to rout the 5th Corps, but they could stop it and hold it fast.²⁹

The mobilization failure placed General Uzelac and the 5th Corps staff in a predicament over how to array the brigades available to them. If they had chosen to mass their formations on the Virovitica axis—the corps' main direction—that would have left the corps' flanks vulnerable to converging attacks from Novska and Nova Gradiska, potentially allowing the Croatians to cut off the bulk of 5th Corps. The other option, the one Uzelac settled on, was to mass most of his forces on the flank axes to create an adequate base of operations in the Novska-Okucani-Nova Gradiska triangle, while making a smaller effort toward Pakrac. Uzelac probably hoped that he would eventually

receive enough reinforcements to continue the drive to Virovitica, and that even the initiation of the attack would tie down Croatian forces and threaten their lines of communication to Eastern Slavonia. This appears to have been the best Uzelac could have done in the circumstances, although the advance on Virovitica would be further hamstrung by the defection of Bosnian Croat and Muslim reservists from the brigade mobilized for this axis.

The Western Slavonia TO often proved to be more of a burden than an asset to the JNA.³⁰ Despite the tutelage and example of the JNA, TO soldiers continued to display the same shortcomings that hindered them during the summer fighting, and they remained undisciplined and unreliable throughout the campaign. The TO leadership failed to create cohesive combat units from the village guards who made up the force, unlike their ZNG counterparts, and few TO units were able to defend any position without the presence of JNA combat units.³¹ Charged with defending more territory than its manpower could cover, the TO would find that its glaring military deficiencies meant that the revamped ZNG and MUP could drive Serb forces from most of Western Slavonia.³²

The Croatians' successful defense of Western Slavonia and their occupation of large areas hinged on the way they capitalized on the elements of superior morale, rapid organization and deployment of manpower, captured heavy weapons, and operational-level planning. At the outset of the JNA campaign it was the high morale of local reserve units and the stiffening of professional Guards and Special Police troops that allowed them to contain the JNA advance. ZNG/MUP personnel were able to use the villages that dotted the JNA's advance route as strongholds to slow them down. This bought time for the ZNG to mobilize and arm more troops with newly captured small arms and integrate the heavy weapons seized from JNA barracks, and these new formations were readily controlled by the new Croatian corps and division-level command structures. The creation of

effective command staffs was especially important for the Croatians' offensive operations. The staffs of the 2nd Bjelovar Operational Zone and its operational groups devised effective and workable campaign and tactical-level attack plans.³³ These improvements allowed the combined ZNG/MUP forces to crush the weak TO units wherever they were encountered. They remained insufficient, however, to achieve any more than local victories against the firepower and professionalism of the JNA.³⁴

Throughout Croatia, both the Croatians and the JNA used special shock units—Guards, military police, Special Police, reconnaissance-sabotage, or “intervention” elements—to spearhead attacks by larger, regular formations. These methods were clearly apparent in ZNG/MUP operations in Western Slavonia. Most ZNG formations were reserve units whose ranks were filled with older, less able men. The ZNG therefore larded its reserve brigades and independent battalions with “elite” sub-units of reconnaissance, sabotage, and intervention companies or platoons composed of younger men and volunteers. These soldiers were not elite in the sense that professional armies use the term; most probably had no more training than their comrades and differed from them only in their motivation and youth. By concentrating these qualities, however, the ZNG/MUP were able to maximize the effect of their manpower advantages. A typical order of battle for a Croatian attack might consist of two or three reserve brigades, plus some independent infantry battalions, which would provide the bulk of the manpower. One or two Guards battalions and/or Special Police units interspersed along the line would attempt to seize the main objective, while the reserve formations, led by their “elite” sub-units, would advance alongside.

Endnotes, Annex 18

¹ The details of the fighting in Western Slavonia are drawn from Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, and Zagreb Radio reporting from mid-September through 1 January 1992, as well as a multitude of articles in the Croatian military journals *Hrvatski Vojnik* and Zagreb *Velebit* discussing the activities of the various brigades. The list of journal articles includes: Sinisa Haluzan, "Daruvar Cranes," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 16. The 52nd Independent Daruvar Battalion, Vesna Puljak, "Eyes Fixed on the Sky," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 23 April 1993, p. 79. Air Defense units of 1st Guards Brigade, Zlatko Djurjevic, "On to Freedom With Patriotism and Courage," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 16 July 1993, p. 18. The 127th Virovitica Brigade, Vesna Puljak, "Always Advancing—Without Retreating," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 7 May 1993, pp. 14-15. The 153rd Velika Gorica Brigade, Ozren Veselic, "They Have Something to Teach," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 30 July 1993, p. 17. The 104th Varazdin Brigade, Mate Babic, "The Pride of the 3rd Krizevci Battalion," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 30 July 1993, p. 18. The 3rd (Krizevci) Battalion/117th Koprivnica Brigade, Mladen Pavkovic, "Brave Warriors from the Drava Valley," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 2 July 1993, pp. 22-24. The 117th Koprivnica Brigade, Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16. The 1st Guards Brigade, Sinisa Haluzan, "Tear of Slavonia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 17-19. The 132nd Nasice Brigade, Gordan Lasic, "A Symbol of Croatian Victory—The 125th Brigade," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 12. Vesna Puljak, "Born in the Underground," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 12. An Independent Company of the 101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade, Goran Bijuk, "The Lionhearted Mikesi," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 24 September 1993, p. 14. The 19th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion, Neven Miladin, "Victories In War and Peace," Zagreb *Velebit* 29 March 1996, p. 15. The 123rd Slavonska Pozega Brigade, Neven Miladin, "They Responded to Every Assignment," Zagreb *Velebit* 19 January 1996, p. 12. The 151st (8th) Samobor Brigade, "Formations of the Croatian Army," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 16 July 1993, pp. 14-15. The 56th Independent Kutina Battalion, Gordan Radosevic, "The 99th—from Slavonia's Plain to the Kapela Heights," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 January 1995, pp. 23-25.

² The initial drive was made with the bulk of the 329th Armored Brigade and the Okucani TO; the 2nd Krajina Partisan Brigade later reinforced them. The 5th Kozara Partisan Brigade also operated in this sector during late November.

³ The TO and volunteer personnel eventually came officially under JNA control, although even prior to the 31 October 5th Corps order to this effect the JNA as a practical matter probably directed combat operations by accompanying TO forces. The 5th Corps order, dated 31 October 1991, states, . . . "all TO units and HQs located in the AORs of JNA Brigades are subordinated to those commands." The order adds that the JNA Brigades are to consider the attached units of the TO and other formations of reinforcement (sic) as elements of their own combat disposition and are to look after those formations. *International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>*, accessed June 2002, p. 92.

⁴ The manpower estimates below are based on an average Croatian brigade having some 2,000 personnel and an independent battalion some 500, unless other information is available. Many brigades, however, probably had more than 2,000 troops and so the estimates likely are on the low side. It is also difficult to track the rate at which armed Croatian manpower grew; the numbers may overstate Croatian personnel totals at the beginning while understating them in the later phases.

⁵ The formations included a battalion of the 1st Guards Brigade, the 3rd (Slavonski Brod) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade, the 99th

Zagreb-Pescenice Brigade, the 108th Slavonski Brod Brigade, the 63rd Independent Slavonska Pozega Battalion, and three Special Police "battalions." By the end of October, the 63rd Slavonska Pozega Battalion and the 4th Battalion/108th Slavonski Brod Brigade had formed the 123rd Slavonska Pozega Brigade and another battalion of the 108th Brigade had been used as the nucleus of the new 121st Nova Gradiska Brigade. In addition, the 139th Slavonski Brod Brigade was formed, adding at least another 4,500 troops to the Nova Gradiska sector.

⁶ These troops were from the 104th Varazdin Brigade, the 1st Battalion/105th Bjelovar Brigade, the 55th Independent Bjelovar Battalion, and the 76th Independent Pakrac-Lipik Battalion.

⁷ The forces in this sector were from the 8th Samobor Brigade, the 117th Koprivnica Brigade, 56th Independent Kutina Battalion, the 65th Independent Ivanic Grad Battalion, and elements from four Special Police "battalions"; these units were also reinforced by one to two battalions of the 1st Guards Brigade when necessary.

⁸ These forces comprised the bulk of the 1st Guards Brigade—which also included the first ZNG tank company from the captured Varazdin barracks—the 101st Zagreb-Susegrad Brigade (which arrived at the end of September), the 51st Independent Vrbovec Battalion, the 53rd Independent Dugo Selo Battalion, the 62nd Independent Novska Battalion, and the 64th Independent Novska Battalion. By the end of October, the battalion of the 101st Brigade was withdrawn, but the 62nd and 64th Novska Battalions had been expanded to a full brigade—the 125th Novska. Thus, the manpower total in the sector probably remained about the same.

⁹ The force expansion noted above increased the total estimated forces in the triangle to at least 27,000 troops.

¹⁰ The 5th Corps' 329th Armored Brigade had deployed elements on "peacekeeping" duty near Stara Gradiska in Western Slavonia since mid-August. Belgrade Radio 16-18 September 1991. General Uzelac was born in Benkovac, Croatia and moved to Slavonia with his family. In 1941 he fled with his family to central Serbia. Uzelac probably was about 55 years old at the time of the interview. He was promoted to Colonel General on 29 November 1991. M. Petrovic and R. Popovic, "The War is Dirty and Has Been Imposed, But the Ustashi Do Not Want Peace," *Narodna Armija* 11 December 1991, pp. 6-7. An interview with Colonel General Nikola Uzelac; Belgrade Radio 29 November 1991.

¹¹ The commander of 329th Armored Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Ratimir Simic, was promoted to full Colonel on 7 October, probably in recognition of his leadership in this sector.

¹² Vesna Puljak, "The Varazdin Pumas," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 21 May 1993, p. 13; Gordan Lasic, "A Symbol of Croatian Victory—The 125th Brigade," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 12.

¹³ Belgrade Tanjug 13 October 1991.

¹⁴ The commander of the 343rd, Colonel Vladimir Arsic, went on to command the brigade during the earlier phases of the Bosnian war. In late 1993 he assumed command of the Bosnian Serb Army "Doboj" Operational Group 9 and was promoted to Major General. His chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja, also served in Bosnia, in early 1992 serving in temporary command over all forces in the Prijedor region that were conducting military operations and ethnic cleansing in the area. He later assumed command of the 343rd, by now redesignated 43rd and dual-hatted as Tactical Group 4 near Gradacac. Zeljaja later went on to command "Prijedor" Operational Group 10 during the last campaigns of the war in western Bosnia.

¹⁵ Zagreb Radio 27 September 1991.

¹⁶ Belgrade Radio 12-14 October 1991.

¹⁷ Jezeric was a former JNA officer. He later served at the Croatian Army's military academy and as the Croatian defense attaché in Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁸ Croatian forces on the Grubisno Polje axis probably consisted of the 77th Independent Bilogora Battalion and the Bjelovar Special Police while the Virovitica axis comprised most of the 127th Virovitica Brigade and the Virovitica Special Police.

¹⁹ Troops were from the still forming 136th Podravsko Slatina Brigade, probably reinforced by up to a battalion of the 127th Virovitica and a battalion of the 132nd Nasice Brigades.

²⁰ The 52nd Independent Daruvar Battalion.

²¹ The Croatian units included the 1st Guards Brigade, the 8th Samobor Brigade, the 117th Koprivnica Brigades, and the 56th and 65th Independent Battalions. In addition, Tomislav Mercep's notorious Special Police reserve unit, apparently nicknamed "Autumn Rains," helped spearhead the attack. See the interview with former unit member Miro Bajramovic in Miro Bajramovic, "How We Killed in Pakracka Poljana," *Feral Tribune* 1 September 1997, pp. 15-19, as well as the interview with Mercep in Igor Zovko, "I Had Bajramovic Arrested Because He Stole VCRs," Zagreb *Vjesnik* 12 September 1997, p. 7.

²² In addition to the Croatian advances, the JNA mounted a small-scale attack northeast of Stara Gradiska in late November involving about two battalions from the 5th Partisan Brigade—about 600 troops—and the 3rd Armored Battalion/329th Armored Brigade. The objective appears to have been to expand the bridgehead, securing 5th Corps crossing points, but it does not appear to have accomplished much. "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, which has a history of the 5th Kozara, the later designator of the 5th Partisan. The brigade commander, Major Pero Colic, was to lead the 5th Kozara throughout both the Croatian and Bosnian wars. He was later plucked from retirement obscurity, promoted to Major General, and made Chief of the Bosnian Serb General Staff when the Serbian Democratic Party engineered the relief of General Mladic in November 1996.

²³ Mico Glamocanin, "Without a Battle Lost," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 26 August 1994, which recounts the history of the 2nd Battalion/343rd Motorized Brigade; also "To the Pride and Honor of the Fatherland," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994 which discusses the history of the brigade as a whole.

²⁴ Mladen Pavkovic, *Dok Je Srca Bit Ce I Croatie: Iz Porvijesti Domovinskog Rata* (While There is a Heart, There Will Be a Croatia: From the History of the Homeland War), Koprivnica: Club of the 117th Brigade Koprivnica, 1995, p. 50. Despite the success of the defense on 10 December, the 343rd Motorized Brigade appears to have suffered heavily in its struggle to halt the initial ZNG attack, and probably lost most of its frontline infantry. One detailed VRS military journal article on the 343rd—apparently based on the brigade war diary—claimed it had only 76 men on the frontline on 7 December, drawn from an assortment of units, including the brigade headquarters. "First Baptism by Fire," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 33-34.

²⁵ For an account of the 5th Partisan Brigade's activities during this fighting see "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994. After heavy fighting near the village of Dereza, some seven kilometers northeast of Pakrac, the brigade's 2nd Battalion experienced major desertions because of low morale. It was reinforced by additional Bosnian troops, as well as a JNA unit from the 52nd (Pristina) Corps in Kosovo.

²⁶ Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 138.

²⁷ For the JNA to be successful, it either needed a small, well-trained and well-equipped force or a large, comparatively untrained but well-equipped force. A smaller, ill-trained, but well-equipped force could make some gains, but not achieve a decisive victory.

²⁸ The corps and brigade staffs were professionals, and the 5th Corps had conducted staff exercises and some field training exercises in early August in preparation for its role in the strategic offensive. Belgrade Tanjug 7 August 1991. M. Petrovic and R. Popovic, "The War is Dirty and Has Been Imposed, But the Ustashi Do Not Want Peace," *Narodna Armija* 11 December 1991, pp. 6-7. An interview with Colonel General Nikola Uzelac.

²⁹ General Uzelac says the troops learned quickly in the field. Units ran training programs for new personnel and the corps distributed "lessons learned" to its units. M. Petrovic and R. Popovic, "The War is Dirty and Has Been Imposed, But the Ustashi Do Not Want Peace," *Narodna Armija* 11 December 1991, pp. 6-7. An interview with Colonel General Nikola Uzelac.

³⁰ The volunteer units played no major role in Western Slavonia beyond augmenting JNA/TO manpower. Each JNA brigade or TO "brigade" equivalent likely had one to two detachments of 200 to 300 personnel. The volunteer troops generally had the same royalist, irresponsible, and cut-throat attitudes as their counterparts in Eastern Slavonia (some units served in both sectors, having transferred to Western Slavonia after the fall of Vukovar). A reporter visiting a "Chetnik" volunteer unit in the Papuk Mountains, southwest of Podravsko Slatina, in early December described its personnel as "social misfits." They carried a black flag with skull and crossbones and chanted Chetnik slogans, such as "I'll gouge out their eyes and cut off their ears," or "surround them, take them alive, and massacre them."

³¹ The TO's (temporarily) successful defense of its positions near Podravsko Slatina is the only exception to this.

³² The SAO Western Slavonia Government (and others) claim that the JNA betrayed the TO is absurd. Belgrade Tanjug 27 December 1991. The JNA barely had enough forces to hold the Novska-Pakrac-Nova Gradiska triangle, let alone the immense mountain areas north of Pakrac.

³³ The 2nd Bjelovar OZ campaign plan, by directing their main effort against those areas defended only by the TO while making holding attacks against the JNA, allowed the Croatians to focus their strengths on the weakest links in the Federal force. At the tactical level, most of the Croatians' multi-brigade operations used concentric or converging attacks along key roads, usually cutting off an isolated salient or forcing the Serb TO to stretch its already limited reserves more thinly.

³⁴ General Tus, Chief of the Croatian Main Staff, claimed in a 1996 interview that the cease-fire that ended the war prevented the ZNG from retaking all of Western Slavonia; he said ZNG/MUP troops could have reached the Sava River in another five to seven days. Considering the ZNG's performance against JNA troops between Pakrac and Novska, it seems highly unlikely that they could have succeeded in driving the 5th Corps back into Bosnia. Croatian troops scored some moderate successes against the JNA, but Croatian troops in 1991 did not have the ability to overcome the JNA's firepower, as demonstrated during the attack on the Pakrac-Okucani road. Igor Alborghetti, "In Peacetime Croatia Will Have Only 50,000 Soldiers," Zagreb *Globus* 31 May 1996, pp. 15-17, 59. An interview with General Anton Tus.

Annex 19

Banija-Kordun-Lika Operations—Consolidating Greater Serbia

The fighting in Banija, Kordun, and Lika consisted primarily of local operations by which SAO Krajina TO and JNA units from Operational Group-1 were able to consolidate the Krajina's control between Petrinja and Knin. The largest attack was the JNA's operation to capture the large Croatian-held pocket around Slunj, south of Karlovac, during October–November. The JNA's originally planned Karlovac campaign to drive toward the Slovenian border near the city failed to materialize because of mobilization problems.

Banija

The fighting in Banija from September through December evolved into two phases. The first period consisted of the initial JNA/TO effort to evict Croatian pockets south of the Kupa River and secure the river as a defensive line. This phase was followed by a period of more or less static trench warfare marked by regular exchanges of artillery and small arms fire against defensive positions, towns, and villages, punctuated by occasional small probes by both sides aimed at improving their positions along the main Kupa River line.

The first move of the Banija TO (7th Banija Division) was to follow up its 13 September victory in Kostajnica, which had ended the its summer campaign, and seize the key town of Petrinja.¹ The opening of the Croatian offensive against the JNA barracks on 14 September provided convenient timing for the TO's move and gave them decisive JNA support. On 16 September an estimated 1,200 troops from the Petrinja TO attacked Croatian positions in and around the town, supported by elements of the JNA 622nd Motorized Brigade. By 22 September, Federal forces had pushed Croatian units—estimated at 650 to 750 personnel from 2nd Guards Brigade and

the Sisak Special Police—out of the town to positions some one to three kilometers north along the Kupa River or east toward the key industrial town of Sisak.² In addition, TO troops southwest of Petrinja pushed to within five kilometers of Sisak. Meanwhile, the arrival of a JNA composite brigade from Serbia on 21 September allowed the TO to launch an attack northwest of Glina, pushing Croatian forces away from the town and securing the Kupa River line and the Glina River valley some 10 kilometers north of Glina. The combined JNA/TO force accomplished this by 5 October.

October marked the beginning of a second, more static phase of the hostilities. As noted, this period was characterized by persistent low-level clashes under a steady barrage of Federal harassment shelling of Croatian towns, villages, and defensive positions. Both sides also conducted a number of minor attacks, nearly all centered on the loop of the Kupa River, northwest of Petrinja. In the first attack, on 18 October, a JNA armor battalion and a TO infantry battalion—and possibly elements of the JNA 592nd Motorized Brigade arriving from Macedonia—tried to clear a tenacious Croatian bridgehead in the river loop.³ The attack failed. About 10 days later, elements of the 2nd Guards Brigade, forming the point of as many as 5,500 troops from three or four brigades, attacked in the same area and pushed JNA/TO forces back about two or three kilometers. Fighting carried over into November, with the Croatian forces, still led by the 1st Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, penetrating another two to three kilometers against TO troops and probably the 592nd Motorized Brigade, reaching the village of Glinska Poljana by 14 November.⁴

The last major battle in Banija worth noting was the ZNG's Operation "Vihor" (Whirlwind). The bold but ill-fated operation began about 8 December and had died by the 15th. The 102nd Novi Zagreb Brigade,

probably with elements of the 2nd Guards Brigade and Special Police units, began the attack from a point along the Kupa River near Pokupsko. The objective was to cross the Kupa and break out of the bridgehead toward Glina and the Glina-Petrinja road, and perhaps even cut off JNA/TO forces in the Kupa River loop northwest of Petrinja.⁵ The operation proved as disastrous as it had been ambitious. JNA and TO forces, probably including elements of the JNA's 592nd Motorized Brigade, appear to have ambushed the force shortly after it crossed the Kupa, and the ZNG units disintegrated. At least 17 soldiers from the 102nd Brigade drowned in the hasty retreat across the river.⁶ With the operation's failure, the frontline in Banija remained deadlocked for the rest of the war.

Karlovac-Kordun

As part of its nationwide strategic offensive the JNA had originally planned a major thrust to the Slovenian border in the Karlovac area to cut Zagreb off from southern Croatia, but the failures of the reserve call-up left the army with far too few men to deploy for the operation, and it was scratched.⁷ The JNA in the Karlovac-Kordun area, operating with or in support of the Serb TO, had to be satisfied with lesser operations against Slunj (see below), attacks to relieve JNA barracks in and around Karlovac, and actions to consolidate Serb-held territory to the south and southwest. The fighting in this part of Croatia was characterized by constant low-level clashes—especially around the barracks—that included sniping, harassing fire, feints and counterfeints, JNA/TO shelling of the city that continued throughout the war, and occasional focused attacks. The first of the small-scale attacks began about 5 October, probably upon the arrival of the JNA 9th Motorized Brigade from Serbia.⁸ Over three days, JNA and Vojnic TO troops pushed through Karlovac's southern suburbs and relieved two besieged barracks.⁹ JNA and TO forces were now some three to five kilometers from the center of town, although the Korana River blocked them from seizing it quickly. Meanwhile, some 25 kilometers east of Karlovac, JNA and TO forces took Lasinja, the last Croatian-held town south of the Kupa between Karlovac and Petrinja, on 8 October.¹⁰ On 4 or 5 November the JNA launched another

operation, on a 10-kilometer front, toward the suburb of Duga Resa. This probably was designed to encircle Karlovac on three sides, and possibly achieve the original JNA goal of cutting northern Croatia off from the south. Over the course of three days JNA troops slogged forward to make some incremental gains.¹¹ On 8 November, however, a Croatian counterattack led by elements of the 2nd Guards Brigade appears to have put a halt to the advance.¹²

Capture of Slunj

The Croatian-held pocket around the town of Slunj, on the boundary of the Lička and Kordun areas, blocked the Croatian Serbs from linking up the regions they held to the north and the south. It was a key objective for their forces, which were now openly joined by the JNA.¹³ Early in October JNA/TO forces began nibbling at the enclave, seizing some outlying villages about 25 kilometers southeast of Slunj near the Bosnian border. A concerted effort to take the town began in early November. Pushing primarily from the Plitvice Lakes area to the south, JNA and TO troops gradually worked their way in toward Slunj, which fell on 16-18 November. The surviving Croatian defenders fell back toward the Bosnian border, near the small town of Cetingrad, about seven kilometers southwest of the town of Velika Kladusa, where Federal forces overran them on 27 November. But many of the Croatian ZNG and MUP fighters chose internment in Bosnia over surrender to the JNA or the local Serbs.

The JNA/TO operation to take Slunj typified the nature and scope of the vicious, small-scale actions that characterized the war in the Banja-Kordun-Lika regions. By late October the JNA had begun preparations for a major assault to close the pocket.¹⁴ To control the operation the JNA appears to have formed two tactical group headquarters and began to move reinforcements into the area. Colonel Cedimir Bulat was to command Tactical Group-2 along the primary attack axis.¹⁵ The reinforcements included most of an armored battalion from the 329th Armored

Brigade, elements of a newly arrived partisan brigade, and a D-30 howitzer battalion.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the 236th Motorized Brigade, the bulk of which was deployed near Gospic, moved elements—probably a reinforced motorized battalion—into position. These forces, together with about a battalion of TO troops from Korenica and one from Plaski, probably were formed into two to four reinforced battalion battle groups and were to attack the pocket from positions about 20 kilometers directly south of Slunj, near the Plitvice lakes.¹⁷ Exempted from the assault were the JNA forces at the Slunj training area 10 to 15 kilometers west/southwest of town, which appear to have been assigned the defensive role of containing the ZNG/MUP forces there.¹⁸ The tactical group probably numbered 3,000 to 3,500 troops in total, with about 20 tanks, 10 APCs, and 18 artillery pieces. Little is known about the structure and number of Croatian forces in the pocket, but probably they numbered no more than 1,000 ill-equipped local or volunteer ZNG troops and special or regular police, with perhaps a sprinkling of village guards carrying their hunting rifles.

The JNA's slow drive toward Slunj began in early November, as Bulat's tactical group converged on the town, systematically destroying Croatian villages in its path. The JNA/TO advance appears to have featured successive drives by the reinforced battle groups, each moving along a main road and probably led by a company of armor and/or self-propelled air defense vehicles; flanking infantry probably were detailed to clear the areas alongside the road. On approaching a Croatian village, tank and artillery fire would suppress any defenders and scare away the residents; the JNA and TO then burned the village. RV i PVO fighter-bombers supplemented these attacks.

The JNA's road-bound methods and limited infantry, however, made Bulat's force vulnerable to Croatian hit-and-run attacks from the region's heavily forested hills and mountains, and attacks like these appear to

have slowed the advance. The main push, from the Plitvice Lakes area toward Slunj, had barely reached the outskirts of Rakovica by 12 November—an advance of only two or three kilometers. The secondary attack toward Saborsko also moved slowly. Over the next week, however, the advance gained momentum and finally rolled over Slunj and its surrounding villages between 16 and 18 November.¹⁹ Over the next ten days JNA and TO troops slowly pursued Croatian forces retreating toward the last Croatian stronghold at Cetingrad, on the Bosnian border. It fell on 27 November.

Gospic-Lika

Most of the fighting near the town of Gospic and throughout the Lika region consisted of minor contests for control of villages and key local terrain. There were no battles even on the scale of Slunj, and the lines established during the late summer fighting essentially marked the frontline throughout the fall and winter of 1991. The biggest event was the Croatian forces' expulsion of JNA, TO, and volunteer forces from Gospic. Croatian and Serb TO forces had been fighting in and around the eastern and southeastern parts of the town since August. With the shift in Croatian strategy to attack JNA barracks, the ZNG 118th Gospic Brigade and Gospic Special Police went over to the offensive, taking the main barracks on 20 September and clearing Gospic by 22 September. The fighting in Lika, although at times intense, now shifted into a series of local actions by both sides to improve their tactical positions in and around the key Croatian-held towns of Gospic and Otocac; the Croatians in particular hoped to shove Serb troops further out of range. Battles of this nature were to last until the January 1992 ceasefire.

Endnotes, Annex 19

¹ Petrinja had a pre-war population of some 18,000, split almost evenly between Croatians and Serbs.

² Croatian forces had already withdrawn from two salients deep in Serb-held territory, near Topusko and Hrvatska Dubica, beginning on 16 September.

³ The 592nd Motorized Brigade was garrisoned in Kumanovo, Macedonia as part of the 42nd (Kumanovo) Corps. The brigade or elements of the brigade probably began to arrive in mid-October.

⁴ Neven Miladin, "The Strength of the Black Mambas," Zagreb *Velebit* 26 January 1996, pp. 16-17.

⁵ Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke* (All My Battles), Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, p. 193.

⁶ General Bobetko, then an adviser to the Croatian Ministry of Defense, and a General Budimir, then a colonel, continue to exchange public recriminations over the operation. Bobetko blamed Budimir in his memoirs for the disaster, accusing him of poor planning, while Budimir has defended himself in the press. See Zeljko Grgurinovic, "Action Stopped on Demand of the Americans? Why Croatian Army Action 'Una' Failed, in September 1995, About Which Generals Bobetko and Crvenko Still Polemicize," Zagreb *Obzor* 13 September 1997, pp. 32-33.

⁷ General Kadijevic notes that missions for the Karlovac grouping "had to be curtailed" because only one of the four brigades earmarked for the operation, in addition to the locally available forces, arrived. Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 139.

⁸ The 9th Motorized Brigade from Zajecar. Although the JNA maintained a large number of barracks and other storage facilities in Karlovac, few of them housed combat units. Any large-scale combat operations would require the JNA to bring in units from outside the region.

⁹ The Federal forces involved probably numbered 1,000 to 2,000 troops from the 9th Motorized Brigade, and up to 1,200 TO troops, supported by elements of the 580th Mixed Artillery Brigade. They faced the 3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, major elements of the 110th Karlovac Brigade, and Karlovac Special Police, probably some 2,000 to 3,000 troops (forces available for front-line duty may have been diminished by the necessity to monitor hold-out JNA barracks).

¹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Mile Novakovic, with a small armored-mechanized force—probably at most a battalion with some local TO troops—captured the areas north of the town of Vrginmost, almost certainly including Lasinja. Novakovic went on to become the SVK General Staff chief in 1993 after serving as a tactical group commander in Bosnia during 1992. Jovanka Simic, "Intrigues Because of Politics," Belgrade *Vecernji Novosti* 15 October 1993, p. 2. An interview with Major General Mile Novakovic.

¹¹ The operation probably involved one to two JNA battalions from the 9th Motorized Brigade, two TO battalions, and a JNA armored battalion, possibly some 2,000 to 3,000 troops.

¹² Simultaneously, the besieged JNA garrison at the nearby Logoriste barracks, including a number of T-34 tanks, attempted to break out. Some elements reached JNA/TO lines, but most of the tanks were knocked out, after which the Croatians seized the barracks. ZNG forces were drawn from the 3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, elements of the 103rd Zagora Brigade, most of the 137th Duga Resa Brigade, and the 2nd Battalion/150th Zagreb-Crnomerec Brigade, probably at least 3,000 troops.

¹³ Croatian forces in Slunj appear to have been cut off in late August or early September. It is unclear whether the Croatians were able to infiltrate men and supplies into the enclave after the main road between Slunj and the Croatian-held town of Ogulin had been severed.

¹⁴ JNA/TO troops from the Korenica area began encroaching on parts of the pocket near the Bosnian border in early October, after Croatian forces mortared the JNA RV i PVO Bihać Air Base. JNA armored units from the 329th Armored Brigade and TO troops attacked and ruthlessly destroyed the village of Vaganac on 9 October; they were supported by RV i PVO air strikes from Bihać. Drenz尼克 Grad and two or three more villages suffered similar fates on 10-12 October. A JNA NCO at the air base told a Belgrade magazine that "Vaganac is wiped out, and little is left of Drenz尼克 . . ." Uros Komlenovic, "General Ljubomir Bajic: A Flying Prince Marko," Belgrade *Nin* 18 October 1991, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵ The 45-year-old Bulat was born in Karlovac and had served at nearly all levels of command in the JNA, from platoon leader to brigade commander. He graduated from the JNA Military Academy in 1967, from the JNA command-staff school in 1978, and the JNA's war college equivalent in 1987. He also taught at the military training center in Sarajevo and at the Center of Military Colleges in Belgrade in the operations department. Bulat was serving on the Fifth Military District staff when war broke out but eventually took command of the 21st Kordun Corps of the Krajina Serb Army (SVK). He was forced to surrender much of the corps to the Croatian Army in 1995 after his forces had been cut off near Karlovac. But they had fought well compared to other parts of the SVK. M. P. "We Do Not Want Karlovac—For the Time Being," Belgrade *Intervju* 3 September 1993, pp. 20-22. An interview with Colonel Cedimir Bulat. See also International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milošević: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/lats/index.htm> accessed June 2002, pp. 92-93, which draws on a 1 November 1991 order issued by Bulat as commander of TG-2 for the operation against Saborsko.

Bulat's new tactical group appears to have reported to either Operational Group "Lika" or Operational Group "Kordun," which in turn were under the command of OG-1.

¹⁶ "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996 pp. 26-29.

¹⁷ The Lika TO was known as the "6th Lika Division," a historic World War II Partisan unit from the area. The TO had adopted the 6th Lika title for the same reasons that the Banija TO had taken on the 7th Banija Division moniker.

¹⁸ The 65th Protection Motorized Regiment was the bodyguard force for the Fifth Military District headquarters and presumably had troops available at the Slunj training area for the operation.

¹⁹ A reporter from the independent Belgrade newspaper *Borba* on the scene observed the destruction on 16 November; Zagreb Radio also identified several of the villages and claimed that the JNA had almost completely destroyed them. Zagreb Radio 22 November 1991. Observations of the Slunj area in 1995, after Croatian forces had recaptured the town, bore out the damages the Croatians claimed Federal forces had inflicted on the area in 1991. "House after house in Slunj was leveled to the extent that little more than rubble remained," while Slunj's old town had been almost completely destroyed.

Annex 20

Zadar-Northern Dalmatia Operations¹

The primary mission of JNA forces in Northern Dalmatia in the strategic offensive was to sever the land connections between the Dalmatian coast and northern Croatia. Accomplishing that mission with relative ease by early September, the JNA 9th Corps turned its attention to relieving the besieged barracks in Zadar. The opposing Croatian forces were no match for the corps' firepower and aggressive battlefield leadership.

The 9th Corps Attacks—September to October

Now under the command of Major General Vladimir Vukovic, the 9th Corps in its offensive operations displayed the same drive and initiative it had shown in its earlier attacks in support of the local Serbs.² On 16 September, the corps, supported by local TO troops, mounted three attacks, a brigade-sized drive toward Zadar city and two smaller pushes toward Sibenik and Drnis. The 180th Motorized Brigade's attack on Zadar, launched from near Benkovac, rapidly moved to within about seven kilometers of the city, relieving the besieged Zemunik Air Base the same day.³ There elements of the ZNG 4th Guards and 112th Zadar Brigades managed to hold up the JNA for a time.⁴ When the 180th, possibly reinforced by elements of the 221st Motorized Brigade, renewed the attack on 2 October it again broke through the Croatian defenses and pushed to the edge of town, virtually cutting it off by 7 October.⁵ The success of the JNA assault persuaded Croatian political and military authorities in Zadar to allow the remaining JNA garrisons to withdraw with their equipment. This was completed on 21 October.⁶

Some 45 kilometers to the southeast, Lieutenant Colonel Lisica and elements of his 221st Motorized Brigade and Captain Dragan's Special Police made the corps' second-most important attack—a drive toward Sibenik and the blockaded JNA/JRM facilities

there.⁷ A successful assault here would also sever the important Adriatic Highway. The Croatian 113th Sibenik Brigade and Sibenik Special Police, however, managed to halt Lisica's troops near the town of Vodice and a key bridge on the Adriatic Highway leading into Sibenik.⁸ Heavy fighting continued in the area until 22 September, when the JNA appears to have called off its attack.

The 9th Corps, augmenting its forces with some troops from the 221st, made another drive some 20 kilometers south of Knin and 25 kilometers northeast of Sibenik to take the key road junctions near Drnis and rescue the JNA depot near the town. JNA forces quickly seized the approaches to Drnis on 16 September, relieving the depot and seizing the road junction around the village of Oklaj on 18 September. The ZNG 114th Split Brigade could do little to counter the JNA's armor and artillery. After Drnis itself fell on 21 September, JNA troops from the 221st hit Croatian forces around Sinj, opening the way for the corps's engineer regiment to withdraw from its barracks.⁹ The Croatians permitted the pullout on 27 September.¹⁰

Local Operations—October to January

After the completion of their main operations, Vukovic and Mladic launched a series of small-scale operations during November, December, and early January that the Croatian troops were unable to counter. The first and largest of these occurred between Zadar and Benkovac, near the villages of Skabrnje and Nadin. The JNA, probably supported by local TO forces, kicked off the attack on 18 November, seizing over 100 square kilometers of ground by 22 November. The territory expanded and helped secure the JNA's previously narrow salient toward Zadar as well as the Serb-held town of Benkovac. On 20 November, JNA or TO troops made a small attack 20 kilometers north of Sibenik to

straighten the line in that area as well. The 9th Corps ended the year with a push to expand its salient near Zadar, this time to the north, capturing possibly 75 square kilometers of ground around the small, inland Novigrad Sea. The corps made one last attack after the final cease-fire was to have gone into effect, on 3 January, when JNA troops attempted to grab the town of Unesic, about 15 kilometers south of Drnis, and the key hills near the town. The last-minute operation was probably designed to broaden the defense of the approaches to Drnis and the main route toward Knin, but the ZNG 114th Split Brigade threw it back.¹¹

Evaluation of JNA Operations and the Croatian Response

Overall, the JNA dominated this sector throughout the fall phase of the conflict, just as it had during the summer. Vukovic and Mladic together handled the 9th Corps boldly. Mladic in particular demonstrated the inspired leadership that was to later earn him the adulation of the entire Bosnian Serb Army. He was ever present in the frontlines, visiting units, moving to and fro across the battlefield. The corps' "always attacking" attitude perfectly matched Mladic's temperament. Given the corps' extensive frontage, spanning roughly 180 kilometers, and its limited striking power, the JNA's continual attacks kept the Croatians off balance and prevented them from taking the initiative to exploit Federal weaknesses.¹² At the

tactical level, the 9th Corps methods were those employed elsewhere by the infantry-poor JNA, bludgeoning the enemy out of position with massed firepower to minimize the need for infantry assaults. Much of the fighting involved the JNA's efforts to capture key villages along major lines of communication; the JNA push toward Zadar, for example, required the seizure of a number of villages along the main roads into town. Standard JNA practice upon approaching a village was to order a preparatory bombardment with artillery and/or multiple rocket launchers, possibly augmented by air strikes. The infantry would then move into the village supported by tanks firing their main guns to clear the advance. If an attack was held up, JNA artillery would re-prep the target, relying on massed fire to overcome the enemy and spare the infantry.

ZNG and MUP forces were unable to match the firepower and operational skill of the 9th Corps. The ZNG forces first mustered between Zadar and Sinj included only three reserve brigades, plus the 4th Guards Brigade, whose battalions had been dispersed in support of the reserve brigades. Working with the more experienced MUP, these troops were sufficient to contain the local TO forces, but when the JNA's mobile forces showed up with their armor and artillery ZNG/MUP units could not stand up to the firepower or repel the JNA's well-led, spirited attacks.

Endnotes, Annex 20

¹ As in earlier sections, accounts of daily events are drawn heavily from contemporary press reporting—Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug.

² Vukovic replaced Major General Spiro Nikovic on 16 September, the same day the corps offensive began.

³ Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Zivanovic commanded the 180th Motorized Brigade. Zivanovic was promoted to full colonel on 7 October 1991 in recognition of his leadership during these operations. Zivanovic later served as the commander of the Bosnian Serb Army's Drina Corps for much of the Bosnian war, retiring just before the capture of Srebrenica in 1995.

⁴ Gordan Lasic and Dejan Frigelj, "St. Krsevan and 112th Defending Zadar," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 14.

⁵ Simultaneously with the new attack at Zadar, the 9th Corps seized a chunk of the Miljevac Plateau, probably as a diversionary move. The plateau, some 10 kilometers west of Drniš and 15 to 20 kilometers northeast of Šibenik, was important to consolidating JNA positions around Drniš, as well as providing the JNA a potential jump-off point toward Šibenik.

⁶ Zagreb Radio 21 October 1991.

⁷ The 221st probably employed a reinforced motorized battalion with roughly a company of armor.

⁸ V.P., "They Resisted Heroically," Zagreb *Velebit* 20 September 1996, p. 11. Lieutenant Colonel Lisica, who commanded the attack, later stated,

Mladić said, 'go to the bridge.' At the beginning, no one realized that this was a real war in which lives would be lost. In order to get [my troops] moving, I secretly arranged with our

artillery officer to shell our own positions and headquarters. He was astonished: how can I shell our own people? I gave the order, but if any one was killed, bravo. When headquarters was finished off, I told the fighters, you see what they are doing to us. That is how I motivated them, and in two hours we covered 20 kilometers and reached the Šibenik bridge.

Ljubomir Grubic, "Pulling Down the Pants," *Nin* 23 July 1993, pp. 12-14. An interview with Major General Slavko Lisica.

⁹ The commander of the engineer regiment, Colonel Mico Vlašavljević, later served as chief of staff of the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps in western Bosnia during most of the Bosnian war.

¹⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 27 September 1991.

¹¹ Oddly, there is no mention of this attack in any of the contemporary press accounts. It figures prominently, however, in *Hrvatski Vojnik* and *Slobodna Dalmacija* articles on the 114th Brigade. See Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18 and Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail On All Battlefields," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 1 June 1996, p. 8.

¹² The JNA could also call on the local TO. TO forces appear to have figured less prominently in 9th Corps operations than elsewhere, but overall the local "brigades" were used to help defend what the two motorized brigades and Captain Dragan's Special Police battalion, 9th Corps's mobile forces, had captured.

Annex 21

Dubrovnik-Southern Dalmatia Operations¹

As discussed earlier, the JNA General Staff had originally planned for two sub-operations in southern Dalmatia, one toward Split and one toward Dubrovnik. Troop deficiencies caused by mobilization problems and subsequent political difficulties in Bosnia, however, were such that only the Dubrovnik campaign would go forward.² General Kadijevic has described the mission of the JNA around Dubrovnik:

Under the modified plan of operation, the mission of the Trebinje-Herzegovina grouping was to liberate Prevlaka, to impose a land blockade on the broader Dubrovnik area, and to be ready for actions in the direction of the mouth of the Neretva. Thanks to successful mobilizations in eastern Herzegovina and Montenegro, the grouping got the forces envisaged for this mission.³

These forces comprised two motorized brigades, one mountain brigade, some five partisan brigades, and a corps-level artillery regiment, probably about 28,000 personnel organized in combat formations supplemented with some 2,000 unruly volunteer troops.⁴ They operated under the command of the 2nd (Titograd) Corps and the 9th (Boka Kotorska) Military-Maritime Sector (9th VPS).⁵ These two corps-size elements were under the overall control of Lieutenant Colonel General Pavle Strugar's "Herzegovina" Operational Group 2, which had been formed from the Headquarters, Montenegrin Territorial Defense. The campaign plan called for the JNA to advance in two main columns. The first, controlled by the 9th VPS, was to push directly up the coast to clear the Konavli area, seize Dubrovnik airport, and then lay siege to the city. Other forces would make supporting attacks from Bosnia directly north of Dubrovnik. The second

advance, to be led by the 2nd Corps, would strike toward the coastal towns of Ston and Slano to sever the Adriatic Highway to Dubrovnik, some 25 to 30 kilometers northwest of Dubrovnik, and cut off the city from reinforcements and the rest of Croatia. The Yugoslav Navy (JRM) was to provide fire support and other assistance along the coast, while blockading Dubrovnik's port.

The JNA completely outmanned and outgunned the forces the Croatians could field near Dubrovnik-Konavli. And because the JNA had only a few facilities in the Dubrovnik area before the war, the Croatians' barracks blockades would have yielded fewer weapons.⁶ Originally, the Croatians probably had no more than 1,000 armed personnel for the defense of the Dubrovnik-Konavli area, mostly MUP regular police and a number of volunteers, including some hastily armed merchant sailors.⁷ By November, perhaps 1,000 more volunteers had infiltrated into the city to assist in its defense.⁸ Overall, the Croatian defense effort, led by the Ministry of Defense's local secretariat and the MUP Dubrovnik Police Administration, was poorly organized and haphazardly controlled, providing no centralized communications to direct the inadequate defense forces.

In the Slano-Ston area, Croatian forces were able to deploy more troops, organized into actual ZNG combat units. Initially, the ZNG had about one brigade-equivalent, drawn from battalion- and company-sized units in Ploce-Metkovic and Makarska and reinforced by the 115th Imotski Brigade soon after the fighting started—probably about 4,000 troops. This force grew to as many as 8,000 men during November, under the command of the ZNG Southern Sector, with the arrival of the 114th Split Brigade and the activation of full brigades from both Metkovic and Makarska. But, as always, they were outgunned by the JNA.

The Occupation of Konavli and Cavtat, 1 to 22 October

The JNA did not actually launch its operation until 1 October, taking two weeks to mobilize and deploy the Montenegrin JNA and TO reservists called for in the army's campaign plan and augmenting them with volunteer units.⁹ Montenegrin and Herzegovinian troops from the 9th VPS—primarily the 5th and 472nd Motorized Brigades, plus the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade—quickly pushed up the narrow neck of Konavli supported by naval gunfire and brushed aside weak Croatian resistance.¹⁰ By 5 October the JNA had seized the Cilipi area, including Dubrovnik airport, having advanced some 15 to 20 kilometers up the coast. The overrunning of the airport and its duty-free shops was the occasion for what one JNA reservist called “the party of a lifetime.”¹¹ The JNA appears to have paused for the next week for reasons that are still unclear, while the festival of looting continued. When the JNA made its next advance, on 15 October, against the resort town of Cavtat some three kilometers from the airport, it took pains to avoid another spree of systematic plunder, using special operations troops and Military Police rather than the reserve units responsible for the previous excesses.¹² It also spared the town the usual artillery preparation. Nevertheless, shops were still stripped, JNA troops abused and arrested many local people, and there were many discreet thefts of money and valuables.¹³ Over the next week JNA troops slowly moved up the coast from Cavtat, taking additional resort villages, such as Plat, and getting ready to lay siege to Dubrovnik itself.

Slano-Ston Operations, 1 October to 1 January 1992

While the 9th VPS was moving directly on Dubrovnik, the 2nd (Titograd) Corps, supported by nearby elements of the 37th Corps and the JRM, moved to cut off the city and its environs from the rest of Croatia. The Montenegrin corps struck first toward the town of Slano on the Adriatic highway, battling Croatian troops from Metkovic and Makarska near the village of Cepikuce.¹⁴ Although Slano itself appears to have held out until 7 October, the highway was cut sooner, possibly as early as 2 October. After this

victory, the 2nd Corps was supposed to make a push to the northwest.

Typical of the attackers' overall performance in October, when the JNA either did not attack vigorously or slowed against stiff Croatian defenses, the 2nd Corps managed only to consolidate its positions along a line running from Cepikuce through the village of Lisac to the Adriatic during the month. It also discovered that the ZNG had moved forces into Herzegovina, between the villages of Hutovo and Ravno, threatening the right flank of the JNA 2nd Corps. To meet this threat OG 2 apparently shifted the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade from the Konavli area under the 9th VPS to the 2nd Corps area. During the period 16-20 October, the brigade succeeded in clearing the Ravno area and stabilized a line in Herzegovina, south of Hutovo Lake, roughly along the Trebisnjica River.¹⁵

In November the force of 7,000 to 10,000 JNA mountain and partisan troops appears to have pushed north only slowly against the estimated 6,000 to 8,000 men of the ZNG.¹⁶ This drive included a thrust into Herzegovina toward Hutovo.¹⁷ By mid-December, the 2nd Corps, with air and naval support, had driven some 10 kilometers further to the northwest, and by the time of the January 1992 ceasefire had established the front-line five or ten kilometers from the town of Ston and the Bosnian port of Neum.¹⁸

Dubrovnik Under Siege, 22 October to 1 January 1992

Back near Dubrovnik, the JNA began its move to besiege the port city on 22 October with an amphibious assault by the 9th VPS on the town of Kupari, some 10 kilometers southeast of Dubrovnik's old town.¹⁹ Over the next week JNA troops rolled over the outlying suburbs and key hills to the southeast, while a supporting attack by 2nd Corps finally broke through near the village of Osojnik, seven kilometers north of the city. As the JNA approached, the city suffered increasing bouts of shelling, including some firing into the old town. By 26 October, Zarkovica hill,

looking directly over the city from the southeast, had fallen to JNA assaults. The same day the JNA's "Herzegovina" Operational Group 2 issued an ultimatum for the demilitarization of the city. In exchange the JNA offered an 11-point proposal including promises that it would not enter the old town and would restore water, electricity, and phone service.²⁰ The Croatians rejected the ultimatum, the JNA withdrew its proposal on 1 November, and the siege resumed, including more shelling of various parts of the city.²¹ In an assault on 8-10 November JNA troops seized another key hill overlooking Dubrovnik from the southeast. One of the most violent bombardments came on 6 December, apparently during confused fighting on and around key positions on Mount Srdj, in which an ancient fortress was destroyed and shells rained into the city.²² Admiral Jokic, commanding 9th VPS, later claimed that a local commander ordered the shelling after one of his men was killed by Croatian troops on Srdj. He ruefully acknowledged that the commander should have limited his actions to neutralizing the firing positions responsible rather than destroying the old fortress and shelling the city.²³ In any case, both sides agreed to a ceasefire the next day, 7 December, and the JNA also agreed to lift the naval blockade of the city.²⁴ The ceasefire appears to have generally held until it merged with the countrywide ceasefire in January 1992.

Evaluation of Combat Performance

Neither side's combat performance from October through December 1991 can be described as better than mediocre. The operations appear to have moved with sludge-like slowness at times, partly because of the difficult terrain, but also probably because the JNA lacked current experience in commanding, controlling, and moving large combat forces, while the Croatian forces had no regular army to maneuver.

Overall, while the JNA was able to achieve the campaign's military objectives, these victories came at a political/public relations price that, combined with the international opprobrium earned at Vukovar, did

serious damage to the Federal cause as a whole (see discussion of JNA excesses and their effect below). At the purely military level, the JNA's two-pronged campaign plan appears to have been well conceived, although a stronger attack from Herzegovina directly toward Dubrovnik city might have effected a more rapid opening and closing of the siege. The whole operation, in fact, appears to have been conducted sluggishly; whether this was intentional and derived from political considerations or was the undesired result of operational and tactical difficulties is unclear. At the tactical level, JNA combat techniques centered, as elsewhere in Croatia, on artillery and mortar fire-power, which the JNA appears to have used prodigiously to make up for the deficient training among line units dominated by hastily recalled reservists.²⁵ The JNA used its single available armor battalion effectively on the open Konavli plateau, but elsewhere the mountainous terrain made the use of tanks almost impossible. The JNA also made effective use of its naval dominance to block any substantial resupply of Dubrovnik proper and to limit enemy movements along the coast, while using the JRM's amphibious capability and naval gunfire to facilitate ground operations.

Skimpy reporting and record-keeping on ZNG/MUP units and operations during this period make it more difficult to gauge their performance around Dubrovnik. The scratch forces defending the approaches to Dubrovnik city and Konavli appear to have done their best to delay and harass the JNA's advance, but the few ad hoc ZNG and MUP units available were no match for the JNA formations arrayed against them. In the fighting around Slano-Ston, the Croatians fielded much larger and better organized forces, and they exploited the extremely difficult topography to put up fairly stiff resistance to the JNA. Despite this, the JNA appears to have been able to drive the Croatians from their defensive positions when and where it wanted. The Croatians' lack of heavy weapons to counter JNA movements, and its shortage of professional officers, meant that in a head-to-head-fight the JNA would eventually prevail.

Endnotes, Annex 21

¹As in earlier sections, contemporary press sources—Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug provide the bulk of day-to-day information on combat operations.

²For a discussion of the problems afflicting the Mostar-Split sub-operation, see the Mostar-Split/Dubrovnik section in Annex 13, "JNA Campaign Plans and Organization, July, September 1991."

³Army General Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Belgrade: 1993, p. 140.

⁴On 2 October, Belgrade Tanjug reported that Niksic had raised 1,000 volunteers, while Belgrade Radio reported on 5 October that Kotor had raised 250 volunteers and Cetinje 320 volunteers.

⁵The 2nd Corps and 9th Sector may have been grouped together as Operational Group "Dubrovnik," which also appears to have been in charge of the overall operation as the Operational Group formed from the 2nd Corps headquarters.

⁶Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokic has said that the JNA had pulled a combat brigade out of Dubrovnik in the 1960s and moved it to Trebinje. Todorovic, "The Navy on the High Seas," Belgrade *Borba* 17 March 1992, p. 9. An interview with Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokic, commander 9th VPS.

⁷For example, one group of 12 merchant seamen were dispatched on foot to the Konavli area from Dubrovnik armed with only four rifles among them.

⁸The 114th Split Brigade infiltrated about 100 personnel into the city during late October. Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18.

⁹During late September, prior to the attack, Croatian and JNA forces had regularly skirmished near the JNA facilities on the Prevlaka peninsula overlooking Kotor Bay.

¹⁰The advance came from two directions. The 5th Motorized Brigade from Titograd (Podgorica), spearheaded by an armored battalion, pushed from the Herceg Novi area in Montenegro along the main Adriatic highway through Vitaljina, while troops from the Trebinje-based 472nd Motorized Brigade and 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade attacked out of Herzegovina in the tri-border area along a more northerly, secondary route. The attackers appear to have bypassed several potential pockets of resistance in Vitaljina and the coastal town of Molunat, which JNA troops, probably MP units, mopped up on 4/5 October. The 1st Niksic Brigade provides an example of the level of casualties suffered by the JNA during these opening moves, losing 4 wounded on 1 October. S. Vulesevic, "Time of Decisive Battles," *Srpska Vojska* 26 August 1995, p. 36, an article on the Bosnian Serb Army 1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, previously the JNA 472nd Motorized Brigade; M. Vukosavljevic, "An Unbridgeable Rampart Against the Enemy," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, pp. 8-9, "War Bulletin," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, p. 9, articles on the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade.

¹¹Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, London: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 133.

¹²Belgrade Radio, Belgrade Tanjug 15 October 1991; Dragan Todorovic, "Miodrag Jokic, Retired Vice Admiral, On Charges That He Was A War Profiteer and Poor Commander: I Prevented Looting On the Battlefield," Belgrade *Borba* 2 June 1993, p. 14. An interview with Vice Admiral Modrag Jokic, commander, 9th VPS.

¹³Silber and Little, p. 182; Glenny, p. 133-134.

¹⁴The attack appears to have been led by the Niksic-based 179th Mountain Brigade, supported by one or two Montenegrin TO partisan brigades, and elements of the 326th Mixed Artillery Regiment.

¹⁵M. Vukosavljevic, "An Unbridgeable Rampart Against the Enemy," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, pp. 8-9, "War Bulletin," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, p. 9, articles on the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade. The 2nd Corps commander claimed that Ravno had been "completely destroyed." Belgrade RTV 16 October 1991.

¹⁶The Croatian forces comprised the 114th Split Brigade, which was deployed to the area at the end of October, the 115th Imotski Brigade, the 116th Metkovic Brigade (formed in November from independent

battalions), and the 156th Makarska Brigade (formed in November from independent battalions and companies), plus probably at least one Special Police "battalion." The 114th Split Brigade was redeployed to positions near Drniš in December.

¹⁷The 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade undertook this part of the operation, beginning on 21 November. The attack—led by one tank platoon—went forward through the village of Zelinkovac, along the south side of Hutovo Lake and had neared the outskirts of Hutovo when the brigade was informed that the JNA had signed a cease-fire with the Croat-controlled Neum Municipality, inside Herzegovina. M. Vukosavljevic, "An Unbridgeable Rampart Against the Enemy," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, pp. 8-9, "War Bulletin," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, p. 9, articles on the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade.

¹⁸The brigade which appears to have served as the spearhead for this part of the operation, apparently the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade (but possibly the 179th Mountain Brigade), came in for special praise in 1992 from then future Yugoslav Army General Staff chief Perisic. Perisic claimed that the brigade lost only 12 men killed in two months of combat operations, of which only half died in the front line. He claimed that the brigade had very able commanders and was intelligently committed and used in combat. Miladin Petrovic and Radovan Popovic, "A Successful Officer is a Natural and Legitimate Leader," Belgrade *Vojnska* 24 September 1992, pp. 3-5. An interview with then Major General Momcilo Perisic.

¹⁹The amphibious assault avoided a difficult advance overland around Zupa Bay between Cavtat and Kupari. The road running through the resort villages of Plat, Miini, and Sebrevo went directly under cliffs rising almost immediately to 400 to 600 meters in height, while dropping quickly off to the bay on the other side of the road.

²⁰Belgrade Tanjug 27 October 1991.

²¹Belgrade Tanjug 1 November 1991.
Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokic, in command of 9th VPS, stated in early 1992:

Back on 25 October, we arrived just outside Dubrovnik, and it was clear to us at that time, taking for granted that we would not enter the city, that it would be a delicate matter to remain at the approaches to the city, on sensitive overlooking positions . . . and that this could be a possible source of conflict. I insisted that the other side agree to demilitarization. When we were just about to conduct the negotiations, which we did not want to publicize, an order came down from Zagreb that there was no question of this, that Dubrovnik was a part of sovereign Croatia, that the defense would be strengthened . . . A new team was sent for negotiations headed by Davorin Rudolf, the Minister [for Navigation]. I asked him the reasons for this sudden change . . . He answered me: We cannot have two major defeats in so short a time, Vukovar and Dubrovnik. Had we agreed, in the manner envisaged, everything would have been different.

Todorovic, "The Navy on the High Seas," Belgrade *Borba* 17 March 1992, p. 9. An interview with Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokic.

²²Zagreb Radio 6 December 1991; Belgrade Tanjug 8 December 1991; Glenny, p. 135.

²³Todorovic, "The Navy on the High Seas," Belgrade *Borba* 17 March 1992, p. 99. An interview with Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokic.

²⁴The JNA also agreed to pull its troops back from Mount Srdj and restore water and electricity. Zagreb Radio 7 December 1991. Belgrade Tanjug 8 December 1991.

²⁵One apparent exception to this was the cited JNA seizure—against almost no resistance—of Cavtat, and several other villages northwest of Dubrovnik, using reconnaissance and Military Police units without any artillery preparation.

Section III

Bosnia 1992

Annex 22

Organization of Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav People's Army Forces, April 1992

The Yugoslav People's Army*

The chaos of the Slovenian and Croatian wars had caused considerable upheaval within the JNA. Many of its units were in disarray after being forced to withdraw precipitately from their barracks in Slovenia and Croatia, and the JNA was in the midst of implementing the Vance Plan, which called for its complete withdrawal from Croatia. The JNA's strategic-level command structure reflected a geographical entity that no longer existed, and so at the beginning of 1992 it undertook a major reorganization that began with several major personnel shifts.¹ The most prominent of these was the retirement of the ailing General Veljko Kadijevic, who had served as Federal Defense Secretary throughout the Yugoslav crisis, and his replacement as acting secretary by Colonel General Blagoje Adzic, the Chief of the JNA General Staff. General Panic, the commander of the First Military District in northern Serbia and eastern Croatia, became acting chief of the General Staff.²

Next came some complicated shuffling of military districts and corps areas. Prior to the Croatian war, elements of three different military districts nominally commanded the JNA formations garrisoned in or deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now the JNA moved to consolidate command and control in the republic by reassigned responsibilities to a revamped system of military districts. The former Fifth Military District headquarters in Zagreb, Croatia, was redesignated the Second Military District (II VO) and relocated to Sarajevo, from which it assumed command over all JNA forces in Bosnia proper (excluding Herzegovina) and Croatia (excluding Eastern Slavonia and Dubrovnik). Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac, previously commanding the Third Military

* For a detailed JNA order of battle as of 10 April 1992, see Chart 1.

District in Skopje, Macedonia, was appointed commander of the Second.³ The JNA General Staff also formed a new Fourth Military District (IV VO) from the headquarters of the Montenegrin Territorial Defense, under Colonel General Pavle Strugar, who had led the operations around Dubrovnik during the Croatian war.⁴ From its headquarters in Podgorica the Fourth District controlled the JNA forces in Herzegovina as well as Montenegro (except for the coastal areas under Navy command), and around Dubrovnik.

The JNA's operational-level headquarters remained the corps, of which there were now five with headquarters and major deployments in Bosnia and Herzegovina—four under the Second District and one under the Fourth. Most of the elements of two of these corps were still deployed in Croatia during early 1992—the 5th (Banja Luka) Corps and the 10th (Bihac) Corps, headquartered in Bosnia. Finally, the Second Military District's 9th (Knin) Corps, whose headquarters and major units remained in Croatia, had one brigade stationed in Bosnia. Elements of all these corps, including the entire 9th (Knin) Corps, would be available when the JNA ordered mobilization for Bosnia and commenced operations in early April.⁵

By early April, after the JNA had ordered mobilization, JNA ground and air combat formations in Bosnia comprised the following major units (including those deployed to Croatia, but garrisoned pre-war in Bosnia)**:

- at least three partisan division headquarters
- one armored brigade
- one armor-mechanized unit training center
- one mechanized brigade
- fourteen motorized brigades
- one protection motorized regiment
- two mountain brigades
- at least fourteen partisan brigades⁶
- one FROG-7 rocket artillery brigade

** For a discussion of the factors that drove JNA strategy and mobilization, see the next annex.

five mixed artillery regiments
one mixed antitank artillery brigade
four mixed antitank artillery regiments
one SA-2 surface to air missile regiment
one SA-3 surface to air missile regiment
one SA-6 surface to air missile regiment
seven light air defense artillery regiments
two fighter-bomber brigades
two fighter-interceptor regiments
one helicopter/transport brigade
one helicopter training regiment

Together with personnel in the JNA's many Bosnia-based schools, the Second and Fourth Military Districts, plus the Fifth Air Force and Air Defense Corps, the JNA had about 100,000 to 110,000 personnel stationed in the republic in April 1992. The ground units were equipped with a total of about 500 tanks, 500 to 600 field artillery pieces 100mm and above, 48 multiple rocket launchers, and 350 120mm mortars. The air units had some 120 fighters or fighter-bombers, some 40 light attack helicopters, and 30 transport helicopters.⁷

Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense and Volunteer Units*

Although most the Serb troops in Bosnia served in the ranks of the JNA, Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense and volunteer units formed an important segment—and, at the start, a more heavily engaged one—of the Serb forces. Drawn from the towns and villages now contested between Serb and Muslim-Croat armed forces, the TO and volunteer units formed the Serbs' first line of defense (or offense). Although volunteer units were nominally formed separately from the TO, in practice most volunteer troops, as counted by the JNA, appear to have been incorporated by design into the TO when fighting erupted. The JNA had continued the practice begun during the Croatian war of forming separate volunteer units, but in Bosnia its purpose was to legitimize the arming of local Bosnian Serbs.⁸ When the budding Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBH) activated its municipal, brigade-level Territorial Defense staffs—which the Serbs had

* For a listing of Bosnian Serb TO formations by municipality, see Chart 2.

appropriated from the Bosnian Republic TO—most of the volunteer units recruited by the JNA were folded into the local TO formation and ceased to exist as separate entities.⁹ In addition to slipping these volunteers into the TO, the JNA also supplied some weapons directly to TO headquarters and units.¹⁰

By mid-April, SRBH TO and volunteer forces estimated at 60,000 personnel had been organized into some 44 municipal TO units designated as "brigades" or "battalions"; these ranged in size from the 300 men mustered in B. Krupa to the 4,200 troops jointly contributed by the Sokolac and Olovo municipalities. Each unit came under the command of the municipal crisis staff headed by the local SDS president.¹¹ The organization of the volunteers and TO in an area near Visoko provides a good example of the TO/volunteer structure. The SDS municipal board for Visoko tasked a local SDS chief in one village with recruiting volunteers for the JNA (which presumably issued the volunteers weapons). These personnel were then formed into a 470-man TO unit, complete with an organized command staff and three TO infantry companies, one from each of three villages.¹² On paper, this is the way most TO formations were organized. But the units themselves generally lacked training and discipline, mere collections of civilians bearing small arms and provided with a few mortars and light antitank weapons. Few could boast any officers with JNA experience, but were led by SDS politicians chosen for their political reliability rather than any battlefield skills.¹³ To overcome these deficiencies, JNA commanders would call up the personnel of some TO and volunteer units and incorporate them into JNA reserve partisan brigades, where they were somewhat better organized and led, though still deficient as soldiers.

Bosnian Serb Ministry of Internal Affairs**

The final component in the triumvirate of Serb security forces was the newly created Ministry of Internal Affairs of the SRBH (MUP). The SRBH MUP came

** For a more detailed look at the SRBH MUP structure and estimated regional manpower in April, see Chart 3.

into existence on 1 April when Bosnian Republic Deputy Minister Momcilo Mandic announced that the Bosnian Serb Assembly had passed laws creating the ministry, and that the organs of the Bosnian Republican MUP would cease to function in the SRBH as of that date.¹⁴ Mico Stanisic, a senior policeman in Sarajevo and relative of Serbian State Security chief Jovica Stanisic, became the new SRBH Minister of Internal Affairs. In some ways the announcement merely formalized what had been going on for months in the Serb autonomous regions, where the local police had already fallen under the control of regional Serb police commanders.

SRBH MUP forces, estimated at about 16,000 active and reserve personnel, were organized into four parts. The first, State Security, would direct civilian intelligence and counterintelligence through a system of regional centers. The second, Public Security, represented the active duty uniformed patrolmen and traffic police and plainclothes criminal investigators. The existing Police Reserve appears to have been expanded and enhanced so that its members could

take on a combat role in addition to their original function of backing up the active duty Public Security personnel. Finally, the Serb element of the pre-war Republican antiterrorist unit MUP was expanded by the SRBH into a much larger force.¹⁵ These regional units—at least one per regional headquarters—were nominally intended to perform antiterrorist and counter-sabotage roles, but now they would often be given important assault missions in combat operations. The State Security and Public Security sections were staffed for the most part by Serb personnel who had served in the Republican MUP; in many cases a Republican MUP command and its predominantly Serb membership was simply redesignated into the SRBH structure. The Reserve and Special Police, though they preserved a leavening of pre-war Republican personnel, now received an influx of politically reliable but untrained SDS police recruits. The police in particular, along with the rest of the SRBH MUP, got a great deal of assistance from the Serbian MUP in forming and organizing.¹⁶

Chart 1

Yugoslav People's Army Order of Battle, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, 10 April 1992*

Second Military District¹⁷

Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac, Commander
Lieutenant Colonel General Branko Stankovic,
Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff
Major General Muharem Fetahagic,
Assistant Commander for Morale, Education, and Legal Affairs

65th Protection Motorized Regiment

HQ: Han Pijesak

389th Rocket Artillery Brigade

HQ: Banja Luka

454th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade

HQ: Derventa

580th Mixed Artillery Brigade

HQ: Vojnic, RSK (Croatia)

240th Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment

HQ: Sarajevo-Lukavica (moved to Sokolac in spring 1992)

367th Communications Regiment

HQ: Han Pijesak?

405th Rear Base

HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

530th Rear Base

HQ: Bosanski Petrovac

744th Rear Base

HQ: Sokolac

993rd Rear Base

HQ: Banja Luka

4th (Sarajevo) Corps

Major General Vojislav Djurdjevac, Commander

6th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Doboj

14th Motorized Brigade

Colonel Tomislav Sipcic, Commander

HQ: Zenica

* Note that this is the static skeleton order of battle and does not show the specific task-organized, sector orders of battle for the main combat areas. See specific orders of battle for those areas. Although this order of battle includes much of Croatia, it excludes JNA forces in Eastern Slavonia.

49th Mechanized Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Enver Hadzhihasanovic, Commander
HQ: Sarajevo-Lukavica

216th Mountain Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Dragomir Milosevic, Commander
HQ: Han Pijesak

4th Mixed Artillery Regiment

HQ: Kiseljak (moved to Pale-Koran area in spring 1992)

4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

HQ: Visoko (moved to Mokro in spring 1992)

346th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

HQ: Sarajevo-Lukavica

288th Military Police Battalion

HQ: Sarajevo-Lukavica

5th (Banja Luka) Corps

Major General Momir Talic, Commander
Colonel Bosko Kelecevic, Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff
HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vicinity of Stara Gradiska, RSK (Croatia)

2nd Partisan Brigade

HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Okucani, RSK (Croatia)

5th Partisan Brigade

HQ: Prijedor-Omarska
Forward Headquarters: vic. Pakrac, Croatia

11th Partisan Brigade

HQ: Bosanska Dubica
Forward Headquarters: vic. Jasenovac, RSK (Croatia)

16th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: East of Novska, Croatia

329th Armored Brigade

HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: East of Okucani, RSK (Croatia)

343rd Motorized Brigade

HQ: Prijedor
Forward Headquarters: vic. Lipik, Croatia

10th Partisan Division

6th Partisan Brigade
HQ: Sanski Most

13th Partisan Brigade
HQ: Bosanski Petrovac

3rd Partisan Detachment
HQ: Bosanska Dubica

30th Partisan Division
Colonel Stanislav Galic, Commander

1st Partisan Brigade
HQ: Kotor Varos

17th Partisan Brigade
HQ: Kljuc

19th Partisan Brigade
HQ: Donji Vakuf

122nd Partisan Brigade
HQ: Skender Vakuf

5th Mixed Artillery Regiment
HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Stara Gradiska, RSK (Croatia)

5th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment
HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Okucani, RSK (Croatia)

5th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment
HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: vic. Okucani, RSK (Croatia)

5th Military Police Battalion
HQ: Banja Luka
Forward Headquarters: Stara Gradiska, RSK (Croatia)

9th (Knin) Corps
Major General Ratko Mladic, Commander
Colonel Savo Kovacevic, Assistant Commander and Chief of Staff
HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

9th Armored Brigade (former 221st Motorized Brigade)
HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

11th Motorized Brigade
HQ: Bosansko Grahovo

180th Motorized Brigade
HQ: Benkovac, RSK (Croatia)

9th Mixed Artillery Regiment
HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

557th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment
HQ: Benkovac, RSK (Croatia)

Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment
HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

9th Military Police Battalion
HQ: Knin, RSK (Croatia)

10th (Bihac) Corps

Lieutenant Colonel General Spiro Nikovic, Commander

15th Partisan Brigade

HQ: Bihac

236th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Gracac, RSK (Croatia)

622nd Motorized Brigade

HQ: Petrinja, RSK (Croatia)

6th Mixed Artillery Regiment

HQ: Petrinja

6th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

HQ: Petrinja

17th (Tuzla) Corps

Major General Savo Jankovic, Commander

Colonel Milan Stublincevic, Chief of Staff

92nd Motorized Brigade

HQ: Tuzla

327th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Derventa

336th Motorized Brigade (former 4th Armored Brigade)

HQ: Bijeljina

395th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Brcko

2nd Armored Battalion/453rd Mechanized Brigade (attached)

Forward Headquarters: vic. Janja

38th Partisan Division

HQ: Bijeljina

17th Partisan Brigade

HQ: Bijeljina

22nd Partisan Brigade

HQ: Ugljevik

17th Mixed Artillery Regiment

HQ: Brcko

17th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

HQ: Bijeljina?

17th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

HQ: Tuzla

497th Engineer Regiment

HQ: Bijeljina

Fourth Military District

Colonel-General Pavle Strugar, Commander

HQ: Titograd (Podgorica)
Forward HQ: Trebinje ("Herzegovina" Operational Group 2)

2nd (Podgorica) Corps

Major General Radomir Damjanovic, Commander
HQ: Podgorica (Titograd)
Forward Headquarters: vic. Trebinje

1st Niksic Partisan Brigade

HQ: Niksic
Forward Headquarters: south of Ljubinje

5th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Podgorica (Titograd)
Forward Headquarters: vic. Dubrovnik, Croatia

472nd Motorized Brigade

HQ: Trebinje
Forward Headquarters: North of Dubrovnik, Croatia

Elements, 326th Mixed Artillery Regiment

HQ: Danilovgrad
Forward Headquarters: vic. Slano/Dubrovnik

2nd Military Police Battalion

HQ: Titograd
Forward Headquarters: vic. Trebinje?

13th (Bileca) Corps

Colonel Momcilo Perisic, Commander
HQ: Bileca

10th Motorized Brigade

Colonel Milojko Pantelic, Commander
HQ: Mostar

13th Motorized Brigade

HQ: Bileca

13th Mixed Artillery Regiment

HQ: Bileca

13th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment

HQ: Bileca

13th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment

HQ: Bileca

Elements, 37th (Uzice) Corps*

Colonel Dragoljub Ojdanic, Commander
Peacetime Headquarters: Uzice
Forward Headquarters: Visegrad

5th Air Force and Air Defense Corps

Major General Ljubomir Bajic, Commander
Headquarters: Bihac Air Base

* Which formations of the 37th Corps deployed to the Visegrad area remains unclear.

350th Air Monitoring, Information, and Navigation Regiment

Headquarters: 200th Air Base at Bihac-Zeljava

155th Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-2)

Colonel Slavko Biga, Commander

Headquarters: Banja Luka

350th Air Defense Rocket Regiment (SA-3)

Colonel Bozo Novak, Commander

Headquarters: Mostar

97th Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 171st Air Base at Mostar

(Relocated from 500th Air Base at Split-Divulje to Mostar)

1 Galeb-Jastreb squadron (12 aircraft)

1 Orao reconnaissance squadron (12 aircraft)

1 Mi-8 transport helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)

1 ASW helicopter squadron (9 aircraft)

107th Helicopter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 171st Air Base at Mostar

2 GAMA/Gazelle attack/observation

helicopter training squadrons (26 aircraft)

117th Fighter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 200th Air Base at Bihac-Zeljava

2 MiG-21 fighter squadrons (24 aircraft)

1 MiG-21 reconnaissance squadron (6 aircraft)

185th Fighter Aviation Regiment

Headquarters: 200th Air Base at Bihac-Zeljava

(Relocated to Bihac from Pula September 1991)

1 MiG-21 fighter squadron (15 aircraft)

1 G-1 Galeb fighter-bomber squadron (12 aircraft)

82nd Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 474th Air Base at Banja Luka-Mahovljani

1 J-21 Jastreb squadron (12 aircraft) (at Udbina Air Base)

1 G-1 Galeb squadron (12 aircraft)

1 J-22 Orao reconnaissance squadron (12 aircraft)

111th Transport Aviation Brigade

Headquarters: 474th Air Base at Banja Luka-Mahovljani

1 GAMA attack helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)

1 Mi-8 transport helicopter squadron (15 aircraft)
1 An-26 transport squadron (6 aircraft)

Tuzla-Dubrave Air Base

Headquarters: Tuzla-Dubrave Air Base

Two to three squadrons of J-22 Orao, MiG-21s, and G-4 Super Galebs, some 30 to 40 aircraft, were usually forward-deployed at this base. Aircraft drawn from 172nd Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment and 185th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Regiment (1 G-4 squadron).

Chart 2

Organization and Manpower Estimates, Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense¹⁸

Banja Luka/Bosanska Krajina Area¹⁹

Banja Luka TO	
2,000 personnel	
Sipovo/Mrkonjic Grad TO	
1,200 personnel	
Prnjavor TO	
1,000 personnel	
Grahovo TO	
800 personnel	
Drvar TO	
600 personnel	
Glamoc TO	
800 personnel	
Bosanski Petrovac TO	
700 personnel	
Kupres TO	
1,000 personnel	
Srbac TO	
1,800 personnel	
Celinac TO	
600 personnel	
Laktasi TO	
750 personnel	
Bosanska Krupa TO	
300 personnel	
Bosanski Novi TO	
1,000 personnel	

Posavina/Northern Bosnia Area

Brcko TO	
400 personnel	
Bosanski Brod TO	
1,000 personnel	

Doboj TO
1,800 personnel

Ozren TO
2,000 personnel

Teslic TO
1,000 personnel

Samac TO
1,000 personnel

Northeastern Bosnia/Northern Drina Valley Area

Bijeljina TO
1,000 personnel

Zvornik TO
1,000 personnel

Sekovici (Birac) TO
1,000 personnel

Srebrenica/Bratunac TO
500 personnel

Sarajevo Area

Novi Grad TO/Trnovo TO
2,400 personnel

Centar (Kosevo) TO
700 personnel

Stari Grad TO
600 personnel

Novo Sarajevo TO
2,800 personnel

Vogosca TO
1,500 personnel

Hadzici TO
1,500 personnel

Pale TO
2,000 personnel

Ilijadza TO
2,800 personnel

Ilijas TO (including Visoko, Breza, and Vares Municipalities)
5,200 personnel

Sokolac TO (including Olovo Municipality)
4,400 personnel

Southern Drina Valley Area

Rogatica TO
800 personnel

Gorazde TO
2,000 personnel

Cajnice TO
500 personnel

Visegrad TO
1,000 personnel

Rudo TO
500 personnel

Foca TO
1,000 personnel

Kalinovik TO
900 personnel

Herzegovina Area

Konjic TO
600 personnel

Mostar TO
500 personnel

Trebinje TO
1,000 personnel

Total Manpower Estimate
About 60,000 personnel

Chart 3

Organization and Manpower Estimates, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Headquarters, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Pale

Mico Stanisic, Minister of Internal Affairs

Public Security Services Center of Bosanska Krajina Autonomous Region

HQ Banja Luka

- Controlled police secretariats/stations in 22 municipalities
- One special police detachment formed on 12 May
- Estimated total personnel:

1,350 active duty public security personnel

5,400 reserve police

200 to 250 special police

6,950 to 7,000 total personnel

Public Security Services Center of Northern Bosnia

HQ Doboj

- Controlled police secretariats/stations in four to five municipalities
- Probably created a special police detachment in May
- Estimated total personnel:

200 to 250 active public security personnel

800 to 1,000 reserve police

40 to 50 special police

1,000 to 1,300 total personnel

Public Security Services Center of Semberija

HQ Ugljevik

- Controlled police secretariats/stations in three or four municipalities
- Probably created a special police detachment in May
- Estimated total personnel:

150 to 200 active public security personnel

600 to 800 reserve police

30 to 40 special police

800 to 1,050 total personnel

Public Security Services Center of Romanija and Birac

HQ Pale

- Controlled police secretariats/stations in about 16 municipalities
- Special police detachment formed 1-4 April
- Estimated total personnel:

800 active public security personnel

3,200 reserve police

150 to 200 special police

4,150 to 4,200 total personnel

Public Security Services Center of Herzegovina

HQ Trebinje

- Controlled police secretariats/stations in about seven municipalities
- Formed special police detachment 1 April
- Estimated total personnel:

350 active public security personnel

1,400 reserve police personnel

70 to 100 special police personnel

1820 to 1850 total personnel

Total SRBH MUP Personnel Estimates

500 active and reserve state security personnel

2,800 to 3,000 active public security personnel

11,000 to 12,000 reserve police

500 to 650 special police

15,000 to 16,000 total estimated personnel

Endnotes, Annex 22

¹The JNA made the announcement regarding the reorganization on 3 January, based on a 30 December Federal Presidency decision. The JNA reorganized into four military districts, plus the Navy and Air Force and Air Defense:

- First Military District, HQ Belgrade, under Colonel General Zivota Panic
- Second Military District, HQ Sarajevo, under Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac
- Third Military District, HQ Skopje, under Colonel General Nikola Uzelac
- Fourth Military District, HQ Podgorica (Titograd), under Colonel General Pavle Strugar
- Navy, HQ Kumbor, under Admiral Mile Kandic
- AF and AD, HQ Belgrade, under Lieutenant Colonel General Bozidar Stevanovic

In addition, the former commander of Fifth Military District (now Second), Colonel General Zivota Avramovic, became Deputy Federal Defense Secretary, replacing Admiral Stane Brovet, while Avramovic's former deputy, Colonel General Andrija Raseta, became Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Belgrade Tanjug 3 January 1992.

²See Jovic entry for 31 December 1991, which notes Kadijevic's resignation. Jovic indicates that he did not entirely believe that health concerns were the only reason for his resignation; he implies that the impact of the Yugoslav crisis had drained Kadijevic mentally. But Kadijevic also suffered from genuinely serious medical problems.

³Prior to becoming commander of the Third Military District, Kukanjac had served in several command and staff positions in the JNA, including the JNA Chief Inspector-General. He had attended and graduated from all the major JNA ground forces and national defense schools. He was born in Serbia and was 56 years old in 1992.

⁴The Montenegrin TO headquarters, under Strugar, had used the designator "Herzegovina" Operational Group 2 during the Dubrovnik operations.

⁵All of the JNA forces stationed in Croatia were scheduled to be withdrawn to Bosnia under the Vance Plan. The transformation of the Second VO (plus one corps of the Fourth VO) into the Bosnian Serb Army at the end of May, however, would effectively nullify this provision of the plan.

⁶Several of these brigades had originally been Republican TO brigades from Western Bosnia, which the JNA had "illegally" mobilized for service during the Croatian war. After their mobilization, they served as JNA rather than TO brigades, and are so accounted for here. In addition, as part of the JNA mobilization in early April, several new partisan brigades were mobilized, incorporating local TO and volunteer personnel in an attempt to provide better organization and control over these ill-disciplined elements.

⁷The formation types described are identical to those noted in Annex 14.

⁸The volunteer concept dates to the Croatian war when the JNA's difficulties in mobilizing reservists forced the army to call on volunteers (mostly Serbs), who were generally formed into their own units and attached to JNA combat brigades. Many such units were formed in Bosnia and fought in the Croatian war, particularly in Western Slavonia.

⁹The SDS took over the municipal TO structures during the fall of 1991 in those areas where Serbs made up a majority, plurality, or, in some cases, a sizeable minority. Generally, it appears that the republican TO staff continued to function in a nominal way while the Serbs set up parallel structures mirroring the official staffs. In some cases, however, new staffs were activated as late as the end of April. The first TO formations appear to have been mobilized in late February near Bosanski Brod, with general mobilization ordered on 15 April. Paris AFP 29 February 1992; Belgrade Tanjug 15 April 1992.

With respect to the absorption of the volunteers by the TO, there is evidence that the JNA had intended to exercise command and control over them separately, but apparently had insufficient time to act on its plans.

On 25 March, General Adzic ordered the Second VO to

As soon as possible, begin establishing headquarters and brigades of volunteer units or reduced scope, provide them with JNA officer cadre, and supply them with weapons and equipment. All volunteer formations should be organized in a military manner and connected with the JNA headquarters in their respective zones of responsibility.

Adzic gave General Kukanjac's command until 15 April to achieve this. Cekic, pp. 186-187, drawn from SSNO; General Staff of the Armed Forces of the SFRY, Administration, Top Secret, No. 585-2, 3 April 1992 to Second Military District. By 20 March, General Kukanjac informed the JNA General Staff that Second Military District had already armed over 69,000 volunteers. Cekic, Supplement XII, pp. 304-321. Two other documents state that General Adzic directed on 25 March and 3 April that,

... the formation, equipping, and signing of JNA officers to volunteer units, the military organisation of volunteer units and co-ordinating them with JNA Commands, the reinforcement, evacuation, or destruction of strategic stockpiles and the mobilisation in the areas where the Serbs make [a] majority; and for the formation of brigade and detachment-size volunteer units with JNA officers as commanding staff and armed with JNA weapons; the acceleration of the retrieval of modern military equipment; the removal of JNA units and property from Zenica, Capljina, and Travnik; and the planned and secure mobilization on the territories where the Serbs are in the majority.

JNA SSNO, Minutes of meetings, 25 March 1992 and SSNO Order 3 April 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002 <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p.106. Given that full-scale fighting broke out in early April, however, it seems apparent that the JNA lacked the time and the means to organize the volunteers into units saluted with JNA cadre. Instead, the SDS-dominated TO staffs did the organizing and appointed the officers. In only a few instances were volunteers incorporated into nearby JNA formations along with men mobilized from the TO. Not until the Bosnian Serb Army was consolidated in the summer and fall of 1992 was the JNA—by then the VJ—able to take full control of these troops.

¹⁰See Cekic, pp. 52-53 for a description of the supply of JNA weapons to the Bosnian Serb TO and local Sarajevo Serbs in March and April. See Cekic p. 97 for the Bosnian Serb Bihać TO's request for JNA weapons in February, and pp. 104-105 for the Bosnian Serb Bosanska Krupa TO's request (and JNA approval) in the second half of April. The 10th Corps reported to the Second Military District on 6 April that "TO and police units were being formed in the area of responsibility according to plan." 2nd MD Combat and Operations Report for 6 April 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002 <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 106.

¹¹A good example of SDS-controlled TO units comes from an article on the 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade, the successor to the Bosanska Krupa Serb TO unit. According to Captain 1st Class Miroslav Vjestica,

Back before the war, in accordance with instructions from the SDS, we formed the brigade. The official name was the Serbian Territorial Defense; we called it Grmec Brigade. It was under the command of the Crisis Staff and the SDS President. Many of their soldiers obtained their wartime experience on the Croatian battlefield.

We were creating the brigade in the war . . . on the move. Until 15 May, the military commander was Mile Strbac-Bijeli, and then came Colonel Vukasin Danicic (by decision of the Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska).

Danicic's appointment on 15 May clearly marked the beginning of the brigade's conversion from an SDS-controlled TO formation into a regular VRS brigade. Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9.

¹² Cekic, p. 187-188.

¹³ This problem was to plague the lower command levels of the Bosnian Serb Army throughout the war.

¹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 31 March 1992.

¹⁵ The Bosnian Serb Special Police Brigade formally dates its formation to 4 April 1992, when Serb elements of the Republican antiterrorist unit seized the Republican police academy in Sarajevo, although the unit probably was clandestinely formed earlier. Pale Srpska TV 4 April 1996. A Special Police detachment was also established in Trebinje on 1 April. Belgrade Tanjug 1 April 1992. The Bosnian Serb Government formally authorized the establishment of Special Police (or Special Militia) detachments for each public security service center on 27 April. Belgrade Tanjug 27 April 1992. A newly formed battalion or detachment paraded in Banja Luka on 12 May. Belgrade Tanjug 12 May 1992. The SRBH MUP had requested and was promised JNA assistance in the formation of the unit on 23 April, providing a laundry list of equipment needed. The list included, among others things, six helicopters, seven armored vehicles, 10 trucks, 157 pistols, 157 Heckler & Koch sub-machine guns. Although the JNA appears to have provided much of the equipment asked for, it almost certainly did not give the Special Police the helicopters. See entire list of requested items in Cekic, Supplement XV, pp. 324-328.

¹⁶ Photographs in Cekic (see pp. 376-377, 380-381, 391) show a number of SRBH MUP personnel wearing US-pattern BDUs and web gear. Since it is highly unlikely that the JNA provided such equipment, these items were probably surplus goods bought on the open market by the Serbian MUP. Weapons and boots appear to have been provided from internal Yugoslav/Serbian stocks.

¹⁷ Note that this order of battle does not show the many operational group headquarters that were active during the Croatian war and remained in existence until the conversion of the Second Military District into the Bosnian Serb Army.

¹⁸ The manpower estimates probably include every Serb registered with a municipal TO or issued a weapon, and probably represent an over-count of personnel actually available to serve in the field, since many over-age men likely were included in the initial count.

To ascertain the regional TO structure, a search has been made of Belgrade Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, and Pale SRNA traffic during the first six months of 1992 for references to Serb territorial units and their home municipalities. The list of municipal TO units is based on this search as well as a list of JNA-recruited volunteers, organized by municipality, provided by General Kukanjac in a 20 March assessment. On the assumption that the volunteer units provided the bulk of the TO's personnel, the estimates for the TO strengths are based primarily on this listing but modified to take account of specific conditions in a given municipality in April. For example, the volunteer numbers for the municipalities of Donji Vakuf, Jajce, and Bugojno have not been included in the TO estimates because it is believed that these personnel were incorporated into the JNA 19th Partisan Brigade when it mobilized in early April. The same is true for the Sanski Most municipality, where it is assessed that these personnel were incorporated into the 6th Partisan Brigade. In addition, some municipalities did not have any volunteers listed, yet clearly had a TO force, such as Zvornik, and thus an entry for Zvornik was added.

¹⁹ The pre-war republican TO was divided into regional districts that controlled a set number of municipalities, and it is believed that the Bosnian Serbs maintained a similar hierarchy prior to the TO's incorporation into the Bosnian Serb Army, but few details are available. Instead, a general regional grouping is included for clarity's sake.

²⁰ Note that the total estimates have been rounded and that the regional estimates added together may not exactly equal the totals. The methodology used in constructing the regional estimates is based on a building block approach, using the municipal police secretariats as the individual block, plus one special police unit per regional center based on a size of about three or four percent of the estimate for the combined public security and reserve police. Each municipality is estimated to have had 50 active duty personnel and 200 reserve personnel.

Annex 23

Yugoslav People's Army Objectives, Strategy, and Operations

JNA Missions, April 1992: Defend the Serbs, Talk to the Muslims, Fight the Croats

The JNA's pre-April policy of supporting a peaceful solution to Bosnia's complex political issues continued to guide its actions as war broke out.¹ However, five events catalyzed and molded the JNA's involvement during this period and eventually steered it toward backing the Bosnian Serbs:

- the Croat-Serb fighting and so-called "massacre" of Serbs near Bosanski Brod in late March,
- the Serb takeover of Bijeljina on 31 March – 4 April,
- the Croat seizure of Kupres on 4-5 April,
- Croatian Army intervention in southeastern Herzegovina,
- the mobilization of Bosnia's TO and reserve MUP forces on 4 April.

It was the republic's TO mobilization that appears to have spurred a Bosnian Serb counter-mobilization of its TO and the outbreak of widespread fighting in Sarajevo and other parts of the republic.² In response to these events General Kukanjac ordered the mobilization of the Second Military District's 40,000-odd reservists (of whom 22,000 responded), and designated four combat areas: Kupres, Bosanski Brod, Bijeljina, and Sarajevo.³ General Strugar, the commander of the Fourth Military District in Herzegovina, probably did the same for his area, which he presumably divided into three combat areas: Drina Valley, Capljina-Mostar-Konjic, and southern Herzegovina-Dalmatia-Dubrovnik.⁴

At the start, JNA forces appear to have assumed two primary missions in these seven combat zones: defending Bosnian Serb territory against Croat "aggression" and making at least token efforts to keep the peace between Muslim and Serb TO forces.⁵ The manner in which it pursued these missions varied among the zones because of the JNA's attitudes toward the Muslims and the Croatians. There was no tolerance whatsoever for any Bosnian Croat—or especially Croatian Army—forces, which were viewed as an immediate threat to the JNA itself and to the Bosnian Serbs. Senior JNA officers were insistently vocal during April that the presence of Croatian Army forces in Bosnia posed the primary threat to the republic.⁶ This being the case, they wasted no time in joining with Bosnian Serb TO units to attack Croatian and Bosnian Croat forces in Kupres, near Bosanski Brod and Bosanski Samac, and between Stolac and the Bosnian-Croatian border near Dubrovnik.⁷

In contrast to its military engagements with the Croats, in those areas where fighting erupted between Serb and predominantly Muslim Republican TO forces—Bijeljina, Sarajevo, and the Drina Valley—the JNA saw its role during April as primarily one of keeping the peace.⁸ General Kukanjac, although mistrustful of the Muslim-led republican government, still appears to have believed that the army could work with it.⁹ On 3 April, asserting that Izetbegovic had asked him to deploy JNA forces to Bijeljina, he promised to "protect every people and everyone who is in danger."¹⁰ The JNA took similar action in Sarajevo, attempting to interpose itself between Serb and republican forces in several key suburbs.¹¹ The JNA also moved units from Serbia into Visegrad and Foca in an attempt to calm the situation.¹²

¹ The fighting in these areas will be discussed in detail in the sections describing combat operations.

Although the JNA's peacekeeping intentions in these areas may have been good, they had little or no impact on the actual fighting because JNA commanders were entirely unwilling to fire on the Serb TO and police forces who were initiating most of the clashes.¹³ JNA troops stationed in Bijeljina did nothing to stop the Serb's armed seizure of the town, although they did shelter civilians fleeing the fighting. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs' combat operations to blockade Sarajevo and seize key districts within it continued unabated.¹⁴ JNA troops also stood by and watched while local Serb TO and police seized Visegrad and Foca. Even if they had been able to separate the forces and halt the fighting, the likely result would have been to consolidate the Serbs' territorial gains and confirm the expulsion of the legitimate municipal authorities, just as they did in Croatia during the summer of 1991.

In other places the JNA's claims to be keeping the peace proved even more hollow, because in several instances it appears that JNA forces directly supported a Serb attack on a Bosnian town. Eyewitnesses to the attack by combined Bosnian Serb TO fighters, Serbian volunteers, and Serbian Special Police on the Bosnian border town of Zvornik on 8-9 April claim that it was supported by JNA artillery firing from inside Serbia.¹⁵ JNA troops clearly took an active part in operations to confiscate "illegal" arms from the local population under the guise of "peacekeeping," with "illegal" being defined as those belonging to Muslims, notably during the Bosnian Serb takeover of Vlasenica on 21 April.¹⁶ JNA troops operating in Visegrad and Foca probably undertook similar missions to disarm the Muslims and there is some evidence that they may have directly participated in some of the Serb attacks.¹⁷ JNA units were also involved in the 23 April capture of Bosanska Krupa and the 24 April seizure of key installations in Sanski Most town in western Bosnia.¹⁸ Such actions reinforced the growing belief among Muslims—already nearly universal among Croats—that the JNA had become an army wholly dedicated to the Serbs. Claims that it was keeping the peace and would protect all nations increasingly fell on deaf ears.

Defend the Barracks, Fight the Muslims—May 1992

The JNA's knee-jerk reaction to any threat to its facilities—a response strongly conditioned by the loss of its barracks in Croatia—finally brought the JNA into open hostilities with the Muslim-led republican forces. Already in early April the JNA had retaliated against the Bosnian Croats for attacks on its barracks and air base near Mostar with air strikes and artillery fire.¹⁹ These clashes, however, derived from existing hostilities between Croats and JNA-backed Serbs. It was not until the republican TO blockaded the JNA's barracks in Sarajevo on 1-2 May that JNA and Bosnian TO confrontations degenerated into all-out war. Tensions had already been growing between the two as a result of the increasingly overt support that the JNA's nominal peacekeepers were giving the Bosnian Serbs. The Federal Presidency's announcement on 27 April that it would be withdrawing the Serbian elements of the JNA from Bosnia appears to have led to the TO decision on 29 April (despite public denials) to blockade JNA facilities. The TO feared that the withdrawal would deny it the opportunity to take back its confiscated weapons stocks and appropriate the JNA's heavy weapons.²⁰ On 1-2 May, the TO blockaded the barracks and on the following night attacked the Second Military District Headquarters. General Kukanjac threatened to retaliate against the city if the attack did not stop and apparently followed through by shelling TO and MUP headquarters. After the JNA's arrest of President Izetbegovic led to UN mediation, its headquarters personnel were to be allowed to leave. But when the TO ambushed the UN-escorted withdrawal column, the JNA's outrage knew no bounds and took it into a completely overt alliance with the Serbs.²¹ The very next day the official Yugoslav press agency announced that JNA tanks and Serb TO troops had captured the north Bosnian town of Doboj from Muslim and Croat forces.²²

The analysis that the TO's decision to blockade the barracks brought the JNA into open war with the Muslim-dominated TO is not meant to imply that war with the JNA and its successor, the Bosnian Serb Army,

could have been avoided. On the contrary, the JNA had already given itself over mentally to the Serbs, along with the weapons it had provided them, whatever hopes some officers, such as Kukanjac, might retain that a peaceful settlement could be reached. Nothing Sarajevo could have done or not done would have changed this fact. Though JNA engagements with the republican TO had been sporadic and

piecemeal before the blockade, it was only a matter of time before JNA combat units became involved on the side of the Serb TO en masse. Belgrade had decided well beforehand that the JNA formations in Bosnia would become the Bosnian Serb Army, and the announcement of the "withdrawal" that provoked the blockade virtually signaled that intention.

Endnotes, Annex 23

¹ Interestingly, Karadzic complained during a 1997 interview that the Bosnian Serbs did not trust the JNA at the time, claiming that it "very rarely helped us." The JNA, he said, regarded the Bosnian Serbs as "... nationalists and anti-communists. As far as they were concerned, there was no difference between Izetbegovic, Tudjman, or Karadzic." Dejan Lukic, "Mobilization Was the Direct Cause of the War," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 2 June 1997, p. 11. An interview with Radovan Karadzic. Given the long-standing tensions that existed between the Bosnian Serb Army's ex-JNA officers and Karadzic's SDS throughout the war, Karadzic's statement probably has some basis in fact. Former JNA operations officer and Krajina Serb Army (SVK) General Milisav Sekulic states in his book on the JNA in 1991-1992 that the JNA was too even-handed during early 1992 and should have forcefully attacked those who were illegally continuing the dissolution of Yugoslavia in Bosnia. See Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Nika Nije Bratio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 285-314.

² Karadzic claims that the Presidency decision on mobilization sparked the war, as reported in Silber and Little, p. 229 and in the *Vечерње Новости* interview discussed earlier. See also Dejan Lukic, "Mobilization Was the Direct Cause of the War," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 2 June 1997, p. 11. An interview with Radovan Karadzic.

³ Cekic, pp. 132-141, provides a detailed description of the JNA mobilization orders and preparations, based on captured JNA documents:

In early April 1992, the headquarters and units of Second Military District were "due to the complex political/security situation in the area of responsibility" at the "highest level of combat readiness." By order of the commander of Second Military District, on 6 April 1992 (sic—actually April) at 21.00, the mobilization was initiated at 21 wartime units of this command. The function of the Reserve Command Post of Second Military District was established and it started its operation, while the mobilization process was followed in the course of the day ...

Highlighting the strong ties to the Bosnian Serbs, the JNA set up the Reserve Command Post in Pale where "contact was established with the Crisis Committee of the SDS for the Municipality of Pale." This headquarters, located at the "Turist" Hotel, consisted of:

- 20 officers from the HQ, Second Military District, headed by the chief of staff, Second Military District
- 6 officers, 20 soldiers, and 8 communications vehicles of 367th Communications Regiment
- 1 squad of Military Police of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment (1 officer, 9 soldiers)
- 1 officer and 5 soldiers of the service personnel
- 1 van, 3 all-terrain vehicles, and 1 passenger car
- Total: 28 officers, 34 soldiers, and 13 vehicles

On 6 April 1992, by 18.00 the response of the reservists ordered to report to the units of the Second Military District was as follows:

Summoned	Reported
2161 officers	506 or 23%
1996 NCO	491 or 25%
35,264 reservists	13,084 or 37%
38,786 total	14,039 or 36.2%

Of the total number of 39,463 reservists called up, on 7 April 1992 by 18.00 the total response was 17,082 or 43% plus 24 vehicles

2253 officers	683 or 30%
2112 NCO	777 or 37%
35,098 reservists	15,622 or 44%

On 8 April 1992 by 18.00 the response of the reservists ordered to report to the units was:

2152 officers	795 or 37%
1840 NCOs	1004 or 54%
36,436 reservists	20,676 or 57%
40,428 total	22,474 or 55%

Of the rear-echelon reservists, 5112 were ordered to report. As of 9 April 1992 at 06.00 790 or 15.4% had reported (259 officers,

543 NCOs, and 4310 soldiers were summoned and 17 officers, or 6.5% 56 NCOs or 10.3% and 717 soldiers or 16.6%)

"In the course of mobilization, until 11 April, the units and institutions of the Second Military District received 22,474 reservists, of which the majority in the units 17 and 5 Corps." Three of the Second Military District's five corps had primary responsibility for the situation in four designated combat areas:

- "Kupres Area of Combat Activities"—5th (Banja Luka) Corps, supported by the 9th (Knin) Corps
- "Bosanski Brod Area of Combat Activities"—17th (Tuzla) Corps
- "Bijeljina Area of Combat Activities"—17th (Tuzla) Corps
- "Sarajevo Area of Combat Activities"—4th (Sarajevo) Corps

The detailed disposition of JNA combat formations in these areas, as gleaned by Cekic from JNA documents, is provided below.

Deployment of JNA forces on 7 April 1992

1. Kupres Area of Combat Activities
(Cekic, p. 135—On 8 April, vic Kupres, 9th Corps undertook the "actions of cleansing the city, assisting the population and preparation for continuation of planning for further activities in the area of Kupreska vrata feature and the village of Malovan.")
Axis: Doline (Hill 1152)—Strazbenica Village—route of attack of 3 Bn/11th Partisan Brigade
Axis: Zlosela village—Hill 1120—Kupresko Polje—attack of tank company with the Volunteer Brigade from Sipovo and Zloselo
Axis: Zlosela village—Hill 1156—Olovo village—attack route of 2nd Battalion/13th Partisan Brigade
Mortar Company deployed area of Suhovo village
105mm howitzer battery in the area of Blagaj village
2nd Battalion/5th Mixed Artillery Regiment deployed in the area of Mrdjenjevi village, Hill 1154, the church at elevation 1130 in Novo Selo
Area of Koprivnica-Carev Mlin—1st Battalion/19th Partisan Brigade/30th Partisan Division
Area of Donje and Gornje Vukovske—Vukovske TO Brigade, major part of Kupres town under control Kupres TO Company
2. Bosanski Brod Area of Combat Operations
Bosanski Brod TO Brigade—eastern part of Bosanski Brod area of Greda feature
Ljesce Brigade in the area of Ljesce
1st Battalion/327th Mtz Bde with 1 TO Brigade vic Kobile Gornje village and movement of the column on the communication with Paraslicna village
Tank Company/327th Mtz Bde in the area of Nareci village
2nd Armored Battalion/336th Mtz Bde in area of Unka village
3rd Battalion/327th Mtz Bde in area of Zboriste village, Bosanski Luzani village, with movement of the column toward the Ukrina River
Prnjavor TO Battalion and Trstenica TO Company in the area of Kalacka Village, Pavlovo brdo, with the movement of the column along the road
Antitank element of 1st Battery/1st Battalion/17th Mxd AT Arty Regiment in area of Bjelas village
MRL battery/17th Mxd Arty Regiment deployed vic Polje village (elevation 199)
Battery of Howitzer Artillery Battalion/336th Mtz Bde area of Sekici village
4th Battalion/327th Mtz Bde in area of Glovoca village HQ.
327th Mtz Bde in Derventa
2nd Battalion/497th Engineer Regiment in area of Betnja Mala and Polje villages
Command Post of 1st Operational Group/17th Corps in area of Podnovlje village (Hill 179)
3. Bijeljina Area of Combat Operations
HQ, 38th Partisan Division deployed in Bijeljina

17th Mixed Artillery Regiment, Bijeljina
 MRL battery/17th Mxd Arty Rgt
 Howitzer Arty Btry/17th Mxd Arty Rgt
 2nd Armored Battalion/453rd Mech Brigade in area of Janja village
 1st Battalion/17th Partisan Brigade in area of Bosanska Raca, Galistok, Brodare villages
 2nd Battalion/17th Partisan Brigade in area of Gornji Sepak village (Zvornik municipality)
 3rd Battalion/17th Partisan Brigade in the area of Trpovacka greda feature, Lukavac River, Donje Crnevljevo village
 Command Post in area of Mala Obarska village
 Mortar Battery of 38 (sic—prob 17) Partisan Brigade in area of Ljesnica village
 22nd Partisan Brigade deployed:
 1st Battalion—Celopek
 2nd Battalion—Bogatovo Selo
 3rd Battalion—Donja Trnova
 CP—Ugljevik

4. Sarajevo Area of Combat Operations

49th Motorized Brigade deployed at the following points:
 —tank platoon at Vratnik
 —reinforced tank platoon at Butmir Airport
 —reinforced tank platoon at Mojilo Hill
 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment vic Koran
 4th Mixed AT Arty Regiment vic Mokro
 346th Lt AD Arty Rgt vic Trebevic
 216th Mtn Brigade in Han Pijesak area
 FCP 4th Corps at Zlatiste
 Non-attached II VO units
 240th SP Medium AD Rocket Rgt
 65th Protection Mtz. Regiment

⁴ Although no documentary evidence regarding this division is available, given that three JNA corps had headquarters deployed in the Fourth Military District areas of Bosnia, this seems likely. Units from the 37th (Uzice) Corps deployed to the Visegrad/Drina Valley area beginning on 13-14 April, after threats to blow up one of the Drina River dams had been received and fighting had broken out in Visegrad. Colonel Dragoljub Ojdanic, commander of the corps, claimed that the president of the municipality, a Muslim, had requested the JNA deployment. Belgrade Radio 14 April 1992; Sarajevo Radio 16 April 1992. The 13th (Bileca) Corps had taken over from the 37th Corps near Mostar-Capljina in early March. Belgrade Tanjug 6 March 1992. The 2nd (Podgorica) Corps was in command in the area south of Capljina, including the Dalmatian coast and Dubrovnik. Belgrade Tanjug 26 April 1992.

⁵ This judgment is based primarily on JNA statements and actions in the respective zones, rather than on hard documentary evidence. Cekic states that,

After the mobilization was ordered, the units of the Second Military District, being in full combat readiness because of "further complications of political/security situation in the area of responsibility," apart from controlling and securing of "vital installations and barracks, and undertaking of combat security measures within the frontal area, supplying of units with food, fuel, and explosive ordnance, establishing of the units of the "Territorial Defense" and the "Ministry of the Interior" of the so-called Serb Republic of Krajina, also undertook preparations for attack operations. (Emphasis added) Cekic, pp. 134-135.

Cekic indicates that a Top Secret General Staff directive to the HQ, Second Military District does exist, having observed it referenced in Second Military District documents. The order, Top Secret No. 172, which is described as an "execution plan," reportedly was submitted on 6 April, as Second Military District was mobilizing. It is likely that Second Military District's exact mission instructions are outlined here.

Unfortunately, Cekic (and presumably the Bosnian Government) were unable to obtain a copy of this order. Cekic, p. 129, FN 33.

Although Cekic provides outstanding source material, he assumes or assesses complete JNA involvement in all phases of the Bosnian Serb military operations at this time. We do not believe this to have been the case; rather, as indicated earlier, we believe the JNA was still of two minds, although it was committed to providing all the help necessary to the Bosnian Serbs if it believed they were threatened. This appears to be based on JNA documents, and likely represents a formalized statement of the two missions, with the phrase "controlling and security of vital installations and barracks" possibly providing the cover for peacekeeping while the "preparations for attack operations" likely refers to Kupres and possibly Bosanski Brod. Cekic also cites a JNA Second Military District HQ document from 16 April in which it is stated that JNA units have "secured" key lines of communications and "objects" throughout Bosnia. Cekic also claims that this included blockading Sarajevo, but it is unclear whether this is directly stated in the cited document or not. See Cekic, p. 144, FN 66 references VP 5027 [VP 5027 was the field post number for Second Military District Headquarters] Internal Use, No. 25/142-760, Sarajevo 16 April 1992, Attention Commander.

⁶ In a statement three days earlier General Kukanjac said that, after the Bosnian Presidency had ordered the mobilization of the republican TO, deployment of Croatian troops to Bosnia was the "main problem" in Bosnia. Belgrade Tanjug 4 April 1992. Later in the month, Kukanjac further emphasized his distress over the HV's presence in Bosnia, stating that

... some parts of Bosnia-Hercegovina have for months been occupied by the Croatian Army; this has been one of the biggest problems on the territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina ... The departure of the Croatian Army and other paramilitary forces from these areas and the disarmament of domestic republican paramilitary forces constitutes the key to resolving the situation in Bosnia. Belgrade Tanjug 29 April 1992.

⁷ The JNA counterstrike at Kupres began on 6 April. The operations around Bosanski Brod were primarily defensive, and began in earnest in late March. Operations against HV and Bosnian Croat forces started around Stolac on 10-11 April.

⁸ Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 285-314.

⁹ Sekulic strongly criticizes Kukanjac for putting any faith in the Bosnian Republic government and Izetbegovic in particular. Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 285-314.

¹⁰ Belgrade RTV 3 April 1992. The JNA ordered additional units from the Serbian-based First Military District to deploy to the Bijeljina/northeastern Bosnia region after the Serbs captured Bijeljina. On 8 April, "according to the plan" two motorized battalions and one armored battalion from First Military District arrived in Biljeljina, according to JNA documents. This may or may not include the armored battalion from 453rd Mechanized Brigade that was deployed to the nearby town of Janja on 5 April. See Cekic, pp. 255-256 for references to a series of JNA documents referencing JNA moves in early-mid April.

¹¹ See the tense Sarajevo Radio interview with Kukanjac in which he pleads for people to stop firing on the army and claims that the JNA was asked to interpose itself between Republican and Serb forces at Vraca Hill in Sarajevo. Sarajevo Radio 7 April 1992.

¹² Belgrade Radio stated on 14 April,

The Uzice Corps units arrived today from the direction of Uzice and immediately will assume control of the town. On their way to Visegrad the army forces did not meet any resistance. Large

quantities of explosives, medical equipment, and food supplies have been found . . . The Serbian village of Bosanska Jagodina was released from a blockade after weathering a siege and several days of provocations by Muslim paramilitary formations. . . . [the] President of the Visegrad Municipality, who asked this morning that units come as soon as possible to protect vital facilities and bring peace and security to the people.

The announcement by the Uzice Corps command and the proclamation to Visegrad citizens say that these people are asked to cooperate with a view to preventing the extremists from running wild, assuring that weapons are returned to the militia (police) station, and having everyone participate in restoring peace. It has been stated that the Uzice Corps will disarm the paramilitary units. Belgrade Radio 14 April 1992.

A Second Military District spokesman told Sarajevo Radio on 13 April that JNA forces in Visegrad were sheltering 700 people of all nationalities in their barracks. Sarajevo Radio 13 April 1992.

¹³ Sekulic does claim that,

. . . the command of the Second Army [Second Military District], in a bid to show its impartiality, occasionally opened fire against Serb positions.

Sekulic harshly criticizes this JNA policy of blaming all sides, claiming that only the Serbs supported the policy that the JNA and the Federal Presidency were pushing. Milišav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 288-289.

¹⁴ A Bosnian Muslim journalist, Sejo Omeragic, who accompanied Bosnian Presidency members Fikret Abdic and Biljana Plavsic on their inspection of Bijeljina in the aftermath of the Serb capture of the town wrote an article for the newspaper Slobodna Bosna describing the situation in the town. He made the following observations of the JNA forces in the town:

At the barracks, Fikret Abdic spoke with General Jankovic [17th Corps commander] and his officers. The first impression of these officers is that they are forlorn people who do not know what more they can say, and to whom. Some try, almost in whispered tones, but they generally stop in mid-sentence. The pained atmosphere is occasionally broken by Mr. Abdic's questions. All in vain. The officers act like helpless souls, crowded into their barracks in the face of the evil that is taking place in the ghostlike city.

'We have done as much as we can. We have taken these people in and fed them,' says General Savo Jankovic about the refugees in his camp. 'There are around 300 people staying here, but there are many more in Patkovaca, somewhere around 1,500. There are both Serbs and Muslims here, while all the people in Patkovaca are Muslims.'

'I want to see all of them,' says Abdic. Immediately thereafter, one senses a palpable fear among the officers. One of them, a colonel, goes out every hour and reports that an attack on the barracks is possible. Incompetent and inexperienced, they are not even able to agree on what should be done. (The question arises: what are they trying to hide?) . . . Finally, after he goes out for the third time, the colonel calls General Jankovic, who returns with awkward apprehension and addresses Abdic: 'You must go to the opština [municipal] building because Ms. Biljana Plavsic is there. There you will have some sort of talk with Arkan . . .'

'We must speak with the refugees, our visit has been pointless if we do not speak with them,' says Abdic.

On the way out we met with the refugees. A circle of armed men tightens around us. People are weeping and sighing. Completely forlorn people who praise the army for receiving and taking care of them.

Later, Plavsic, General Prascevic (Second Military District chief of staff), and General Jankovic spoke with Arkan.

Here in the park, with a security detachment, Biljana Plavsic, General Prascevic, and General Jankovic are speaking with Arkan. Biljana Plavsic asks Arkan to let the army take over the city now. 'Out of the question,' . . . 'First I must clean up this area, and then we will go to Bosanski Brod';

I listened to an army in which a corporal had more authority than these two broken men with the rank of General.

Sejo Omeragic, "Tracking Down Crime: The Bloody Bijeljina Bayram," *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna* 5 April 1996, pp. 12-15. Reprinted from 4 April 1992 edition.

Omeragic's observations seem to clearly demonstrate the army's indecisiveness and its refusal or inability to act, rather than indicating any involvement in the Bosnian Serb operation.

¹⁵ See Silber and Little, pp. 222-224. The UN High Commission for Refugees representative to former Yugoslavia, Jose Mendiluce, passed through Zvornik the day it was attacked. He reported seeing artillery firing from inside Serbia into the Zvornik area. Serbian Radical Party leader, Vojislav Seselj, said of the operation,

The Bosnian Serb forces took part in it. But the special units and the best combat units came from this side [Serbia]. These were police units—the so-called Red Berets—special units of the Serbian Interior Ministry of Belgrade. *The army engaged itself to a small degree—it gave artillery support where it was needed.* (Emphasis added)

This would seem to indicate that the JNA played only a supporting role, not a direct one, in the capture of Zvornik, although there are other indications that troops from the Bosnia-based 336th Motorized Brigade helped secure the town. The "Red Berets" were the most elite special operations unit in the Serbian MUP, under the command or authority of "Frenki" Simatovic and Serbian State Security (RDB). The "Red Berets" were directly associated with Captain Dragan's Special Police unit from Knin, which operated with such effectiveness during the Croatian War.

¹⁶ See Belgrade Tanjug 21 April 1992. It is worth quoting because it probably reflects the JNA's role in many of the nominal peacekeeping operations during the second half of April. Some in the JNA may actually have believed they were helping to keep the peace by confiscating Muslim weapons. Of course, this merely served to strengthen and consolidate Bosnian Serb control over those regions where this occurred.

A possible interethnic conflict was prevented in Vlasenica today by a successful intervention of the units of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Tuzla Corps. After a state of emergency was proclaimed in the town this morning, unknown people started skirmishes.

After that, the Vlasenica Municipal Crisis Headquarters—which consists of members of the Serbian nation—gave an ultimatum to all citizens who illegally possess arms to hand them over to the Public Security Station or a JNA unit before 1000. A large number of citizens handed over their weapons, a Tanjug reporter was told in the Crisis Headquarters.

Belgrade Tanjug 21 April 1992. See also Cekic, pp. 139-140.

JNA forces probably included elements of the 336th Motorized Brigade. Since the JNA and the Bosnian Serb authorities had "legally," by their definition, distributed weapons to the Serb population, the only "illegal" weapons were those of the Muslims and Croats.

¹⁷ Although Sarajevo Radio reported on 14 and 16 April that Visegrad was relatively peaceful and seemed to imply that the JNA deployments had helped out in the situation, on 18 April the SDA claimed via Sarajevo Radio that the JNA was helping the SDS hunt down the most important Muslim officials and dignitaries in the town. Sarajevo Radio 14, 16, 18 April.

¹⁸ Report: Serbian police and volunteers take Sanski Most and oust extreme members of SDA who fled to Croatia, 24 April 1992 and military report regarding military activities, staffing and organization of the 6th Sanska Brigade between 10 August 1991 and 28 August 1992, 28 August 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 241.

¹⁹ Tensions between the Croats and Muslims on one side and the JNA had been on the rise in southeastern Herzegovina since the deployment of JNA Montenegrin reserve formations to the area during the 1991 Croatian war. The blockade of the JNA's barracks in Capljina, which began on 4 March, together with the deployment of HV forces into the area in late March, brought the situation to the boiling point. The clashes around JNA facilities in April were merely the culmination in a long chain of events.

²⁰ Belgrade Tanjug 29 April 1992; for a photograph of the supposed TO order, see Professor Dr. Kosta Cavoski, *The Hague Against Justice Revisited: The Case of Dr. Radovan Karadzic*, "Serbian Sarajevo" (sic): 1997, p. 88.

²¹ See Silber and Little, Chapter 17, for a more detailed discussion of the situation regarding the blockade of the JNA barracks, Izetbegovic's arrest, and the assault on the JNA convoy as well as Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 299-302 for a JNA account. As with Cekic, Silber and Little ascribe more coherence and strategic forethought to JNA policy in support of the Serbs than we believe existed.

Without minimizing the critical role the JNA played in arming the Bosnian Serbs earlier in the year, our analysis is intended to produce a more complex understanding of how the army viewed its mission. The JNA did not have a strategic plan to dismember Bosnia; Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs, however, did. We believe this shade of difference is important in terms of drawing lines of responsibility for the war.

²² Belgrade Tanjug 4 May 1992.

Annex 24

Mladic's Own: The Bosnian Serb Army

Formation of the VRS*

The Bosnian Serb Army was formed officially on 20 May 1992, although the genesis of its formation dates to 27-30 April, following Bosnia's declaration of independence, when the Federal Presidency announced a new republic comprised of only Serbia and Montenegro. On 30 April, Serbian President Milosevic, Federal Presidency member Borisav Jovic, and other key Serbian and Federal officials met with Bosnian Serb President Karadzic and Assembly speaker Krajisnik to agree on the transfer of the JNA forces in Bosnia to the new Bosnian Serb republic. As Borisav Jovic has stated,

Karadzic agrees. Krajisnik raises a series of questions: How will that military be financed, who will pay its wages, who will provide its pensions, etc., all of which are indeed problems, but are not critical to our discussion . . .

For us this action was very significant, but for the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I believe, it was even more significant. They got their own military!'

On 12 May, the Bosnian Serb Assembly proclaimed the formation of the Bosnian Serb armed forces, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel General Ratko Mladic.² By 19 May, the last of the Serb soldiers from Serbia and Montenegro had withdrawn from the JNA units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the VRS came into existence the following day.³

Despite the official conversion of the JNA in Bosnia into the VRS, the chaos resulting from the 3 May

* See Chapter 16 in Volume I and Annex 22 for discussions of efforts to prepare JNA forces in Bosnia for transfer to the Bosnian Serbs, if necessary.

ambush in Sarajevo, the JNA personnel withdrawals, and the ongoing fighting threatened to disrupt Mladic's efforts to form a single, unified VRS from the start. General Gvero later stated,

The first ones to come were Ratko Mladic, the late [VRS logistics chief, General Djordje] Djukic, and I, then several other officers and [future Main Staff chief] Manojlo Milovanovic, and on 9 May 1992, they found general disarray here in Crna Rijeka [the JNA command center near Han Pijesak]. General Kukanjac was here with several hundred officers, and their sole concern was to go back to Serbia.⁴

Mladic states that,

I immediately set out to gather people and form a command headquarters and Main Staff (of the future Serb forces), partly from the remnants of the Second Military District, partly from people who came with me from Knin and other regions, but who had been born in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵

Gvero indicates,

. . . In that general muddle and uproar, nothing serious could be done until the 12 of us were left and until we established a network to control those units which remained in the field; we worked speedily to establish control over them, to form new units, and to link them into the single entity of a front with a unified command system.

At that time, there were units of the JNA in the field which had not been withdrawn, there were numerous village or municipal units, various volunteer units and armed groups, or paramilitary organizations, with all kinds of different insignia and various advisers . . . One of my

conditions for coming here was that we do away with all insignia, including the red star and cockade [a royalist symbol] and various other recent insignias. I called for the VRS to be one army with one symbol and one insignia, under one command.⁶

Bosnian Serb President Karadzic formalized the Main Staff's efforts to eliminate "rogue" elements with the proclamation of a decree on 13 June 1992 prohibiting "the formation and operation of armed groups and individuals . . . not under the unified command of the armed forces or the police force."⁷

Political-Military Squabbles: Chetniks versus Partisans

The new army was a mixture of two visions, that of its ex-JNA, ex-Communist senior officers and the Serbian nationalism of the SDS.⁸ The senior JNA officers, like Mladic and General Milan Gvero, the army's senior political officer, viewed the army's mission as defending threatened Serbdom against renewed fascist aggression. They appear to have truly believed that they were in many ways carrying on the JNA's partisan traditions of World War II, viewed through a Serbian prism. Karadzic and the SDS, however, were Serbian nationalists who believed in the revival of greater Serb "royalist" sentiment, renewing the traditions of the Kingdom of Serbia. The SDS praised the World War II exploits of the royalist Chetniks, archenemies of the Partisans. Although both visions were clearly pro-Serb and led to essentially the same objective, from the very beginning their different bases generated ideological and emotional conflicts over war aims, military strategy, political control over the military, and the role of the SDS in the army. By the end of the war, these conflicts had deteriorated into open and vitriolic hatred between the VRS Main Staff and the SDS.

The fundamental clash between the VRS Main Staff and the SDS came over the desire of the SDS to control the internal composition of the army and the appointment and promotion of its officers to ensure political reliability. The "royalist" SDS did not trust

the ex-Communist JNA officers. General Gvero has stated that,

At the root of it all . . . is the fact that the political and state leaders of the RS the whole time wanted the SDS, not the state, to exercise command over the army. That is, for the army to be party-controlled . . . That concept was very essential to them . . .

That negative attitude toward the army was personally known to me at once; from the beginning, since May 1992, it was obvious in the first top-level meetings, in the very top leadership of the RS . . . From the first moment they behaved toward us as though the officers of this army could only serve them with their professional knowledge, but without respect for them as people, because it was clear to them that we would not fit into their schemes of their party politics. For them, no one who had been an officer of the JNA could be a Serbian officer.⁹

Karadzic's statement that in 1992 the "JNA could not be trusted . . . The JNA regarded us as nationalists and anti-communists" seem to bear out Gvero's statements.¹⁰ The VRS would complain throughout the war of the SDS's interference in the internal workings of the army and accuse the party leaders of refusing to provide the army with the resources needed to prosecute the war.¹¹ Karadzic, Krajisnik, and the SDS compounded this perception with their involvement in widespread smuggling, war profiteering, and corruption, which the army charged siphoned supplies from its soldiers.¹² The army was further hampered by "poor selection of command personnel" when its needs for junior and mid-level officers were filled by the appointment of SDS supporters instead of recruitment based on professional qualifications.¹³

These ongoing disputes and ideological wars exacerbated a disagreement between the SDS and the military over the proper use and limits of force juxtaposed against the politicians' concerns for such factors as international opinion. Throughout the war, Karadzic and the SDS leadership were far more concerned than

Mladic and the VRS Main Staff about the impact Bosnian Serb military actions might have on Republika Srpska's international political standing. SDS leaders had no compunction about ordering the VRS to stand down from an incipient military operation if they thought its results might compromise their attempts to legitimize the RS internationally or score political points. The VRS Main Staff did not object per se to overall political control of the military—as Red Army-model JNA officers they were ingrained with this principle.¹⁴ Rather, they were outraged by the direct interference of Karadzic and the SDS leadership in the conduct of military operations, not in order to achieve a vital war aim, but rather to go along with what they viewed as political stunts, such as the regulation of heavy weapons deployments by international monitors.¹⁵ Such interjections imposed what Mladic had called during the Croatian war “start-stop” operations, in which an ongoing, successful attack was halted for transient political ends. The generals complained that the SDS did not seem to realize that warfare cannot be turned on and off like a water faucet, and, as time went on, the VRS Main Staff became increasingly selective over which SDS directives it would follow. Karadzic and the SDS were hostilely resentful of what they viewed as their legitimate efforts to exercise political control over the military, and their anger would culminate in Karadzic’s failed attempt to fire Mladic in late 1995.*

Karadzic’s efforts to dominate the VRS were intertwined with and complicated by the strong allegiance Mladic and the VRS owed to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and the Yugoslav Army (VJ). Many have claimed that Milosevic and the VJ directly planned and controlled VRS military operations. We do not believe this to have been the case. Instead, the relationship was a far more complex interweaving of influence, logistics (including such things as officer salaries), and personal ties. Mladic and his top officers certainly had far more respect for and loyalty to Milosevic than they ever did for Karadzic, and they clearly viewed him as the top Serb. This never meant, however, that Milosevic and his two General Staff chiefs, General Zivota Panic and General Momcilo

Perisic, were in the habit of issuing daily orders to Mladic to attack this or stop shelling that. The VRS planned and ran their own war, with some political guidance from Belgrade, and with generous amounts of logistics and other support from the VJ.

Karadzic and the SDS naturally resented Milosevic’s influence over the VRS and, after the August 1994 falling-out between Milosevic and Karadzic, fought hard to remove that influence. They tried to win senior VRS officers over to the SDS’s side in the dispute with offers of bribes and perquisites, and they did whatever they could to pump up the image and authority of the forces of the SDS-controlled Ministry of Internal Affairs at the expense of the VRS. When the VRS officers resisted, the party powers appear to have resorted even to withholding supplies to the army in an effort to bend the VRS to its will. The party machinery mounted a public relations campaign alleging Belgrade’s “unnatural control” over the VRS that focused on the former JNA officers’ communist indoctrination, labeling them “red generals,” “red scum,” and other pejoratives. When they were actually conducting the war, Mladic and the Main Staff were able to resist or ignore the SDS campaign to bring them under Karadzic’s thumb, but these political-military conflicts became an infection that vitiated the Republika Srpska’s ability to deal with its enemies throughout the Bosnian conflict.

VRS Organization, 1992

The first order of business facing Mladic and the Main Staff was to re-establish and extend the chain of command among the former JNA corps headquarters while converting the SDS-raised TO “units” into full-fledged VRS brigades.¹⁶ These brigades were to provide the bulk of the VRS manpower throughout the war, especially the manning of most of the static trench defenses, while the VRS relied on the veteran formations inherited from the JNA as its mobile reserve. By the end of 1992 the Main Staff had provided the VRS’s six corps (five original ex-JNA corps, plus a new one activated in November), together with

* The Bosnian Serb national command authority was vested in the “Supreme Command” (*Vrhovna Komanda*) or VK. For a description of the VK, see Appendix 1.

Main Staff subordinate units, with the following major combat formations:¹⁷

- two armored brigades
- one mechanized brigade
- 10 motorized brigades
- one protection motorized regiment
- at least 63 infantry or light infantry brigades¹⁸
- one FROG-7 rocket artillery brigade
- six mixed artillery regiments
- one mixed antitank artillery brigade
- two mixed antitank artillery regiments
- five light air defense artillery regiments

At the time of its formation in 1992, the VRS numbered over 250,000 troops (when fully mobilized), but by 1994-1995, the VRS would deploy only about 155,000 troops, even at full mobilization.¹⁹ It originally fielded some 500 to 550 tanks, about 250 armored personnel carriers or infantry fighting vehicles, 500 to 600 field artillery pieces over 100mm, and some 400 to 500 120mm mortars.

The Air and Air Defense (V i PVO) included the following units:

- one mixed aviation (fighter-bomber and helicopter) brigade
- one SA-2 brigade
- one SA-6 regiment
- one light air defense artillery regiment
- one early warning radar battalion

¹⁷ Most VRS brigades underwent several reorganizations during the war, usually cutting back the number of subordinate battalions. Some new brigades were formed after 1992 but at the same time older ones were consolidated into other formations.

The V i PVO numbered about 2,000 personnel and fielded some 20 Galeb-Jastreb and Orao fighter-bombers, about 15 Gazelle light attack/observation helicopters, and about 15 Mi-8 Hip transport helicopters.

The JNA order of battle inherited by the VRS was less impressive than it looked, since most of the combat formations listed above lacked practical experience; they had not been mobilized for the Croatian crisis and had remained in Bosnia throughout the war. Only one corps command (1st Krajina—ex-5th Banja Luka), one armored brigade, three motorized brigades, and five infantry/light infantry brigades had mobilized and deployed into the field during 1991.¹⁹ The majority of the VRS units and their officers had never been required to mobilize and integrate reservists into a peacetime cadre structure, weld newly-uniformed civilians into a functioning combat team while deploying to the battlefield, and logically support troops during the chaos of combat. To compensate for these shortcomings, the JNA transferred to the VRS a host of veteran combat officers to fill key command and staff slots.

Evolution of the VRS, 1992-1995

Each of the VRS's major commands evolved during the war to fill a specific role, in the process developing its own character based on unit esprit, regional affiliations and shared experiences. The following sketches give a feel for the mission and persona each of these commands took on.²⁰

The Main Staff: The Brain. The Main Staff was the brain of the VRS, formulating Bosnian Serb military strategy and dealing with the Bosnian Serb civilian leaders to match this strategy to the leadership's war aims. The Main Staff worked out operational-level planning with corps commands, developed doctrine, managed personnel, and supervised army-wide logistics. While Mladic was officially "Commander of the Main Staff of the VRS," (Komandant Glavni Stab VRS) he relied on Major General (later Lieutenant

¹⁹ For a skeleton order of battle for the VRS from 1992-1995, see Appendix 2.

Colonel General) Manojlo Milovanovic, the Chief of the Main Staff (Nacelnik Glavni Stab), to ensure that things ran smoothly. During many major operations Mladic, and in some cases Milovanovic, would directly supervise the battles. In Operation Lukavac 93—the Trnovo-Mount Igman operation in August-September 1993—Mladic supervised the Herzegovina and Sarajevo-Romanija Corps attacks both on the ground and from his personal Gazelle helicopter. In 1992, however, Mladic and Milovanovic appear to have done less of this than they did later in the war, possibly because of the demands of establishing the Main Staff and dealing with Karadzic and the SDS.

Mladic had seven deputies, who headed the Main Staff's seven primary bodies:

- Major General Manojlo Milovanovic, Deputy Commander and Chief of the Main Staff.²⁰ Milovanovic supervised Operations and Training Section, and the branch (armor, artillery, etc.) sections.
- Colonel Mico Grubor, Assistant Commander for Organizational-Mobilization and Personnel Affairs, dealing with administrative and personnel issues.²¹
- Major General Milan Gvero, Assistant Commander for Morale, Religious, and Legal Affairs, who served as the army's senior political and information officer.²²
- Colonel Zdravko Tolimir, Assistant Commander for Intelligence and Security.²³
- Colonel Jovo Maric, Assistant Commander for Air and Air Defense Force Affairs.²⁴
- Colonel Stevan Tomic, Assistant Commander for Development and Finance.²⁵
- Major General Djordje Djukic, Assistant Commander for Rear Services. Djukic and his staff were responsible for VRS logistics and maintenance issues.²⁶

Of these, the big four were Milovanovic, Gvero, Tolimir, and Djukic. They served not only in their

respective staff positions but also as Mladic's confidants and closest advisers.

The Main Staff, although thrown together from a variety of different officers in different commands, developed during the war into the most professional staff and planning body of all the many combatants in the Bosnian conflict.²⁷ Time and again the VRS Main Staff demonstrated its ability to plan and execute difficult operations, even in the midst of shortages of reserves, materiel, and logistics, and, in 1995, NATO air strikes and Croatian Army intervention. When, at the end, the VRS found itself losing the war, it was through no fault of the Main Staff or of strategic and operational errors.

1st Krajina Corps (1. Krajiski Korpus): Backbone of the VRS. The 1st Krajina Corps was the largest, most experienced, and most capable corps in the army from start to finish. In 1992, only the 1st Krajina Corps headquarters had any experience in conducting corps-level combat operations, having directed JNA operations in Western Slavonia during 1991. The corps was able to maintain full continuity in its experienced staff with the assumption of command in March 1992 of Major General Momir Talic, who had been chief of staff during the 1991 operations. Talic's chief of staff, Major General Bosko Kelecevic, took over this position simultaneously with Talic's assumption of command and served with him for the duration of the Bosnian war.²⁸ By virtue its previous combat experience and size, the 1st Krajina Corps became the VRS strategic reserve.²⁹ The corps had more hitting power, concentrated in two armored brigades and four motorized brigades, than all others, in addition to its roughly 30 infantry/light infantry brigades. Those brigades in particular, such as the 16th Krajina and 43rd Motorized, which had fought in Western Slavonia, became fire brigades that would be transferred repeatedly, often in dribs and drabs, throughout the RS to hold or seize key sectors. Most of its brigades were raised in Bosanska Krajina, where the VRS had only minimal frontline sectors to deal with until 1995, so that these units could be sent outside of their home areas. It was

not until late 1995 that the HV's irruption into the heart of the Bosnian Serbs' strategic rear area, the Bosanska Krajina, spelled the end of the VRS's powers of resistance, as the army was forced to redeploy nearly all of 1st Krajina Corps' unit—plus many from other corps—to defend the area, stripping the army of its few remaining troop reserves.

2nd Krajina Corps (2. Krajiski Korpus): Vulnerable Backdoor. The 2nd Krajina Corps, under the leadership of Major General Grujo Boric, and later Major General Radivoje Tomanic, was the weak sister of the five corps.³⁰ The corps was made responsible for secondary sectors until late 1994, stretched thin throughout its area of responsibility. Although the corps staff was formed from the headquarters of the battle-tested 10th Corps, it had none of that pre-war corps' striking power.³¹ Instead, it mustered eight relatively weak brigades, none of which had Croatian war experience. The number of brigades available was comparable to the other corps, but, given the vast frontages the 2nd Krajina was forced to hold, its lack of operational reserves to plug enemy penetrations left it completely inadequate to face a major threat. Its task was made more difficult by the awkward separation of its brigades between the Kupres-Bosansko Grahovo and the Bihać sectors. When Bosnian Army 5th Corps forces, and later HV/HVO forces, began major operations against the corps in late 1994, the Main Staff had to send substantial reinforcements to the region in a vain attempt to stem the tide. The 2nd Krajina Corps' sector became the backdoor through which both the Krajina Serb and Bosnian Serb Armies were defeated.

East Bosnian Corps (Istocno-Bosanski Korpus): Guardian of the Corridor. The primary mission of the East Bosnian Corps (originally the JNA 17th Tuzla Corps) for the duration of the conflict was the maintenance and widening of the Posavina Corridor at its narrowest point in Brčko. The corridor was the single most strategic sector in Republika Srpska, the loss of which would have split the RS in two; at Brčko the corridor was only five kilometers wide. In addition, the corps was tasked with defending the frontline along the Majevica Mountains and the protruding "Sapna" salient, east of Tuzla city. Colonel (later Major General) Novica Simić led the corps for most of the war, taking over from Colonel Dragutin Ilić in late 1992 after successfully leading a tactical group

under 1st Krajina Corps during the operation to create the western portion of the corridor in the summer of 1992.³² Simić's troops were raised from three regions: Posavina (along the Sava River), Semberija (around Bijeljina), and Majevica (the mountain area northeast of Tuzla). Each of these regions eventually raised three infantry/light infantry brigades, in addition to an elite light infantry/light motorized brigade, which was used as an assault unit or to reinforce threatened sectors.³³ Because of the importance of Brčko, the corps was regularly reinforced by 1st Krajina Corps formations.

Sarajevo-Romanija Corps (Sarajevsko-Romanjski Korpus): Besieging Sarajevo. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps (originally the JNA 4th Sarajevo Corps) was best known for its maintenance of the siege of Sarajevo, and remained the focus of world attention, gaining an evil reputation from its repeated shelling and sniper attacks on civilians in the city. Its repeated shelling of market places, which killed scores of people in 1994 and 1995, provoked international pressure that forced the corps to remove most of its heavy weapons from around Sarajevo. The corps was also the most politicized of the VRS corps commands because of its proximity to the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale and, perhaps in consequence, was run by more commanders than any other corps in the war: Major General Tomislav Sipčić, Major General Stanislav Galic, and Major General Dragomir Milošević, who served during 1992, 1993–mid-1994, and mid-1994 through 1995 respectively.³⁴ But the corps retained its military professionalism in spite of political influences, fighting successfully in a number of small-scale VRS offensive operations in 1992–1993 and in larger defensive actions during 1994–1995. The corps consisted of a mechanized brigade and eight infantry/light infantry brigades in 1992–1993, and one mechanized brigade and seven infantry/light infantry brigades in 1995.³⁵ All were raised from Sarajevo city, its suburbs, and parts of the Romanija region. These troops held both an inner siege ring around the city proper and an outer ring facing away from Sarajevo toward central Bosnia and Mount Igman/Herzegovina. In between the rings lay a number of Serb-populated suburbs, such as Ilijas and Hadžići.³⁶ Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps in November 1992, the

corps was also involved in VRS operations around Gorazde and Zepa in the Drina River valley, commanding an additional motorized brigade and elements of one of the Sarajevo brigades.

Drina Corps (Drinski Korpus): The Dirty War in the Enclaves. The Drina Corps was formed on 1 November 1992 from forces of the East Bosnian, Sarajevo-Romanija, and Herzegovina Corps, to provide a unified command covering the entire Drina valley. Major General Milenko Zivanovic led the corps until late July 1995, when Major General Radislav Krstic replaced him.³⁷ The corps had responsibility for three of the most internationally visible sectors in Bosnia, after Sarajevo: the Muslim-held enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. The fighting in the Drina valley around these enclaves was particularly nasty, with the Bosnian Serbs charging Bosnian Army units from Srebrenica and Zepa with atrocities against Serb civilians during 1992 and 1993, to which the VRS responded more than in kind, including the now infamous slaughter of Muslim males escaping from fallen Srebrenica in July 1995. Vicious fighting also took place in the southern half of the corps sector at Gorazde, particularly during the April 1994 VRS offensive, in which the army burned captured Muslim villages. Due to reorganizations and shifting boundaries, the corps varied in size from one motorized brigade and eight infantry/light infantry brigades in 1992 to a motorized brigade and seven infantry/light infantry brigades in 1995.³⁸ These forces held multiple, awkward fronts, forced to guard both the enclaves and the frontline with the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps southeast of Tuzla. The corps area of responsibility was essentially split into a northern and a southern zone, running along an east-west line at Zepa, although this natural division was not formalized in the command structure. The northern sector consisted of the “Sapna” salient-Kladanj-Srebrenica triangle, while the southern comprised Gorazde. Zepa faced both. The presence of the Main Staff headquarters at the Han Pijesak/Mount Zep complex, in the middle of the corps area, also complicated command, as Mladic and Milovanovic were often tempted to interfere in local events.

Herzegovina Corps (Hercegovacki Korpus): The Herzegovina Corps was formed from the JNA 13th Bileca Corps, and given command over all VRS

forces in the Serb-controlled section of the old Ottoman vilayet of Herzegovina. Major General Radovan Grubac commanded the corps from the beginning of the war until he was ousted with General Mladic in November 1996.³⁹ Despite its large frontage, the corps started with only three motorized brigades (one of which was converted into an infantry brigade) and three—later four—light infantry brigades to defend its territory.⁴⁰ The corps initially controlled most of the front around Gorazde as well, commanding another five light infantry brigades before giving this up to the Drina Corps in the latter half of 1992.⁴¹ Despite its manpower shortages the corps was generally successful in most of its battles. During 1992, the corps stayed primarily on the defensive, attempting to hold off HV/HVO operations in the long sector between Mostar and Trebinje-Dubrovnik. During 1993-1995, after most fighting with the Croats had ended, the corps was able to shift its focus north, leading VRS offensives, including Operation Lukavac 93 at Mount Igman and the campaign against Gorazde during April 1994. A composite Herzegovina Brigade—essentially a tactical group—was used during 1994-1995 to defend key positions along the Treskavica Mountains near Trnovo-Kalinovik and to fill gaps in other corps as well.

Limited Manpower: VRS Strategic Reality

The strategic reality faced by the Main Staff and its corps from the beginning to the end of the war was that the VRS did not have enough troops to hold the long frontlines that stretched from Bihać to Trebinje. While this was of less consequence in 1992, when only the Croatian Army was capable of conducting any large-scale offensive operations against the VRS, it was to become an increasingly difficult and eventually insoluble problem as the war dragged on. Even in 1992, however, the VRS was forced to draw single battalions from many brigades and shift them from front to front to reinforce local units. As the lengthening war brought increasing losses and higher rates of desertion and draft dodging, the VRS had to plumb every available source to fill the ranks. As early as 1993 it began forming reserve battalions in many

brigades comprised of males over 50 years old and even women to operate rear area facilities and defend secondary areas.⁴² By the end of the war, the VRS was desperately plugging gaps in the line with composite brigades of platoons and companies drawn from several different formations, shifting them from one end of Bosnia to the other, or using a variety of rear services units to hold frontline sectors.

VRS Operational and Tactical Methods, 1992-1993*

Campaigning: At the operational or campaign level, the VRS appears to have followed JNA doctrine for mountain warfare, which called for slow, methodical advances to avoid threats from enemy units concealed in the dense forests and difficult mountain terrain. An advance usually proceeded along several axes converging on the objective, often a town, which the VRS would first try to cut off and isolate into an enclave or salient. The army would then systematically reduce the area, methodically moving from one enemy defensive line to another in a series of set-piece attacks with some tactical exploitation following a breakthrough. One to two brigades or tactical groups would be assigned to each axis.

Tactical Doctrine: Endemic shortages of troops led the Main Staff to rely heavily (as had the JNA) on the use of firepower-based tactics, which made up for deficiencies in rifle fire and limited the necessity for infantry units to close with the enemy. During 1992 in particular, the VRS often succeeded in using the shock effect of armor and artillery to rout poorly organized, ill-trained, and under-equipped Muslim and Bosnian Croat infantry units, allowing the VRS infantry to pretty much walk into the objective. As resistance coalesced, however, the VRS developed a more sophisticated tactical offensive doctrine. This doctrine relied on detailed pre-attack planning, reconnaissance, and intelligence to identify enemy tactical weaknesses, the integration of all available fire

* The VRS spent most of 1992-1993 on the offensive, so this section will deal with how the VRS adapted its offensive operational-tactical doctrine to its shortage of soldiers. The development of VRS defensive doctrine, particularly in light of the even more pressing manpower problems encountered in the second half of the war, will be discussed at the beginning of the 1994 section, when the VRS assumed (for the most part) the strategic defensive.

support, and the use of specially selected small infantry units to spearhead an advance by larger regular infantry units supported by small armored columns.

Structure of a VRS Attack. A typical VRS attack consisted of three phases: Attack Preparation, Execution, and Pursuit.

First Phase (Attack Preparation)—(D minus n) The VRS begins operational planning and intelligence preparation of the objective to determine the enemy's weakest positions several days or weeks before an attack. The corps or an operational group commander and brigade/tactical group commanders coordinate planning for the attack with major input from military intelligence.

—(D minus 3+) The Serbs establish artillery observation and reconnaissance posts in key vantage points overlooking enemy positions and begin emplacing artillery and mortars. These posts allow units down to battalion to identify key enemy weak points, call for and adjust artillery or mortar fire, and pass important intelligence back through the chain of command.

—(D minus 2 or 3+) The preliminary artillery bombardment begins with mortars concentrating on frontline positions and the field artillery striking deeper.

Second Phase (Execution)—(D minus 1) VRS makes early morning probing attacks to identify weak points in front line and perhaps deceive the enemy as to the timing of the main attack. Reconnaissance-sabotage units rove behind enemy lines to get more intelligence and attack rear area targets.

—(D Day) Intense pre-dawn artillery and mortar fire is concentrated on enemy positions with support from direct-fire weapons and tanks on key strongpoints. At the end of the preparation, probably from 0400 to 0600, regular infantry, spearheaded by elite assault infantry units and supported by armor, attack in two or more of the weakest enemy sectors, supported by direct-fire artillery and other weapons. The infantry

advances along hills and ridges, while armor, from positions on nearby roads or tracks, provides fire support against enemy bunkers, machine gun positions, and concealed forest defenses. Close coordination between the two is vital to success. Direct fire and mortar barrages are concentrated on eliminating enemy anti-tank weapons while artillery and MRL fire focus on routes into the attacked area to cut off the sector from reinforcement. Armor-mechanized units conduct tactical exploitation to further unravel enemy defenses if the initial infantry push is successful.⁴³

Third Phase (Tactical/Operational Pursuit)—(D plus ?) VRS continues tactical exploitation to next enemy defensive line and prepares for another set piece battle or, if resistance is weak, expands tactical exploitation into operational exploitation.

Role of Combat Arms and Units in the Attack—Each command or arm played a specific role within the attack.

Command Units—Corps/operational group and brigade command staffs jointly planned the operation. Military intelligence units, especially signals intelligence, helped drive the planning. Artillery observation and reconnaissance groups supplemented the intelligence collection effort. Their observation posts, dispersed at battalion level, were the main eyes and ears during an attack, feeding information to the battalion commander and adjusting artillery/mortar fire in support of the attack. When deployed in advance of an attack or behind enemy lines, reconnaissance-sabotage units supplemented intelligence collection.

Infantry Units—VRS infantry units were of four types: regular, assault/intervention, reconnaissance-sabotage, and antiterrorist (military police and MUP special police). During an attack, however, there were essentially only three roles:

Reconnaissance-Sabotage Role—Elite reconnaissance-sabotage units, either corps or brigade-level troops, were deployed before an attack to conduct reconnaissance behind enemy lines and, during an attack, to raid and disrupt enemy positions.

Assault Role—Expanding on methods introduced by the JNA during the Croatian war, the VRS used small, elite assault infantry units to spearhead an attack and seize key objectives so that regular infantry could more easily penetrate into the enemy defensive zone.⁴⁴ About a platoon of assault troops accompanied each attacking regular infantry battalion. Each VRS brigade had at least one reconnaissance-sabotage platoon or company, together with a collection of assault or intervention platoons in its line battalions. Some brigades had a full assault battalion. Probably few of these brigade-level formations had received the specialized training that characterizes genuinely elite units; generally they were collections of younger men, usually battle-experienced, who had been stripped from regular line units to form the shock troops. The corps could reinforce these organic units with truly elite corps-level formations, such as military police, assault battalions, reconnaissance-sabotage units, or MUP special police. Many of these corps-level units had received additional training in advanced infantry tactics.

Regular Infantry—In the attack, the role of regular infantry units was to follow up the assault infantry. They supported the assault infantry with suppressive fire during their initial attack and then moved forward to widen the break in enemy lines, mop up remaining enemy troops, and then consolidate or exploit the gains made.

Armor-Mechanized and Self-Propelled AD Artillery Units—The VRS used armor-mechanized and self-propelled AD artillery units in three roles during an infantry attack: mobile fire support, tactical exploitation, and mobile reserve. Tanks and self-propelled air defense artillery vehicles most often performed the first role, providing direct fire from positions overlooking the battlefield along a key road or from overwatch positions on key terrain. During tactical exploitation, mixed armor-mechanized elements pushed quickly behind local remaining defensive positions. From its normal second-echelon positions the armor also formed a mobile reserve to block enemy counterattacks.⁴⁵ Armor-mechanized units were usually organized in companies with mixed tank,

mechanized infantry, and attached SPAAs, usually with seven tanks and three APCs or three tanks and seven APCs, and possibly one to three SPAAs attached. The VRS's limited number of tanks, persistent fuel shortages, and the operating difficulties of mountainous terrain made it cautious about employing its armor.

Artillery and Heavy Weapons Units—The fire support for a VRS attack came from both indirect and direct artillery fire, mortars, antitank guns, and recoilless rifles.

Indirect—VRS field artillery over 100mm, multiple rocket launchers, and 82mm/120mm mortars were the primary indirect fire support systems. During preparatory bombardments mortars targeted enemy frontline positions. The artillery was tasked during the preparation phase to focus on deeper interdiction and suppression of key strongpoints, roads, and troop concentration areas, as well as harassing fire on towns. These bombardments continued for several days—probably at least three—prior to an attack. During the attack mortars and artillery concentrated on hitting and suppressing specific enemy defensive positions on each attack axis, while laying stationary barrages on key withdrawal and reinforcement routes to isolate the attack sector.

Direct—The VRS used its light artillery, anti-tank weapons, and anti-aircraft guns in direct fire roles during an attack to suppress enemy defenses and engage key strongpoints. This use of direct fire gave the infantry commander closer control than was possible with field artillery and heavy mortars. The VRS used the following weapons most often in this direct role:

—M-48 76mm mountain guns and ZIS-3 76mm field guns

—T-12 100mm AT guns

—BOV-1 and BRDM ATGM vehicles, AT-3 ATGM

—Recoilless rifles

—Air defense artillery

VRS Structural Strengths and Weaknesses

A number of critical organizational strengths and weaknesses profoundly influenced the VRS way of war. The new army's most fortunate asset was its wholesale incorporation of a functioning military organizational hierarchy from the JNA. Building such a structure from scratch would have been difficult and daunting, as the Bosnian Army was to find. Even with the skeleton of such an organization in place, developing smoothly functioning and natural relations between command levels and among officers takes considerable time and effort. This structure, with former JNA professional officers filling the army's most important slots, particularly in staff and technical positions, would make the VRS a tough, resilient, and efficient force at the strategic and operational levels.

At the tactical level, however, despite the infusion of a sophisticated doctrine, most regular infantry units were poorly trained, particularly in 1992, and suffered from a lack of trained and competent junior officers and NCOs. Most units were not mobilized until war was upon the country, so that reservists rarely received even the most basic refresher training.⁴⁶ The inevitable result was heavy casualties among the infantry during 1992, and the VRS had to rely even more heavily on selected elite units to achieve its battle successes.⁴⁷ A lack of trained officers and NCOs below the brigade headquarters level exacerbated the tactical difficulties; General Mladic has noted that most of these personnel were inadequately trained.⁴⁸ Most JNA units would have planned to rely on JNA reserve officers and NCOs to fill junior command positions. But even the reservists' training and leadership skills were far better than the SDS appointees on whom the VRS was forced to rely for most of the junior slots.⁴⁹ Many of these officers were appointed because of their political connections or financial contributions to the SDS. Infantry training and junior leadership were to show only minimal improvements as the war progressed.⁵⁰

Poor junior leadership led directly to problems with discipline and morale in many units, which were compounded as the conflict dragged on into an extended war of attrition, when unmotivated conscripts and reservists began to desert or flee the draft.⁵¹ Endemic

corruption, particularly among SDS officers, and blatant war profiteering, corruption, and draft avoidance among privileged civilians had disheartening and demoralizing effects on many enlisted personnel. Desertions left the VRS even more dependent on its elite units and massed firepower, but these became less and less effective as the Bosnian Army improved and its defenses strengthened.

The outdated linkage of the territorially-raised brigades to their home municipalities for logistics support handicapped many maneuver brigades. Under the pre-war Yugoslav concept of General People's Defense, TO brigades depended on their home municipalities for logistics support and manpower.⁵² Because most of the VRS formations were former TO units, the army carried this concept over into the Bosnian war. Unfortunately, the system had been designed for fighting a decentralized guerilla war, allowing units and their municipal political leadership to fight semi-autonomously even behind enemy lines. It was inappropriate for a centrally directed conventional war, particularly the World War I style of the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia. Since municipalities varied in the resources available to them, brigades received different levels of support determined not on the military needs of the VRS and the mission assigned to a particular brigade, but rather by the amount of material and food a municipality could spare. The corruption of SDS officials at the municipal level compounded this structural flaw and made it impossible for the Main Staff to persuade the SDS leadership to enact a proper central budget for the army. Too many SDS officials were making too much money to interrupt the system. The same municipal leaders were also responsible for nominating many of the incompetent junior officers in the VRS maneuver brigades.⁵³

Help from Big Brother: VJ Support

The support received from the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian Internal Affairs Ministry was critical to the VRS's ability to sustain itself organizationally and logically. Among the many misconceptions about the VJ-VRS relationship, the most striking is that large numbers of Yugoslav Army ground troops fought in Bosnia during the conflict and that the VRS was under the command of the VJ General Staff. There is no evidence to support this notion, despite frequent assertions by ill-informed journalists. The VJ and the Serbian MUP routinely deployed packets of special operations troops to support VRS operations.⁵⁴ These forces usually numbered a few hundred, and probably did not total more than 2,000 men at any given time. There is just one occasion when the VJ is known to have sent anything other than special operations personnel into Bosnia, and that was during the winter-spring 1993 VRS counteroffensive at Srebrenica, when roughly a battalion of VJ armor was deployed into the area and VJ artillery provided fire support from positions inside Serbia.

More important to the VRS war effort were the individual VJ officers and NCOs who served in VRS units. These personnel provided badly needed cadres for many poorly led units. The VJ also continued to pay the salaries of ex-JNA VRS officers and NCOs.⁵⁵ Logistically, the Federal Republic and the VJ supplied the VRS with fuel, ammunition, and maintenance support to ensure that the Federal equipment left behind could move and fight.⁵⁶ Fuel in particular was vital to keeping the VRS's large fleet of trucks, buses, and armor in operation. Mobility was key to the army's ability to shift its limited mobile reserves from sector to sector throughout the country in time to sharpen an attack or stiffen a defense.

Appendix 1 **Organization of the Supreme Command**

The Supreme Command (*Vrhovna Komanda—VK*) was the national command authority for Republika Srpska, somewhat similar to the US National Security Council.⁵⁷ Formed on 6 December 1992, it consisted of the following positions and individuals:

President of the RS, Radovan Karadzic

Vice President of the RS, Nikola Koljevic

Prime Minister of the RS (various)

President of the RS Assembly, Momcilo Krajisnik

Minister of Internal Affairs (various)

Minister of Defense (various)

The Commander of the Main Staff VRS, Lieutenant Colonel General Ratko Mladic and the Chief of the Main Staff, Major General Manojlo Milovanovic, were not members of the VK, but attended its meetings in an advisory capacity. Only civilian members were allowed to vote on decisions of the VK. Karadzic and the SDA hoped to use the VK to strengthen their control over the VRS and the prosecution of the war. They established it after the army had opposed several of Karadzic's political-military gestures to curry Western favor in 1992, such as his move to hand back the VRS combat aircraft to the Yugoslav Federal Republic. In this they were only partially successful.

Chart 1

Skeleton Order of Battle, Bosnian Serb Army, June 1992-October 1995*

Main Staff of the VRS, HQ Han Pijesak-Mount Zep

(*Glavni Stab Vojske Republike Srpske-GS VRS*)

1st Guards Motorized Brigade HQ Kalinovik⁵⁸
(1. gardijska motorizovana brigada—1. gmtbr)

65th Protection Motorized Regiment, HQ Han Pijesak-Mount Zep⁵⁹
(65. zastitni motorizovani puk—65. zmtpr)

10th Sabotage Detachment, HQ Bijeljina-Vlasenica⁶⁰
(10. diverzantska odred.—10. do)

89th Rocket Artillery Brigade, HQ Banja Luka⁶¹
(89. raketno artiljerijska brigada—89. rabr)

“Rajko Balac” Center for Military Schools, HQ Banja Luka⁶²
(Centar vojnih skola Vojke Republike Srpske “Rajko Balac”
—CVS VRS “Rajko Balac”)

67th Communications Regiment, HQ Han Pijesak⁶³
(67. puk veze—67. pv)

63rd Autotransport Battalion, HQ Zvornik
(63. autotransportni bataljon—63. atb)

14th Rear Base, HQ Banja Luka⁶⁴
(14. pozadinska baza—14. PoB),

27th Rear Base, HQ Sokolac⁶⁵
(27. pozadinska baza—27. PoB)

30th Rear Base, HQ Bileca⁶⁶
(30. pozadinska baza—30. PoB)

35th Rear Base, HQ Bijeljina⁶⁷
(35. pozadinska baza—35. PoB)

410th Intelligence Center, HQ Banja Luka
(410. Obavestajni Centar—410. ObC)

Technical Repair Institute “Hadzici,” HQ Hadzici⁶⁸
(technički remontni zavod “Hadzici”—TRZ “Hadzici”)

Military Hospital, HQ Sokolac

* This order of battle is designed to show the number and types of permanent formations available to the VRS, as well as the three semi-permanent division-level headquarters in 1st Krajina Corps. It also shows home garrisons of each formation and the final unit designator in 1995; many former light infantry brigades became regular infantry brigades during the course of the war. It does not show the almost innumerable tactical group or provisional brigade structures put together throughout the war or their deployed field locations. These will be dealt with in each campaign section as part of the order of battle analysis for each operation.

1st Krajina Corps, HQ Banja Luka⁶⁹

(1. krajiski korpus—1. kk)

Operational Group 9 “Dobo,” HQ Doboј

(9. operativna grupa “Doboј”—9. OG “Doboј”)

9th Reconnaissance Company, HQ Doboј

(9. izvidacka ceta—9. ic)

9th Military Police Battalion, HQ Doboј

(9. bataljon Vojna Policija—9. bVP)

9th Mixed Engineer Battalion, HQ Doboј

(9. mesoviti inzinjerijski bataljon—9. minzb)

Operational Group 10 “Prijedor,” HQ Prijedor-Omarska⁷⁰

(10. operativna grupa “Prijedor”—10. OG “Prijedor”)

30th Infantry Division, HQ Sipovo⁷¹

(30. pesadijska divizija—30. pd)

30th Communications Battalion, HQ Sipovo

(30. bataljon veze—30. bv)

36th Independent Armored Battalion, HQ Sipovo

(36. samostalni oklopni bataljon—36. sokb)

1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Banja Luka⁷²

(1. izvidacka-diverzantska odred—1. ido)

Assault Detachment “Wolves of Vucijak,” HQ Prnjavor⁷³

(Udarna or Jurisna Odred “Vukovi sa Vucjacka”)

1st Military Police Battalion, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁴

(1. bataljon Vojna Policija—1. bVP)

1st Communications Battalion, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁵

(1. bataljon veze—1. bv)

1st Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁶

(1. mesoviti protivoklopni artiljerijski brigada—1. mpoabr)

1st Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁷

(1. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—1. map)

1st Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁸

(1. laki artiljerijski puk PVO—1. lap PVO)

1st Engineer Regiment, HQ Banja Luka⁷⁹

(1. inzinjerijski puk—1. inzp)

1st Pontoon Engineer Battalion, HQ Banja Luka⁸⁰

(1. pontonirski bataljon—1. pontb)

1st Autotransport Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

(1. autotransportni bataljon—1. atb)

1st Medical Battalion, HQ Banja Luka

(1. sanitetski bataljon—1. snb)

- 1st Armored Brigade, HQ Banja Luka⁸¹
 (1. oklopna brigada—1. okbr)
- 2nd Armored Brigade, HQ Doboј⁸²
 (2. oklopna brigada—2. okbr)
- 2nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka⁸³
 (2. krajiska pesadijska brigada—2. kpbr)
- 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Prijedor-Omarska⁸⁴
 (5. kozarska laka pesadijska brigada—5. klpbr)
- 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade, HQ Sanski Most⁸⁵
 (6. sanska pesadijska brigada—6. spbr)
- 11th Dubica Infantry Brigade, HQ Kozarska Dubica⁸⁶
 (11. dubicka pesadijska brigada—11. dpbr)
- 12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kotorsko
 (12. kotorsko laka pesadijska brigada—12. klpbr)
- 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
 (16. krajiska motorizovana brigada—16. kmtbr)⁸⁷
- 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Mrkonjic Grad
 (11. mrkonjicka laka pesadijska brigada—11. mlpbr)
- 19th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbobran (Donji Vakuf)⁸⁸
 (19. srbobranska laka pesadijska brigada—19. slpbr)
- 22nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, HQ Knezevo (Skender Vakuf)⁸⁹
 (22. krajiska pesadijska brigada—22. kpbr)
- 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, HQ Derventa⁹⁰
 (27. derventska motorizovana brigada—27. dmtbr)
- 31st Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbobran (Donji Vakuf)
 (31. laka pesadijska brigada—31. lpbr)
- 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade, HQ Prijedor⁹¹
 (43. prijedorska motorizovana brigada—43. pmtrbr)
- 1st Doboј Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Doboј
 (1. dobojska laka pesadijska brigada—1. dlpbrr)
- 1st Celinac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Celinac
 (1. celinacka laka pesadijska brigada—1. slpbr)
- 1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbac
 (1. srbbacka laka pesadijska brigada—1. slpbr)
- 1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gradiska
 (1. gradiska laka pesadijska brigada—1. glpbr)
- 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade, HQ Novigrad (Bosanski Novi)⁹²
 (1. novigradska pesadijska brigada—1. ngpbr)
- 1st Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
 (1. banjalucka laka pesadijska brigada—1. bllpbr)

- 2nd Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
 (2. banjalucka laka pesadijska brigada—2. bllpbr)
- 3rd Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
 (3. banjalucka laka pesadijska brigada—3. bllpbr)
- 4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
 (4. banjalucka laka pesadijska brigada—4. bllpbr)
- 1st Kotor Varos Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kotor Varos⁹³
 (1. kotorvaroska laka pesadijska brigada—1. kvlpbr)
- 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Prnjavor
 (1. prnjavorska laka pesadijska brigada—1. plpbr)
- 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Sipovo
 (1. sipovska laka pesadijska brigada—1. slpbr)
- 1st Teslic Infantry Brigade, HQ Teslic
 (1. teslicka pesadijska brigada—1. tpbr)
- 2nd Teslic Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Teslic (formed 1993)
 (2. teslicka laka pesadijska brigada—2. tlpbr)
- 1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bosansko Petrovo Selo
 (1. ozrenska laka pesadijska brigada—1. olpbr)
- 2nd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Tumare
 (2. ozrenska laka pesadijska brigada—2. olpbr)
- 3rd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gornja Paklenica (formed 1993)
 (3. ozrenska laka pesadijska brigada—3. olpbr)
- 4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vozuca (formed 1993)
 (4. ozrenska laka pesadijska brigada—4. olpbr)
- 1st Trebava Infantry Brigade, HQ Modrica
 (1. trebavska pesadijska brigada—1. tpbr)
- 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Krnjin
 (1. krnjinska laka pesadijska brigada—1. klpbr)
- 1st Vucjak Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Modrica
 (1. vucijacka laka pesadijska brigada—1. vlpbr)
- 1st Osinja Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Osinja (to 1994)⁹⁴
 (1. osinska laka pesadijska brigada—1. olpbr)
- 1st Laktasi Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Laktasi (to 1995)⁹⁵
 (1. laktaska laka pesadijska brigada—1. llpbr)
- 1st Knezevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Knezevo (Skender Vakuf) (to 1995)⁹⁶
 (1. Knezevska laka pesadijska brigada—1. klpbr)

2nd Krajina Corps, HQ Drvar⁹⁷
 (2. krajiski korpus—2. kk)

- 2nd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Drvar⁹⁸
 (2. izvidacka-diverzantska odred—2. ido)

- 2nd Military Police Battalion, HQ Drvar
 (2. bataljon Vojna Policija—2. bVP)
- 2nd Communications Battalion, HQ Drvar
 (2. bataljon veze—2. bv)
- 2nd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bosansko Grahovo
 (2. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—2. map)
- 2nd Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Drvar
 (2. laka artiljerijski puk PVO—2. lap PVO)
- 2nd Engineer Regiment, HQ Kljuc-Laniste
 (2. inzinjerijski puk—2. inzp)
- 2nd Autotransport Battalion, HQ Drvar
 (2. autotransportni bataljon—2. atb)
- 2nd Medical Battalion, HQ Drvar
 (2. sanitetski bataljon—2. snb)
- 1st Drvar Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Drvar
 (1. drvarska laka pesadijska brigada—1. dlpbr)
- 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Petrovac
 (3. petrovacka laka pesadijska brigada—3. plpbr)
- 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Glamoc
 (5. glamocka laka pesadijska brigada—5. glpbr)
- 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade, HQ Kupres⁹⁹
 (7. kupresko-sipovska motorizovana brigada—7. ksmtbr)
- 9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bosansko Grahovo¹⁰⁰
 (9. grahovska laka pesadijska brigada—9. glpbr)
- 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Krupa
 (11. krupska laka pesadijska brigada—11. klpbr)
- 15th Bihac Infantry Brigade, HQ Ripac
 (15. bihacka pesadijska brigada—15. bpbr)
- 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kljuc
 (17. kljucka laka pesadijska brigada—17. klpbr)
- 21st Independent Armored Battalion, HQ Petrovac
 (21. samostalni oklopni bataljon—21. sokb)

East Bosnian Corps, HQ Bijeljina¹⁰¹
 (Istocno-Bosanski Korpus—IBK)

- 3rd Military Police Battalion, HQ Bijeljina
 (3. bataljon Vojna Policija—3. bVP)
- 3rd Communications Battalion, HQ Bijeljina
 (3. bataljon veze—3. bv)
- 3rd Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Donji Polje
 (3. mesoviti protivokloplni artiljerijski puk—3. mpoap)

- 3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bijeljina**
 (3. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—3. map)
- 3rd Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Vukosavci**
 (3. laka artiljerijski puk PVO—3. lap PVO)
- 3rd Engineer Regiment, HQ Dvorovi**
 (3. inzinjerijski puk—3. Inzp)
- 3rd Pontoon Engineer Company, HQ Bijeljina¹⁰²**
 (3. pontonirski ceta—3. pontc)
- 3rd Autotransport Company, HQ Bijeljina**
 (3. autotransportni ceta—3. atc)
- 3rd Medical Battalion, HQ Bijeljina**
 (3. sanitetski bataljon—3. snb)
- 1st Posavina Infantry Brigade, HQ Brcko¹⁰³**
 (1. posavska pesadjska brigada—1. ppbr)
- 2nd Posavina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Samac**
 (2. posavska laka pesadijska brigada—2. plpbr)
- 3rd Posavina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pelagicevo¹⁰⁴**
 (3. posavska laka pesadijska brigada—3. plpbr)
- 1st Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina¹⁰⁵**
 (1. semberijska laka pesadijska brigada—1. slpbr)
- 2nd Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina**
 (2. semberijska laka pesadijska brigada—2. slpbr)
- 3rd Semberija Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bijeljina¹⁰⁶**
 (3. semberijska laka pesadijska brigada—3. slpbr)
- 1st Majevica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Ugljevik¹⁰⁷**
 (1. majevicka laka pesadijska brigada—1. mlpbr)
- 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Ugljevik**
 (2. majevicka laka pesadijska brigada—2. mlpbr)
- 3rd Majevica Infantry Brigade, HQ Lopare¹⁰⁸**
 (3. majevicka pesadijska brigada—3. mpbr)
- Special Brigade/1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade “Panthers,” HQ Bijeljina¹⁰⁹**
 (Specijalne brigada/1. bijeljinska laka pesadijska brigada “panteri”—I. blpbr
 “panteri”)

Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, HQ Sarajevo-Lukavica¹¹⁰
 (Sarajevski-Romanjski Korpus—SRK)

- 4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment “White Wolves,” HQ Pale**
 (4. izvidacka-diverzantska odred “beli vukovi”—4. ido “beli vukovi”)
- 4th Military Police Battalion, HQ Lukavica¹¹¹**
 (4. bataljon Vojna Policija—4. bVP)

- 4th Communications Battalion, HQ Lukavica
 (4. bataljon veze—4. bv)
- 4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica
 (4. mesoviti protivoklopnji artiljerijski puk—4. mpoap)
- 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica
 (4. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—4. map)
- 4th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Lukavica¹¹²
 (4. laka artiljerijski puk PVO—4. lap PVO)
- 4th Engineer Battalion, HQ Pale
 (4. inzinjerijski bataljon—4. inzb)
- 4th Autotransport Battalion, HQ Lukavica
 (4. autotransportni bataljon—4. atb)
- 4th Medical Battalion, HQ Pale
 (4. sanitetski bataljon—4. snb)
- 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, HQ Lukavica¹¹³
 (1. sarajevska mehanizovana brigada—1. smbr)
- 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vojkovici
 (2. sarajevska laka pesadijska brigada—2. slpbr)
- 3rd Sarajevo Infantry Brigade, HQ Vogosca¹¹⁴
 (3. sarajevska pesadijska brigada—3. spbr)
- 4th Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Pale¹¹⁵
 (4. sarajevska laka pesadijska brigada—4. slpbr)
- 1st Rajlovac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Rajlovac (to late 1993)
 (1. rajlovacka laka pesadijska brigada—1. rlpbr)
- 1st Kosevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kosevo (to late 1993)
 (1. kosevska laka pesadijska brigada—1. klpbr)
- 1st Romanija Infantry Brigade, HQ Han Pijesak¹¹⁶
 (1. romanjska pesadijska brigada—1. rpbr)
- 1st Ilijas Infantry Brigade, HQ Ilijas
 (1. ilijaska pesadijska brigada—1. il. pbr)
- 1st Ilidza Infantry Brigade, HQ Ilidza
 (1. ilidzanska pesadijska brigada—1. idz. pbr)
- 1st Igman Infantry Brigade, HQ Hadzici
 (1. igmanska pesadijska brigada—1. ig. pbr)

Drina Corps, HQ Vlasenica
 (Drinski Korpus—DK)

- 5th Military Police Battalion, HQ Vlasenica
 (5. bataljon Vojna Policija—5. bVP)
- 5th Communications Battalion, HQ Vlasenica
 (5. bataljon veze—5. bv)

- 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Vlasenica**
 (5. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—5. map)
- 5th Engineer Battalion, HQ Vlasenica**
 (5. inzinjerijski bataljon—5. inzb)
- 5th Medical Battalion, HQ Vlasenica**
 (5. sanitetski bataljon—5. snb)
- 1st Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Rogatica¹¹⁷**
 (1. podrinjska laka pesadijska brigada—1. plpbr)
- 2nd Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Visegrad (to mid-late 1994)¹¹⁸**
 (2. podrinjska laka pesadijska brigada—2. plpbr)
- 3rd Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Cajnice (to mid-late 1994)¹¹⁹**
 (3. podrinjska laka pesadijska brigada—3. plpbr)
- 4th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Rudo (to mid-late 1994)¹²⁰**
 (4. podrinjska laka pesadijska brigada—4. plpbr)
- 5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Visegrad¹²¹**
 (5. podrinjska laka pesadijska brigada—5. plpbr)
- 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, HQ Zvornik-Karakaj¹²²**
 (1. zvornicka pesadijska brigada—1. zvpbr)
- 1st Birac Infantry Brigade, HQ Sekovici**
 (1. bircanska pesadijska brigada—1. bpbr)
- 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Bratunac¹²³**
 (1. bratunacka laka pesadijska brigada—1. blpbr)
- 1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vlasenica (from late 1993)**
 (1. vlasenicka laka pesadijska brigada—1. vlpbr)
- 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Milici (from late 1993)**
 (1. milicka laka pesadijska brigada—1. mlpbr)
- 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, HQ Sokolac¹²⁴**
 (2. romanjska motorizovana brigada—2. rmtbr)
- Independent Infantry Battalion “Skelani,” HQ Skelani¹²⁵**
 (samostalna pesadijska bataljon “Skelani”—spb “Skelani”)

Herzegovina Corps, HQ Trebinje/Bileca
 (Hercegovacki Korpus—HK)

- 7th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment, HQ Bileca¹²⁶**
 (7. izvidacka-diverzantska odred—7. ido)
- 7th Military Police Battalion, HQ Bileca**
 (7. bataljon Vojna Policija—7. bVP)
- 7th Communications Battalion, HQ Bileca**
 (7. bataljon veze—7. bv)
- 7th Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion, HQ Bileca**
 (7. mesoviti protivoklopni artiljerijski divizion—7. mpoad)

7th Mixed Artillery Regiment, HQ Bileca¹²⁷
(7. mesoviti artiljerijski puk—7. map)

7th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Bileca
(7. laka artiljerijski puk PVO—7. lap PVO)

7th Engineer Battalion, HQ Bileca
(7. inzinjerijski bataljon—7. inzb)

7th Autotransport Battalion, HQ Bileca
(7. autotransportni bataljon—7. atb)

7th Medical Battalion, HQ Bileca
(7. sanitetski bataljon—7. snb)

1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, HQ Trebinje¹²⁸
(1. herzegovacka motorizovana brigada—1. hmtbr)

2nd Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Borci
(2. herzegovacka laka pesadijska brigada—2. hlpbr)

8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, HQ Nevesinje¹²⁹
(8. herzegovacka motorizovana brigada—8. hmtbr)

11th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade, HQ Srbnje (Foca)¹³⁰
(11. herzegovacka pesadijska brigada—11. hpbr)

14th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Cajnice (from mid-late 1994)
(14. herzegovacka laka pesadijska brigada—14. hlpbr)

15th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade, HQ Bileca¹³¹
(15. herzegovacka pesadijska brigada—15. hpbr)

18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gacko
(18. herzegovacka laka pesadijska brigada—18. hlpbr)

Air and Air Defense Force, HQ Banja Luka
(Vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdusna odbrana—V i PVO)

92nd Mixed Aviation Brigade, HQ Banja Luka-Zaluzani¹³²

474th Air Base, HQ Banja Luka-Mahovljani

474th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment, HQ Banja Luka-Zaluzani
(474. laka artiljerijski puk PVO—474. lap PVO)

155th Air Defense Rocket Brigade, HQ Banja Luka
(155. raketna brigada PVO—155. rbr PVO)

172nd Medium Self-Propelled Air Defense Rocket Regiment, HQ Sokolac
(172. srednji samohodni raketni puk PVO—172. ssrp PVO)

Air Observation Battalion, HQ Banja Luka¹³³
(bataljon vazduhoplovno osmatranja, javljanja, i navodjenje—bVOJIN)

Endnotes, Annex 24

¹ Jovic, entry for 30 April 1992.

² Belgrade Tanjug 12 May 1992. General Adzic appointed Mladic commander and chief of staff of the JNA Second Military District on 8 May, after General Kukanjac and General Stankovic were relieved in the wake of the disastrous ambush of the District's headquarters convoy on 3 May. Headquarters, Second Military District was to become the Main Staff of the VRS. For Mladic's description of the circumstances surrounding his appointment, see Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 7. Adzic almost certainly told Mladic at the same time that he would become the commander of the VRS upon its formation.

³ Belgrade Radio 18 May 1992.

⁴ Milja Vujsic, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade *Intervju* (Internet Version) 13 December 1996. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero. Mladic observed that,

I encountered a very complex situation, with a large number of traumatized people . . . Many of them knew nothing about the people closest to them. There were several dozen officers working at those headquarters, some of whom had spent their entire career working in Sarajevo. Many of them had left family and property behind in that city . . . Unfortunately, many of them never saw their families again.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 7.

⁵ Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 7.

⁶ Milja Vujsic, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade *Intervju* (Internet Version) 13 December 1996. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero. Mladic, Gvero, and many other ex-JNA officers had an abhorrence for a disunited command, as Gvero implies, and constantly enforced the VRS prerogatives as the sole RS armed force, assuming operational control over all MUP units in combat. They heartily despised the volunteers and "paramilitaries," and particularly deplored their penchant for looting rather than fighting. In a 1993 interview then Major General Slavko Lisica described his dislike for volunteers, stating,

These were not fighters, but rather adventurers and the usual dregs that every war brings to the surface . . . they are disorganized, irresponsible, and have never fit in with my concept of combat. You have guys who will kill a 90-year old man just for a lamb. . . They ask me to send them out for so-called "cleansing." Ok, I say, there are some minefields that you can clear out to your heart's content . . . volunteers have been a burden in my zone of responsibility, so that on one occasion I even sent in tanks to disarm them.

Ljubomir Grubic, "Pulling Down the Pants," Belgrade *Nin* 23 July 1993, pp. 12-14—an interview with Slavko Lisica.

⁷ A copy of the order can be found in Professor Dr. Kosta Cavoski, *The Hague Against Justice Revisited: The Case of Dr. Radovan Karadzic "Serbian Sarajevo"* (sic): 1997, p. 55. An order from Karadzic on 6 August indicates that this order had been more or less carried out, except for some groups near Kljuc and in the Drina River valley; see Cavoski, p. 71.

⁸ This section will refer to the SDS rather than the Bosnian Serb Government as such, because the government was essentially the formal face of the SDS. The SDS was for all intents and purposes the only Bosnian Serb political party during the war; it was the government. There was little political control or influence exerted on the army (outside of the Yugoslav Federal Republic) other than by the SDS.

⁹ Milja Vujsic, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade *Intervju* (Internet Version) 13 December 1996. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero. See also Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, "Wisdom and Caution," *Srpska Vojska* 22 March 1996, pp. 10-14. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero.

¹⁰ Dejan Lukic, "Mobilization Was the Direct Cause of War," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 2 June 1997, p. 11.

¹¹ Many, including probably the SDS, would argue that they were asking for nothing more than the same level of control that the Yugoslav League of Communists had exercised over the JNA (including these same VRS officers) during its reign over the SFRY. While the two examples are superficially similar, the underlying facts are far different. Certainly, in the JNA, officers needed a politically correct pedigree to advance. However, the JNA system also placed a premium on professional competency. An officer had to have punched the proper professional tickets, such as attendance at the army's professional military academies, performance at staff schools, and success at various levels of command, before he could rise in the ranks. An officer, particularly at the more sensitive, higher levels of command and staff, had to be both politically reliable and professionally capable. This was the general rule, although there were certainly many exceptions. The SDS on the other hand, was not advocating a sophisticated, systemic solution to political reliability and competency, but instead was prepared to randomly grant someone an officer slot based on his importance to the SDS in a local municipality or on the amount of money provided to the party till (or its leaders). The SDS required little or no professional credentials from a prospective officer.

¹² The most detailed accounts of the VRS Main Staff's charges against the SDS can be found in Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic's November 1996 letter to *Nin* and General Gvero's December 1996 interview. Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, "Loss of Supreme Command," Belgrade *Nin* 1 November 1996, pp. 19-22 (A letter to the editor from Lieutenant Colonel Milutinovic); Milja Vujsic, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade *Intervju* (Internet Version) 13 December 1996. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero. Milutinovic was the Chief of the VRS Information Service and, together with Gvero, served as the official VRS mouthpiece during the war. He and Gvero were both at the top of the SDS hit list, and Karadzic tried to relieve them in fall 1995. Milutinovic's letter inspired Karadzic and the SDS to make their final and successful effort to fire Mladic in November 1996.

¹³ Milutin Kozarica, "Discipline—The Foundation On Which An Army Is Built," *Srpska Vojska* 28 December 1995, pp. 17-19.

¹⁴ The JNA believed in the strict adherence of the army to political control of the military through the League of Yugoslav Communists and the Federal Presidency. See "Kadijevic Fails to Stop Secession," in the section on the Croatian war for an example of JNA servility to political authority.

¹⁵ Karadzic's many attempts to placate world opinion with what the VRS regarded as militarily unsound political "stunts" included his move in 1992 to allow the UN to monitor VRS heavy weapons around key towns, the effort to turn over the VRS Air Force and Air Defense aircraft to the FRY, the cession of the Sarajevo airport to the UN, the agreement to "demilitarize" Srebrenica in April 1993 when the VRS was on the verge of victory, the September 1993 withdrawal from Mount Igman, and the halting of the VRS offensive against Bihac in late 1994 in favor of a cease-fire negotiated by former US President Jimmy Carter.

¹⁶ See Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9 for description of a light infantry brigade's antecedents as an SDS controlled TO unit.

¹⁷ Infantry and light infantry brigades in the VRS were, in fact, different in composition. An infantry brigade generally was larger, sometimes twice as large, as a light infantry brigade, and was usually better equipped, having a field artillery battalion instead of only mortars and mountain guns, and often a company of T-34 tanks. In 1992, however, many future infantry brigades were still designated as "partisan" (the original JNA term) or, using the new VRS term, "light infantry."

¹⁸ VRS General Savo Sokanovic provided the 250,000 troops figure during a news conference in May 2000. During the war, then Colonel

Sokanovic headed the VRS Information Service under General Gvero. Banja Luka RTRS Radio 10 May 2000.

¹⁹ The brigades in question were the 1st (ex-329th) Armored, 43rd (ex-343rd) Prijedor Motorized, 16th Krajina Motorized, 1st Herzegovina (ex-472nd) Motorized, 2nd Krajina Infantry, 5th Kozara Light Infantry, 6th Sanski Infantry, 11th Dubica Infantry, and 22nd (ex-122nd) Infantry Brigades. The 8th Herzegovina (ex-13th) and 27th (ex-327th) Derventa Motorized Brigades also took part in combat operations during April 1992 in Bosnia as JNA formations, just prior to the formation of the VRS. In addition, the JNA 13th (VRS 8th Herzegovina) Motorized Brigade and the 4th Armored Brigade (redesignated as the JNA 336th Motorized Brigade and became the VRS 1st Žvornik Infantry Brigade) had been blockaded in their barracks in Croatia for the duration of the war, while the 14th (VRS 2nd Romanija) Motorized Brigade had taken part in the Slovene Ten Day War.

²⁰ Note that Milovanovic was not just a deputy, but was considered the deputy to Mladic, with the authority to issue orders to the other sections in Mladic's absence. Milovanovic was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel General on 24 June 1994. Milovanovic appears to have had one or two deputies during the war. Colonel Radivoje Miletic served as the deputy during 1994-1995. Their formal title was Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations and Training. Miletic was promoted to Major General on 23 June 1995.

²¹ Grubor was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994. Colonel Petar Skrbic replaced Grubor by early 1995, and was promoted to Major General on 23 June 1995.

²² Gvero had served throughout the Croatian war as the JNA's leading public spokesman, and was best known for the tours of Vukovar he gave to foreign journalists. His official position was Chief of the Section for Information and Propaganda in the Department for Morale and Political Affairs of the Federal Secretariat for National Defense. Gvero was promoted to Major General (one star) on 22 December 1991, and Lieutenant Colonel General on 24 June 1994. Gvero also supervised the VRS Information Service, headed by Colonel Savo Sokanovic and Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic. Sokanovic was also Gvero's deputy and chief of the Section for Morale and Education.

²³ Tolimir had previously served as Chief of Security/9th (Knin) Corps, working directly for Mladic. He was one of Mladic's closest advisers. Tolimir was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994. His two deputies were Colonel Petar Salapura, Chief of Military Intelligence, and Colonel Ljubisa Beara, Chief of Counter-Intelligence. Salapura appears to have been Chief of Military Intelligence in the Second Military District (and possibly its predecessor the Fifth Military District). Beara was actually a naval security officer and had served as Chief of Security/Military-Maritime District during the Croatian war.

²⁴ Maric and his staff dealt with organizational and doctrinal issues, but did not command the Air and Air Defense Force, which was separate. Maric was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994.

²⁵ Tomic was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994.

²⁶ Djukic had previously served on the JNA General Staff, heading the Technical Services Section in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Rear Services. Djukic was promoted to Major General on 23 December 1991, and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel General on 24 June 1994. The office of the Assistant Commander for Rear Services consisted of Technical Service, Quartermaster Service, Procurement and Trade, Medical Service, Traffic Service, and Construction Service Sections.

²⁷ The 1995 Croatian Main Staff in Zagreb probably came a close second. The 1995 version of the HV certainly was the most formidable army that fought in Bosnia. HV forces, however, were free to use such overwhelming force that it is difficult to judge the relative importance of staff work (beyond the obvious need for it to be conducted competently) to the victory, in comparison to its high value for the resource-constrained VRS.

²⁸ Kelecevic previously served as Chief of Security for the Fifth Military District throughout the Croatian war, and during the pre-war crises.

²⁹ The size of the corps area forced the VRS to establish two (later three) semi-permanent commands to control key sectors: "Doboj" Operational Group 9 and 30th Infantry Division. OG 9 appears to have been formed originally from an operational group derived from elements of the JNA 17th Tuzla Corps and former TO forces brought together in late May 1992 to control the forces deployed around

Bosanski Brod and Doboj. Under the VRS, Colonel Milivoje Simic initially commanded the OG; Colonel Slavko Lisica replaced him at the end of 1992. In mid-1993, Lisica was removed, promoted, and given command of the VRS Center of Military Schools. Colonel Vladimir Arsic replaced him, leading the OG until the end of the war. Arsic was promoted to Major General on 23 June 1995. OG 9 was initially responsible for areas around Doboj, Teslic, and Ozren, but later appears to have assumed command over all 1st Krajina Corps forces stretching from Teslic to Orasje—the bulk of the Posavina Corridor.

The 30th Infantry Division (originally 30th Partisan Division) (19th Brigade, 1st Sipovo, and 11th Mrkonjic Brigade) was responsible for the sector running from Donji Vakuf (Srbobran) to the boundary with OG 9 near Teslic from 1994-1995. Previously, the sector had been split into the 30th Division sector, covering the Donji Vakuf-Kupres area and the "Vlasic" Operational Group (1st Kotor Varos and 22nd Brigades), under Lieutenant Colonel Janko Trivic, covering the Mount Vlasic-Travnik area, up to the OG-9 boundary. The "Vlasic" OG was merged with the 30th Division in 1994. Colonel Stanislav Galic commanded the division during much of 1992, until Colonel Jovo Blazanovic replaced him. The division's last commander was Colonel Momir Zec, who led it from late 1994 to the end of the war. Zec was promoted to Major General on 23 June 1995.

The 1st Krajina Corps formed a third major subordinate command, "Prijedor" Operational Group 10, in August 1995, to deal with the Bosnian Army and HV/HVO offensives threatening Western Bosnia. Colonel Radmilo was its commander. This OG appears to have existed earlier, during 1993, when it acted as a holding formation for elements in the Prijedor-Sanski Most area, while covering the Una and Sava River boundaries with Croatia. Colonel Branko Basara appears to have been in command at that time. The OG probably was inactivated in 1994.

³⁰ Boric originally took command of the corps as a colonel and was promoted to Major General in late 1992. Boric had served as Assistant Commander for Rear Services in the corps during the Croatian war. Upon his relief, he took command of the VRS training center, the Center of Military Schools, located in Banja Luka, which he headed until 1997. Major General Radivoje Tomanic replaced him in November 1994, after the Bosnian Army breakthrough at Bihać. Tomanic served on the VRS Main Staff prior to his appointment.

Boric's chief of staff was Colonel Mico Vlaisavljevic. Vlaisavljevic was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994. Vlaisavljevic previously commanded the engineer regiment of the 9th (Knin) Corps under Mladic. Colonel Dusan Kukobat replaced Vlaisavljevic at the same time Tomanic replaced Boric.

³¹ The old 10th (Zagreb) Corps, from which the 10th (Bihać) Corps was formed, had an armored brigade, a mechanized brigade, and a motorized brigade, plus an artillery regiment and an antitank regiment. None of these units remained with the corps when it became the 2nd Krajina. The armored brigade had been sent in late 1991 to the Tuzla area, while the mechanized brigade had gone to the Sarajevo area. The motorized brigade and the artillery units remained in the Krajina.

³² Simic commanded Tactical Group 1 of the 1st Krajina Corps during Operation "Corridor 92." He had served as chief of staff in the JNA 329th (VRS 1st) Armored Brigade during the 1991 Croatian war. He was promoted in July 1993 to Major General after the successful action by 1st Krajina/East Bosnian Corps Operation "Sadejstvo-93" to widen the Posavina corridor near Brcko. Colonel Dragutin Ilic was Simic's predecessor as commander of the East Bosnian Corps upon its absorption by the VRS. Simic's chief of staff throughout the war was Colonel Budimir Gavric. Gavric was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994.

³³ Of these nine brigades, all but one were formed by the end of 1992. The 3rd Posavina Infantry Brigade was formed on 28 September 1994, from four battalions of the 2nd Posavina Infantry Brigade.

³⁴ Galic was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel General upon his retirement. The chiefs of staff for these corps commanders was as follows: Colonel Dragan Marcetic, 1992, Colonel Cedo Sladoje, 1993-1995.

³⁵ The VRS merged three light infantry brigades in late 1993, creating the 3rd Sarajevo Infantry Brigade from the Vogosca, Rajlovac, and Kosevo Light Brigades.

³⁶ The Serbs expelled most of the Muslims who had lived in these suburbs before the war.

³⁷ Zivanovic was a close colleague of Mladic, and had previously commanded the JNA 180th Motorized Brigade/9th (Knin) Corps under Mladic during the Croatian war, earning a promotion. Zivanovic was a colonel when he took command of the new corps, and was promoted to Major General during 1993. He was rewarded with promotion to Lieutenant Colonel General at his retirement in July 1995. Prior to assuming command of the corps in July 1993, Krstic had served as corps chief of staff since early 1993. He previously commanded the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade (ex-JNA 14th Motorized), leading it under both the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps and the Drina Corps during fighting around Gorazde, Zepa, and Olovno during 1992-1994. Krstic lost part of his leg in combat. Krstic's predecessor as corps chief of staff was Colonel Milutin Skocajic. Skocajic was promoted to Major General on 24 June 1994.

³⁸ In late 1994, four of the five brigades of Tactical Group Visegrad, which comprised the 1st through 5th Podrinje Brigades, were merged into three brigades. One of the new brigades was transferred to the Herzegovina Corps along with its area of responsibility on the southern side of Gorazde.

³⁹ Grubac's chief of staff was initially Colonel, later Major General, Vlado Spremo. Colonel Miladin Prstojevic replaced Spremo during mid to late 1994.

⁴⁰ The Main Staff's 1st Guards Motorized Brigade moved almost permanently to Kalinovik in September 1993 upon the conclusion of Operation Lukavac 93, and was attached to the Herzegovina Corps command for the rest of the war.

⁴¹ The corps again assumed control over part of the Gorazde front during mid to late 1994, reabsorbing two light infantry brigades that were then merged into a single formation.

⁴² See Drago Vrucinic, "Capable of More and Better Things," *Ranni Bilten Seste Sanske Pjesadijske Brigade* (War Bulletin of the Sixth Sanske Infantry Brigade) 15 November 1994, p. 4:

By order of the Prijedor Operational Group and the 6th Sana Infantry Brigade, of March 1993, four "B" Battalions were formed in the territory of Sanski Most municipality. The members of these battalions are able-bodied men age 50 and above and women between the age of 18 and 40, except those who have children younger than seven years old.

⁴³ A recent Yugoslav Army (VJ) professional journal article describing VJ doctrine for the use of an armored battalion in mountain terrain provides an excellent overview of many of the same principles incorporated into the VRS tactical doctrine. Given the JNA ancestry of both, this is not surprising. The following passage describes the conduct of an attack, and, although focused on armor, usefully includes how all arms, not just armor, take part in it:

Within the scope of the overall mission of the battalion, companies are given many consecutive missions that mainly coincide with tactical-topographic objects in the depth of the enemy defense so that by their gradual conquest the enemy will be broken into many smaller parts for easier encirclement and destruction . . .

In an attack in mountainous terrain, the battalion will most frequently use encirclement and bypass and, less often—only when compelled to do so—a frontal form of attack. An attack on the leading edge of the enemy requires starting with deployed mechanized and attached motorized [infantry] companies, and tank companies act as when they are in direct support of infantry. Because of the increased danger of action by enemy short-range antitank combat weapons, tanks must move directly in the combat disposition of the infantry or behind it, attacking in columns, most often platoon columns. During an attack, there has to be uninterrupted communication between mechanized (motorized-infantry) components and tanks, and the tanks at any moment must be secured by the infantry. Between the tanks and the infantry there must be clearly coordinated fire, and targets must be indicated. Tank fire is used primarily for destruction of bunkers, nests of automatic weapons, and clear-

ing forests, steep slopes, and other sheltered objects by machine gun and cannon fire. In the attack objects are occupied one after the other by a combination of frontal attack of the infantry and envelopment-bypass of tank platoons and companies. Military-territorial units [light infantry] may be used for these missions . . .

. . . Rapid penetration deep into enemy defense requires the use of advantages offered by the terrain for sneaking smaller units of temporary composition through gaps, taking envelopment and bypass on the flanks and wings, and rapidly breaking through to the rear lines. When there is no possibility of envelopment and bypass, it is necessary by a combination of actions in valleys and along ridges, with strong fire support by artillery units and tank fire, to neutralize enemy fire points and with infantry support to take certain objects and then continue energetic penetration by tanks.

. . . Upon taking some objects and attaining certain lines . . . it is required to set up combat disposition, re-establish disrupted cooperation, reconnoiter the further direction of the attack as far as possible, and only then continue penetration. [Comment: note emphasis on phased, methodical attack]

Colonel Hajrudin Redzovic, "Armored Battalion in Mountainous Areas," Belgrade *Novi Glasnik* September-October 1996, pp. 47-52. Other examples also illustrate key aspects of JNA mountain tactical doctrine, especially the focus on a methodical, step by step advance, regrouping after an advance to the next defense line, while emphasizing flank security in the difficult terrain. A Bosnian Army (and former JNA) officer stated after a successful VRS attack near Travnik in November 1992 that, "The Chetniks broke our defense lines step by step, using strong forces, securing their flanks and regrouping stronger forces . . . It was a text book operation." Andrej Gustincic, "Bosnian Frontline Collapses, Serbs Closer to Travnik," Reuters 17 November 1992.

⁴⁴ The use of small, picked infantry detachments to spearhead attacks by larger bodies of normal infantry troops is reminiscent of the German development of "stormtroop" (sturmtruppen) units in the First World War during 1915-1917 to lead attacks by regular infantry. The following excerpt is from a British intelligence assessment written in 1918:

A noteworthy feature of infantry organization has been the introduction of "Assault Detachments" (Sturmtrupps). These units consist of picked men whose initiative and skill in attack are developed by special training . . . During the later part of 1916, an assault company (Sturmkompanie) was formed in a number of divisions. An assault company usually consists of 1 officer and 120 men; the company is organized in 3 platoons, one of which is often attached to each regiment of the division. These units are mainly employed in patrolling, and in carrying out trench raids and offensive operations.

Imperial General Staff, *Handbook of the German Army in War*, April 1918, Nashville: Imperial War Museum/Battery Press, reprinted 1996, p. 47. See also Martin Samuels, *Command or Control? Command, Training, and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918*, London: Frank Cass, 1995, Chapters 3 and 8.

⁴⁵ Again, although geared toward the VJ, Colonel Redzovic's article provides the best detail on how former JNA armies used armor in mountain warfare, emphasizing that infantry, not armor, was to lead in the attack:

Combat action requires preparation and organization so that the armored battalion will not be the carrier of an attack on mountainous terrain, but will act as direct support to motorized (infantry) units. At the same time, when being the carrier of the attack is unavoidable, it must be reinforced by a greater number of motorized (infantry) units, engineering, artillery, air defense units, and military-territorial [comment: light infantry] to the extent possible, and made independent in the logistic sense.

Colonel Hajrudin Redzovic, "Armored Battalion in Mountainous Areas," Belgrade Novi Glasnik September-October 1996, pp. 47-52.

⁴⁶ As the war went on, the VRS did institute some basic training for new conscripts, but it does not appear that this provided the recruits with anything more than basic military skills, although some specialty and technical personnel probably received additional training. In mid-1993 the VRS established an army-level military training center, the Center of Military Schools, which included an officer school, an NCO school, and combat development and training sections. Nevertheless, the output of new officers and NCOs almost certainly was never able to fill the gaps in the VRS junior leadership ranks caused by the original deficiencies and the subsequent casualties. Most VRS training was given within the operational unit. For example, within a single corps, the corps-level artillery regiment would run a series of courses for all the artillerymen in the corps's formations, or the corps-level military police battalion would conduct counter-sabotage courses for all brigade-level MPs.

⁴⁷ As an example, in what would appear to have been no more than a week's worth of combat (but might have been a month), the 6th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade suffered 35 men killed in action and 130 wounded during heavy fighting near Gradacac, roughly 25 to 30 percent of its strength; this level of casualties does not appear to have been an isolated case. This battalion did not serve in the Croatian War, and was raised in early April 1992, apparently from local TO personnel in the town of Ljubija near Prijedor. Its only previous action prior to its commitment at Gradacac had been ethnic cleansing operations near Prijedor during May-September. Zivko Ecim, "The Year of Successful Actions," Kozarski Vjesnik 25 June 1993.

⁴⁸ See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 7.

⁴⁹ The VRS was forced to rely even more on SDS appointees in those ex-JNA units raised in heavily mixed ethnic regions, since many reserve officer and NCO positions were scheduled to have been filled in the old army by Muslim and Croat reserve cadres.

⁵⁰ For a particularly informative discussion of key shortcomings in the VRS, including officer selection and training, see Milutin Kozarica, "Discipline—The Foundation On Which An Army Is Built," *Srpska Vojska* 28 December 1995, pp. 17-19.

⁵¹ Milutin Kozarica, "Discipline—The Foundation On Which An Army Is Built," *Srpska Vojska* 28 December 1995, pp. 17-19.

⁵² See Colonel Lazar Durovski, "The Commune and National Defense," The Yugoslav Concept of General People's Defense, Belgrade: *Medunarodna Politika*, 1970, pp. 301-305, for a description of the role of the municipality (also called communes) in the pre-war Yugoslav defense doctrine.

⁵³ For several critiques by VRS professional officers of different aspects of this structural flaw, see Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, "Loss of Supreme Command," Belgrade *Nin*, 1 November 1996, pp. 19-22; Milja Vujsic, "The Truth About the General's Dismissal," Belgrade Intervju (Internet Version) 13 December 1996—An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero; Lieutenant Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, "Wisdom and Caution," *Srpska Vojska* 22 March 1996, pp. 10-14. An interview with Lieutenant Colonel General Milan Gvero. One of the clearest statements about the municipality problem came from Major General Momir Zec, commander of the 30th Infantry Division, in August 1995. He stated,

... I do not expect them [the state] to buy us airplanes and atom bombs. But what there is must be equally distributed; there must be one joint treasury. Supplying individual units today depends upon how rich a municipality is, and the formational structure of individual brigades depends upon this. For this reason, we now have municipal armies, and even armies of local communities. . .

... At the beginning of 1992, we had very good military results . . . If we had had more order and discipline, if we had not had local-municipal armies, we could have ended the war back in 1993.

M. Solaja and R. Vujetovic, "The Army is to Order, Not Convince," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, pp. 23-25—an interview with Major General Momir Zec.

⁵⁴ VJ troops were drawn primarily from the 63rd Airborne and 72nd Special Operations Brigades. MUP personnel came from Frenki Sima-

tovic's elite "Red Beret" special operations unit, as well as regional active duty and reserve Special Police units. For example, in December 1993, as part of Operation "Pancir," some 120 VJ troops—probably from either the 63rd or 72nd Brigades—were deployed under command of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, while during June 1995 defensive operations around Trnovo three Serbian MUP special units took part. SRK Command, No 20/15-1409, 15 December 1993 and RS MUP Combat Reports, 30 June and 1 July 1995 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 119.

⁵⁵ The ICTY pre-trial brief on Milosevic for Bosnia and Croatia outlines the VJ/VRS personnel connection, stating,

... Despite a mobilisation process throughout 1992, not every Bosnian Serb returned to serve in the VRS and there were shortages in certain military specialisations and command ranks.

The VJ assisted the VRS in this area by maintaining a significant role in the training of VRS military personnel, and through incentives offered to FRY military officers who volunteered to serve in the VRS . . .

On 6 Aug 1994, the VJ Main Staff [sic] decided to provide officers serving in the RS double credit (for pension purposes, etc) for duty performed in BiH after 20 May 1992 . . .

The personnel matters of VRS officers as well as contract workers and other personnel were administered from the 30th Personnel Centre of the General Staff of the VJ in Belgrade, an administrative unit specifically established for this purpose. This arrangement was developed after a number of meetings between the VRS and the VJ and, with more than 26,000 commissioned and non-commissioned officers in the VRS in July 1992, provided the VRS with the ability to continue operations despite its monetary and personnel shortfalls.

GS VRS document, "Analysis of the Combat Readiness of the Army of the Republika Srpska in 1992," April 1993, Report on the Army of Srpska Republika, General Mladic, 01 Sept 92, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, pp. 128-129.

⁵⁶ The ICTY pre-trial brief also detailed some of the VJ's logistical support plan for the VRS stating,

... in the late summer of 1992 the VRS Main Staff and the General Staff (GS) of the RY agreed upon a plan of supply, code-named "Izvor" (Source). This plan was aimed at facilitating the delivery of large quantities of ammunition and fuel from the FRY to the VRS . . . On 12 September the VRS Main Staff wrote to the 1KK [1st Krajina Corps] noting the agreement between the GS FRY and the VRS and that the 14th Logistics Base (which supported the 1KK and the 2KK [2nd Krajina Corps]) had already taken over 225 tonnes of ammunition with a further 220 tonnes to follow. The letter also noted that the logistics base and the Corps were also allowed to procure ammunition and fuel in the FRY. Documents also indicate that VRS OG Doboj received large quantities of material from Serbia and Montenegro between 5 August - 14 September 1992, including small arms, artillery, tank and rocket ammunition.

There were probably at least three deliveries of ammunition to the 1KK through the Izvor plan as documentation in early 1993 notes the delivery of supplies in accordance with "Izvor-3". On 1 January 1993, a 1KK logistics report noted that 29 trailer trucks had been dispatched for the transport of material from the FRY as per the Izvor-3 plan and later documents indicate that this material was received by the technical services of the corps. In April 1993, in an analysis of the combat readiness of the VRS, the Main Staff noted that units of the army had been supplied with technical equipment from the FRY reserves and

that 7,451 tonnes of ammunition had been received via the Izvor plan.

Other evidence indicates additional FRY technical and material support to the VRS. Almost immediately upon the reopening of the Posavina corridor in the summer, material transfers between Belgrade and Banja Luka began once again. On 5 August, the IKK noted that sources of ammunition and fuel were limited but supplies were located in the FRY. Later in 1992, there is evidence that individuals from the IKK were travelling to the FRY in order to secure material and technical resources, including fuel, mines and explosives for their individual units. Other references note that repairs of military equipment were being carried out in the FRY and transported back to the IKK. In December 1992, a daily combat report noted that three thousand 82mm mortars shells had come back from repairs in the FRY. References to the establishment of a commission for obtaining ammunition in the FRY, certificates authorising the collection of fuel from the FRY bearing the IKK commander's signature block and issued by the corps, and a request for ammunition sent to the Republic of Serbia Secretariat of the Interior (SUP) also illustrate the extent of FRY and VJ support for the VRS At the 50th Session of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska in April 1995, General Mladic provided a consumption review of weapons and other equipment used by the VRS from the start of the war until 31 December 1994. After initially obtaining roughly 40% of the infantry, artillery, and anti-aircraft ammunition it was to use from former JNA stocks, the VRS received at least another 34% of the total amount of each of these items it consumed before 31 December 1994 from the VJ. Various 1st Krajina Corps and VRS Main Staff documents and Audio Recording, General Mladic, 50th Session of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, Sanski Most, 15-16 April 1995 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, pp. 126-128.

⁵⁷ Belgrade Tanjug 6 December 1992.

⁵⁸ The brigade was created as an elite formation in December 1992 from personnel drawn from throughout the Republika Srpska. It was modeled on the JNA/VJ 1st Guards Motorized Brigade. It was attached to the Herzegovina Corps and more or less permanently deployed at Kalinovik after Operation Lukavac 93 around Mount Igman-Bjelascica.

⁵⁹ The regiment served as the bodyguard force for the Main Staff, as well as serving as an elite intervention/assault infantry formation throughout the RS. As a JNA formation it had served as the bodyguard formation for the Second/Fifth Military District.

⁶⁰ The detachment was formed in early 1994 with the primary mission of conducting the most important sabotage operations behind enemy lines for the Main Staff.

⁶¹ The pre-war 389th Rocket Artillery Brigade in the JNA; it was the only FROG-7 surface-to-surface missile unit in the army.

⁶² This training center was established in mid-1993 from the former JNA "Petar Drapsin" Center for Training Armor-Mechanized Units. It consisted of an officers school, an NCO school, and various training departments. It was named for its second commander, Major General Rajko Balac, after he was killed leading cadets from the school in combat at Bihać in November 1994.

⁶³ The pre-war JNA 367th Communications Regiment which supported the Second/Fifth Military District.

⁶⁴ This logistics unit supported the 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps. It was the pre-war 993rd Rear Base.

⁶⁵ This logistics unit supported the Sarajevo-Romanija and Drina Corps. It was the pre-war 744th Rear Base.

⁶⁶ This logistics unit supported the Herzegovina Corps.

⁶⁷ This logistics unit supported the East Bosnian Corps.

⁶⁸ This facility was a pre-war JNA medium-level repair facility for armored vehicles and other equipment.

⁶⁹ Formed from the pre-war 5th (Banja Luka) Corps.

⁷⁰ This OG was formed in 1992-1993 to control rear echelon and border security units in western Bosnia. It was reactivated in late August-September 1995.

⁷¹ The division originally was designated "partisan." After the JNA-style "partisan" was dropped, the division designator alternated between 30th Light Infantry and 30th Infantry Division, finally ending with "infantry" in 1995. The division was also often called 30th Krajina Division.

⁷² The detachment (a cross between a company and battalion) was originally a company.

⁷³ This unit was originally a volunteer unit formed in 1991 for service in Western Slavonia.

⁷⁴ Formed from the pre-war military police battalion of the JNA 5th Corps.

⁷⁵ Formed from the pre-war communications battalion of the JNA 5th Corps.

⁷⁶ Formed from the pre-war 5th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment. It also may have incorporated elements of the pre-war 454th Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade.

⁷⁷ Formed from the pre-war 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment.

⁷⁸ Formed from the pre-war 5th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment.

⁷⁹ Formed from the engineer regiment of the pre-war JNA 5th Corps.

⁸⁰ Formed from the pontoon battalion of the pre-war JNA 5th Corps.

⁸¹ Formed from the pre-war 329th Armored Brigade.

⁸² Formed from assets of the JNA's "Petar Drapsin" Center for Training Armored-Mechanized Units and one M-84 armored battalion of the 336th (ex-4th Armored) Motorized Brigade.

⁸³ Formed from the pre-war 2nd Partisan Brigade. Also called at times 2nd "Banja Luka" Light Infantry Brigade.

⁸⁴ Formed from the pre-war 5th Partisan Brigade.

⁸⁵ Formed from the pre-war 6th Partisan Brigade. It also used the designator 6th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade.

⁸⁶ Formed from the pre-war 11th Partisan Brigade. Also seen designated 11th Kozara Infantry Brigade.

⁸⁷ Formed from the pre-war 16th Motorized Brigade. Nicknamed the "Garava (Black) Brigade."

⁸⁸ Formed from the 19th Partisan Brigade.

⁸⁹ Formed from the pre-war 122nd Partisan Brigade.

⁹⁰ Formed from the pre-war 327th Motorized Brigade. It was previously assigned to the 17th (Tuzla) Corps.

⁹¹ Formed from the pre-war 343rd Motorized Brigade. Also seen designated 43rd Kozara Motorized Brigade.

⁹² Transferred to 2nd Krajina Corps, November 1994.

⁹³ Also seen as 1st Krajina Light Infantry Brigade.

⁹⁴ This brigade was formed in 1992 and appears to have merged with another brigade—possibly the 27th Motorized Brigade—in 1994.

⁹⁵ This brigade was formed in 1992 and by 1995 appears to have merged with another formation, possibly one of the four Banja Luka light infantry brigades.

⁹⁶ A second-line formation which appears to have merged with another formation, probably the 22nd Infantry Brigade, during 1995.

⁹⁷ Formed from the pre-war 10th (Bihac) Corps.

⁹⁸ This detachment was originally a company.

⁹⁹ Formed from 9th (Knin) Corps assets and manpower from the Kupres and Sipovo areas. The brigade was also known as the 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade.

¹⁰⁰ This brigade was formed from a combination of the Serb Bosansko Grahovo TO and the ex-JNA 11th Motorized Brigade. The 11th was originally the 11th Naval Landing Infantry Brigade, stationed before the Croatian war in the port city of Sibenik.

¹⁰¹ Formed from the pre-war 17th (Tuzla) Corps.

¹⁰² Formed from the pontoon battalion of the pre-war JNA 17th Corps.

¹⁰³ Formed from the pre-war 395th Motorized Brigade.

¹⁰⁴ Formed in September 1994 from four battalions of the 2nd Posavina Brigade.

¹⁰⁵ Formed from the 17th Partisan Brigade.

¹⁰⁶ Formed in November 1992, possibly with a large percentage of Muslim personnel.

¹⁰⁷ Formed from the 22nd Partisan Brigade.

¹⁰⁸ Elements of the pre-war JNA 92nd Motorized Brigade, headquartered in Tuzla, may have gone into the formation of this brigade.

¹⁰⁹ This brigade, one of the more colorful and effective VRS mobile units, had two official designators. It was initially designated "Special Brigade," and nicknamed the "Panthers" or "Serbian Guard-Panthers." It was later retitled "1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade," although few seem to have referred to it by this name. Despite the "light infantry" designator, it was in effect a light motorized brigade, organized into an armored battalion plus an unknown number of light infantry/light motorized infantry battalions. It was also equipped with a variety of home-made light armored cars and other mobile weapons.

¹¹⁰ Formed from the pre-war 4th (Sarajevo) Corps.

¹¹¹ Formed from the pre-war 288th Military Police Battalion.

¹¹² Formed from the pre-war 346th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment.

¹¹³ This brigade was formed from the pre-war 49th Motorized Brigade, headquartered in Sarajevo, and the pre-war 140th Mechanized Brigade, which was relocated from Zagreb to Sarajevo at the end of the Croatian war.

¹¹⁴ Originally the Vogosca Light Infantry Brigade, the brigade subsumed the Rajlovac and Kosevo Brigades, which became battalions, during 1993.

¹¹⁵ This brigade was formed in early 1995 from three light infantry battalions—Pale, Praca, and Jahorina—that appear to have been previously assigned to the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade or possibly the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade.

¹¹⁶ Formed from the pre-war 216th Mountain Brigade.

¹¹⁷ Originally 1st Rogatica Light Infantry Brigade. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Tactical Group "Visegrad" of the Herzegovina Corps.

¹¹⁸ Originally 1st Visegrad Light Infantry Brigade; merged with 5th Podrinje mid-late 1994. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Tactical Group "Visegrad" of the Herzegovina Corps.

¹¹⁹ Originally 1st Cajnice Light Infantry Brigade; merged with 4th Podrinje and became 14th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, transferred to Herzegovina Corps, mid-late 1994. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Tactical Group "Visegrad" of the Herzegovina Corps.

¹²⁰ Originally 1st Rudo Light Infantry Brigade; merged with 3rd Podrinje and became 14th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, transferred to Herzegovina Corps, mid-late 1994. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Tactical Group "Visegrad" of the Herzegovina Corps.

¹²¹ Originally 1st Gorazde Light Infantry Brigade; merged with 2nd Podrinje mid-late 1994, but retained 5th designator. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Tactical Group "Visegrad" of the Herzegovina Corps.

¹²² Apparently formed from major elements of the pre-war 336th (ex-4th Armored) Motorized Brigade. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to the East Bosnian Corps. The Podrinje Special Forces Detachment "Drina Wolves" were part of the brigade.

¹²³ Formed in November 1992 from one battalion of the 1st Birac Brigade and the Bratunac TO.

¹²⁴ Formed from the pre-war 14th Motorized Brigade. Prior to the formation of the Drina Corps, it was assigned to Sarajevo-Romanija Corps.

¹²⁵ Despite some reporting that this unit was a brigade, it appears to have been only a battalion throughout its history.

¹²⁶ This detachment was originally a company.

¹²⁷ Formed from the pre-war 13th Mixed Artillery Regiment.

¹²⁸ Formed from the pre-war 472nd Motorized Brigade. Also known as the Trebinje Brigade.

¹²⁹ Formed from the pre-war 10th Motorized Brigade, a designator the 8th, probably used for much of 1992. It was also known as the Nevesinje Brigade.

¹³⁰ Originally designated the 1st Foca Light Infantry Brigade.

¹³¹ Formed from the pre-war 13th Motorized Brigade, a designator the 15th, probably used for much of 1992, and possibly later.

¹³² The 82nd Fighter-Bomber Aviation Brigade and the 111th Helicopter Transport Brigade merged sometime in 1992 to form the 92nd. It had four squadrons—one Galeb-Jastreb fighter-bomber squadron, one Orao fighter-bomber/recon squadron, one Gazelle squadron, and one Hip squadron.

¹³³ This unit was the VRS early warning radar battalion.

Annex 25 **Croatian Political Objectives and Military Strategy** **in Bosnia, 1991-1992**

Political Goals

Croatian policy toward Bosnia in 1992 would be driven by President Tudjman's personal views and philosophy, bolstered by the strongly held parallel views of Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak and the powerful "Herzegovina lobby." Tudjman's vision of a united Croatian people rested on the conviction that he was the man of destiny who would achieve this goal. He had long ago dismissed the possibility of maintaining a unitary multi-ethnic Bosnian state, and he considered the Muslims in Bosnia, like those in Serbia (in the Sandzak and Kosovo), to be an eventual threat to Croatians and Croatia. For their part, Susak and other ethnic Herzegovinians in the Croatian Government nursed a similar vision of attaching to Croatia the Bosnian Croat regions, especially Croat-dominated Western Herzegovina. In this they were backed by the powerful Croatian émigré community, many of whom were from Herzegovina.¹ This alignment with the Herzegovinians enabled Tudjman and Susak to deflect and ignore the strong opposition to Bosnian partition in the Croatian Foreign Ministry, the Croatian Assembly, and other parts of the government and public.²

Zagreb's first priority was to increase the political awareness and organization of the Bosnian Croats, moving toward the autonomy of Croats in Bosnia as an interim step on the road to their separation and integration into Croatia proper. In August 1990 Tudjman's political party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), formed a wing in Bosnia³ which, guided from Zagreb, advocated a "sovereign, independent, and confederal" (emphasis added) Bosnia.⁴ A year later,

during the Croatian war, the Bosnian Croats declared the formation of the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna, covering 30 Bosnian municipalities, with Bosnian HDZ vice-president Mate Boban as the community's president.⁵ By January 1992, a Croatian Community of Bosanska Posavina had also been established.⁶ Local Bosnian Croat officials in predominantly Croat municipalities would now respond more to the national HDZ leadership—and Zagreb—than to the nominal central Bosnian Government in Sarajevo.

Zagreb and the Bosnian Croats saw these nascent Croat mini-states as parallels to that of the Bosnian Serbs. While moving on this track, Zagreb was also negotiating with Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs to partition Bosnia or create a nominal confederation with virtual independence for the three ethnic entities.⁷ Tudjman and senior Croatian and Bosnian Croat leaders held a series of meetings to discuss partition with Serbian and Bosnian Serb leaders in 1991 and early 1992, starting with Milosevic in spring 1991, followed by Nikola Koljevic, a Serb member of the Bosnian Presidency in December 1991, and Karadzic in February 1992. Semi-secret talks continued as late as May, when Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban reached a tentative agreement on "borders" and a cease-fire with Karadzic. International reaction to what was regarded as Croatian perfidy forced Tudjman to back off and change tacks. Within two weeks he had maneuvered to promote an agreement on confederation initiated by the Croatians, the Bosnian Croats, and a high-ranking Bosnian Muslim official, which at least temporarily deflected the spotlight from the Boban-Karadzic talks.⁸ Zagreb also played up its diplomatic recognition of the Bosnian government and crowded about its role in the republic's creation. Quietly, however, Tudjman and Susak continued to support and

encourage Bosnian Croat efforts to strengthen and extend their autonomy, moving from Western Herzegovina into the more ethnically diverse Central Bosnia and Posavina. These actions would result in armed fighting during fall 1992 between nominally allied Muslim and Croat forces.

Military Strategy

Croatian military strategy during 1991 and 1992 in pursuit of these political objectives escalated from the provision of weapons and Croatian Army “volunteers” to train and organize a Bosnian Croat military in late 1991 to the full-blown deployment of Croatian Army combat formations in April 1992. Zagreb appears to have sent weapons as early as October or November 1991.⁹ An ethnic Herzegovinian commanding Croatian Army special operations forces has admitted to having first gone to Western Herzegovina in December 1991—as a “volunteer”—to train and organize Bosnian Croat soldiers.¹⁰ In early 1992 Zagreb stepped up its shipments of weapons and equipment and continued the organization of what would become the Croatian Defense Council (HVO)—the Bosnian Croat army.^{*} With its own war at least temporarily at an end, Zagreb also allowed Bosnian Croat enlisted men serving in the HV to demobilize and return to Bosnia with their personal weapons, where they helped form the nucleus of the growing Bosnian Croat forces.

The JNA’s defeat of HV/HVO forces in the Battle of Kupres in early April and the advent of war throughout Bosnia brought more increases in Zagreb’s support to the Bosnian Croats. Corps General Janko Bobetko, a senior officer on the Croatian Main Staff, received approval from Croatian President Tudjman on 10 April to establish a command post at the Croatian port of Ploce from which to reorganize HV forces in southern Dalmatia.¹¹ Tudjman authorized the move apparently because of Bobetko’s erroneous assessment that the JNA victory at Kupres was the first step in a major JNA offensive to seize Herzegovina and the

* See Volume I, Chapter 18, “The Bosnian Croat Militias,” for a detailed discussion of the formation and organization of the HVO.

Croatian port of Ploce and sever southern Dalmatia.¹² Upon assuming control over HV southern Dalmatian forces, Bobetko began organizing HVO headquarters (usually with HV officers) and units under his command.¹³ This included the establishment of a forward command post for Bobetko on 16 April in Grude, some 35 kilometers west of Mostar. This command post was dual-hatted as the new Main Staff of the HVO, under a former JNA colonel in the HV, Milivoj Petkovic.¹⁴ Zagreb’s theater objective in Herzegovina was to defend and hold the Croat territory of Herceg-Bosna and assist in the relief of Dubrovnik; to that end, Bobetko was preparing a counteroffensive to free the Mostar-Neretva valley in preparation for and in support of HV operations to break the Serb/JNA blockade of Dubrovnik. He had already ordered the first full HV combat unit—a battalion of the 4th Guards Brigade—into Herzegovina on 12 April.¹⁵ Additional brigades followed soon after, both to defend Herzegovina and take part in simultaneous HV operations to reach HV troops besieged in Dubrovnik. By early July, HV/HVO forces were ready to undertake Operation “Jackal” to seize the Mostar-Neretva valley.

After the successful completion of this operation and the final actions around Dubrovnik in September and October, the HV probably decreased its ground troop presence in Herzegovina. HV combat units, however, remained in defensive positions north of Dubrovnik inside Herzegovina until the implementation of the Dayton agreement in early 1996.^{**} More importantly, from a Bosnian political-military standpoint, Zagreb retained direct command over the HVO for the duration of the conflict. This was aptly demonstrated by the passage of senior HV and HVO General Staff officers, such as Generals Petkovic, Praljak, Roso, and Budimir, through the revolving door between the two armies from 1993 to 1995, assuming command first in one force and then the other.

In addition to its efforts in Herzegovina, the HV also assumed command over the nascent HVO forces in

** For a detailed account of the Herzegovina fighting, see Annex 32, “The Battles for Herzegovina 1992.”

the Posavina and began deploying regular HV combat units to the region in April.¹⁶ The HV 1st Osijek Operational Zone, through its Posavina Operational Group, controlled the initially successful HV/HVO operations, which had as their objective the capture and retention of "Croat" territory, while maintaining pressure on the Bosnian Serbs' most strategic supply route to western Bosnia. Following setbacks at the hands of the Bosnian Serb Army, the HV dispatched deputy Main Staff chief General Petar Stipetic to assume command in mid-July. Even so, Croat troops

were unable to halt the VRS, and the key town of Bosanski Brod fell in October. Following this defeat the HV scaled back its presence in the Posavina as well, although it retained some troops in the remaining Orasje pocket.* The HV also continued to exercise overall command of the HVO Posavina Operational Zone (later the Orasje Corps District) throughout the war.

* The fighting in the Posavina, including HV involvement, is discussed in more detail in Annex 28, "The Battle for the Corridor: Operations in the Posavina, March 1992- January 1993."

Endnotes, Annex 25

¹ Tudjman most clearly outlined his beliefs on Bosnia to US Ambassador Warren Zimmermann in January 1992. Zimmermann provides a detailed description of this conversation in his memoirs of the breakup of Yugoslavia. During the discussion, Tudjman claimed that the Muslims wanted to create an "Islamic, fundamentalist state in Bosnia," and that they planned to "flood the region with 500,000 Turks" while rewarding Bosnian Muslim families for having large families. Islamic influence would spread from Bosnia through Sandzak, Kosovo, and Turkey to Libya. Izetbegovic was a "fundamentalist front-man" for Turkey, striving to create a greater Bosnia. Tudjman went on to discuss how the Croatians and Bosnian Croats needed to conclude a deal with Milosevic and the Serbs over partitioning Bosnia, ignoring the fact that Tudjman had just fought a war with the Serbs in which he demanded the West recognize the inviolability of Croatian borders. Tudjman claimed that this was the only way to stop a war in Bosnia and halt the Muslims. See Warren Zimmermann, "Origins of a Catastrophe," New York: Random House, 1996, pp. 181-184.

² Zimmermann noted that Tudjman's key aides were flabbergasted by his diatribe. Other senior HDZ officials publicly stated their strong opposition to the division of Bosnia. However, working with Susak, Tudjman bypassed all of those opposed to a Croatian policy of carving up Bosnia rather than supporting its unity.

³ Belgrade Tanjug 18 August 1990; Silber and Little, p. 209.

⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 18 August 1990.

⁵ Zagreb Radio 18 November 1991.

⁶ The same day that the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna was formed, a Regional Committee of the Croatian Community of Bosanska Posavina was also created. By January 1992 the Croatian press was referring to the Posavina community. Belgrade Tanjug 19 November 1991; Zagreb HTV 19 January 1992; Sarajevo Radio 25 March 1992.

⁷ In an interview with the political weekly Herceg-Bosna on 27 March Tudjman declared that the Bosnian Croats could not accept any "unitarianistic" solution from Sarajevo, i.e., they would not accept a Muslim-dominated central government controlling ethnic Croat areas. Cantonization was the minimum acceptable solution.

⁸ See O. Ramljak, "Better Now Than Never," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 20 May 1992, p. 6, and Zivko Gruden, "Bombshell from Split," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 20 May 1992, p. 2.

⁹ Colonel Mile Dedakovic—"Hawk," the Croatian commander in Vinkovci-Vukovar during the Croatian War, stated at the end of December 1991 that Defense Minister Susak had told him that weapons originally intended for Vukovar had been diverted to Herzegovina. Dedakovic states,

Susak told me personally in front of some other people that Herzegovina must also have help. I said that I had nothing against that, but I asked him who needed help more now, Herzegovina or Vukovar?

On one occasion, I sent eight drivers I trusted to the Supreme Command for supplies, but when they got there, they were told they were not needed, and that they themselves would find drivers. Those eight tractor-trailer rigs never reached either Vinkovci or Vukovar. And then Susak told me that those trucks had gone to Herzegovina . . . There are documents.

Veceslav Kocijan, "Playing Around With Money and Weapons," Zagreb *Danas* 31 December 1991, pp. 20-21. An interview with Mile Dedakovic.

¹⁰ In May 1994, then Colonel Miljenko Filipovic, commander of the elite Zrinski Battalion, the HV's premier special operations unit, discussed his actions in late 1991 and spring 1992 in Western Herzegovina.

. . . toward the end of 1991 we were training soldiers in Tomislavgrad. We took part in the battles on Kupres, which I commanded personally. The battalion liberated three-fourths of Kupres, but in the end it fell nevertheless, through no fault of ours.

. . . After it fell, we remained for a time in Herzegovina, helping to build the Croatian Defense Council (HVO).

You see, I was born in Tomislavgrad, and I was fighting in Herzegovina as a volunteer. I cannot leave the graves of my

ancestors to anyone. Absolutely not! Incidentally, when war broke out in Croatia, most of the volunteers came from Herzegovina, and they only went back to defend their own.

Snjezana Dukic, "If we had been only 10 minutes late..." Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 23 May 94 p. 9. An interview with Colonel Miljenko Filipovic.

Although Filipovic almost certainly did volunteer to go back, he also almost certainly was directly authorized and/or asked to by Defense Minister Susak. It is noteworthy that Filipovic refers to his "battalion" fighting in Kupres in April 1992. This would indicate that a large portion of his unit—which included a high proportion of Croats who had previously served in the French Foreign Legion—had also "volunteered" for Bosnia duty, as had Colonel, later General, Ante Roso, another Herzegovina native, member of the HV Main Staff, and founder of the Zrinski Battalion. Roso, Filipovic, and their men almost certainly organized and trained the local HVO brigade in Tomislavgrad, which was commanded for most of the war by Zeljko Glasnovic, another ex-Foreign Legion Croat, who almost certainly had served in 1991 in the Zrinski Battalion. For the reference to Roso's presence at the disastrous Battle of Kupres, see Marko Barisic, "The Colonel or the Corpse," Split *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* 24 November 1993, p. 6.

¹¹ This section is based on the detailed information, including copies of key documents, found in General Bobetko's memoirs, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996. The most important section covering the HV's actions in Herzegovina is "The Preparation and Organization of the Defense of the General Herzegovina Region and Preparations for Operation Jackal," pp. 200-274.

¹² See Bobetko, p. 202 for a photographed copy of Tudjman's order authorizing Bobetko to assume command of all Croatian forces from Split to Dubrovnik.

¹³ See particularly Bobetko pp. 212-216, 220-221, 224, 229 for photographs of his orders to HV officers organizing HVO defenses in key areas of Herzegovina.

¹⁴ See Bobetko pp. 206-208 for photographs of the orders establishing this forward command post with Petkovic as its chief when Bobetko was not present. It is interesting to note that when Bobetko was present at this command post he issued his orders on stationery with the header

Croat Community of Herzeg-Bosna

Croatian Defense Council

Southern Front Command Headquarters

Forward Command Post Grude

In accordance with JNA practice followed by the HV and other former Yugoslav armies, Bobetko then sealed his signature with a stamp that reads "Main Staff Herceg Bosna" (Glavni Stozer Herceg Bosne). See pp. 214-215 for good examples of this.

During an interview with Petkovic—who is originally from Split, Croatia, not Bosnia—in late 1994, after he had been transferred back to the HV, the interviewer writes,

He remained [in the HV] until April 1992 in what then was the Split Operational Zone. He informed General Bobetko at the time that he wanted to join the Croatian Defense Council as a volunteer.

Petkovic himself states,

The reason was simple. The Croatian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina needed help. The Croatian Defense Council was neither organized nor structured. They lacked officers at the command level . . . Fast action was needed . . . I was Chief of the General Staff of the HVO, and I stayed all of 28 months instead of the two or three that were planned.

Ana Diklic, "The Guard Brigades are the Cutting Edge of the Croatian Army," Osijek *Glas Slavonije* 31 December 1994, p. 36. An interview with Milivoj Petkovic.

¹⁵ For a photograph of this order, see Bobetko, p. 203.

¹⁶ The JNA claimed that two battalions of the HV's 108th Slavonski Brod Brigade had crossed the Sava River into Bosnia at Bosanski Brod on 18 April and engaged in combat with JNA and Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense troops. Belgrade Tanjug 18 April 1992. Despite the Serbian sourcing, this date is consistent with HV actions elsewhere and probably is true.

Annex 26

Northeastern Bosnia, April 1992: The Axe Falls

Zvornik

At the beginning of April 1992, Zvornik was a relatively large town of approximately 15,000 residents (sixty percent of them Muslim) nestled on the west bank of the Drina river.¹ A two-lane bridge connected it with the smaller town of Mali Zvornik, on the opposite bank of the river in Serbia. In late January 1992, the “Serbian Autonomous Region of Semberija and Majevica” had included Zvornik among its constituent municipalities, although Serbs were only a minority of Zvornik’s total population.² Interethnic violence first erupted during the republic-wide tensions following the announcement of the independence referendum results on 2 March. Two weeks later, Zvornik’s Serbs proclaimed their own, independent “Serbian Municipality of Zvornik.”³ At the end of March, the personnel of Zvornik’s police station split into two rival forces.⁴ By the beginning of April, a near-war psychosis had settled over the town. Many Serbs anticipated violence and sought safety across the river in Serbia, while Zvornik’s Muslims lived in constant fear as the Serb population mobilized, organized, and armed itself around them. By the time of the republic’s declaration of independence on 6 April, tensions had reached a fever pitch.

The Serb forces rallying in the Zvornik area were a hodgepodge of professional troops, local Serb TO and volunteer forces, and Serbian ultranationalist volunteer units. Units included the local Zvornik TO, probably local MUP police forces, Arkan’s Serbian Volunteer Guard, Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj’s men, and “Frenki” Simatovic’s crack Serbian RDB/MUP “Red Beret” special operations troops.⁵ Elements of the JNA 336th Motorized Brigade, which could call on artillery units in Serbia, backed up these forces. All told, the Serbs may have mustered 1,000 to 2,000 men. Arkan and Simatovic’s

units made up only a small portion of the attack force, totaling no more than 200—but they probably played the most important role considering their professionalism and experience (see Seselj quote below.) The rest, except for the JNA elements, were little more than a rabble.

Muslim forces appear to have been organized by the “Patriotic League” prior to the outbreak of the war, and were apparently led by an individual named “Captain Almir,”⁶ whose real name was Samir Nistovic.⁷ Almost nothing is known about the size or composition of Zvornik’s defense, but the debacle that ensued suggests that the Muslim defenders were few in number or poorly organized—and quite probably both.

Fighting between Serbs and Muslims broke out in and around Zvornik on 8 April, with the JNA, too, openly shelling Zvornik from inside Serbia on the far side of the river.⁸ Late on that day Arkan arrived in the area and delivered an ultimatum: the Muslims of the Zvornik commune must hand over their arms by 8 a.m. the following day or “experience the fate of Bijeljina.”⁹ Serb forces surrounded the town, while the Muslims manned hastily thrown-together barricades on its outskirts and waited anxiously through the night.¹⁰ Minutes after the ultimatum expired the next morning, the Serb forces—including Arkan’s men, SDS-armed “volunteers,” and Simatovic’s “Red Berets,” supported by more JNA artillery fire—began their attack and within hours had occupied the town. Muslim resistance within the town effectively ended by nightfall, although mopping-up operations and sporadic fighting continued in the immediate area for the next few days.

By pure coincidence, Jose Mendiluce, the senior representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the former Yugoslavia, happened to be in Zvornik as the Serb forces were taking it over.

Acting on his own, Mendiluce helped to evacuate hundreds of Zvornik's Muslims by declaring them to be under UNHCR protection and then arranging their transport to Muslim-held Tuzla. This inspired and courageous act undoubtedly saved many lives, but it became the first instance in which UN authorities actively, if unwittingly, facilitated Serb ethnic cleansing. By evacuating Zvornik's entire Muslim population, the UNHCR had helped the Serbs achieve the ultimate political-military objective of their assault.¹¹

In contrast to Bijeljina, the JNA actively supported the Serb paramilitaries assaulting Zvornik.¹² Indeed, the Yugoslav Army made no effort to conceal its involvement at Zvornik, and a JNA official statement from 10 April announced that following Croat-Muslim "provocations" in the area,

JNA and Territorial Defense units...entered Zvornik, pushed the paramilitary formations out of town, established order, and restored communications.¹³

But it was the Serbian RDB/MUP's "Red Beret" special operations unit that was the most decisive force. As the Serb extremist Vojislav Seselj was later to state openly:

The Bosnian Serb forces took part in it. But the special units and the best combat units came from this side [Serbia]. These were police units—the so-called Red Berets—special units of the Serbian Interior Ministry of Belgrade. The army engaged itself to a small degree—it gave artillery support where it was needed. The operation had been prepared for a long time. It wasn't carried out in any kind of nervous fashion. Everything was well organized and implemented.¹⁴

In sum, the capture of Zvornik illustrates how the well-organized Serb paramilitary groups (organized, supplied, and backed by the Serbian Internal Affairs Ministry), the Serbian MUP's own forces, and the JNA could collaborate to demolish in short order a stunned, ill-equipped, and disorganized Muslim resistance.

Visegrad

The town of Visegrad had been a Turkish stronghold in Bosnia where in 1571 the Ottoman Vizier of Bosnia¹⁵ commissioned the empire's greatest architect, Sinan, to design and build a 180-yard long, eleven-arched bridge over the Drina. This jewel of Turkish architecture was to provide the inspiration for the acclaimed book "Bridge Over the River Drina" by Yugoslavia's only Nobel-prizewinning author, Ivo Andric.¹⁶ But Andric's binding imagery of the bridge notwithstanding, the Visegrad municipality had been fracturing since January 1992 when the Serb-majority districts on the left bank of the Drina voted to join the Serb Autonomous Region of Romanija while those on the right bank voted to join the SAO of Hercegovina.¹⁷ Visegrad's Muslims, of course, did not want to be in either of the Autonomous Regions; Serb and Muslim goals were clearly mutually exclusive. Tensions spiked again in the first days of March, when the referendum results were announced, although they did not lead to actual violence.¹⁸ In Visegrad, as in a number of other municipalities, the ethnic composition of the police force was a source of open dispute in the run-up to the war.¹⁹ Then on 23 March barricades went up on the road to Gorazde²⁰ and shooting was heard throughout the town after Muslims attacked four Serbs on 24 March.^{21 22}

Open violence erupted on 7 April, when Bosnian Serb Territorial Defense forces moved to seize control of the town. The local TO probably numbered some 1,000 Bosnian Serb troops, backed up by roughly 100-200 municipal police from the area. These were probably assisted by small numbers of JNA 37th (Uzice) Corps troops.

The Bosnian Muslim forces were clearly overmatched in terms of numbers, organization, and weapons. Belgrade media claimed at the time that there was a battalion of 450 armed Muslims in the town, but this is almost certainly a vast exaggeration.²³ In reality, the Muslims probably could count only a fraction of the local police and reserve police forces—perhaps 100 or so individuals—and maybe several dozen armed

Patriotic League members. It would have been surprising to find more than 250 armed Muslims in the Visegrad area, not all of whom might answer to any single authority.

Details of the fighting in Visegrad are very hazy: the heaviest fighting appears to have taken place on 8 April, probably centered on a contest for the police station, and Serb forces made an organized effort to clear "paramilitaries" from the left bank of the Drina during the day.²⁴ Panic spread as rumors circulated of Arkan's imminent approach, and the entire Muslim population had fled Visegrad and its environs by the morning of 9 April.²⁵

Sporadic Muslim resistance appears to have continued in isolated areas for a few days after the fall of Visegrad itself. While Visegrad was being overrun, Bosnian Serb forces appear to have wiped out a detachment of "Green Berets" manning a roadblock near the town of Rudo on the Bosnian-Serbian border.²⁶ Serb forces also overwhelmed local Muslim resistance in the nearby villages of Dobrun²⁷ and Bosanski Jagodina over the next few days, although Dobrun appears to have been surrounded for four days before surrendering.²⁸ Even though minor skirmishes may have continued for as much as a week after the 7 April attack, the Bosnian Serbs had established effective control over the area within 48 hours.

In a bizarre episode as the fighting around Visegrad drew to a close, a Bosnian Muslim, Murad Sabanovic, seized control of the hydroelectric dam above the city and threatened to blow it up with explosives, which would have flooded Visegrad and much of the surrounding area. After negotiations by radio failed, the JNA stormed the position and discovered that Sabanovic had no explosives. Before his capture he managed to release a small amount of water that did little damage.²⁹

Foca

Foca, ethnically split at 52 percent Muslim, 45 percent Serb, straddled a north-south road running alongside the Drina river about 20km southwest of Gorazde. As elsewhere in the Drina valley, there had been trouble

in Foca for weeks before April 1992. On 1 March, during the referendum on Bosnian independence, shooting broke out at a polling station near Foca³⁰ and barricades went up on the Foca-Sarajevo road the when the referendum results were announced the next day.³¹ When word of a series of interethnic confrontations in and around Gorazde reached Foca on 23 March, the local SDS Crisis Center declared a "state of readiness" because of the "threatened security of the minority Serb population in Gorazde" and stated that if peace were not restored that same day, the party would call on the Serb population of Foca to arm itself.³²

The Foca SDA appears to have been exceptionally well organized, and the several hundred defenders in the area were probably the best armed and best organized Muslims in eastern Bosnia. (Foca appears to have been the one area where the Muslim paramilitaries managed to acquire mortars and other heavy weapons before the outbreak of the war.) Their comparatively high level of organization and armament gave the Foca Muslims something of a fighting chance. Whereas Muslim forces in Bijelina, Zvornik, and Visegrad were essentially wiped out within a day or two, those in and around Foca were able to continue resistance for almost three weeks.

Serb forces in the Foca area consisted primarily of the Foca Territorial Defense, numbering probably about 1,000 troops. Elements of Territorial Defense units from nearby towns (at the very least, the Cajnice TO) probably assisted,³³ and up to 200 local MUP forces were probably also involved. At least in the later stages of the operation, the Bosnian Serbs were also reinforced by volunteers from Seselj's Serbian Chetnik Movement.³⁴ Finally, the JNA's 37th (Uzice) Corps may have provided some support. There were persistent though never-substantiated claims that Uzice Corps troops participated in the battle, and men from units such as the 37th MP battalion may also have assisted the Bosnian Serbs.

When Bosnia formally declared its independence on 6 April, the Foca Serbs took control of the municipal

authorities—including the police—and declared themselves loyal to the SRBH and independent of the Sarajevo government.³⁵ Fighting became general by the evening of 8 April, and eight were killed and six wounded in the contest for control of the Jajce 2 hydroelectric plant near the town.³⁶ A tense calm descended and continued through most of the day on 9 April, as the Serbs again issued an ultimatum that the local Muslims could either surrender their arms or face retribution. When the deadline passed at 6 p.m. Serb forces opened intense fire and mortar shelling on the Muslim-majority neighborhoods of Donje Polje and Sukovac.³⁷

The next few days witnessed the most intense Muslim resistance in the Drina valley of April 1992, notably at the police station, one of the first contested locations. But by 11 April the Serbs had swept the Muslim defenders from the police station and most of the town, and had raised a Serb flag atop Foca's mosque.³⁸ International negotiator José Cutileiro arranged a cease-fire to take effect at midnight on 12 April, but it broke down within a day.³⁹ Most of the town was a no-man's land by day and a looter's paradise by night. Even Serb radio broadcasts admitted that the town was deserted until dusk, after which looters would take anything they could carry from the abandoned shops.⁴⁰

By 14 April the Serbs were growing frustrated with their inability to dislodge the stubborn Muslim defenders from the Donje Polje district. A fierce street battle began that morning as Serb forces battered the neighborhood with artillery fire and eventually pried the Muslim defenders out of a conspicuous skyscraper that had given Muslim snipers a dominating position overlooking the town.⁴¹ With its loss the Muslim defenses became untenable and most Muslims had fled the Foca area by 17 April.⁴²

A particularly bad example of “ethnic cleansing” followed the Serb capture of Foca. Muslim-owned houses were looted or torched, mosques were burned down, and the remnants of the Muslim population were terrorized. A Reuters correspondent managed to get into Foca shortly after the town was captured by Serb forces, and described the scene he saw. The report is indicative of both the destruction and the

chaos of the very first days of the Bosnian war, before the various sides had regularized their forces and imposed greater discipline on the troops:

Gangs of gun-toting Serbs rule Foca, turning the once quiet Bosnian town into a nightmare landscape of shattered streets and burning houses. The motley assortment of fierce-looking bearded men carry Kalashnikovs and bandoliers or have handguns tucked into their belts. Some are members of paramilitary groups from Serbia, others are wild-eyed local men, hostile toward strangers and happy to have driven out their Moslem neighbours. No one seems to be in command and ill-disciplined and bad-tempered gunmen stop and detain people at will.

The Moslems, who made up half the town's population of 10,000 people, have fled or are in jail. Many of their houses have been destroyed or are in flames. Entire streets have been destroyed, restaurants reduced to cinders and twisted metal, apartment blocks charred, the hospital hit by mortar fire. The Serbs say that despite the damage, only seven or eight of their own men and about twenty Moslems were killed in the fighting.⁴³

The fall of Foca did not end the Muslim resistance in the general area, which continued almost until the end of April. Muslim forces appear to have rallied in the Ustikolina area (site of a JNA arms warehouse) between Foca and Gorazde where they attempted to block further Serb advances, while pockets of defenders held out in a few other areas. The Serb forces moved to mop up captured areas and demand the surrender of Muslim forces in the remaining villages.⁴⁴ On 30 April the leader of the Foca area's Bosnian Serb war headquarters claimed his forces had occupied about 85 percent of the Foca opština, and added that “We certainly will not stop at these borders because the parts where the Muslims are in the majority are still a threat.”⁴⁵ When Serb forces finally crushed all Muslim resistance in and around Foca, the Muslims shifted their actions to the defensive ring around Gorazde.

Endnotes, Annex 26

- ¹ According to the 1991 census data, the entire Zvornik municipality, including suburbs, numbered 81,295 residents. Of these, 59% were Muslim, 38% were Serb, and fewer than 1% were Croat.
- ² Sarajevo Radio, 29 January 1992, FBIS Vienna AU3001101092, 301010Z Jan 92.
- ³ Belgrade Tanjug, 15 March 1992, FBIS London LD1503154992, 151549Z Mar 92.
- ⁴ Belgrade Radio, 28 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2803162092, 281620Z Mar 92.
- ⁵ It is unclear whether Simatovic himself was present, or if, as seems likely, Captain Dragan (of Croatian war fame) led the "Red Berets" in the fighting.
- ⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1004180392, 101803Z April 1992.
- ⁷ Travnik Bosnjak, Interview With Senahid Hadzic, Commander of the 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, "Crucial Test," 21 November 1995. FBIS Reston VA, 96BA0040A.
- ⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804181592, 081815Z April 1992.
- ⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804224092, 082240Z April 1992.
- ¹⁰ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. pp. 89-91.
- ¹¹ Reiff, David, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*. New York: Simon & Schuster (Touchstone Books), 1995. pp. 200-202.
- ¹² Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 2 March 1992, FBIS London LD0203222792, refers to members of a JNA mechanized-armored unit from Jastrebarsko deploying to the Zvornik area in late February-early March. This was the former 4th Armored Brigade, formerly headquartered at Jastrebarsko and redesignated the 336th Motorized.
- ¹³ Belgrade Tanjug, 10 April 1992, FBIS London LD1004224892, 102248Z April 92.
- ¹⁴ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA. p. 224.
- ¹⁵ The Ottoman vizier who commissioned the bridge was Mehmet Pasha Sokolovic, who had been born a member of a prominent Orthodox family from near Visegrad. He was taken as a youth by the Ottomans as part of the "blood tax" of Christian children, and subsequently rose by skill and luck to become the most powerful advisor to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. Despite this, Mehmet Pasha never entirely separated from his Orthodox background, allowing the Serbian Orthodox Church greater freedom within the Ottoman empire and arranging for his own brother to be appointed Patriarch of the newly-restored Serbian Orthodox Church. See Sudetic, Chuck, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1998. pp. 12-13.
- ¹⁶ Andric won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961. His book details the life of the town—and of the Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic, and Jewish communities which comprised it—through four centuries after the bridge's construction. Andric (a Croat who wrote in the Serb dialect) also refers directly to the interethnic tensions in then-Yugoslavia and the potential for violence beneath the community's surface.
- ¹⁷ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 13 January 1992, FBIS London LD1301140392, 131403Z Jan 92.
- ¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 March 92, FBIS London LD0403233392, 042333Z Mar 92.
- ¹⁹ Interview with Momcilo Mandic, Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs of Bosnia-Hercegovina, "They Want the Personnel Officer to Be Replaced!" Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje*, 6 March 1992, p. 2.
- ²⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 23 March 92, FBIS London LD2303114292, 231142Z Mar 92.
- ²¹ Belgrade RTV, 24 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2403194292, 241942Z Mar 92.
- ²² Belgrade Tanjug, 24 March 1992, FBIS London LD2403234392, 242343Z March 92.
- ²³ Belgrade Tanjug, 7 April 1992, FBIS London LD0704150692, 071506Z April 1992.
- ²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU804151492, 081514Z August 92.
- ²⁵ Zagreb Radio, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904120792, 091207Z April 1992.
- ²⁶ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904215792, 092157Z April 1992.
- ²⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 10 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1004203092, 102030Z April 1992.
- ²⁸ Belgrade RTB Television Network, 9 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0904191892, 091918Z April 1992.
- ²⁹ Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*. Penguin, 1992. pp. 165-166.
- ³⁰ Belgrade Radio, 1 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0103210892, 012108Z Mar 92.
- ³¹ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 2 March 1992, FBIS London LD0203160192, 021601Z Mar 92 (U).
- ³² Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 23 March 1992, FBIS London LD2303132592, 231325Z Mar 92.
- ³³ Miro Stanic, Commander of the Foca War Headquarters, left on 30 April 1992 to meet in Cajnice with the "Army Minister of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Hercegovina" in order to coordinate further operations in the area. (Belgrade Radio 30 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU3004161292, 301612Z April 1992) Cajnice was also the closest sizeable town with its own TO headquarters.
- ³⁴ Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 15 May 1992, FBIS London LD1505135392, 151353Z May 92.
- ³⁵ Belgrade Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804114792, 081147Z April 92.
- ³⁶ Zagreb Radio, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904101192, 091011Z April 92.
- ³⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 9 April 92, FBIS Vienna AU0904190792, 091907Z April 92.
- ³⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 11 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1104213792, 112137Z April 92.
- ³⁹ Zagreb Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS London LD1304080792, 130807Z April 92.
- ⁴⁰ Belgrade Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1304173292, 131732Z April 92.
- ⁴¹ Belgrade Radio, 14 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1404161692, 141616Z April 92.
- ⁴² Belgrade Tanjug Domestic Service, 17 April 92, FBIS London LD1704152792, 171527Z April 92.
- ⁴³ Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*. Penguin, 1992. p. 166.
- ⁴⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 28 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2804192492, 281924Z April 92.
- ⁴⁵ Belgrade Radio, 30 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU3004161292, 301612Z April 92.

Annex 27
Ethnic Cleansing as a Military Operation:
Prijedor-Sanski Most-Kljuc, May-July 1992¹

The Bosnian Serb Takeover, April 1992

As the war widened in April, the Bosnian Serb leadership in the Bosanska Krajina Autonomous Region moved to consolidate its control over key municipalities that retained Muslim and/or Croat-controlled governments and police units. The Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Kljuc municipalities bordering the Sana River valley were of particular concern because of the high concentrations of Muslims in all three—the Muslims had a plurality in Prijedor and Sanski Most, while the Serbs had a plurality in Kljuc.² In mid-April, the Serbs, coordinated by the SDS, acted. In Sanski Most, between 15 and 20 April, units from the JNA 6th Partisan Brigade, recently returned from Western Slavonia, occupied key administrative buildings and infrastructure, including the police headquarters, radio station, and power station.³ SDS officials took charge of the municipal government, the Sanski Most municipal police secretariat was absorbed into the new Bosnian Serb Ministry of Internal Affairs,⁴ and all the Croat and Muslim police were expelled from the force.⁵ A little more than a fortnight later the SDS took full power in Prijedor, with JNA troops—units of the 343rd Motorized Brigade—again providing backup in case there were problems.⁶ As in Sanski Most, key buildings and facilities were taken over, including the municipal government headquarters, radio station, and police station, and all Croat and Muslim police were sent home.⁷ In Kljuc, Serbs probably took over the government during April or possibly early May; no detailed reporting is available.⁸ JNA troops from the 6th Partisan Brigade almost certainly backed this move as well. The stage was set for the “cleansing of the terrain” to begin.

The Forces: April-May 1992

During late 1991 and early 1992, as the Serbs continued their march toward autonomy and independence, Croats and Muslims of the Sana valley—as elsewhere in Bosnia—set about organizing local self-defense groups or village guard forces against the possibility of attack by Serbs and their JNA backers.⁹ These “units,” often organized by former JNA reserve or TO officers or members of the Patriotic League, were little more than untrained bands of civilians armed with hunting weapons or the odd military rifle, often World War II era bolt-action M-48s. They could muster only a few antitank or other heavy weapons, and some they did have were defective pieces bought from Serb black marketeers. Most of the men came from the villages near Prijedor city proper. It is unlikely that any more than 500 of them were armed, though a larger number of males probably were registered as part of the force. Since they were scattered throughout the villages, their nominal commanders had little or no ability to concentrate forces against Serb or JNA troops. They clearly would be no match for regular units of the JNA or its successor, the Bosnian Serb Army.

As the Vance-Owen plan went into effect in Croatia, the JNA’s 5th (Banja Luka) Corps began withdrawing combat brigades from the frontline in Western Slavonia. During April, elements of three brigades, the 5th and 6th Partisan Brigades and the 343rd Motorized Brigade, began returning to their home garrisons in Prijedor and Sanski Most in Bosnia.⁹ The three brigades would be met by new reservists mobilized by the Second Military District on 5 April and by members of the Bosnian Serb TO folded into their ranks. The commander of the 5th Corps, Major General Momir Talic, also established a regional

¹ See Volume I, Chapter 17, “The Patriotic League: Bosnia’s Muslims Begin to Organize,” for detailed discussion of Muslim efforts to organize defense forces.

command under Lieutenant Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja, the chief of staff of the 343rd, to oversee the regional TO headquarters and the security of the Sana River valley. Zeljaja in turn coordinated all his actions with local SDS leaders.¹⁰ By the time the JNA units in Bosnia became the Bosnian Serb Army on 20 May, the forces under Zeljaja's command may have numbered as many as 8,000 troops, probably including former TO units (in the process of converting to regular JNA/VRS units) and "volunteer" personnel. These forces were backed by small amounts of armor and field artillery.

The "Cleansing" Begins, May 1992

The Bosnian Serbs' next step was to order all Muslims and Croats to turn in their weapons to the VRS and police. The Serbs, and the VRS in particular, claimed that this was necessary to eliminate the "threat" from the virtually non-existent Muslim "forces" in the area.¹¹ The VRS was particularly concerned about the possibility that the town of Kozarac and the surrounding Muslim villages might be used to block the main road between Prijedor and Banja Luka.¹² Newly commissioned in the VRS, Lieutenant Colonel Zeljaja ordered the predominantly Muslim villagers within about a 10-kilometer radius of Prijedor city to turn in all weapons or face the consequences. A day or so later, on 22 May, a VRS patrol clashed with a village guard unit near the village of Hambarine.¹³ It was the only pretext the VRS would need. Zeljaja later stated,

Hours of talks with the representatives of the SDA and HDZ did not yield any results. On May 22, in the field below Hambarine, they were shooting at our soldiers . . . and shot two of them dead . . . Within 40 minutes time we found out who had been shooting. We invited the gentlemen from the SDA and HDZ to deliver the culprits to us by 1200 the next day. They were also told (and I think that my statement was made public through our news media) that this command would not allow Prijedor to become another Tuzla [where JNA troops withdrawing from the city had been fired on] . . . After that the events developed the way they wanted them to: they blocked the road in Kozarac, and they

were again offered everything, but they would not listen . . . The attack was launched two hours after the given ultimatum expired.¹⁴

Zeljaja and the VRS, however, had been preparing to move against the villages well before the incident at Hambarine. Then Major Pero Colic (a postwar Chief of the VRS General Staff) later stated that two battalions of his 5th Partisan Brigade and one battalion of the 43rd (former 343rd) Motorized Brigade had moved into staging areas near the Muslim stronghold of Kozarac two days before the fortuitous clash at Hambarine.¹⁵

On 23 May VRS troops encircled Kozarac and the neighboring villages, shelling them in preparation for an infantry attack. Kozarac itself, however, held out for four days, inflicting several casualties on the Serb attackers, before succumbing to the VRS's superior numbers and armor. After the town's seizure, VRS troops apparently killed a large number of people, including women and children.¹⁶ The remainder were herded into camps, where men 18 to 60 years old were segregated from the women, children, and elderly. Hambarine received the same treatment as Kozarac, although it fell more quickly.¹⁷

In response, Patriotic League commander Slavko Ecimovic, a Croat, regrouped the remnants of the Muslim-Croat local defense units just south of Prijedor and planned a near-suicidal attack on key Serb installations in Prijedor town itself. What Ecimovic hoped to achieve through the attack remains unclear. One possibility is that he hoped that if he could take and hold his objectives even temporarily, a mass uprising among Prijedor Municipality's still numerous Muslim population might ensue. Another possibility is that he hoped the attack would divert the Serbs from encircling the Muslim villages long enough for the villagers to escape into the forests and hills and make their way to Bosnian Government-held territory.

In any event, in the early hours of 30 May, about 200 Patriotic League fighters (possibly more) attacked a hotel used by the Serbs as a barracks, the police station, the VRS garrison, and the municipal government headquarters. They apparently overran the hotel, kill-

ing a number of Serb soldiers, and the police station, where they seized a large number of small arms. Ecimovic was killed during the attack. Eventually, having received little or no support from SDA supporters in the town and with VRS reinforcements arriving, the surviving Muslim and Croat forces pulled out. They had held key sections of Prijedor for most of a day, embarrassing the VRS and MUP, which lost 14 soldiers killed in action and 26 wounded. The consequence of their brief success, however, was almost certainly to confirm and inflame Serb fears of a Muslim military threat to SDS/VRS control over the region.¹⁸

Sanski Most-Kljuc, May-June 1992¹⁹

Meanwhile, further south, the VRS had also acted quickly to eliminate the supposed threat from the Muslims and Croats at Sanski Most town and in the villages surrounding Kljuc. On 25 May, VRS 6th Partisan Brigade units began mortaring the predominantly Muslim Sanski Most suburb of Mahala. The next day VRS troops began rounding up the entire population, again separating the “military age” males from the rest and interning them in camps, while shipping most of the women and children to the Muslim-controlled Bihać enclave. In Kljuc Municipality two battalions of the 6th Partisan Brigade and a VRS engineer battalion, possibly supported by a battalion from the 13th Partisan Brigade, began a series of brutal actions to clear villages north and northwest of Kljuc town on about 25 May.²⁰ These operations continued into early June, and succeeded in driving out or killing a large proportion of the rural Muslim population. The VRS 6th Partisan Brigade commander, Lieutenant Colonel Branko Basara, himself admitted that units under his command “had been committing ‘genocide’ against Muslim noncombatants.”²¹

Ethnic Cleansing: A Portrait

A typical action against a village appears to have followed a standard pattern. The VRS unit engaged in a sweep operation would first surround the village, then pound it with mortar or direct fire to terrorize the population into submission and dishearten any defenders.²² Many villagers, particularly the women and

children, would scatter into nearby forests during the shelling. In most cases, troops then moved into the village itself on the following day. In some instances, this entry was only a precautionary move to check for weapons and harass the population, after which the VRS withdrew and passed on; the VRS commander might order Muslims to demonstrate their submission by hanging white sheets out of their windows. Usually, however, VRS units directly entered the village and began a house-to-house clearance of the population, randomly killing some, burning homes, and looting valuables. The “military age” males—18 to 60 years old—were separated from the women, children, and elderly men. Often these prisoners were killed, but in most cases they appear to have been shipped off to camps, primarily Omarska, Keraterm, and Manjaca. The women and children were sent separately to the camp at Trnopolje or bused to the front-lines near Bosnian Government-controlled territory in the Bihać enclave or Travnik. Finally, the homes still standing were burned, bulldozed, or dynamited.

These terse descriptions and the earlier accounts of “actions” and “operations” give little indication of the brutality and horror that usually accompanied a VRS descent on a Muslim or Croat village. The following description, based on the account of a 62-year old Muslim survivor, provides a more vivid description of these “actions.”

At about 1500 hours on 30 May 1992, a large force of ethnic Serb . . . soldiers entered the village of Prhovo, located about 7 kilometers northeast of the district center of Kljuc. The village contained 45 houses grouped along a main road and several small streets, and had more than 150 inhabitants.

The soldiers, who wore stocking masks over their faces, went from house to house searching for weapons. After finding some weapons, the soldiers proceeded to ransack the homes, break windows and doors, and pull the residents out into the streets. These men, women, and children were ordered to fold their hands behind their heads and were herded through the village to a point on the road where they were stopped and lined up.

Meanwhile, the soldiers attempted to coax back into the village those residents who had run into the woods when the soldiers arrived. The soldiers announced through megaphones that the residents would not be harmed if they returned.

The assembled villagers were then told they were free and that they need not worry anymore, and they were ordered to place white flags on their homes to indicate the village had surrendered. That night and the next, some people fled to the woods, and others slept in their cellars.

At about 1800 hours on 1 June, the soldiers returned and again used megaphones to call people in from the forest. They also went from house to house and pulled people into the streets. The male residents were beaten severely. At about 1900 hours, the soldiers began murdering the residents with automatic weapons. The residents were heard pleading for their lives and then the first shots were heard in various spots around the village. After a time the single shots were replaced by long bursts of automatic gunfire. The soldiers were heard cursing and taunting their victims as they killed them.

After the shooting stopped and the soldiers had departed, one Muslim man who had fled to the woods when the shooting started returned to the village. The murdered men, women, and children lay in the streets. Houses were burning and their roofs were collapsing down into them. Some women and children who had hidden in basements began to come out into the street crying and looking for their loved ones.

At least 53 people were dead.

Last Acts, July 1992

A few of the people who survived such attacks and escaped into the sprawling forests and mountains of the Majdanska Planina mountain and forest area between Prijedor and Sanski Most would band together in groups for survival. A number of these bands were armed, and some remnants of the self-

defense groups, including the survivors of the attack on Prijedor, began operating as guerrillas. They attacked a number of VRS patrols in the area and did what they could to help the surviving Muslim population.

The VRS appears to have viewed incidents like these as the last major threat to its control over the area and mounted a major operation around 20 July to eliminate these survivors and clear villages and towns that were as yet "uncleansed."²³ The plan called for most of the 5th Partisan Brigade, under Major Pero Colic, reinforced by at least one battalion of the 43rd Motorized Brigade, to sweep south from Prijedor toward Stara Rijeka. Near there, Colic's troops would link up with units of the 6th Partisan Brigade moving north from Sanski Most through Stari Majdan. The operation appears to have gone more or less as planned. The VRS units destroyed a number of villages, expelling the population or killing them, while dispersing most of the wandering guerrillas and survivors. It was the last major ethnic cleansing operation by the VRS in the region, after which the 1st Krajina Corps began transferring the remaining combat formations to key battlefronts further east, indicating that the VRS believed that the "threat" had been virtually eliminated and that the few remaining armed Muslims could be contained by the police.²⁴

Final Analysis

The Bosnian Serb Army undertook these ethnic cleansing operations because it believed the Muslim population posed an armed threat or could act as a "Fifth Column" during the war with the Bosnian Government. The VRS focus on seizing weapons from the population and on detaining military-age males supports this analysis. That the Bosnian Serbs' paranoia greatly exaggerated this supposed threat does not mean that the VRS did not believe it. The few armed Muslim groups that managed to form and survive the Serb assaults and make sporadic guerrilla attacks on VRS and MUP forces in the region inflamed this paranoia still further.²⁵

In addition to their nominal military objectives, the Serbs' removal of the Muslims and Croats from the area solidified their political control over the region and moved the Serb Republic that much closer to its war aim of an ethnically pure state. The SDA's control over the Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Kljuc municipalities prior to the war had greatly worried the SDS leadership.

Together with photographs of the MUP and VRS camps to which many of the civilians were sent, reporting of the VRS military actions in the region during the spring and summer of 1992 have become some of the most lasting images of the war in Bosnia.

To many, reports of soldiers singling out one ethnic group for death, torture, and expulsion, combined with startling photographs of living skeletons at Omarska, resurrected memories of the Nazi Holocaust. While it may have served the Bosnian Serbs' immediate political and military objectives, the campaign blackened the pages of Serbian history. Taken together with similar operations conducted in the Drina valley, it served to destroy any sympathy the Bosnian Serbs might have hoped to gain from the international community, while creating a thirst for revenge among the Muslim people. The Serbs may have sown the seeds for the next war at Prijedor, Sanski Most, and Kljuc.

Endnotes, Annex 27

¹ This section will look almost exclusively at the ethnic cleansing in Western Bosnia through the actions of the Bosnian Serb Army. It will not examine the detention camp system, and is not intended to cover war crimes issues. Nor will it focus on the often exaggerated actions of so-called "paramilitary" units (more accurately designated volunteers, these cutthroats served as auxiliaries to VRS regular formations). Reporting not otherwise cited in these notes is drawn from a series of refugee accounts, and has been judged to be highly accurate in most cases. Crosschecks between these accounts and Serb journals that corroborate these accounts have allowed us to develop a detailed picture of the VRS operations.

² In Prijedor Municipality, the population of 112,470 was about 44 percent Muslim, 43 percent Serb, almost six percent Croat, and eight percent "Yugoslav" and others. In Sanski Most Municipality, the population of 60,119 was about 47 percent Muslim, 42 percent Serb, some seven percent Croat, and about four percent "Yugoslav" and others. In Kljuc Municipality, the population of 37,233 was about 48 percent Muslim, precisely 49.5 percent Serb, about one percent Croat, and about three percent "Yugoslav" and others. (Numbers have been rounded). Miroslav Kralje Lexicographical Institute, *A Concise Atlas of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Zagreb: Graficki Zavod Hrvatske, 1993, p. 125.

³ The 6th Partisan Brigade, under Lieutenant Colonel Branko Basara, had fought during the Croatian war around Jasenovac in Western Slavonia as part of the 5th (Banja Luka) Corps. The brigade had originally been a Bosnian republic TO formation that the JNA had "illegally" mobilized in the fall of 1991, along with several other TO brigades in Bosanska Krajina. By spring 1992 it was in effect a JNA brigade. Major elements of the brigade redeployed to Sanski Most from Western Slavonia on 3 April.

⁴ The Bosnian Serbs also moved to take power in the adjacent Bosanska Krupa Municipality on about 20 April, when local Bosnian Serb TO troops, supported by at least a battalion of the JNA 6th Partisan Brigade, attacked Bosanska Krupa town and surrounded the town of Arapusa. The section of Bosanska Krupa town on the south side of the Una River fell to TO and JNA troops on 23 April, followed soon after by Arapusa. Belgrade Tanjug 21-22 April 1992, Belgrade Radio 23 April 1992, Zagreb HTV 21 April 1992.

⁵ Some press reports claim that the Muslim and Croat police barricaded themselves in the local municipal assembly building on 19 April before being ejected the following day. Belgrade Tanjug 20 April 1992.
⁶ The 343rd Motorized Brigade, under the command of Colonel Vladimir Arsic, had fought in Western Slavonia as part of the 5th (Banja Luka) Corps in and around Pakrac-Lipik. Although Arsic was the brigade commander, his chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja, may have supervised the JNA actions at this time. See "The Forces" section.

⁷ Some reporting suggests that the takeover in Prijedor happened concurrently with that in Sanski Most.

⁸ Sarajevo Radio indicated that the Serbs had taken control of Kljuc by at least 9 May. The Serbs reportedly guaranteed all residents "personal security." Sarajevo Radio 9 May 1992.

⁹ VRS unit information drew heavily on the following articles in the newspaper *Kozarski Vjesnik*:

"To the Pride and Honor of the Fatherland," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994.

Zivko Ecim, "Serb Seal for All Times," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 13 May 1994.

Zivko Ecim, "We Know Our Goal," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994. An interview with Radmilo Zeljaja.

Mico Glauncanin, "Without a Battle Lost," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 26 August 1994.

Mile Mutic, "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath: The Warpath of the 5th Kozara Brigade," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984.

Zivko Ecim, "A Bomb in the Heart, A Sigh in the Eye," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984. An interview with Pero Colic.

Zivko Ecim, "The Formation of the Ljubija Battalion," *Kozarski Vjesnik* June/July 1994? Issue 980.

¹⁰ *Kozarski Vjesnik* article. The role of Colonel Arsic upon the 343rd's complete redeployment to Prijedor, and where he fit in the chain of command, is unclear.

¹¹ For one of the most explicit statements of Serb views on the Muslim threat, see "Battle for Prijedor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 34-35. *Krajiski Vojnik* is the military journal of the 1st Krajina Corps. The article opens with the statement,

A special chapter in the biography of this heroic brigade [43rd Motorized] is certainly the events of April 1992, when Prijedor became the media center of the entire world. It did not suit the world's powerful leaders that the Serbs of this region would not consent to suffer the fate of their forefathers half a century ago—and that is what was intended for them. The fanatical Muslim extremists were "hurrying" their Serbian neighbors to move out of their homes, or else—you know what. A knife, just like 50 years ago. And it was all prepared, the knives were sharpened, the scenario was composed, and the executors were already known.

¹² The *Krajiski Vojnik* article claims that "... without a clear situation in the Krajina and on the slopes of Kozara, there would have been many more problems in liberating the corridor and all of Posavina, and later the Drina basin and Romanija." "Battle for Prijedor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 34-35.

¹³ The VRS and the Muslim defenders of Hambarine present differing stories of the clash. The VRS claimed that the patrol was ambushed, while the Muslims claimed that the Serbs fired first, and that the Muslims were only returning fire.

¹⁴ Zivko Ecim, "We Know Our Goal," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994. Interview with Colonel Zeljaja.

¹⁵ Mile Mutic, "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath: The Warpath of the 5th Kozara Brigade," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984. The order of battle for the operation to secure Kozarac and the villages surrounding it comprised:

1st Battalion/5th Partisan Brigade

2nd Battalion/5th Partisan Brigade

1st Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade

Reconnaissance Company "Zoran Karlica"/43rd Motorized Brigade

"Cigo" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Platoon/5th Partisan Brigade

"Zoran Miscevic" Reconnaissance Sabotage Platoon/5th Partisan Brigade

Military Police Platoon/6th Partisan Brigade

The action appears to have been under the command of Zeljaja and Major Zoran Karlica, who led the 343rd/43rd's recon company during the fighting in Croatia. It is unclear whether Major Colic was in command of his battalions during the attack.

¹⁶ The 1st Krajina Corps reported to the VRS Main Staff that 80 to 100 Muslim men were killed and 1500 captured. The VRS lost four killed and 15 wounded. A series of 1st Krajina Corps reports to the VRS Main Staff from 24 and 26 May 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latsi/index.htm> accessed June 2002, pp. 237-238. At least one refugee claimed that VRS troops had not committed any atrocities in their area, although this was not apparently true in Kozarac town itself.

¹⁷ The attack on Hambarine probably involved troops from the 5th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade, as Zeljaja had identified that unit as having lost the soldiers killed in the initial clash at Hambarine. Elements of the brigade reconnaissance company "Zoran Karlica" also may have been involved. At least one refugee claims that the atrocities that later took place in the village were definitely not perpetrated by the troops who first seized Hambarine.

¹⁸ Oddly, *Krajiski Vojnik* has one of the most detailed accounts of the attack on Prijedor. It has been cross-checked with other information.

and found to be generally accurate, although Serb estimates for Muslim manpower seem high. The following is the *Krajiski Vojnik* account:

At dawn on 30 May, the Muslims and Croats attacked Prijedor, but the creators of the attack were then president of the Prijedor SDA, Mirza Mujadzic, and hardened HDZ member Slavko Hecimovic. They were joined by Second Lieutenant Asim Muhic, Kemal Alagic, and Hadji Izet Mesic. The attack was prepared for almost a month, with intensive drilling in the forests of Kurevo and Panjik.

The attackers reached the Sana by forest paths and rural roads, and crossed the river near the old tannery. They gathered in the Old City, at Dedo Crnalic's restaurant, and split there into five groups. The attack was well-planned and coordinated from the city itself, where about 500 armed Muslims were already concealed. The attack began at early dawn, at precisely 0400 hours, on 30 May 1992.

Along with the above mentioned groups, others were led by Slavko Ecimovic, Asim Muhic, Kemo Alagic, and Hadji Izet Mesic, and which had the assignment of occupying the new hotel, the municipal building, the Public Security Station [police], and Radio Prijedor. A fifth group, headed by Edin Cajic (Little Edo), had the assignment of cutting off, near the underpass, the road by which the city would receive help from the barracks, and at the same time "encouraging" Puhrska [a predominantly Muslim suburb] to go on the offensive, since at that time there were more than 5,000 Muslims in it.

The battle was fought until 8, and then members of the 43rd Motorized Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja came to the city's aid, and in just two hours completely destroyed the attackers and drove them into flight with great losses. Fleeing headlong along the same route across the Sana River . . . they gathered again in the forests of Panjik and Kurevo.

"Battle for Prijedor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 34-35.

¹⁹ This section is based primarily on refugee accounts. In addition, issues of the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade's (the later designator for 6th Partisan Brigade) wartime newspaper, *Ratni Bilten* (War Bulletin) have clearly stated the 6th's involvement in the "liberation" of Sanski Most and Kljuc. In addition, the ICTY's Milosevic pre-trial brief on Bosnia and Croatia includes a section on Sanski Most drawn heavily from VRS 1st Krajina Corps documents, including war diaries and reports from the 6th Sanski Brigade. See International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, pp. 240-245.

²⁰ The operations in the Kljuc area involved the 1st and 2nd Battalions/6th Partisan Brigade, plus an engineer [pioneer] battalion of what later became the 2nd Engineer Regiment/2nd Krajina Corps. An article from the engineers' unit journal states,

We all remember the day some soldiers were killed while passing through Banja Luka at Pudin Han, but few know that part of

the Pioneer Battalion was already stationed in Kopjenica in the afternoon hours, that it began infantry actions toward Velagici, and that the first mortar shells, recoilless gun shells, and M-84 machine gun bullets came from the barrels of the Pioneer Battalion . . . Many townspeople of Kljuc will remember the entry of the Stojadina [a car] into Kljuc with the commander and seven heroes on it after the cleansing of Velagici and Pudin Han.

Predrag Malic, "Pioneer Battalion of Laniste—Future Overflow Chamber of the Klenovac-Laniste Pipeline," *Mladi Inzinjerac* February 1993, p. 4.

²¹ Command of the 6th Partisan Brigade Order establishing discipline in the units of the brigade during combat operations, 3 June 1992 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002,

<www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 243.

²² Many of the initial attacks were preceded by a demand that the village surrender any weapons it had. This did not preclude the VRS from shelling the village anyway.

²³ It is unclear who was in overall command of the operation. Lieutenant Colonel Zeljaja moved to the Posavina corridor on 26 June, taking command of the newly formed Tactical Group 4, which comprised the headquarters and major combat elements of the 43rd Motorized Brigade. Zeljaja served as commander of Tactical Group and 43rd Motorized Brigade for much of the war. He later took command of the "Prijedor" Operational Group 10, formed in late summer 1995 to control 1st Krajina Corps troops defending Western Bosnia against the joint Croat-Muslim offensive that ended the war.

²⁴ *Krajiski Vojnik* claimed that the Serbs did not completely eliminate the threat until November 1993. This almost certainly is a reference to the capture by MUP Special Police troops of a small group of Muslim men who were hiding in the forests near Sanski Most. See AP Photos by Radivoje Pavicic from 11 November 1993, which depict a series of males clothed in civilian dress surrounded by Special Police.

²⁵ Many Western journalists have viewed the VRS soldiers and Serbian volunteer troops involved in the massacres and cleansing operations as cowards who were willing to kill innocent men, women, and children, but were unwilling to stand up and fight armed soldiers in battle. The battle records of the three brigades most heavily involved in the ethnic cleansing operations—the 5th Partisan (later 5th Kozara Light), 6th Partisan (later 6th Sanski Infantry), and 43rd Motorized—do not bear out the latter charge. The VRS used all three, although primarily the 43rd and 6th, as fire brigades throughout the war, shifting them from sector to sector. In addition, all three appear to have performed adequately during the Croatian War. If the soldiers in these units had a reputation for ineffectiveness in battle, it is unlikely that the 1st Krajina Corps would have relied so heavily on them throughout the conflict.

Annex 28
The Battle for the Corridor: Operations in the Posavina, March 1992 to January 1993

**Opening Clashes,
24 February to 1 April 1992¹**

The clashes in the Bosanski Brod area were the spark for the fighting that would consume Posavina during 1992.² The chain of events began on 24 February, when the local SDS in Bosanski Brod declared the formation of a Serb municipality supplanting the old one. Five days later the Serbs put up barricades in the town,³ and on 3 March the Serb TO engaged local Croat and Muslim police and armed civilian opponents of the new order. The Croats and Muslims quickly banded together and formed a joint headquarters. One of the key Muslim organizers was a journalist named Armin Pohara. He later stated that,

The first day of the attack on Brod, about 200 shells fell on the city. The Croats already had a crisis command center in the HDZ, and the Muslims formed their own within the Muslim group. I led the Muslims and the Croats were headed by Ivan Brizic . . . We established a joint crisis command center in which they elected him chairman and me deputy.⁴

Pohara told Silber and Little that he went to Bosanski Brod's twin city, Slavonski Brod, in Croatia, to ask for more weapons from the HV.⁵ Neither side was able to take over the city, and the fighting died down for a while before breaking out more fiercely about ten days later. The JNA deployed most of the 327th Motorized Brigade from nearby Derventa to the area, nominally to help keep the peace; as the fighting spread, however, the JNA began focusing on the Croat-led forces. By late March it was dealing with armed clashes in Derventa itself. Then, toward the

¹ For a description of the military geography of the Posavina, see Appendix 1.

beginning of April, the apparent deployment of regular Croatian Army troops into the Bosanski Brod area signaled a change that was to shift the balance to the Croats and the Muslims.

Croats Advance in the Center, Serbs Hold the Flanks, 1 April to 1 June 1992

In early April Zagreb moved its forces in to consolidate the Croat hold over Bosanski Brod town and expand their control to the rest of the municipality, as well as Derventa. Reinforcing the two newly organized HVO brigades with at least one HV brigade, the Croatians mounted a total force numbering some 4,000 to 5,000 troops.⁶ They faced JNA and Serb TO units, comprising 3,000 personnel in the understrength JNA 327th Motorized Brigade, an armored battalion, and two to three battalion-sized TO brigades. On 4-5 April, HV/HVO forces broke out of their bridgehead, apparently finding a weak point in the JNA/TO line southwest of Brod, and pushing about 10 kilometers toward Derventa.⁷ Heavy fighting continued over the next two weeks as Croat forces continued to edge closer to Derventa, while HVO units around the town itself fought the Serbs for control. By 22 April, HV/HVO forces occupied most of Derventa, while JNA and Serb forces hung on at the outskirts of town to the southwest.

By the beginning of May, the HV appeared ready to inject additional troops into the battle to expand Croat territorial holdings and sever the east-west road at the town of Modrica.⁸ Although they had lost Derventa, JNA and Serb TO units still held positions some five kilometers southeast of Brod itself, while controlling the key town of Modrica and positions near Odzak. To carry out the attack, the HV sent most of the elite 3rd Guards Brigade to Bosanski Brod, while a composite tactical group, including a battalion from 2nd

Guards Brigade, was sent to positions near Odzak—a total of about 2,000 to 3,000 additional troops. Two HVO brigades—possibly another 3,000 to 4,000 troops—were also organized near the town of Odzak.⁹ By 13 May the joint HV/HVO force had defeated JNA and TO forces near Bosanski Brod, rolling some units back 10 to 15 kilometers into a pocket near the village of Podnovlje on the Bosna River, while others fell back to positions just south of Derventa. HVO and TO troops then seized the key town of Kotor-sko/Johovac on the main Doboj-Derventa road, completely cutting off the pocket at Podnovlje and severing the corridor. Croat troops also captured Modrica, cutting the corridor again at a major road junction and linking up with the 107th HVO Brigade at Gradacac.

Despite these HV/HVO (and TO) gains, JNA and Serb forces had not been routed and were able to consolidate the gains they had made at key road junctions—Brcko, Bosanski Samac-Pelagicevo, and Doboj. A force combining Arkan's SDG "Tigers," Serb TO, volunteer, and MUP troops—apparently with little or no JNA assistance—had captured the important Sava river port of Brcko during early May. Poor organization and a lack of discipline, however, allowed the troops to break ranks and plunder the town, and the Serbs were unable to push beyond the Brcko suburbs, leaving the corridor only about three kilometers wide.¹⁰ Earlier, on 17 April, the JNA Tactical Group-17 and TO units had seized the town of Bosanski Samac on the Sava River and the key roads between Modrica, Pelagicevo, and Brcko.¹¹ (The JNA and TO had also occupied Modrica on 11 April, but as discussed above, Croat forces retook the town on 13 May.) A little later, on 3 May, they took control of the important road and rail junction of Doboj, although TO and HVO troops remained only two kilometers to the south and west of town. The hold on Doboj, along with the positions the JNA had maintained just outside Derventa, were to become vital to the VRS's ability to move reinforcements into striking position for a major counteroffensive to reopen the corridor.

VRS Preliminary Offensive Operations at Doboj-Derventa, 1 June to 24 June 1992¹²

The only VRS force that could potentially reopen the corridor was the 1st Krajina Corps—the former JNA 5th (Banja Luka) Corps—but most of its best units were still tied down in Western Slavonia or reorganizing after withdrawing from the region. In order to better understand the situation and prepare plans for a counterstrike, Major General Momir Talic, commander of the 1st Krajina Corps, sent a planning group, headed by his chief of staff, Colonel Bosko Kelecevic, to the Derventa-Doboj area at the beginning of June. Kelecevic's mission was to coordinate with VRS commanders on the ground, determine where the critical sectors were, and prepare for the redeployment of 1st Krajina Corps units from Western Slavonia and Banja Luka.

Meanwhile, VRS commanders in Doboj organized the remnants of JNA 17th (Tuzla) Corps units in the Doboj-Derventa area into a new operational group, "Operational Group Doboj," under the command of Colonel Radivoje Simic. In addition to holding its current positions near Derventa and Doboj, Simic's forces hoped to break through to the VRS-held pocket clustered around the village of Podnovlje and the Trebava region, some 10 to 20 kilometers northeast of Doboj. As a result, on 8-9 June, OG "Doboj" units, led by the 1st Vucjak Light Infantry Brigade, attacked north from the Doboj area toward the key Croat-held road junction of Kotorsko-Johovac, through which passed the main road to Derventa and Podnovlje. Over three to four days of heavy fighting VRS troops managed to push into the villages, but were unable to take full control of them.

By 14 June, the 1st Krajina Corps had taken over command of the operation, and had began moving elements of several brigades—reinforced by a brigade of Krajina Serb Special Police units—into the area, forming two tactical groups to continue the attack.¹³

The corps, however, switched the main effort to the left. Tactical Group 1, under Colonel Novica Simic, with 3,000 to 4,000 troops in the main attack sector, was to push along the main road toward Derventa, recovering this key artery.¹⁴ The advance, if successful, would also place VRS troops in better jumping-off positions for an attempt to recapture Derventa, while flanking the defenses at Kotorsko. Covering TG-1's right flank along the left bank of the Bosna River, RSK Special Police (and ex-JNA) Colonel Mile Novakovic's Tactical Group 2, with some 3,000 to 4,000 troops, was to make a direct assault on the Croat line at Kotorsko in order to link up with the forces cut off in Podnoblje.¹⁵ Fighter-bombers and light attack helicopters from the 92nd Mixed Aviation Brigade were to provide air support. HV/HVO forces in the main sectors probably numbered 2,500 to 3,500 troops from the HV 3rd Guards Brigade, and the HVO 101st Bosanski Brod Brigade, and roughly a battalion of Muslim TO troops.¹⁶

TG-1 forces, led by elements of 1st Armored and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades, were able to break Croat lines west of Kotorsko-Johovac. On 18 June elements of TG-1's 2nd Armored Brigade took the key hill of Cer, some five kilometers to the northwest, while 16th Motorized units advanced parallel to the 2nd Armored on the important Highway 17 to Derventa. By 20 June, however, the advancing TG-1 had stalled along the Plehan-Tomasevo Brdo line, some seven kilometers southeast of Derventa, after having pushed forward another two kilometers. Meanwhile, elements of TG-1 and TG-2 advanced through Kotorsko, linking up with Podnoblje and eliminating the remaining Croat-Muslim forces on both sides of the Bosna River.

Operation "Corridor 92," 24 June to 6 October 1992

Forming the Corridor, 24 to 28 June 1992. At this interlude, General Talic decided to launch the 1st Krajina Corps's main effort—Operation "Corridor 92"—to reopen the supply route to the rest of the RS and the FRY. (Civilian and military supply shortages in the western RS and the RSK, particularly medical supplies, apparently had become critical.) The preliminary operations had provided the corps with a

sufficiently large base of operations to ensure that its spearheads would not be cut off. On 21 June the corps began redeploying TG-1 and TG-2 into their attack sectors while shifting the corps forward command post to Duga Njiva hill in Trebava. TG-1 turned over its positions southeast of Derventa to the newly formed Tactical Group 3, moving south through Kotorsko and then east through the previously cut-off Trebava area to positions near the village of Donji Skugric, some seven kilometers southeast of Modrica. It still numbered about 4,000 to 5,000 troops, although with a slightly different composition.¹⁷ It was assigned the primary mission of opening the corridor and seizing Modrica; General Talic gave Colonel Simic four days to achieve the objective. TG-2, after absorbing the forces that had been cut off in Podnoblje, shifted its assault units along the left (or northern) bank of the Bosna River to positions some 12 kilometers southwest of Odzak. It now had some 5,000 troops, although at least 1,000 of these were tied down guarding its flanks and would not attack.¹⁸ Its mission was to attack toward Odzak, along TG-1's left flank, and attempt to seize the town. Elements of the VRS 2nd Posavina Light Infantry Brigade/East Bosnian Corps were deployed on the opposite side of the corridor, ready to link up with TG-1. Topping off the preparations, while redeploying its combat forces the 1st Krajina Corps implemented a deception plan employing civilian radio transmissions and intentionally unencrypted communications traffic to convince the Croats that the VRS intended to make its main advance toward Tuzla.¹⁹

HV/HVO forces at Odzak-Modrica-Gradacac numbered about 7,000 to 8,000 troops, although some of these forces also faced VRS East Bosnian Corps troops to the east. In the main sector, south of Modrica, the HVO 105th Modrica Brigade and elements of the HVO 107th Gradacac Brigade faced Tactical Group 1 and the 2nd Posavina Brigade troops. They held the five-kilometer-wide gap between the VRS 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps that divided the RS. The gap marked a distinct change in the terrain, which shift abruptly from the Trebava hills and mountains to open plains. On the left or northern bank of the Bosna, west of Odzak, an HV tactical group, including the elite 3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, held strong defensive positions in more difficult terrain, including the key Debar Kula narrows

which guarded the main road into Odzak. The HVO 102nd Odzak Brigade may have reinforced these HV troops, but most of the brigade probably held the front northeast of Odzak, facing VRS 2nd Posavina Brigade forces.

The VRS artillery preparation, utilizing field artillery, mortars, and direct fire from tank and antitank guns, began at 0630 on 24 June, targeting enemy forward defensive positions.²⁰ A half hour later, the TG-1 and 2 launched their attack. The 1st Krajina Corps war diary claims that the first day of the offensive was “characterized by a very low attack tempo by all units due to poor knowledge of the terrain and the positions of enemy forces.”²¹ The rapid redeployment of the tactical groups had forced the VRS units to advance without having properly reconnoitered enemy defenses or examined the ground over which they were to attack. Nevertheless, TG-1, led by the 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade (supported by a tank company from 1st Armored Brigade), was able to break into HVO defenses between Gradacac and Modrica, advancing about two to three kilometers to seize the village of Gornji Kladari and approach Zivkovo Polje. The HVO 107th Brigade, however, had set up a fire pocket at Zivkovo Polje and allowed the 3rd Battalion to drive right into it, then hit the unit from three sides. VRS artillery was able to lay down covering fire and smoke that permitted the battalion to pull back to its start line after two hours of fighting. TG-1’s planners, probably in their haste to prepare the attack, had failed to provide adequate protection on the right flank, giving the HVO the opportunity to set up the ambush. Meanwhile, on the left flank along the Bosna River, more TG-1 units were able to penetrate a kilometer toward Modrica, reaching the village of Kuznjaca, where a minefield halted the attack. Units of the 2nd Posavina Brigade remained about two and a half kilometers from TG-1’s forces.

To the north, the second prong of the offensive, Tactical Group 2 quickly ran into stiff resistance. VRS units here faced troops from the HV 2nd Guards Brigade, who had prepared excellent defensive positions backed by strong artillery fire. TG-2 was unable to gain any ground, but reinforced its forward line.

During the night of 24-25 June the HVO attempted a counterattack against TG-1, while shelling VRS supply roads. The counterattack withered under superior VRS firepower, while Colonel Simic used the time to pull out the ambushed 3rd Battalion/16th Motorized and move it to cover the right flank. He replaced it as TG-1’s spearhead with the elite 1st Military Police Battalion and the 1st Battalion/1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade. When the attack was renewed at daylight they retook Gornji Kladari, which the 16th had taken and lost the previous day, while the units on the left flank pushed another kilometer toward Modrica to reach the new HVO defense line at Tarevci and Donji Rijecani.

Across the Bosna, Colonel Novakovic’s Tactical Group 2 was able to punch through the initial HV defense line, advancing up to two kilometers. The HV, however, was able reestablish their defenses and halt the VRS attack with strong artillery fire. As night fell, TG-2 consolidated its gains and reinforced its assault units. Meanwhile, southeast of Derventa, Colonel Slavko Lisica’s new Tactical Group 3 probed HV/HVO defenses in preparation for a renewed attack against the Plehan-Tomasevo Brdo line.²²

On 26 June, Tactical Group 1 finally broke through the remaining HVO units, penetrating six kilometers into their defenses and linking up with the 2nd Posavina Brigade troops in the village of Kornice. Units were also able to expand the breach on the flanks, pushing to within two kilometers of Modrica from the south and moving toward Gradacac. The “Little Corridor” (Mali Koridor) was now as wide as four kilometers, although it narrowed to two kilometers near Modrica.

Tactical Group 1’s victory was not matched by Tactical Group 2, whose attack stalled against strong HV resistance, particularly from intense artillery fire. The corps war diary states that,

The defense had the advantage because of the height of its positions, the narrows at Dobor Kula around which it was not possible to pass,

and very well fortified defense sectors, with a mass blockade by a minefield. By using the visibility of the terrain skillfully, the enemy prevented our forces from breaking into an assault position and from moving tanks closer for direct fire.²³

Tactical Group 3 further to the west experienced similar difficulties, making little gain around Plehan in the face of strong artillery and multiple rocket launcher fire.

The next day, Colonel Simic shifted his main force, together with 2nd Posavina Brigade, toward the north against Modrica, still seeking to widen the corridor. VRS forces were able to seize a chunk of the remaining HVO bridgehead south of the Bosna, leaving the Croats stuck in a vulnerable 3km by 3km salient centered on Modrica, with their backs to the Bosna. To the north, TG-2 was again unable to find a weakness in the Croat defenses and did not advance.

Modrica finally fell on 28 June—St. Vitus Day—when troops from Tactical Group 1, led by the 2nd Armored Battalion/1st Armored Brigade, occupied the town against little resistance.²⁴ The HVO 105th Modrica Brigade apparently withdrew following the VRS attack the previous day, which had left it in an untenable position. The VRS had achieved its primary objective according to schedule, and convoys to the western RS and the RSK could now pass through the captured area. But their passage was limited to the hours of darkness because HV/HVO defenses on the north side of the Bosna were able to interdict the road with artillery fire. The elimination of these forces was 1st Krajina Corps's next objective.

On to the Sava: The Capture of Odzak, Derventa, and the Drive to Brod, July 1992. General Talic and his staff began preparing for the next advance as Modrica fell, while the tactical groups began incorporating new units recently withdrawn from Western Slavonia.²⁵ The main effort would come in Tactical Group 2's sector as it tried again to seize the strong HV defensive positions west of Odzak and allow VRS forces to advance on the Sava at Novi Grad. Tactical Group 1 was to assist in the attack on TG-2's right flank.²⁶ To the west, Tactical Group 3 and the 16th Krajina

Motorized Brigade were to make a two-pronged advance toward Bosanski Brod, with TG-3 directed to seize Derventa in a preliminary operation. The 16th Motorized was also to cover TG-2's left flank toward the Sava.

HV/HVO forces in both sectors appear to have consisted of more or less the same formations that had faced the late June attacks. Against TG-1 and 2 the Croats fielded at least one HV tactical group, possibly reinforced with an additional battalion or two, plus most of two HVO brigades, the 102nd Odzak and the remnants of the 105th Modrica—possibly totaling 5,000 to 6,000 troops. Opposite TG-3 and 16th Motorized Brigade, the HV/HVO deployed the 3rd Guards Brigade, the 108th Slavonski Brod Brigade, probably an additional HV tactical group (in the sector southeast of Bosanski Brod), and two HVO brigades, the 101st Bosanski Brod and 103rd Derventa, probably with 9,000 to 10,000 men. Although limited information on Croat planning is available, it was almost certainly focused on staying on the defensive, holding key terrain on the approaches to the main towns and the Sava River, and counterattacking when possible to restore lost positions.

Tactical Group 2 launched its attack on 5 July, making slow progress against HV forces along the Jakes-Dobor Kula line. The VRS-RSK troops finally stormed the defenses on 7 July. TG-1, which had been providing enfilading fire support to TG-2, quickly shifted an armored battalion from 1st Armored Brigade the next day across the Bosna River and through the Dobor Kula pass to locations south of Odzak. With a bridgehead directly south of Odzak now secure, TG-1 moved more units across the river, placing its forces in position to roll up the HV flank while TG-2 continued its frontal assault. But the HV/HVO forces doggedly continued to defend their positions and the Serb troops had to edge their way forward, slowly gaining control of the key heights in TG-2's sector and the approaches to Odzak in TG-1's area. On 12-13 July TG-1 forces broke into Odzak and thrust through the HV/HVO forces, while to the northwest troops from TG-2 seized the last HV/HVO line. With the

Croat defenses broken, both tactical groups were now able to push rapidly toward the Sava, overcoming broken remnants of withdrawing HV/HVO units to reach the river on 15 July.²⁷

On the Derventa-Bosanski Brod front, while preparations for the new attack were underway, Tactical Group 3 had continued its struggles to seize the vital Plehan-Tomosevo Brdo line so that it could get its forces in position to strike at Derventa.²⁸ By 1 July, after heavy fighting lasting several days, shock troops drawn from several formations were finally able to seize the Plehan position, advancing over five kilometers to positions some three kilometers south of town.²⁹ Two days later, VRS troops advanced into Derventa.

With Tactical Group 3 now in position, the main advance toward Bosanski Brod could begin. Colonel Milan Celeketic's veteran 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, the bulk of which had recently arrived from Western Slavonia, was to make the primary effort.³⁰ The brigade was to attack from the Podnovlje area, on TG-3's right flank and drive in the Croatian left flank directly toward Bosanski Brod and the Sava River. TG-3 would launch supporting attacks in the same direction. The drive began on 5 July against stiff resistance from HV troops. After more than a week of fighting, attackers from the 16th finally broke the Croat defenses and drove toward the Sava River and Brod, carrying along TG-3 forces as the Croat line crumbled. By 15 July elements of the 16th had reached the Sava, and by 17 July they had reached the village of Vinska on the Obodni Canal, some 10 kilometers southeast of Bosanski Brod.

As a result of this attack VRS forces had smashed the HV/HVO's central position in the Posavina. The 1st Krajina Corps had gained control of about 30 kilometers of the winding right bank of the Sava from Vinska to Bosanski Samac. Croat forces were now isolated in two widely separated bridgeheads around Bosanski Brod and Orasje and posed only a minimal threat to the strategic corridor anywhere west of the Brcko-Orasje line.

The Battle for Bosanski Brod, July to October 1992. Around Bosanski Brod itself Croat forces still held strong defenses, however, and they would get

stronger. To bolster the enclave in the aftermath of the recent defeat, Zagreb began pumping more troops into the Bosanski Brod area, possibly up to five tactical groups by early September, although some of units identified probably alternated with each other. Overall, the HV/HVO force probably numbered up to 15,000 troops by the beginning of September.³¹ They also received a new commander, General Petar Stipetic, the deputy chief of the HV Main Staff and a veteran JNA staff officer.³²

The VRS forces trying to take the town had to contend not only with these Croat strengths but also with their own weaknesses. Most of the units in Tactical Group 3 had been engaged in ongoing combat operations for over a month and a half, and, with few VRS reserves available, they were likely to continue to remain in the line. TG-3 was further handicapped by the fact that most of its units were newly raised light infantry brigades with few experienced junior officers and NCOs, which made them susceptible to bouts of indiscipline and prone to tactical deficiencies in battle. All told, as of early September they numbered at least 12,000 and as many as 15,000 troops, drawn from as many as 11 different brigades.³³

The Croat bridgehead at Bosanski Brod was oddly shaped. HV/HVO forces on the right flank had greater depth to their positions, holding a strong bastion around Bijelo Brdo-Kostres-Zboriste, over 15 to 20 kilometers from Bosanski Brod and only three kilometers north of Serb-held Derventa. On the left flank, due to the VRS advance in mid-July, the Croat perimeter in some places sat only 10 kilometers from the town itself.

Despite the VRS advantage on its right flank (the HV left), most of its summer campaigning consisted of a series of relatively fruitless attacks on the VRS left around Bijelo Brdo, which the HV/HVO had held since April. On 27-28 August VRS troops from the 11th Dubica Infantry and 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade finally were able to storm this position, but the Croat defenders were able to pull back in good order to secondary defensive positions some four kilometers north at Korace. VRS attacks continuing into mid-September gained little ground.

By the end of September, Colonel Lisica appears to have wearied of the piecemeal attacks that had gained so little and was ready to launch a major offensive against the enclave. On 27 September the VRS sent four air strikes against Croat positions around Korace and Bosanski Brod and kicked off the ground attack, pushing toward Korace and Kostres. The advance, led by troops from the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade and the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, was unsuccessful, running into a new HV brigade that General Stipetic had moved to this sector for a planned attack toward Derventa.³⁴ Frustrated by the unexpected rebuff in the Korace sector, Lisica unexpectedly shifted the focus of his attack to the northeast, near Kolibe, where on 4-5 October Major Miko Skoric's 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, together with major elements of the 2nd Armored and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades, broke through Croat lines and pushed quickly toward Brod. VRS troops occupied the town on 6 October and HV engineers blew the bridge over the Sava between Slavonski and Bosanski Brod. The battle for Bosanski Brod was over.

Questions about Bosanski Brod's rapid fall after such a prolonged defense have been fought over in the press since Lisica's men marched into the town, and its capture has become yet another Balkan conspiracy legend.³⁵ Many have argued that Croatian President Tudjman agreed to withdraw HV forces from the enclave in exchange for Belgrade's withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the Croatian Prevlaka peninsula, south of Dubrovnik. General Stipetic recently stated that he still did not know why Bosanski Brod fell, but maintained that it could not have been because the VRS was stronger.³⁶ Suspiciously, the public agreement on Prevlaka came at the end of September, concurrently with the final VRS attack. Although a number of senior Croatians, notably former Tudjman aide Josip Manolic, have hinted or claimed this was the case, there is no direct evidence to indicate this is true.³⁷ Stipetic also claimed that Bosnian Croat President Mate Boban had struck a deal with Bosnian Serb President Karadzic, but neither is there any information to confirm that.

The more likely explanation is simply that the VRS troops, after months of attacking the Croat positions, finally mastered them and found themselves ready to

defeat the Croats in battle just as Zagreb was deciding on a withdrawal, possibly because of a deal or possibly because Tudjman and the HV believed the enclave was becoming untenable.³⁸ Stipetic, however, claims he never issued an order for the withdrawal of the units near Bosanski Brod town before they collapsed under the VRS attack. An examination of the final battle confirms that Croat resistance remained strong, but that the strike in the northeastern sector after the repeated VRS attacks in the southwest surprised the HV, rupturing the Croat front. Regardless of Stipetic's objection, given the short distance to Bosanski Brod from there—less than seven kilometers—it is hardly surprising that the town then quickly fell, irrespective of whether its defenders had been pulled back or pushed back. Although the HV/HVO seem to have been able to withdraw most of their forces before Serb troops took the town, a number of Croat units were cut off at Korace and had to escape across the Sava on rafts and other craft.³⁹ It seems unlikely that that they would have had to resort to such means if they were expecting a Serb takeover.

Finally, Bosanski Brod, while important to the Serb consolidation of their control over the corridor, was less strategically vital to their opponents than many people have claimed it to be. Croat forces in the pocket, while a potential threat to the main supply route through Derventa, were not likely to be able to close the 35-kilometer gap between the Bosanski Brod front and Doboj. The 1st Krajina Corps opened the corridor on 28 June, before the VRS recaptured Derventa. If the VRS had not captured Brod, it could still have contained the pocket. The biggest threat to Serb control over the corridor came not at Bosanski Brod, but further east at Brcko-Orasje. In fact, Croat attacks on the corridor, clearly with HV assistance or involvement, increased after Bosanski Brod's fall. Bosnian Croat troops—again apparently with HV support—also were able to repel a VRS offensive against Orasje in November (see below). If Belgrade and the Bosnian Serbs negotiated a deal to secure the corridor in exchange for Prevlaka, they made a bad bargain, since HV/HVO forces continued to hold Orasje for the rest of the war.

Battles for Gradacac, July 1992 to January 1993. While battles continued to the north, VRS Tactical Group 4 and the HVO 107th Gradacac were fighting their own private war over the key road junction of Gradacac, some 12 kilometers southeast of Modrica. Fighting surged almost continuously for six months over the same set of villages and roads around the town. At first, during July, Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja and TG-4 were assigned to guard the rear of the main VRS attack toward the Sava and Bosanski Brod.⁴⁰ But at the same time Zeljaja was supposed to put pressure on Ivan Mijavac's mixed Croat-Muslim 107th Brigade—some 2,500 to 3,500 men—holding Gradacac. Zeljaja had no more than 2,000 men for his mixed missions. They carried off their primary task with ease but made only minor gains around Gradacac against stiff resistance.

In early August Lieutenant Colonel Pero Colic brought his 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade's 1,000 troops into Gradacac and assumed command over TG-4.⁴¹ Colic's troops almost immediately attacked the HVO-held salient from the northeast, penetrating one or two kilometers into HVO defenses. A seesaw struggle ensued as Croat, Muslim, and Serb troops battled during the rest of August and September over the villages along these approaches to the town. The HVO troops staunchly defended their positions, even regaining some ground taken by the neighboring VRS 2nd Posavina Brigade in earlier fighting.

Not until late October was the recently arrived 6th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade able to push the 107th Brigade back several kilometers directly north of town and penetrate the town's industrial zone.⁴² The battle continued into November and December, with gains measured in meters.⁴³ On 7 December HVO troops pushed the 5th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade out of two villages to the northwest. (The 43rd's 4th Battalion retook the villages in early January.) Later in the month, VRS units struck back again in the industrial zone, inching their way forward. The year ended with both sides locked in position, but the 107th Brigade still holding Gradacac.

Battling for the Eastern Corridor: Brcko-Orasje, July 1992-January 1993

As the VRS wound down its efforts to seize the western half of the corridor in October, it shifted its attention to the remaining Croat enclave of Orasje at the eastern end of Posavina, as well as the narrow gap between HVO-held frontlines southwest of Brcko and the Sava River. From July through September, the VRS East Bosnian Corps, initially under Colonel Dragutin Ilic, had made a number of less-than-successful attempts to widen the corridor at Brcko. On 12-13 September HVO and TO troops actually managed to temporarily sever the corridor northwest of Brcko on the road to Orasje, and cut it again on 10-12 October. On 20 October, HV/HVO troops captured the village of Vidovice, just southeast of Orasje, bringing more pressure on the corridor and securing the Orasje enclave.

Goaded by this situation, the VRS began preparing an operation to capture Orasje, no doubt spurred on when the HVO and Bosnian Army 2nd Corps troops again cut the VRS supply line on 9 November at Gorice, some seven kilometers northwest of Brcko. Troops from the 2nd Posavina Brigade managed to reopen the route, but only the elimination of Orasje would put an end to the troublesome Croat-Muslim actions.

To beef up the planned attack the 1st Krajina Corps moved the entire 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, plus an armored battalion from 1st Armored Brigade—over 3,000 troops—to positions some 10 kilometers south of Orasje, reinforcing 2nd Posavina and 2nd Krajina Infantry Brigade units opposite the enclave. The total force likely numbered 6,000 to 7,000 men. The VRS faced two relatively high-strength HVO brigades, the 104th Samac and 106th Orasje, the remnants of the four HVO brigades defeated in the west, plus perhaps two HV tactical groups, probably about 10,000 total personnel.

The VRS offensive began in mid-November, initially penetrating HV/HVO defenses south of Vidovice and at Covic Polje. Troops from the 2nd Battalion/16th Motorized attempted to flank Vidovice, but bogged down in heavy fighting and terrible weather. One Bosnian Serb soldier in the 2nd Battalion later recalled:

... we had been constantly followed by bad weather . . . In the morning heavy frosts, rain during the day, the clouds would break up, and again frost. Many of the soldiers were freezing, they vomited blood, but we didn't retreat from a single foot until the command was given to withdraw. I don't know who gave this command or why; if there had only been a little better organization and command, Orasje would have been liberated too.⁴⁴

Poor weather, insufficient VRS organization or planning, and a staunch Croat defense enabled the HV/HVO units to stop the attack cold and push the 16th Motorized back.⁴⁵

Rather than re-start the failed Orasje attack, the VRS shifted its focus to the threat from the south side of the corridor. The 16th Motorized was attached to the East Bosnian Corps, now under Colonel Novica Simic, and turned around to face positions just west of Brcko.⁴⁶ On 14 December, the 16th Motorized launched its two-pronged assault, supported by troops from the 1st Posavina Infantry Brigade and 3rd Semberija Light Infantry Brigade from the East Bosnian Corps.⁴⁷ On the right, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, led by recon units and supported by armor, pushed toward the villages of Vuksic and Ulice. On the left, the 3rd Battalion, led by elite military police troops and backed by an armored battalion, headed toward Donji Rahic. The Krajina troops penetrated two kilometers into the defenses held by the Bosnian Army's 21st Srebrenik Brigade and the HVO's 108th Brcko Brigade on a six-kilometer front. Two weeks later, on 27 December, the 16th repeated its performance, pushing the ARBiH/HVO defenders back another kilometer on the same front. The line in the Brcko area was to remain stable until mid-1993.⁴⁸

Despite these year-end successes, the VRS position in the eastern end of the corridor remained vulnerable. At Brcko itself, the most important route in the entire Republika Srpska remained only three kilometers wide. The new positions taken in December made the supply line only marginally more secure, extending it some five to ten kilometers further west—the sector where Bosnian Army and HVO units had cut the corridor during the fall. The route was still vulnerable from both the north and south, since the VRS had failed to eliminate the Orasje pocket.

Secondary Operations in Northern Bosnia, June to October 1992

Not far from the 1992 Posavina battles, VRS, TO/ARBiH, and HVO forces clashed in several secondary sectors of northern Bosnia. These battles centered around two adjacent regions: the periphery of the Maglaj-Tesanj salient, including the towns of Dobojski and Teslic, and on the frontline surrounding the Serb-held Ozren Mountains.

The Serb-held town of Dobojski, on the north side of the Muslim-Croat Maglaj-Tesanj salient, was the most strategically significant position of these secondary sectors. The town was a key road and rail junction for the VRS 1st Krajina Corps forces fighting to create the corridor to the north and provided the only gateway to the Ozren Mountains. Following the JNA/Serb TO capture of the town on 3 May, JNA/TO and later VRS troops from Operational Group "Dobojski" had gradually pushed elements of the HVO 110th Usora and the Dobojski TO further south, and the HVO 109th Dobojski to the east, away from the town. By early July, however, HVO and TO troops still remained within three kilometers of Dobojski to the south and east of the town. On 13 July, in an attempt to disrupt the ongoing VRS drive to the Sava, the HVO 110th Usora and the Dobojski TO mounted a major attack toward Dobojski, pushing to within two kilometers of the town center before VRS 1st Dobojski Light Infantry Brigade troops were able to halt the attack. On 19 July, reinforced with units from Tactical Group 3, the VRS threw the HVO and TO forces out of the territory they had

gained. A month later, VRS forces were able to push the HVO/TO defenders back another two kilometers to the south. The frontline remained static for the rest of the year (and, despite often heavy fighting, for the rest of the war).

Another hot spot was the area south of the Serb-controlled town of Teslic. In late July, HVO forces from the 111th Zepce Brigade, together with Tesanj TO troops, were able to advance about 10 kilometers toward Teslic, reaching positions some five kilometers southeast of the town. By 8 August, however, VRS 1st Teslic Light Infantry Brigade/OG "Doboj" counterattacks had stopped the HVO/TO operation, and less than a week later VRS troops had retaken all of the lost ground. Over the next month the VRS 1st Teslic was able to gain additional ground, reaching a key line of hills southwest of Tesanj, while claiming to have "liberated" all of the Teslic Municipality. The line stabilized here with little change during the rest of 1992, although battles for the key hilltops and the Tesanj-Novi Seher road continued.

Along the eastern boundary between the Maglaj-Tesanj salient and the Ozren Mountains, VRS troops from the 1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade/OG "Doboj" fought a series of grinding battles with Maglaj TO (ARBiH)—later the 201st Maglaj Brigade—forces during September-November. The TO held a salient about five kilometers deep and five kilometers wide on the eastern (or right) bank of the Bosna River in the Ozren encompassing the old town portions of Maglaj. The VRS launched a series of battalion and multi-battalion attacks beginning in late August in an attempt to eliminate this salient. During three months of fighting, the 1st Ozren was able to gradually constrict the small TO bridgehead, even claiming on 20 October to have seized the Maglaj old town, although ARBiH troops appear to have pushed the Serbs back out. By mid-November, however, the VRS drive appears to have stalled and the Serbs called off the offensive, leaving the ARBiH with a one- to three-kilometer-deep position on the east bank.

Another important battle fought on the periphery of the Ozren during late August was the relief and capture of the surrounded Serb-held town of Smoluca, some six kilometers north of the government (Mus-

lim)-held city of Lukavac. Bosnian TO troops had cut off the Serb-populated pocket around Smoluca at the start of the fighting in April and May. By mid-August, the VRS was ready to do something about the plight of the beleaguered Serbs and sent OG "Doboj," reinforced by the "Panthers" of the East Bosnian Corps's light motorized Special Brigade, to try to reach the enclave. In heavy fighting the "Panthers," supported by troops from the 1st and 2nd Ozren Brigades, broke through to the enclave east of the Spreca River by 31 August. Unable to hold the enclave against strong TO pressure, however, the VRS decided to evacuate the population and withdraw its troops, leaving the frontline to run along the Spreca.

Evaluation of the 1992 Posavina Operations

Strategically, the VRS operations in the Posavina during 1992 were a major Serb victory, achieving a key war aim—the creation of a territorially contiguous Serb state. The separate wings of the Republika Srpska could not have survived politically, economically, or militarily without the connecting link created by the VRS offensive. Although the corridor saw no major fighting during 1993-1995 that compared to the operations of 1992, its importance and vulnerability required the VRS to position a large portion of its strategic reserves to defend the area. Although the VRS was perennially short of infantry reserves, these troops were only rarely available for use in battles elsewhere. Only the threat posed to the western RS in 1995 by the combined forces of the HV/HVO and ARBiH posed forced the VRS to redeploy many of these units, since the loss of the western part of the republic the corridor would make the corridor irrelevant.

The notable combat effectiveness during the Posavina operations stemmed from the professionalism of its ex-JNA officer cadre, the JNA military system retained by the VRS, and the army's dominant firepower. The operational and higher tactical VRS commands—1st Krajina Corps headquarters and the tactical group headquarters—consisted entirely of professional officers from the JNA, all of whom had

served in combat during the 1991 Croatian war.⁴⁹ The combination of their personal experience and training within the well-established JNA military system created a whole greater than the sum of its parts. This smoothly functioning team was able to use its staff skills to plan effective operations and battles, rapidly shift units from one sector to another, and ensure adequate logistical support.⁵⁰ When these professional advantages were combined with the superior fire-power inherited from the JNA the Serbs were difficult to beat.

Where the Serb military came up short was in the number of professional officers and NCOs below the brigade and battalion level, particularly in newly raised light infantry units, and therefore in the quality of its troops. The soldiers of these units were largely civilians inducted when the VRS was created; even the units themselves had often not existed prior to May 1992. The rapid expansion of the Serb military forces in May and June stretched and thinned the cadre of JNA officers, and many of the newly raised battalions were lucky if their battalion commander was a JNA reserve officer, let alone a JNA combat professional. Most units had to be sent into battle with almost no indoctrination or training under company officers and NCOs almost as green as they were. It was no wonder that discipline and tactical efficiency in these newly raised units were extremely poor. Indeed, at the battalion level and below most of the HVO and the better-organized Bosnian TO units opposing the VRS were as good as the Serbs' locally raised, non-JNA units; the difference was that the Serbs were much better armed. It was only the VRS's superior professionalism at the corps and brigade levels, and its prodigious use of firepower, that enabled it to overcome its deficiencies on manpower.

The Croatian Army performed relatively effectively in the Posavina, having made evolutionary improvements from the late 1991 force in organization, logistics, staff work, and use of firepower. As in 1991,

however, the more professional and better equipped ex-JNA units of the VRS were usually able to defeat the HV in a given engagement. Nevertheless, the HV, when dug in and supported by the newer artillery it was receiving, was difficult to dislodge, as the VRS found at Bosanski Brod and Orasje. And individual HV units were often better than many of the recently organized VRS light infantry formations.

The HVO, which was organized and controlled by the HV, performed in much the same way the new Croatian forces had in the early and middle stages of the 1991 war. Most units were poorly organized and lacked training, but fought hard to defend their homes. The leavening of Bosnian Croat veterans who had fought in the 1991 HV, together with the HV provision of brigade level staff officers, played an important role in solidifying these units. When stiffened with HV troops, HVO forces strongly resisted VRS attacks. The HVO, however, paid the price of their doughty resistance; the Orasje Corps District—the later designator for the Posavina Operational Zone of 1992—listed 3,000 personnel killed in action and 10,000 wounded during the war.⁵¹ Most of these casualties probably came in 1992.

The Bosnian Territorial Defense—by October it had become the Bosnian Army (ARBiH)—played a less central role in the Posavina fighting, both in terms of physical presence as well as combat capability. In contrast to the HVO, which could rely on HV aid in men and equipment, the TO/ARBiH had no mentor to guide, organize, and arm its forces. As a result, although most fought as hard as the HVO troops, their units lacked organization, training, staff work, and weapons. Despite these initial shortcomings, the situation had improved by the end of 1992, and entering 1993 the ARBiH was moving toward assuming the primary role in defending the south side of the Posavina corridor, supported by the veteran HVO brigades.

Appendix 1

Terrain of the Posavina, Maglaj-Tesanj, and Ozren Regions

Posavina. The principal combat zone was the Posavina region, which ran along the Sava River roughly from a western line at Bosanski Brod-Derventa-Doboj over to a Brcko-Orasje axis in the east. In terms of military geography, this area consists of two differing sectors. The western sector, up to Odzak-Modrica-Gradacac, is an area of lower hills at 200 to 300 meters in height between Doboj and Derventa, interspersed with streams and a large number of villages and smaller towns, such as Kotorsko. Near Bosanski Brod, just north of Derventa, the hills drop off to less than 100 meters approaching the Sava River plain. Directly on the main approaches from Derventa is a large man-made lake that channels ground movement to narrow corridors on either side of the lake bounded by the Sava. Northeast of Doboj, the Trebava region is more mountainous, rising to 400 to 600 meters or so. The large Bosna River runs between Doboj and Trebava (and into the Sava north of Odzak). The main road runs north-south from Doboj, through Kotorsko, to Derventa and Bosanski Brod. The main east-west highway links into this road at Kotorsko, continuing to western Bosnia from Derventa.

The other sector, beginning at Odzak-Modrica-Gradacac, is far different than most of Bosnia. Tending east from the western area, the hills abruptly drop off along the line of these three towns, with level plains dotted with villages and farms stretching east to Brcko and north to the Sava. There are occasional hills, but these rise to no more than 100 meters in height. South of a line running roughly from Gradacac to Brcko, the hills and mountains begin to rise again. In the north, approaching the Sava, much of the ground along the river becomes marshy, often flooding in winter. Overall, the road network through the region is good, with

fine asphalt roads running east-west from Brcko to Modrica and Gradacac, while the main north-south route runs from Orasje to near Gradacac on the way to Tuzla city.

Doboj-Maglaj-Tesanj-Teslic. The region comprising the towns of Maglaj-Tesanj-Teslic and other areas southwest of the Posavina was a secondary combat sector in northern Bosnia during 1992. Other key towns include Jelah, Zepce, and Zavidovici. The Bosna River bounds the region on the east and the south; a large mountain range peaking at 1000 meters forms the western boundary, along with the town of Teslic. Doboj was on the northern boundary. In the Muslim-Croat Maglaj-Tesanj enclave, the terrain is lower than the surrounding mountains, at only 100 to 300 meters near Tesanj and Jelah, along the Usora River valley. South and southwest of the Muslim-held Maglaj town, a belt of 400 to 600 meter hills curves to the north, east of Serb-controlled Teslic, and provides a natural boundary between the two areas. South of these mountains lies the Croat-dominated Zepce-Nov Seher area, with lower hills at 200 to 400 meters. The town of Zavidovici, held by the Muslims, lies on the Bosna River to the east.

Ozren Mountains. The large Serb-held salient in the Ozren Mountains was also a secondary battleground in 1992. The area, bounded on the east by the Spreca River, the west by the Bosna River, and the south by the Krivaja River, consists of rugged mountains rising to about 1000 meters. It is covered by a number of villages, but with only a few small towns, the most important being Bosansko Petrovo Selo. A number of Muslim-held towns surrounded the salient, including the industrial city of Lukavac, as well as Maglaj, Zavidovici, and Gracanica. The key to the area, however, was Doboj, which was the gateway into the salient.

Endnotes, Annex 28

¹ The following narrative and analysis has a Serbo-centric focus because of the strategic importance of the Posavina Corridor to the creation and survival of Republika Srpska. The Bosnian Serb Army has published a substantial amount of information on its operations in the corridor, making it far easier to tell the Serb side of the military story than that of the Croatians, who, for obvious reasons (they lost), have provided far less public information on their version of events. The Bosnian Serb military journals *Krajiski Vojnik* and *Srpska Vojska* contain many detailed articles on the corridor that describe unit dispositions, the battles, and commanders. The comparable Croatian military publications, *Hrvatski Vojnik* and *Velebit* usually mention in passing that a unit fought in the "Sava Basin" in 1992, or, more rarely, will admit to having been in "Bosanska Posavina"; beyond general locational statements, however, no narrative detail is provided on combat operations. The last HV commander in Posavina, General Stipetic, is still an active duty officer and has not published his memoirs, unlike the Croatian Army commander in Herzegovina and the Dalmatian coast, General Bobetko.

² Most of this section, as with much of the combat narrative in this study, is drawn from contemporary Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, Zagreb Radio, and Sarajevo Radio reporting.

³ Paris AFP 29 February 1992; Sanja Modric, "The Good and Bad of the Land of Mystery," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 27 July 1992, pp. 8-9; an interview with Armin Pohara.

⁴ Sanja Modric, "The Good and Bad of the Land of Mystery," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 27 July 1992, pp. 8-9; an interview with Armin Pohara. Both Muslims and Croats joined the newly forming HVO brigade, in contrast to many other areas of Bosnia in which Muslims joined the TO and Croats the HVO.

⁵ Silber and Little, pp. 220-221.

⁶ The two HVO brigades, 101st Bosanski Brod and 103rd Derventa, appear to have been organized in mid-March. The HV brigade was the 108th Slavonski Brod from across the river, probably with a battalion of the 3rd Guards Brigade attached.

⁷ The disposition of JNA and Serb TO forces around Bosanski Brod as of 7 April is given below, based on JNA Second Military District documents in Cekic, pp. 135-136.

Bosanski Brod TO Brigade—eastern part of Bosanski Brod-area of Greda feature

Lijesce Brigade in the area of Lijesce

1st Battalion/327th Mtz Bde with I. TO Brigade vic Kobile Gornje village and movement of the column on the communication with Paraslica village

Tank Company/327th Mtz Bde in the area of Nareci village

2nd Armored Battalion/336th Mtz Bde in area of Unka village

3rd Battalion/327th Mtz Bde in area of Zboriste village, Bosanski Luzani village, with movement of the column toward the Ukrina River

Pnjavor TO Battalion and Trstenica TO Company in the area of Kalacka Village, Pavlovo brdo, with the movement of the column along the road

Antitank element of 1st Battery/1st Battalion/17th Mxd AT

Artillery Regiment in area of Bjelas village

MRL battery/17th Mxd Artillery Regiment deployed vic Polje village (elevation 199)

Battery of Howitzer Artillery Battalion/336th Mtz Bde area of Sekici village

4th Battalion/327th Mtz Bde in area of Glovoca village

HQ, 327th Mtz Bde in Derventa

2nd Battalion/497th Engineer Regiment in area of Betnja Mala and Polje villages

Command Post of 1st Operational Group/17th Corps in area of Podnovlje village (Hill 179)

⁸ It is unclear who the operational-level HV commander was at this time, although it possibly was the 1st Osijek Operational Zone commander, Major General Josip Lucic, and his successor (from 20 June),

Brigadier Vinko Vrbanac, or more likely the commander of the Posavina Operational Group, Brigadier Vinko Stefanek, headquartered in Slavonski Brod. General Petar Stipetic, then deputy chief of the HV Main Staff, does not appear to have taken command of what was to be called the "Slavonian Battlefield" until probably mid-July. An early 1996 Zagreb *Globus* article implies that Stipetic was the HV commander in Posavina at least as early as mid-June. Davor Butkovic, "President Tudjman Begins Major Purge of Top Officers In Croatian Armed Forces: Generals Antun Tus, Franjo Feldi, Petar Stipetic, Vinko Vrbanac, and Many Others Are Leaving," Zagreb *Globus* 19 January 1996, pp. 5-6. However, Stipetic was still fulfilling his Main Staff duties as late as 25 June when he met in Karlovac with UNPROFOR deputy commander General Morillon. It seems likely that Stipetic was appointed after the loss of Modrica and Odzak in late June and mid-July.

⁹ The 102nd Odzak and 105th Modrica Brigades.

¹⁰ During a 1995 interview, then Major General Momir Zec, who in 1992 was a JNA lieutenant colonel in the Tuzla area, stated that, Greediness hindered us . . . Even now I claim that if we had not plundered Brcko, we would have had a wider 'corridor,' because the Muslims would have been driven past Majevica.

M. Solaja and R. Vujetovic, "The Army Is To Order, Not Convince," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, pp. 23-25; an interview with Major General Momir Zec.

¹¹ The exact composition of TG-17 is unknown. It obviously was formed from 17th Corps units, the best candidates being elements of the 17th Partisan Brigade and the 395th Motorized Brigade.

17th Corps Daily Operational Report, 18 April 1992, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002.

<www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 109.

¹² In addition to contemporary press reporting, the narrative in this and the following sections on VRS 1st Krajina Corps preliminary operations, Operation "Corridor 92" itself, and the follow-on operations in November and December draws primarily on the following articles from Bosnian Serb military journals and civilian periodicals:

"Who's Who in Krajina," Belgrade *Vreme* 25 October 1993; describes career of Major General Mile Novakovic, commander (as a colonel) of VRS Tactical Group 2 during Operation "Corridor 92."

Jovanka Simic, "Intrigues Because of Politics," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 15 October 1993, p. 2; an interview with Mile Novakovic.

"Anniversary of the Capture of Brod," Banja Luka Televizija 7 October 1997; includes statements by Major General Slavko Lisica on the capture of Brod.

Ljubomir Grubic, "Pulling Down the Pants," Belgrade *Nin* 23 July 1993, pp. 12-14; interview with Slavko Lisica.

Radmila Zivic, "The 1st Armored Brigade of the 1st Krajina Corps: Without A Battle Lost," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 11.

M. Totic, and R. Vujatovic, "When Father and Electricity Come," *Krajiski Vojnik* December 1995, pp. 7-10; an interview with VRS soldier Mico Milovanovic, a member of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

Dusan Vrzina, "The Best Unit of the 1st Krajina Corps: 1000 War Days of the 16th," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, pp. 15-16; a history of the VRS 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

Milan Celeketic, "Defense of Krajina," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 25; more on 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade by its former commander.

Radmila Zivic, "16th Krajina Brigade: Heroes of Flat Posavina," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 7-8.

"Statements by Major General Momir Talic, Commander of the 1st Krajina Corps: There Will Nevertheless Not Be War," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 7-10.

"Operation Corridor: Road Paved With Lives," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 11-14; includes list of all VRS brigades involved in the operation.

"Chronology of Events—Daily War Diary" *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 16-17; war diary of 1st Krajina Corps headquarters from 24 to 28 June 1992.

Nenad Cvjetkovic, "Anniversary of Liberation of Serbian Posavina marked on Trebava: More Than Victory," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 26, article on 1st Krajina Corps tactical groups in Posavina.

"Posavina Front: Zek's Unfinished Story," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 36; interview with Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja, commander of Tactical Group 4 and 43rd Motorized Brigade.

Dusan Vrzina, "The Weapons Awoke: Sketch for a Monograph: The Brecko Battlefield," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 20; narrative of successful 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade attack west of Brecko in December 1992.

"The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29; article on history of VRS 1st Armored Brigade, includes war diary excerpts.

"Colonel Miko Skoric: From Victory to Victory," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 38-39; biographic information on Colonel (then Major) Miko Skoric, who commanded a battalion in the 2nd Armored Brigade and the 1st Knin Light Infantry Brigade during the corridor battles.

"Commander Trivo," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 40-41; article describing Colonel Trivun Vujic, commander of 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, who was killed in action near Derventa on 30 June 1992.

Slavisa Sabljic, "Lest We Forget—The Government's Battle Steel Against Steel," *Srpska Vojska* June 1996, p. 24; interviews with soldiers in the VRS 1st Armored Brigade.

M. Tasic, "The Majority of the Glorious Ones—Tank Units," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, p. 34; article describing history of VRS 2nd Armored Brigade.

"Two Years Since Completion of 'Operation Corridor': The Krajinas Have Breathed Deeply of Freedom," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, pp. 30-37.

Zivko Ecim, "A Bomb in the Heart, A Sight in the Eye," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984. Interview with then Colonel Pero Colic, commander of the 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade.

Zivko Ecim, "We Know Our Goal," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 20 May 1994; interview with Colonel Radmilo Zeljaja.

Mico Glamocanin, "Without A Battle Lost," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 26 August 1994; history of 2nd Motorized and 4th Motorized Battalions/43rd Motorized Brigade.

Mile Mutic, "The Brigade of a Long and Honorable Warpath: The Warpath of the 5th Kozara's Brigade," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984; history of the 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade, it appears to be based on the brigade war diary or include excerpts from it.

Zivko Ecim, "The Year of Successful Actions," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 25 June 1993; history of the 6th (Ljubija) Battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade.

M. Jovicevic, "Rescuing Industrial Installations," *Belgrade Vojska* 24 December 1992, p. 22; an article on a special unit formed within the 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade to secure key infrastructure in Derventa during its recapture.

Mark Rucnov, "Among Fighters From Majevica: Panthers," *Belgrade Vojska* 4 April 1993, pp. 6-7; an article on the VRS Special Brigade "Panthers"/East Bosnian Corps [later the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade].

Multiple issues of the newsletter for the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade (AKA 6th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade or 6th Partisan Brigade), *Ratni Bilten* (War Bulletin), describing actions of brigade sub-units in 1992.

In addition, the following articles from Croatian military journals and Croatian and Bosnian Muslim periodicals provide some detail on the 1992 operations.

A. Prlenda, "A Small But Modern Army," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje* 4 October 1996, p. 4; HVO chief of staff Major General Živko Budimir, who commanded an HV tactical group in Posavina in 1992, notes the difficult fighting in Derventa and Brod.

Edhem Ekmescic, "We Have to Have A Strong Army Because It Is the Guarantee Of Our Return Home!" *Travnik Bosnjak* 2 January 1996, pp. 12-13; interview with Major Ibrahim Salihovic, commander of the Bosnian Army 211th Liberation Brigade in 1995; he fought in 1992 in the 21st Srebrenik Brigade near Brecko and in the corridor, including attacks that successfully severed the Serb supply route.

Mirudin Aldobasic, "The Doboј 'Golden Lily,'" *Doboј Bosanski Reporter* January 1996, p. 3; article on Bosnian Muslim soldiers from Doboј.

Muhamed Cabric, "Reviewing the Forces of Decisiveness," *Doboј Bosanski Reporter* January 1996, pp. 4-5.

"Is A Battle for the Corridor Imminent," *Zagreb Vjesnik* 10 May 1994, p. 7; includes HVO casualty statistics for Posavina.

Interview with General Anton Tus, Chief of the HV Main Staff, Zagreb HTV 21 August 1992; Tus admits HV forces are in Bosnia, claiming the HV is needed there to protect the Croatian border.

Marko Barisic, "Wartime Strategy: Doboј Has Still Not Fallen," *Zagreb Danas* 2 June 1992, p. 27; details the military situation around Doboј as of late May 1992.

Sanja Modric, "The Good and Bad of the Land of Mystery," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija* 27 July 1992, pp. 8-9; interview with Armin Pohara.

Gordan Radosevic, "Slavonia, Who Did Not Love You . . ." *Zagreb Velebit* 9 May 1997, pp. 16-17; article on the 3rd Guards Brigade.

Gordan Lauseic, "With Vukovar In Their Hearts," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 8 October 1993, pp. 28-29; article on 124th Vukovar Brigade elements deployed along the Sava.

Gordan Radosevic, "Bite of the Cobras," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 17 June 1994, pp. 17-19; article on the 3rd (Slavonski Brod) Battalion/3rd Guards Brigade.

Gordan Radosevic and Zeljko Stipanovic, "Wolves From the Drava," *Zagreb Velebit* 31 January 1997, pp. 18-19; article on 107th Valpovo Brigade and a tactical group formed in 1992 under Major Zivko Budimir.

Anto Pranjic, "Wolves from the Drava," *Zagreb Velebit* March 1996, p. 15; as above.

Vesna Puljak, "Up To Their Task," *Zagreb Velebit* 10 January 1997, pp. 12-13; article on 70th MP Battalion.

Neven Miladin, "Security Through Experience and Training," *Zagreb Velebit* 3 January 1997, pp. 14-15; article on the 5th Rijeka Operational Zone, the current Fifth (Pazin) Corps District, which mentions that the 111th Rijeka Brigade was ordered to "Bosanska Posavina" in early 1992.

Gordan Radosevic, "Thundering Slavonian Artillerymen," *Zagreb Velebit* 27 December 1996, p. 13; article on the 2nd Mixed Artillery Battalion.

Vesna Puljak, "They Passed the Test in Sunja," *Zagreb Velebit* 22 March 1996, p. 15; article on the 103rd Zagora Brigade.

Neven Miladin, "Proven Military Skill," *Zagreb Velebit* 8 March 1996, pp. 14-15; article on the 3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade.

Neven Miladin, "The Strength of the Black Mambas," *Zagreb Velebit* 26 January 1996, pp. 16-17; article on the 1st Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade, which had elements assigned to "Bosanska Posavina" in 1992.

Neven Miladin, "Proven Throughout All of Croatia," *Zagreb Velebit* 26 January 1996, p. 14; article on the 145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade.

Neven Miladin, "Where It Was Needed Most," *Zagreb Velebit* 8 December 1995, p. 15; article on the 137th Duga Resa Brigade.

Gordan Radosevic and Anto Pranjic, "The Pride of Slavonski Brod," *Zagreb Velebit* 7 July 1995, p. 11; article on the 108th Slavonski Brod Brigade.

Vesna Puljak, "Always Advancing—Without Retreating," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 7 May 1993, pp. 14-15; article on the 153rd Velika Gorica Brigade.

Vesna Puljak, "Cromerec is Defending Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 22 October 1993, p. 15; article on the 150th Zagreb-Cromerec Brigade.

Branko Bošek, "Everything Passes, But Not the Mountainers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 13 August 1993, p. 19; article on the 103rd Zagora Brigade.

Dubravko Grakalic, "Dismissal of General of the Corps Zvonimir Cervenko is Preparation for Departure of Minister of Defense Gojko Susak in 1997!" Zagreb *Globus* 15 November 1996, p. 11; article discusses current HV Main Staff chief, General Pavao Miljevac, and his command of the 137th Duga Resa Brigade in Bosnia in 1992. Also notes that Stipetić was the overall commander.

Tuđman Carries Out Reshuffle of Military Echelons, Zagreb Radio 5 December 1992; this includes the relief of Major General Petar Stipetić as commander of the "Slavonian Battlefield," (Slavonska Bojista), and his appointment as commander of the Zagreb Corps District. The HV often used the term "Battlefield" to denote a senior command, which was essentially the equivalent of a separate, ad hoc corps headquarters reporting directly to the Main Staff. General Bobetko's Southern Battlefield or Southern Front (Južnog Bojista) was the equivalent headquarters in southern Dalmatia and Herzegovina.

Mladen Pavković, *Zemlja Rata Zlata: Fotografije* Zagreb: Meditor, 1995; a book of photographs, almost exclusively of HV troops in Bosnian Posavina during 1992; focus on 117th Koprivnica Brigade soldiers around Bosanski Brod.

President Franjo Tuđman, News Conference, Zagreb Radio 1 December 1995; Tuđman states that HV troops were sent to defend Bosnian Posavina in 1992 (although he claims they did not arrive until the fall).

¹³ These so-called Special Police almost certainly were elements of the new "Special Police" brigades that the JNA had helped organize in the RSK as it withdrew in early 1992. These units were different from the traditional MUP "Special Police," which were primarily elite special operations units. The brigades were organized along the lines of a JNA motorized brigade; the "police" appellation was simply a cover for a military force in being when the Krajina Serb TO and remaining ex-JNA units were demobilized and their equipment stored. One of these brigades appears to have been formed for each UN Protected Area, except possibly Sector West. The key role (he later served as commander of the Special Units of the RSK MUP) that ex-JNA Colonel Mile Novaković played in these units further emphasized this fact. Čekić outlines the basic structure of one of these brigades, based on a 25 April JNA document outlining a request from the Krajina Serb TO Kordun Operational Zone complete the organization of its Special Police Brigade. This request included the following equipment:

426 7.62mm pistols
3900 automatic rifles
116 M-57 rocket propelled grenade launchers
93 M-84 7.62mm general purpose machine guns
7 recoilless rifles
32 9K11 (AT-3) antitank missile launchers
10 120mm mortars
12 M-42 ZIS-3 76mm antitank guns
18 M-2 or M-56 105mm howitzers
24 M-75 20mm air defense artillery pieces
10 M-55 20mm air defense artillery pieces
13 S-2M (SA-7) man-portable surface-to-air missiles

Čekić, p. 112.

¹⁴ The headquarters of 1st Armored Brigade formed the command of Tactical Group 1, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Novica Simić, the brigade chief of staff. The main units in the tactical group were the reinforced 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, a battle group (battalion task force) from 1st Armored Brigade, one to two battalions from the newly formed 2nd Armored Brigade, the 1st Battalion/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade, the 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade, the "Wolves of Vučijak" assault detachment (a former JNA volunteer unit), the 1st Knin Light Infantry Brigade, and the crack 1st

Military Police Battalion. These forces probably were equipped with about 60 tanks and at least 18 field artillery pieces over 100mm. In addition, another 1,000 troops from the 1st Osinja Light Infantry Brigade held a more static sector on TG-1's far left flank over to positions 10 kilometers south of Derventa, where it linked up with the 27th Motorized Brigade.

¹⁵ The headquarters of the RSK Special Police formed the command of Tactical Group 2. Its main units comprised an RSK Special Police Brigade, the 1st Vučijak Light Infantry Brigade, and the 1st Trebava Light Infantry Brigade, with some armor support from a company or two of 1st Armored Brigade. TG-2 probably was equipped with 10 to 20 tanks and at least 18 field artillery pieces over 100mm.

¹⁶ Another 1,500 to 2,000 troops from the HVO 103rd Derventa Brigade covered the Croats' right hand sector opposite the 1st Osinja and elements of the 27th Derventa. The HV 108th Slavonski Brod Brigade probably provided additional support in this sector. One to two battalions of HV artillery and multiple rocket launchers—some 18 to 36 guns and 8 to 12 MRs were in support.

¹⁷ TG-1 still included the 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, a battle group from the 2nd Armored Battalion/1st Armored Brigade, the 1st Battalion/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade, the 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade, the 1st Laktasi Light Infantry Brigade, the "Wolves of Vučijak" assault detachment, and the 1st Military Police Battalion. It picked up a battalion or two from the 1st Trebava Light Infantry Brigade, which had been holding the sectors opposite Modriča and Gradacac. It now probably had about 30 tanks and at least 18 field artillery pieces over 100mm.

¹⁸ TG-2 now included the RSK Special Police brigade, one to two companies of the 1st Armored Brigade, a battalion of the 27th Motorized Brigade (which earlier had been cut-off in Podnovlje), the newly arrived 2nd Krajina Infantry Brigade, and the 1st Vučijak Light Infantry Brigade. The assault units comprised the RSK Special Police, the armor, and probably the 2nd Krajina and the battalion from the 27th Motorized. The 1st Vučijak was tied down guarding the left flank, northwest of Podnovlje. The TG still probably had 10 to 20 tanks and 12 to 18 field artillery pieces over 100mm.

¹⁹ The 1st Krajina Corps journal states,

Confusion was also being created in the enemy ranks by disinformation that a special team of Serbian officers were releasing, according to plan, over the local radio stations, the press and unprotected telegrams between our units. The enemy bit the hook and obtained the impression and reached the firm conclusion that the main direction of the attack would be Doboj-Graničica-Smolica-Tuzla.

"Operation Corridor: Road Paved With Lives," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 11-14. Despite the Serb claim that the Croats were deceived, there is no evidence either way that the HV/HVO believed the VRS attack would be toward the south.

²⁰ The VRS 89th Rocket Artillery Brigade also fired two LUNA-M (FROG-7) surface-to-surface missiles at the Croatian city of Slavonski Brod about two hours after the main attack started. The attack might have been designed to divert HV attention from the ground offensive or to hit supply concentrations in the city.

²¹ "Chronology of Events—Daily War Diary" *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 16-17; war diary of 1st Krajina Corps headquarters from 24 to 28 June 1992.

²² Tactical Group 3 was formed from the headquarters of Colonel Lisić's 2nd Armored Brigade. In addition to that brigade, it consisted of the 1st Knin Light Infantry Brigade, the 1st Osinja Light Infantry Brigade, all but one battalion of the 27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, and the 1st Šrbac Light Infantry Brigade.

²³ "Chronology of Events—Daily War Diary" *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 16-17; war diary of 1st Krajina Corps headquarters from 24 to 28 June 1992.

²⁴ Radmila Žigic, "The 1st Armored Brigade of the 1st Krajina Corps: Without A Battle Lost," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 11.

²⁵ The last VRS (ex-JNA) unit withdrew from Western Slavonia on 6 July 1992.

²⁶ TG-1 now comprised nearly the entire 1st Armored Brigade, up to three battalions from the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade, the 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade, the 1st Laktasi Light Infantry Brigade, and the 1st MP Battalion.

²⁷ The 2nd Armored Battalion/1st Armored Brigade again led the TG-1 advance. Radmila Zivic, "The 1st Armored Brigade of the 1st Krajina Corps: Without A Battle Lost," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 11.

²⁸ Colonel Lasic's Tactical Group-3 now commanded the following brigades or elements drawn from these brigades, including up to one battalion/1st Armored Brigade, the 2nd Armored Brigade, the 27th Motorized Brigade, the 1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigade, the 1st Osinja Light Infantry Brigade, the 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, and the 1st Vucjak Light Infantry Brigade.

²⁹ Elements from the 1st and 2nd Armored, 27th Motorized, 1st Krnjin Light Infantry, and 1st Vucjak Light Brigades were involved in the battle. The commander of the 27th Motorized Brigade, Colonel Trivun Vujic, was killed in action during the attack.

³⁰ During May, after withdrawal from Western Slavonia, the 16th had absorbed 1,500 new recruits and conducted refresher training at the JNA training area in Manjaca, south of Banja Luka.

³¹ This assessment is based on a careful reading of *Hrvatski Vojnik* and *Velebit* reporting (see above source references) which often cryptically refer to HV deployments to the Bosnian Posavina in 1992 as the "Sava Basin" or simply Posavina, although in some cases articles will explicitly state the unit went to Bosnian Posavina.

The tactical groups discussed were usually formed from a single brigade headquarters, one of its own battalions, and up to two battalions from other brigades, plus support troops—estimated at up to 2,000 men total. Some tactical groups may have been smaller with about 1,000 troops. Thus, for example, Tactical Group 145 was formed from the headquarters of the 145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade, one of its battalions, plus units from the 101st Zagreb-Susedgrad, 148th Zagreb-Trnje, 151st Samobor, and 153rd Velika Gorica Brigades. Neven Miladin, "Proven Throughout All Croatia," Zagreb *Velebit* 26 January 1996, p. 14.

Unfortunately, Croatian sources provide little detail on HV Posavina operations, and, because of the tactical group structure predominantly used by the HV, identification of a "brigade" as having fought in the area provides only minimal help, since it was usually only one element of that brigade. These sources usually provide little locational information other than in the "Posavina" or "Sava Basin"; since HV troops were deployed in three discrete sectors—Bosanski Brod, Modrica-Odzak (to mid-July), and Orasje, it is difficult to get a fix on how many troops were in fact stationed where and against which VRS units.

The following HV brigades sent elements to the Posavina as part of a tactical group or were fully deployed to the Posavina during 1992. The list may include some units that did not enter Bosnia but were deployed to defend the Sava River line from inside Croatia.

3rd Battalion/2nd Guards Brigade (+)
3rd Guards Brigade
101st Zagreb-Susedgrad Brigade
103rd Zagora Brigade
104th Varazdin Brigade
107th Valpovo Brigade
108th Slavonski Brod Brigade
111th Rijeka Brigade
117th Koprivnica Brigade
124th Vukovar Brigade
131st Zupanja Brigade
137th Dugopolje Brigade
139th Slavonski Brod Brigade
145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade
148th Zagreb-Trnje Brigade
150th Zagreb-Crnomerec Brigade
151st Samobor Brigade
153rd Velika Gorica Brigade
157th Slavonski Brod Brigade

³² Stipetic was widely regarded as the best operational planner in the HV. He served on the HV Main Staff during the 1991 war. Stipetic later played key roles during Operations "Flash" (Bljesak) and "Storm" (Oluja). He became Chief of the HV Main Staff in early 2000.

³³ Tactical Group 3 had now expanded to roughly a division-sized force. It included the following units, based on the sectors which they held around the enclave, beginning on the VRS right flank:

1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade
one to two battalions/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade (from September)

1st Vucjak Light Infantry Brigade

1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade

1st Osinja Light Infantry Brigade

11th Dubica Infantry Brigade

27th Derventa Motorized Brigade

2nd, 3rd, and 6th Battalions/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade

3rd Battalion/5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade (also served on right flank)

In addition, most of the 2nd Armored Brigade, plus one to two battalions of the 1st Armored Brigade—up to 75 tanks, plus 20 to 30 APCs/IFVs—were parceled out to the infantry brigades to provide direct support. TG-3 probably had at least three artillery battalions mounting 36 to 54 field artillery pieces over 100mm in direct and general support roles. In addition, the V i PVO's 92nd Mixed Aviation Brigade provided air support.

³⁴ A VRS tank crewman said that the four tanks from the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade that took part in the attack on Kostres suffered 50 percent casualties among their crewmen. Radmila Zivic, "16th Krajina Brigade: Heroes of Flat Posavina," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 7-8. See Dragan Djuric, "New Commander of the Croatian Army," Zagreb *Nacional* 15 March 2000, pp. 21-23, an interview with General Petar Stipetic, for the deployment of the HV brigade.

³⁵ See Silber and Little, p. 256 for the latest statement of such a conspiracy.

³⁶ Dragan Djuric, "New Commander of the Croatian Army," Zagreb *Nacional* 15 March 2000, pp. 21-23, an interview with General Petar Stipetic.

³⁷ Davor Butkovic, "President Tudjman Ordered the Croatian Army to Withdraw From Posavina and to Cede the Corridor to the Serbs!" Zagreb *Globus* 22 April 1994, pp. 7-10; an interview with Josip Manolic.

³⁸ Dragan Djuric, "New Commander of the Croatian Army," Zagreb *Nacional* 15 March 2000, pp. 21-23, an interview with General Petar Stipetic.

³⁹ See Dragan Djuric, "New Commander of the Croatian Army," Zagreb *Nacional* 15 March 2000, pp. 21-23, an interview with General Petar Stipetic for a definitive statement on the cut-off HV forces and Reuters reports from 6-7 October 1992 in which both a police spokesman and the HV military police chief in Slavonski Brod claimed some troops were still holding out at Korace.

⁴⁰ TG-4 appears to have initially consisted of Headquarters, 43rd Motorized Brigade, 2nd and 5th Battalions/43rd Motorized Brigade, probably 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, a tank company from 1st Armored Brigade, and an artillery battery from 43rd Motorized Brigade.

⁴¹ TG-4 now consisted of Headquarters, 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade, 1st and 2nd Battalions/5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade, 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, 1st and 4th Battalions/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade, 2nd and 5th Battalions/43rd Motorized Brigade, "Wolves of Vucjak" assault detachment, a tank company from 1st Armored Brigade, and an artillery battalion from 43rd Motorized Brigade. Equipment totals probably numbered about 10 tanks and 12 105mm howitzers.

⁴² During heavy fighting in early October at Gradacac, the commander of the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps, Zeljko Knez, threatened to release industrial chlorine gas if VRS attacks against Gradacac did not stop. Under strong international pressure, Knez ordered the chlorine cylinders withdrawn on 25 October.

⁴³ Colonel Zeljaja and headquarters, 43rd Motorized Brigade resumed command over TG-4 on 4 November.

⁴⁴ M. Totic, and R. Vujatovic, "When Father and Electricity Come," *Krajiski Vojnik* December 1995, pp. 7-10; an interview VRS soldier Mico Milovanovic, assigned in 1992 to the 2nd Battalion/16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

⁴⁵ The brigade commander and chief of staff at the time, Colonel Vukan Makragic and Lieutenant Colonel Vlado Topic, both indicated in the VRS journal, *Srpska Vojska*, that the fighting was "most difficult on Orasje," in which the battle zone was a "mud-covered, swampy line of demarcation, with trenches full of water." Radmila Zivic, "16th Krajina Brigade: Heroes of Flat Posavina," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶ Simic took over the East Bosnian Corps on 19 September, after a short stint as commander of the 16th during August and September.

⁴⁷ The 3rd Semberija was formed during November 1992 in the Bijeljina area, and included a large number of Muslims in its ranks. It was deployed to hold the frontline in roughly the same sector that the 16th Motorized Brigade's attack was going to occur.

⁴⁸ The dates of 14 and 27 December for these attacks are tentative. They correspond to gains reported on Belgrade Radio which were then compared to *Krajiski Vojnik* articles discussing operations of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade. The two, however, do not exactly match up, and the 16th Brigade attack may have occurred early in January 1993. There is a small chance that the *Krajiski Vojnik* articles are discussing part of Operation "Sadejstvo 93" in July 1993, but this seems unlikely.

⁴⁹ All four tactical group commanders had either served as JNA brigade commanders or brigade chiefs of staff during the 1991 war.

⁵⁰ An interesting organizational highlight from the Posavina campaign is the effective use the VRS made of tactical group headquarters, which the army was to employ extensively throughout the war. Initially, the groups were formed to control battalion-sized elements withdrawn

from several brigades still deployed in Western Slavonia. As the VRS operation grew in scope, and more complete brigades were formed or redeployed to the region, the tactical groups—which initially were the size of reinforced brigades—grew to multi-brigade, division-sized formations. Although the TG headquarters seem to have been able to cope with controlling up to three or four small brigades at a time, the expansion of TG-3 during the Battle of Bosanski Brod to command parts or all of 11-plus brigades taxed Colonel Lisica's headquarters to the limit. The staffs of these essentially brigade-level headquarters were simply not trained or equipped to deal with this many formations at once. The 1st Krajina Corps probably should have formed another TG headquarters or shifted another TG headquarters to Bosanski Brod to take command over half of the sector in order to better manage the battle.

⁵¹ Neven Miladin, "The Pride and Strength of Croatian Posavina," *Velebit* 28 November 1997, pp. 14-15.

Annex 29

Operation “Vrbas 92”: The VRS Assault on Jajce, July–November 1992

The Bosnian Serbs wanted to eliminate the Croat-Muslim salient at Jajce to extend and consolidate their control of western Bosnia and eliminate the threat to Bosnian Serb lines of communication posed by the salient. Perhaps more importantly, the Serbs needed to take over two hydroelectric power plants on the Vrbas River that supplied a considerable portion of electricity for the region and were vital to the economic well-being of Western Bosnia.¹

Terrain and Campaign Planning

As with many areas of Bosnia, the terrain around the town of Jajce favors the defender. Jajce sat in an almost inaccessible position, defended by a series of hills immediately around the town that were controlled by the HVO and TO. In 1992 the HVO–TO salient stuck out from the rest of Croat-Muslim central Bosnia like a northeastward-facing head in profile, stretching some 25 kilometers from the Serb-held village of Vitovlje at the chin to the village of Jezero at the crown, and some 20 kilometers wide from the Ugar River along the nose to the Rijeka River at the nape. Just under the tight collar was the town of Turbe, northwest of Travnik, from which a narrow neck about seven kilometers wide and 10 kilometers long extended to the broader enclave around Jajice, about where an ear would be (see Map 13).

Instead of making its main effort against the neck of the salient, the VRS chose to push directly for the town, probably hoping that this would force the Croat-Muslim population to flee or possibly because they wanted to avoid taking on the strong HVO and TO defenses near Travnik. In any event, the VRS 30th Infantry Division’s campaign plan followed standard JNA/VRS operational and tactical doctrine for mountain warfare, using multiple converging axes to

shrink the enclave before making a final assault. The operation was to be undertaken slowly and methodically, guarding the attacking force’s flanks and ensuring that all captured ground was cleared as the operation proceeded.

The 30th Division chose three primary attack routes toward Jajce town, running from the north, the west, and the south/southwest. The first route, running from Banja Luka, began at the initial frontline about 10 kilometers north of town, dominated by the Gola Planina feature and the Vrbas River valley, along which one of the major roads to Jajce runs. (The Ugar River valley to the northeast, which converges with the Vrbas some five kilometers north of Gola Planina, is almost impassable because of the steep approaches, and formed a natural frontline that narrowed the possible attack sector.) The Gola Planina lies west of the river valley and is about six kilometers wide and five kilometers long, rising to 1000 meters. It completely dominates the approach route along the Vrbas river road. The size of the feature makes it difficult to isolate or surround. More hills control the east side of the valley, dropping from 800 meters to 400-500 meters at the river in less than a kilometer. The hydroelectric plants so desperately wanted by the Serbs, Jajce I (north) and Jajce II (south), were both on this route. The approach route to the west, from the direction of the Pliva Lake (about three kilometers long and a third of a kilometer wide), at the frontline some eight kilometers west of town, was less treacherous, but also guarded by mountains and passes. An attacker would have to seize an 865-meter hill, then two more passes at Donji Mile and Vrbica—the last gate to Jajce—in order to reach the town. In addition, an attacker would need to protect his left flank by seizing Caning Polje while attacking along the main road. This secondary route would also allow an approach to the north side of Jajce at Carevo Polje, coming around the south side of Gola Planina and

bypassing the main defenses on the north. The Pliva Lake would guard the right flank of any attack most of the way to the town.

The third route, from the south/southwest, began at the initial frontline some five to seven kilometers outside of town. This route actually was split into two parallel routes, one running along the Selinac River valley and the other along the Vrbas River valley from the direction of Serb-held Donji Vakuf (Srbobran). They converged at the Elektrobosna industrial plant (a silicon and chemical complex) and a secondary defensive line between the villages of Skela and Bage, some two kilometers from town. Both, however, were difficult approaches. Along the first, a series of 700-800 meter hills looked directly over the road. On the second, which ran along the main Jajce-Donji Vakuf highway, a tunnel near the initial frontline and then a 1000-meter hill on the right flank, looking directly down on the road, offered good defensive positions. Once past these, the 900-meter Bukovica feature posed a final obstacle, looking directly down on the Elektrobosna plant.

Forces

The VRS deployed an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 troops for Operation "Vrbas 92" under the command of Colonel Jovo Blazanovic's 30th Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps. Blazanovic's forces were divided into Tactical Groups 1, 2 and 3. Tactical Group 1, consisting of the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade plus the Krajina Brigade—3,000 to 3,500 troops—was to advance along the southern axis.² Tactical Group 2, consisting of the reinforced 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade—some 2,000 to 2,500 troops—was to make the main advance along the western and northern axes. Tactical Group 3, organized with at least three battalions from three separate brigades, had some 1,500 troops guarding the northern/northeastern front along the Ugar River line. One or two direct support artillery battalions, a corps artillery battalion, and an armored battalion—30 to 50 field artillery over 100mm, and 20 to 30 tanks—are assessed to have backed these three tactical groups. VRS forces could also call on the Serbs' skimpy airpower in the form of

one- or two-plane strikes by Galeb-Jastreb or Orao fighter-bombers attacking with guns, rockets, and cluster bombs. Two light infantry brigades, the 19th at Donji Vakuf and the 22nd at Mount Vlasic near Travnik, protected the flanks of the assault forces.³

The defending HVO Jajce municipal command and Bosnian Government Jajce TO forces are estimated to have started with some 3,400 armed troops, plus another 1,000 unarmed men. These appear to have been reinforced with another 2,200 armed men in mid-September. HVO troops, which appear to have played a slightly more active role in the defense, were organized under the Jajce Municipal Headquarters, and probably consisted of about two battalions of local troops—about 1,000 men—only two-thirds of whom probably had weapons. The HVO reinforced these units with dribs and drabs of platoons and companies drawn from the Central Bosnia Regional headquarters—which had overall responsibility for Jajce—and the Northwestern Herzegovina Regional headquarters in Tomislavgrad. The first of these reinforcements probably comprised about 1,000 troops, followed by another 1,000 in early September. The Bosnian Government Territorial Defense in Jajce was a municipal headquarters estimated to command about three battalions of local citizens, some 1,500 men; about half of them may have had rifles. Two battalions of TO troops, consisting of about 1,000 personnel from the TO Zenica District headquarters, supported these local forces and sent another 1,000 men in early September.⁴ Command and control links between the two allied armies appear to have functioned adequately, but were often strained, especially by the HVO's order of 10 July disbanding the Bosnian Government's competing local government headquarters. The defenders lacked not only the heavy weapons needed to engage Serb armor and artillery but even, in many cases, individual weapons. But their morale was stiffened by the knowledge that it was their homes they were defending against the Serb invaders. And they wielded pick-axes and shovels valiantly to lace the naturally difficult terrain with strong bunker and trench defenses. The VRS was in for a hard fight.

Operations⁵

The VRS appears to have begun preparations for the Jajce campaign during June, and began tightening the ring around the enclave during July. Tactical Group 3 (TG-3) and the 22nd Light Infantry Brigade/30th Division started hitting at the base of the supply neck into the salient northwest of Turbe from about 3 to 9 July and again from 17 to 22 July. It is unclear whether the Serbs wanted to sever this route completely or merely threaten it; most likely they wanted to leave an inviting escape route open to encourage the defenders and the civilian population to evacuate the enclave. In any event, the attacks gained little ground.

In early August the VRS was ready for serious action, taking the first step in a progressive "bite and hold" campaign with an attack directly toward Jajce town. In four weeks of seesaw fighting along the western axis, troops from Tactical Group 2 (TG-2) were able to fight through HVO-TO lines near the pass at Donje Mile, while skirting the rear of Gola Planina on the flank.⁶ These forces were able to push almost six kilometers toward the town before they were stopped at the Vrbica pass, less than two kilometers from Jajce.⁷ The town's defenders now had their backs to the wall. But on the northern approaches HVO and TO units were able to stymie TG 2's attempts to advance on the vital dams. While the 30th Division was preparing its next move for sometime in mid-September, the HVO and TO hoped to disrupt its preparations with an attack in central Bosnia against VSR positions between Donji Vakuf and Mount Vlasic, north of Travnik. Launched about 9 September, it fizzled out on 12 September with little or nothing gained. Nor did it have any apparent diversionary effect on the VRS's planned attack, which actually appears to have kicked off the same day, 9 September, along the south/southwestern approach to Jajce with supporting attacks along the western axis. Tactical Group 1 (TG-1) succeeded in driving back HVO-TO troops some five kilometers, reaching a line about a kilometer from Jajce town between the villages of Bage and Skele on the Vrbas River at the Elektrobozna facility by 15/16 September.

It was apparently the expectation that Jajce would be overrun by the next Serb thrust that motivated Bos-

nian Croat leaders to strike a deal, sealed on October 9, whereby they would continue to supply Serb districts with electricity from the two hydroelectric plants in return for a ceasefire in place by the VRS.⁸ It was Croat forces that were defending the dams, and the Muslims, who were not included in the deal, almost certainly reacted angrily, their fears revived of a Croat-Serb conspiracy to carve up Bosnia between them and leave the Muslims with only scraps. Relations between HVO and TO units in central Bosnia had been strained by the unresolved political disputes over Bosnia's future, and the new Serb-Croat deal over Jajce proved too much. On 21 October fighting between Croats and Muslims erupted around Travnik, Novi Travnik and Bugojno, almost directly along the supply route to Jajce.⁹

The VRS moved quickly to exploit these differences, with the prospect that the erstwhile allies would betray one another at Jajce itself. On 25 October the 30th Division, reinforced with troops from the crack 1st Military Police Battalion and 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, launched an all-out attack along all three axes.¹⁰ But Serb hopes that the Croats and Muslims facing them would fold or fade away were quickly dashed.¹¹ Along the western axis, near the key Vrbica pass and Carevo Polje just to the north, strongpoints appear to have exchanged hands several times, testifying to stout resistance. VRS TG-1 troops approaching from the south reached the Pliva River, directly across from the center of town, by 27 October, but Croat and Muslim troops still held out at Vrbica and Carevo Polje. On the same day, along the northern axis, Tactical Group 2 units reached positions near the Jajce 2 hydroelectric dam, having advanced about five kilometers. Two days later, the town finally fell, as VRS units reached the old fortress in the center of Jajce. But the precious dams, which should have been a more important strategic target than Jajce itself, were sabotaged by the retreating Croat defenders. The defeated troops and the frightened civilian residents of the pocket now had to retreat across barely navigable dirt tracks under Serb fire, as cold, rainy weather set in. Thousands poured into Travnik, causing one of the biggest single refugee crises of the war.¹²

⁵ See Volume I, Chapter 31, "Dress Rehearsal for War: The 1992 Croat-Muslim Clashes" for a detailed discussion of this fighting and its origins.

The last act in the campaign came in mid-November. VRS forces had occupied nearly all of the former enclave, but the stub of the neck that had led into it still stuck out stubbornly near Turbe. Eliminating this stub would place VRS forces in a position to pressure not only Turbe but Travnik, if they wanted that option. So, on 12 November, 30th Division forces began grinding away at the awkward salient at Karaula, and erased it from the map 18 November.¹² Here the VRS halted, apparently content with its gains.

Evaluation of the Campaign

The VRS 30th Infantry Division captured Jajce because it was the more professional force. It was better organized, better armed, better staffed, and better trained. Where it fell short was in the weight of numbers, which was not enough to take the objective quickly and seize the vital dams before the Croats could put them out of commission. The valiant Croat

and Muslim defenders of the HVO and TO were able to hold out as long as they did because they were highly motivated, innovative, and improvised excellent defensive positions in easily defensible terrain. Claims by defeated soldiers that one side betrayed the other are probably inevitable, given the inter-ethnic tensions of the time, but there is no solid evidence that the Croats sold out Jajce to the Serbs.¹³ Croat claims and Muslim counterclaims that refusals to allow supplies and reinforcements through caused the enclave's fall have some validity, but both sides are to blame for their fratricidal clashes in central Bosnia. Even with the additional resources that might have been provided, the defenders could not have held the enclave indefinitely, and the VRS would eventually have taken the town. As the Bosnian TO commander in Travnik, Colonel Hasan Ribo, stated, the HVO did not abandon Jajce; it fell because of "pure Serbian military pressure."¹⁴

Endnotes, Annex 29

¹ Mladic emphasizes the importance of the two plants; the short-lived cease-fire later arranged between the Croats and Serbs called for the Croats to provide the Serbs with electricity if the Serbs halted their offensive. Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matrica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 7. The territory itself does not appear to have been particularly important to the Serbs since the pre-war population of Jajce Municipality was only 19 percent Serb. The Croats and Muslims made up 35 percent and 39 percent of the population respectively. Yugoslavs and others made up the remaining seven percent. Miroslav Krleza Lexicographical Institute, *A Concise Atlas of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Zagreb: Graficki Zavod Hrvatske, 1993, p. 125.

² The 11th Mrkonjic Brigade was on the tactical group's right flank and the Krajina Brigade was on the left flank, adjacent to TG-2. The Krajina Brigade's origins are obscure; it probably was a composite formation drawn from several 1st Krajina Corps brigades, particularly from those raised in Banja Luka, probably including the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigades. Belgrade Radio observed on 1 September that TG-1 was comprised "mainly of Banja Luka fighters." It also may have included elements of the 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade.

³ VRS Order of Battle—Jajce Campaign, July–November 1992

30th Infantry Division

Colonel Jovo Blazanovic, Commander
 Tactical Group 1 (HQ, 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade), deployed southern axis
 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade
 Krajina Brigade (-)
 1-2 field artillery batteries (6-12 howitzers)
 Total: 3,000 to 3,500 troops
 Tactical Group 2 (HQ, 17th Kljuc LI Brigade), deployed western/northern axes
 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade (+)
 1-2 field artillery batteries (6-12 howitzers)
 Total: 2,000 to 2,500 troops
 Tactical Group 3, deployed North/Northeastern front-Ugar River line
 1st Battalion/1st Celinac Light Infantry Brigade
 1st Battalion/6th Sanske Infantry Brigade
 1st Battalion/1st Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigade
 Total: 1,500 troops
 19th Light Infantry Brigade
 2 battalions facing Bugojno
 1 battalion faving Jajce enclave
 Total: 1,500 troops
 22nd Light Infantry Brigade
 2 battalions facing Travnik
 1 battalion facing northeast front of Jajce pocket
 1 field artillery battalion
 12 howitzers
 Total: 2,000 troops
 1 corps-level 155mm artillery battery-battalion from 1st Mixed Artillery Regiment
 6-12 howitzers
 1 armor battalion
 20 tanks, 10 APC/IFV
 Total VRS troops: 7,000 to 8,000 (Jajce operation)
 3,500 (supporting flanks)

⁴ HVO and Bosnian TO Order of Battle—Jajce Campaign, July–November 1992

HVO Forces

Jajce Municipal Headquarters (Brigade-equivalent) (+)
 —2 local battalions: 1000 total personnel, of which
 650 armed
 —2 to 3 battalions from Northwestern Herzegovina Regional HQ and Central Bosnia Regional HQ—
 1,000 armed troops
 Total: 1,650 armed troops (to early September)
 Reinforcements (from early September)
 —2 to 3 battalions from Northwestern Herzegovina Regional HQ and Central Bosnia

Regional HQ: 1,000 personnel

Total: 2,650 armed troops (from early September)

TO Forces

Jajce Municipal Headquarters
 —three local battalions: up to 1,500 personnel, of which
 750 armed
 —two battalions from Zenica TO District: 1,000 armed troops
 Total: 1,750 armed troops (to early September)
 Reinforcements (from early September)
 —two battalions from Zenica TO District: 1,000 armed troops
 Total: 2,750 armed troops (from early September)

Total Combined Force

—3,400 armed troops (to early September)
 —5,400 armed troops (from early September)

⁵ The narrative of the Jajce operations relies heavily on contemporary local reporting by Belgrade Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, Zagreb Radio, and Sarajevo Radio, augmented with detailed terrain and map analysis of these and other reports.

⁶ Engineer troops from the engineer battalion (later regiment) of the 2nd Krajina Corps cleared extensive minefields along the attack route of the 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade, which made up the bulk of TG-2. Predrag Malic, "Pioneer Battalion of Laniste—Future Overflow Chamber of the Klenovac-Laniste Pipeline," *Mladi Inzijerac* February 1993, p. 4.

⁷ Reuters reporter Kurt Schork talked to a Bosnian soldier in September who stated that the VRS broke through in mid-August. Kurt Schork, "Besieged Bosnian Town Braces for Winter, Serbs," Reuters 24 September 1992. This statement is consistent with VRS claims in August. Belgrade Radio 26 August 1992, Belgrade Radio 1 September 1992.

⁸ RS Defense Minister Colonel Bogdan Subotic announced the agreement. Belgrade Tanjug 9 October 1992.

⁹ Milka Totic, "The Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 52, an article on the 1st Military Police Battalion; Ljubomir Paljevic, "The Eyes and Ears Corps," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 53, an article on the 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company (later Detachment).

¹⁰ Personnel from the VRS 4th Battalion/6th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade later claimed in the September 1994 issue of the brigade magazine that Jajce was its "toughest battle."

¹¹ For vivid descriptions of the appearance of these forlorn people, their arrival in Travnik, and the atmosphere in central Bosnia at the time, see Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1994, pp. 179-185, and Lieutenant Colonel Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives*, London: Harper Collins, pp. 84-105.

¹² A Muslim former JNA officer in Travnik called this little VRS attack a "text-book operation," as the VRS again used JNA tactical doctrine of a slow, methodical advance, guarding its flanks, and consolidating each gain while integrating all arms in the battle. Reuters 18 November 1992.

¹³ The strongest piece of evidence comes from the chief of staff of the Bosnian Army's 705th Jajce Mountain Brigade who stated in 1995 that, while he was serving in the Jajce TO in 1992,

... the city would never have fallen if there had been a little more cooperation and coordination between the TO and the HVO! When I say this, I am thinking of the fact that the HVO units began to withdraw from the city 10 days before Jajce finally fell into Chetnik hands.

Dzemal Sefer, "We Are Ready Both for War and For Peace," *Travnik Bosnjak* 5-12 December 1995, pp. 13-15; an interview with Senior Captain Miralem Imamovic, chief of staff 705th Glorious Jajce Mountain Brigade.

Contradicting the captain's claim that HVO troops pulled out early, other contemporary Croat reporting indicated that HVO units were still fighting in Jajce at its fall. At this point in time, the weight of evidence suggests that there was no betrayal, although coordination problems clearly existed.

¹⁴ "Jajce Refugees Under Fire—UNHCR," Reuters 30 October 1992.

Annex 30
Battles on the Drina, Round One: April to
December 1992

Zvornik-Srebrenica¹

After the fall of Zvornik, Serb TO forces expanded their area of control around the town in an attempt to seize the entire municipality as well as link up with Serb-controlled municipalities around Sekovici and Vlasenica. Strategically, the capture of this territory would help connect the northeastern parts of the Serb republic and Serbia itself with Serb-controlled territory around Sarajevo. However, it took almost two weeks for the new Serb offensive to get on track when Zvornik TO and volunteer troops supported by a JNA armor battalion from the 336th Motorized Brigade finally seized the Muslim-held village of Kula Grad on 26 April, less than a kilometer southwest of Zvornik itself.² Even then, Serb forces were only able to push the tough Muslim defenders about three kilometers south of Zvornik into the Donje Snagovo-Kamenica area. To the northwest, Serb troops—presumably still aided by the JNA 336th Motorized Brigade—had more success. By 9 May, the Serbs had punched through several Muslim-defended villages, reaching the outskirts of Sapna village, some 15 kilometers northwest of Zvornik, where Bosnian TO troops were finally able to halt them.³ Nevertheless, Serb and JNA troops were able to seize the key town of Kalesija, 20 kilometers west of Zvornik, on 11 May. As a result of these successes, Serb forces were able to open the vital Zvornik-Sekovici road, which was the only route available to Pale from the northeast. Although Bosnian TO troops from Kalesija managed to recapture the town on 25-28 May, the Serbs—now formed into the Bosnian Serb Army—managed to retain control of the road.

During late May and June, both sides reorganized their forces. With the formation of the Bosnian Serb Army on 20 May, local Serb TO and volunteer units,

plus the JNA 336th Motorized Brigade, were re-cast into new territorially-raised infantry and light infantry brigades. In the Zvornik-Sekovici area, at least two brigades (and possibly another two later on in 1992) were created under the command of the East Bosnian Corps. The 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade—with about 3,500 troops—was split in two parts. Half the brigade faced northwest toward Bosnian TO positions around Sapna-Kalesija, while the other half faced south/southeast toward Cerska-Kamenica to guard the Zvornik-Sekovici road.⁴ The other brigade, the 1st Birac Infantry Brigade, headquartered in Sekovici—with 3,000 to 4,000 troops—also was also forced to fight in two directions with half guarding the frontline around Kalesija-Kladanj, and the other attempting to defeat the Muslims around Cerska-Kamenica.⁵ A special operations battalion, the “Drina Wolves,” and a MUP special police detachment, about 500 troops, rounded out the VRS order of battle.⁶

The Bosnian TO worked to create a stronger chain of command and better-organized sub-units for its brigade-equivalent municipal TO headquarters. Battalions, companies, and platoons were formed, although weapons remained scarce. Despite this lack of weapons, TO commands proved particularly adept at organizing sabotage units that were to have amazing success against the VRS. The TO was able to field in the Sapna salient or “thumb,” southeast of Tuzla and under the command of the Tuzla TO District, the Zivinice TO (brigade), Kalesija TO (brigade) deployed between Kalesija and Sapna, the Zvornik TO (brigade) between Sapna and Teocak, and the Teocak TO (brigade) at the tip of the Sapna salient.⁷ Altogether, these units probably numbered about 8,000 to 10,000 men, although probably at most 50 percent were armed. In the Cerska-Kamenica enclave, the TO organized an additional two “brigades,” with possibly another 4,000 men combined, although again no more than 50 percent had weapons, and probably less.

Meanwhile, on the battlefield, despite their setbacks in May Bosnian TO forces in both Kalesija-Sapna and the Cerska-Kamenica enclave refused to give up, and throughout 1992 made several strong efforts to link up while attempting to sever the Serb-controlled road. On or about 7 June TO troops from Kalesija and Sapna attempted to push through VRS Zvornik Brigade forces toward the key villages of Memici and Caparde, on the Zvornik-Sekovici road. Over the next month, fighting seesawed back and forth. Eventually, the VRS gained the upper hand. On 19 June 1st Birac Brigade troops seized the key height, Mount Vis, which overlooked Kalesija, the Spreca River valley, and the Tuzla-Dubrave air base. The fighting petered out after 9 July, when troops from the Zvornik Brigade retook Memici.

Following this battle, Bosnian TO/Army troops drawn primarily from the Cerska-Kamenica enclave launched a series of strikes to sever the Zvornik-Sekovici-Pale road during July-September. The first raid against the road came on 29-30 July. While Bosnian Army forces from Kalesija-Sapna made holding attacks, Muslim sabotage troops hit the corridor at a key bottleneck, Crni Vrh, some 10 kilometers northeast of Sekovici and four kilometers west of Muslim-held territory in the Cerska-Kamenica area. Fighting back, the Serbs were able to reopen the route. Late in August Bosnian Army units from Kalesija and Kamenica struck at the road from two sides in a vain-attempt to link up their forces, gaining only a little ground. Sabotage units hit the route twice in September, but were beaten back. During October, ARBiH units made a major effort to link the Kalesija and Cerska-Kamenica regions, while VRS troops from both the Zvornik and Birac Brigades attempted to shrink the Cerska-Kamenica enclave. Neither side succeeded, although the VRS was able to seize a few key positions around Kamenica, and during one of the last Muslim pushes, on 30 October, they lost a veteran ARBiH brigade commander, Hajrudin Mesic from the Teocak Brigade.⁸ The dogged Muslims kept at it, though, severing the route three times in November. The VRS countered with a Zvornik Brigade attack that captured the Zvornik-Drinjaca-Bratunac road between the Drina River and the Cerska-Kamenica enclave on 22 December. At the turn of the new year, however, this slender route would be retaken and held

when Naser Oric's men attacked out of Srebrenica and firmly tied in the Cerska-Kamenica enclave with Srebrenica-Zepa.

The Muslim defenders of Srebrenica were to become some of the Serbs' most dangerous and deadly foes during the course of the Bosnian war.⁹ Serb TO troops and armed volunteers led by the local SDS President, Goran Zekic, took over Srebrenica on 18 April after demanding that Muslims in the town turn over their personal and official weapons. Most of the Muslims refused and fled to the hills.¹⁰ There, under the leadership of the charismatic Naser Oric, who had served in the Serbian special police, they planned their counter-attack while harassing the occupying Serbs with attacks throughout the month of April.¹¹ On 8-9 May, after a Muslim college student killed Goran Zekic, Oric's men swept back to reclaim their city from the suddenly demoralized Serbs. Deprived of their leader, Serb forces seem to have disintegrated, and withdrew helter-skelter to Bratunac to wreak revenge on the Muslim minority there, rounding up and slaughtering most of the remaining males.¹² Meanwhile elite Serbian MUP "Red Beret" special operations troops (possibly led by Captain Dragan of Croatian War fame) arrived to reinforce Bratunac and its environs.¹³

Oric and the Muslim forces—numbering between 4,000 and 6,000 men in three "brigades"—of which probably 30 to 50 percent were armed—ignored the Serb build-up and began their own reign of terror against Serb military and civilian occupants outside the towns of Bratunac, Skelani, and Milici. The Muslims systematically raided Serb villages, killing their defenders and making off with their weapons and the villagers' food. A Muslim battalion commander later stated,

We were not ready for war. We had to attack to get arms and ammunition. We attacked south because the Serbs were weak there; they did not think we would dare to attack towards Serbia. Another important factor was food. We had to obtain food. We had many refugees from

Zvornik, Bratunac, Rogatica, and Han Pijesak . . . And anyway, we simply wanted to liberate as much as possible of the Srebrenica opština [municipality].¹⁴

This raiding continued through June, July, and August, as the Muslims looted and razed Serb villages and expanded their areas of control. Chuck Sudetic observed that Oric's combat troops were now being followed by a band of desperate civilians,

Oric could now count on a force that struck the fear of God into the Serb peasants . . . a horde of Muslim refugees, men and women, young and old, who were driven by hunger and, in many cases, a thirst for revenge. Thousands strong, these people would lurk behind the first wave of attacking soldiers and run amok when the defenses around Serb villages collapsed. Some . . . used pistols to do the killing; others used knives, bats and hatchets. But most . . . had nothing but their bare hands and the empty rucksacks and suitcases they strapped on their backs. They came to be known as torbari, the bag people. And they were beyond Oric's control.¹⁵

The Serbs were now tasting a particularly nasty version of their own medicine.¹⁶

On 26 September Oric's men scored one of their biggest victories when they hit the village of Podravane and the nearby hamlets, some 15 to 20 kilometers southeast of Milici, near the Srebrenica bauxite mines. At least 27 VRS soldiers were killed—early Serb reports claimed as many as 50 had died—and the territory gained allowed the Srebrenica fighters to link up with Avdo Palic's brigade in Zepa.¹⁷ The Muslims treated the Serbs—soldiers and civilians alike—with no quarter. Sudetic writes,

The Serb fighters left behind men and women who had been wounded and killed . . . Then the torbari rushed in. Muslim men shot the wounded. They fired their guns into the bodies of the Serb dead, plunged knives into their stomachs and chests. They smashed their heads with axes and clubs, and they burned the bodies inside buildings. Oric's men grabbed half a

dozen prisoners; one, a fighter from Serbia who had relatives in Podravane, was beaten to death, and the others emerged bruised and battered when they were exchanged a month later.¹⁸

The Muslim attacks continued into October, as several villages 10 to 15 kilometers north of Skelani, right on the Drina River border with Serbia, were burned. In mid-December, more villages, about 10 kilometers southeast of Bratunac, were attacked and more than 50 Serbs killed. The VRS 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade and the Skelani Battalion were powerless to stop Oric.

Oric was now ready for his next objective: to link up with the Cerska-Kamenica enclave to the northwest and overrun the entire Bratunac-Skelani area, pushing right to the Serbian border. This offensive, which kicked off successfully on 24 December, was to be his last campaign, however. Instead of final victory it would bring down the wrath of General Ratko Mladić, the VRS, and the Yugoslav Army.

Battles along the Southern Drina: Rogatica, Gorazde, Foca, and Visegrad¹⁹

After the capture of Foca and Visegrad during April, the Serbs' next objective was to take control of the remaining Muslim strongholds centered around Gorazde. At the beginning of May the Serbs tried to occupy key suburbs of Gorazde town from the direction of Cajnice and take the Potkozara and Trebresko Brdo passes on the road to Cajnice. This first try failed despite fighting that stretched into June. On 24 June, the VRS—probably the Cajnice Brigade—claimed to have taken the southern district of Zupcici, some three kilometers south of the town center, but they must have lost it to a government counterattack because on 10 July, more than two weeks later, the VRS again announced the capture of Zupcici. The Bosnian Army's 43rd Drina Shock Brigade appears to have succeeded in pushing VRS troops back again and by the end of July the frontline in this sector had stabilized 10 kilometers southeast of town.

The Bosnians' rapid reorganization of their army and TO combat units contributed to this victory. By June the government had organized its forces into five brigades (1st Rogatica, 1st Visegrad, 1st Drina Shock, 31st Drina Shock, 43rd Drina Shock), while creating a regional headquarters, the East Bosnian Operational Group, under the command of Ferid Buljubasic, to control these forces.²⁰ The operational group probably covered about 8,000 to 10,000 troops, although, as usual, no more than 50 percent of these probably had modern small arms. In addition, elements of two tactical groups deployed in the Mount Igman-Trnovo area—possibly some 2,000 to 4,000 personnel—would be involved in operations to aid the enclave.

The VRS "Podrinje" Operational Group of the Herzegovina Corps, apparently under the command of Colonel Svetozar Parezanin, plus elements of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, controlled 10,000 to 11,000 troops covering the Trnovo-Foca-Gorazde-Visegrad region.²¹ The "Podrinje" OG commanded at least two (and possibly three) tactical groups in Foca and Visegrad.²² TG "Foca," under Colonel Marko Kovac, controlled the Foca Light Infantry Brigade (2,500 troops)—which was heavily involved in the Trnovo-Gorazde fighting—plus apparently the Gacko Light Infantry Brigade (1,200 men).²³ On the north side of this corridor, 1,500 troops organized in four battalions of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps (probably assigned to either the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized and/or 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigades) and the "White Wolves" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment supported TG "Foca."²⁴ TG "Visegrad," led by Major Vinko Pandurevic (and later Colonel Dragisa Masal), was the primary force containing or attempting to seize Gorazde. The tactical group was organized into four, later five, light infantry brigades—the Rogatica, Visegrad, Cajnice, Rudo, and Gorazde Brigades—with about 5,500 troops. Elements of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps's 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade supported the tactical group around Rogatica. Several hundred Serbian and Montenegrin volunteer "troops" also augmented VRS personnel, but their presence faded as the fighting dragged on.²⁵ On 1 November, the newly activated Drina Corps took charge of most of the Gorazde front, except for TG "Foca," to provide

Serb forces with a more unified command and control structure.

Although the dogged Bosnian TO/Army troops had a firm grip on Gorazde's defense, the enclave would need more supplies to hold out. Opening a supply corridor from Mount Igman, north of Foca, to the beleaguered enclave would be one of the government's most critical tasks during the year. When Serb troops hit and captured Foca and the nearby town of Ustikolina in April, they had pressed the unprepared Muslim forces back to the northeast, along the Osanica and Drina Rivers, some 15 to 20 kilometers west of Gorazde town. Clashes along this line continued throughout May, although little ground changed hands.

By the beginning of June, however, Muslim forces from Mount Igman began pressuring VRS troops around the key road junction of Trnovo, which was the gateway to Gorazde: from there Bosnian forces could use a rough mountain road to transport supplies across the southern Jahorina Mountains to the enclave. On 1 June, VRS troops and Serb civilians appear to have withdrawn from the town, but four days later the Serbs returned and pushed the Muslim forces back out. By late July the Bosnian TO/Army had prepared a major offensive to seize both Trnovo and the key Rogoj Pass to the south of town and thus secure a route over the Johorina running through the villages of Grebak and Jabuka. On 23-25 July Muslim troops captured the Jabuka-Grebak areas, pushing the Serb troops from the Foca Brigade and the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps out of several villages along the corridor, probably flushing out the local Serb population as well. On 31 July troops from the Bosnian TO "Igman" Tactical Group stormed Trnovo, then pushed on to capture the Rogoj Pass, 10 kilometers south of the town. For the next three weeks VRS forces held off repeated Muslim attempts to reach the town of Kalinovik, another 12 kilometers further south. Their success came too late, for the road to Gorazde—some five to 15 kilometers wide and 30 kilometers long from Trnovo to the Osanica River—lay open to the supply trucks.

Firefights peppered the area of the corridor for months afterward, but it was not until mid-November that the VRS made a concerted effort to close down the road.²⁶ This operation called for attacks by both the Sarajevo-Romanija and Herzegovina Corps at the route's narrowest point, possibly under the overall command of Colonel Vlado Spremo, chief of staff of the Herzegovina Corps. On 11 November two Sarajevo-Romanija Corps battalions, probably augmented by the "White Wolves," under a Lieutenant Colonel Borovina, pushed south from positions near Praca on Jahorina, while troops from the Foca Brigade under Colonel Kovac drove north. By 13 November the two forces had linked up at Modro Polje. Muslim troops fought to restore the corridor over the next week with some success. On 7 December, however, VRS troops ambushed a supply column near Grebak and closed the road; it would stay closed until early in the next year. The 1992 fighting seemed to indicate that the VRS had insufficient forces to hold a continuous frontline along the supply track, but could interdict it with shellfire and the occasional ground forces strike. During 1993, however, the VRS would move to shut down the corridor for good.

While they battled in the west, Muslim and Serb forces also fought over the Rogatica-Visegrad-Gorazde triangle along the banks of the Drina. In late May, as the two sides fought for control of the south bank of the Drina at Gorazde town, clashes erupted around the Mount Trovrh radio tower and Borak hill, some seven kilometers north/northeast of town. The hills running between the two points dominated the approaches to the town from both the north and the northeast. By 29 May, Muslim troops seized control of Borak, although Serb forces retained the Trovrh tower.

Throughout May, June, and July, Serb/VRS forces also moved to take control of the rural portions of the Rogatica municipality, seizing most of the area between Muslim-held Rogatica and Zepa. Bosnian TO/Army forces, however, still held Rogatica itself. The VRS Rogatica Brigade, under Major Rajko Kusic, gradually pushed Muslim soldiers and civilians out of the area, particularly along the Rogatica-Visegrad road, and by the end of July the VRS was ready to assault the town itself. Rogatica fell on 2 August after two days of fighting.²⁷ Muslim forces in the area

strongly resisted the attacks, but Kusic's troops were subsequently able to secure most of the area surrounding the town. Beginning on 8 August, the Rogatica Brigade moved to take the remaining Muslim-controlled part of the road, beginning at the Sjemic depression, some 12 kilometers east of Rogatica. The attack appears to have been at least partially successful.

Now, it was Ferid Buljubasic's turn to go on the offensive. Beginning in mid-August the East Bosnian Operational Group launched a series of attacks to clear the northern (left) bank of the Drina around Gorazde, and penetrate toward Rogatica and Visegrad. One of the first objectives was the Trovrh radio tower, which appears to have fallen in late August after sustained fighting.²⁸ By 30 August Muslim troops, led by the 1st Rogatica, 1st Drina, and 31st Drina Shock Brigades, had captured much of the northern bank, pushing to within 10 to 15 kilometers of Rogatica from the south.

The next step was to move on Visegrad, including the key hydroelectric dam south of town, while renewing the drive toward Rogatica. Muslim troops already held a narrow salient toward Visegrad, culminating in the village of Mededa, 12 kilometers southwest of town. They also held a strip of land five to seven kilometers wide on the south side of the Drina at its confluence with the Lim River, directly across from Mededa. The Muslim offensive kicked off on or about 12 September but made little headway against VRS Tactical Group "Visegrad," under Major Vinko Pandurevic. VRS Rogatica and Rudo Brigade troops counterattacked in late September and early October with some success. By 12 October, however, Buljubasic's men appear to have retaken the lost ground (including near Rogatica), and were able to renew the drive, slowly grinding their way toward Visegrad. By early November, Muslim 1st Visegrad Brigade units had pushed to within one to two kilometers of Visegrad town and the dam, and were within five kilometers of Rogatica from the south.²⁹ VRS counterattacks may have regained some ground in early December, but Muslim troops appear to have pushed Serb forces back out again.

Zepa and the VRS Main Staff

One of the more intriguing sectors in the Drina valley fighting was the area around the little village of Zepa, east of Han Pijesak. In and around Zepa, the Muslims had collected thousands of refugees and local villagers in a mountain fastness that was nearly impregnable. Operating from this area, Muslim soldiers—from the 6th Zepa Shock Brigade under the command of Avdo Palic—made themselves hornets around the ears of the VRS, particularly the nearby VRS Main Staff, the high command of the army. Muslim-controlled villages were less than five kilometers from the Main Staff command bunker complex at Mount Zep.

On 4 June, Muslim troops ambushed and annihilated a VRS supply convoy driving to the important radio relay tower on Zlovirh mountain, only some five kilometers northeast of Zepa itself.³⁰ The VRS did not respond to this attack, but after the next incident, on 7 August, when 13 VRS soldiers were captured, the Main Staff decided to eliminate the hornets' nest or at least swat back.

Guarding the Main Staff was normally the job of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment; much of that elite unit's troops, however, appear to have been dispatched to the fighting around Sarajevo. With the rest of troops in the area tied down all over the Drina valley, the only formation still in the Han Pijesak-Mount Zep area was the 67th Communications Regiment. To deal with Palic's hornets the VRS had to redeploy the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade all the way from Prijedor in western Bosnia to Han Pijesak to conduct its planned counterattack.³¹ The Main Staff was also able to draw on elements of Lieutenant Colonel Radislav Krstic's 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade. Combined with elements of the 65th, these units managed to seize and destroy several Muslim villages, clearing about 60 square kilometers in front of its headquarters.

This still left Muslim forces only five to ten kilometers from Mount Zep, and the rugged terrain made their main stronghold around Zepa virtually impenetrable.³² On 11 December a large Muslim sabotage unit struck at the Main Staff area again, but this time troops from the 65th Protection Regiment and the 2nd Romanija Brigade were able to block the strike.³³

Attacks like these would continue for another two and a half years while the Zepa hornets' nest hung just beyond the grasp of the bedeviled VRS.

Evaluation of the 1992 Drina Valley Operations

The ability of the Bosnian Muslims in the Drina valley to organize military units under extremely difficult conditions, defend their homes, and then undertake offensive operations against the Bosnian Serb Army stands as one of greatest military feats of the Bosnian war. The victories these forces achieved, which deflected the Serbs from one of their key war aims, came at a terrible price. At the beginning of the conflict the Serbs had driven thousands of Muslims from their homes and probably killed thousands more. Muslim military successes could not retrieve those terrible losses, and their forces remained locked in tenuous and hungry enclaves often crowded with refugees. Where they did succeed in pushing back the Serbs in 1992, their very successes—together with the many revenge-driven atrocities committed by Muslim forces, mostly around Srebrenica—would bring on a VRS strategic offensive in 1993 that was to destroy most of these gains.

Muslim military prowess can be attributed to four factors: organization, motivation, natural fighting ability, and leadership. The Bosnian TO/Army forces in the Drina valley, caught unawares when the war started, quickly organized themselves into classic military formations ranging from platoon to brigade. Although these units had nothing like the robust command and control network, discipline, or professional leadership common the former JNA units of the VRS, they were sufficient to provide a coherent framework for the defense of the remaining Muslim territory. Possibly as a legacy of Yugoslavia's era of Communist regimentation, every side in its war of disintegration, including the put-upon Muslims, set out promptly to organize its manpower, set up a chain of command, and work actively to professionalize its forces while the fighting raged. It was not a pretty process from a Western or NATO professional military standpoint, but the Muslim recruits of 1992 had units to report to, and they knew who their commanders were.

Second, the Muslims in the Drina valley were highly motivated instant soldiers. The men, particularly the refugees, had seen family members and friends brutally killed, tortured and raped. Many had lost their homes and all of their possessions. Their villages had been overrun and burned to the ground. Those who had escaped with their families now had to watch them slowly starve as the roads to central Bosnia and the central government were cut and pinched off. These experiences inspired the men of the Bosnian TO/Army forces in the valley with a powerful motivation to kill Serb soldiers and take their weapons, food, and anything else that would help them survive.

The Bosnian TO/Army made good use of the natural fighting ability that seemed to characterize the men of the Drina valley. They proved to be adept mountain rangers and fighters; operating in semi-partisan fashion, in small units, they exploited the familiar mountainous terrain to infiltrate the porous lines fronting VRS positions and to attack Serb villages. Their quick and stealthy movements terrorized VRS frontline soldiers, as well as the Serb peasant population, so that a minor Muslim raid might gather steam and roll up new territory as Serb troops and their families panicked and abandoned their positions and homes.

Finally, Muslim military leaders were chosen not for their political correctness or affiliation to a party, only for their ability to fight and inspire. Muslim soldiers grouped naturally around what were essentially chieftains or warlords rather than professional soldiers. These commanders were men who had risen naturally and by example to the top of the "warrior" groups in the early days of the fighting. They had a common thirst for battle and an appreciation of their situation expressed in the local equivalent of "the best defense is a good offense." Far from hunkering down and waiting for the VRS to hit them, these commanders took advantage of their men's anger and their natural combat skills to take the war to the Serbs.

The Serbs gathered under the banner of the VRS failed to defeat Bosnian TO/Army forces in the Drina

valley during 1992 because of shortcomings in organization, professionalism, and firepower. The VRS suffered from a command and control vacuum in the valley during most of the year, until the formation of the Drina Corps in November. The two corps that had been responsible for the region under the JNA, the East Bosnian and Herzegovina, were focused elsewhere (Posavina and Mostar-Dubrovnik, respectively). The operational group headquarters these corps formed to organize the men and materiel allocated to the Drina valley proved unable to unify the Serb effort or bring to bear the resources needed to combat the Muslims.

The absence of a former JNA corps in the valley also meant that, unlike the situation in other Serb-dominated areas, there would not be enough professionals with JNA experience in staff and leadership skills to organize and command newly created units. JNA professionalism was one of the key assets that had brought the VRS success elsewhere in 1992, and the availability of higher staff skills at the corps level, and often in brigades, had helped make up for the deficiencies in discipline and training at the battalion and company levels. Of the two former JNA combat brigades deployed in the valley, one was split in three different directions, and the other had been considerably diluted with TO personnel so that there was little or no cadre of regular units to compensate for the rawness of the new brigades.³⁴ Without this leavening of professional expertise and disciplined stiffening, most Serb units in the valley faced their Muslim opponents with a surfeit of modern rifles as their only advantage.

Unfortunately for the Serbs, although they had more weapons than the Muslims the advantage was not on a scale that allowed the VRS to compensate for its other shortcomings, as was the case in other theaters. With few regular formations to draw on, the VRS lacked the numbers of JNA-supplied armor and field artillery it needed to support its operations in the valley. Most of its new light infantry units had only 60mm and 82mm mortars to provide fire support, plus a few 120mm pieces.

Endnotes, Annex 30

¹ As with most of the combat narratives, contemporary press reporting is the primary source for the day-to-day events of 1992. These include Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, Sarajevo Radio, and Zagreb Radio. In addition, three Western studies on the Srebrenica area have supplemented these reports:

Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81; this article includes a review of a book by Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, which features a detailed history of Srebrenica.

Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

1998. While recounting the experiences of a single family in Bosnia, it provides a great deal of "ground truth" feeling for the situation in the Drina Valley during 1992-1993.

Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996.

David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1996.

Almost exclusively focused on the fall of Srebrenica in 1995, this book nevertheless gives useful background information on the situation around the town in 1992.

² 17th Corps Daily Operational Report, 18 April 1992, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002,

<www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 109.

³ Elite Bosnian Patriotic League troops, the "Black Swans," under the leadership of the unit founder, Mehdin Hodzic, together with Hase Tiric and Hajrudin Mesic, were able to halt Serb attacks around the villages of Nezuk and Zaseok, along the road to Sapna. On 10 May, Hodzic, after Tiric and Mesic were wounded, stopped a Serb/JNA armored attack.

The Chetniks were attacking with about 10 tanks and several APCs. The ring around our fighters, the wounded, and the civilians was tightening, and the Chetniks were using a megaphone to call upon our fighters to surrender.

Going deeper into the village, however, the Chetniks did not know that they were actually entering a trap prepared for them by Mehdin Hodzic. Then our OSAs [M-79 "Osa" 90mm anti-tank rockets] were heard and several tanks were already on fire. Then Mehdin Hodzic ordered a counterattack, and our men destroyed the Chetniks. They also captured their first tank and self-propelled artillery piece. . . . Unfortunately, the hero Mehdin "Senad" Hodzic also died at the close of the battle. A Chetnik sniper hit him right in the heart.

S. Hodzic, "Black Swan," Sarajevo Oslobođenje 7 March 1996, p. 8.

⁴ The 1st Zvornik appears to have been formed from the ex-JNA 336th Motorized Brigade.

⁵ The 1st Bihać probably initially included battalions raised in Vlasenica and Milici. Units from these two towns were expanded into brigades in late 1992 or early 1993 and designated 1st Vlasenica and 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigades.

⁶ Banja Luka TV 7 May 1997 "Tactical Antiterrorist Exercise" held marking anniversary of "Wolves of the Drina," includes short interview with General Milenko Zivanović.

⁷ The Tuzla TO District became the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps later in the year, and the brigade-level TO municipal headquarters were redesignated as brigades. Thus, the Kalesija TO became the 205th Mountain Brigade, the Žvornik TO became the 206th Mountain Brigade, the Teocak TO became the 1st Teocak Mountain Brigade.

⁸ S. Hodzic, "Captain Hajro," Sarajevo Oslobođenje 6 March 1996, p. 6. Ferid Hodzic, the commander in Cerska-Kamenica states that, In October, we tried to link up with Teocak. We were hoping to meet Hajro's men in Nezuk, west of Zvornik. But we lacked

the weapons and the ammunition and we never broke through. Hajro died on 30 October in a last attempt to make a link.

Quoted in Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 79.

⁹ This section on Srebrenica is based heavily on Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81 and Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, which includes a detailed history of Srebrenica. The account in the article has been cross-checked against official reporting and is consistent with this information. See also Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, pp. 77-79. For a short pre-war history of the prosperous mining community, see David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1996, pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁰ Many reports also claim that troops from Arkan's elite Serbian Volunteer Guard were involved in the occupation of Bratunac and Srebrenica. However, no Serb sources have verified this claim, and "Srebrenica" is not shown in a 1994 SDG-produced list of battle honors. Some of the volunteer elements may have fought in Vukovar during 1991, and possibly were confused with the SDG.

¹¹ Danner's description of Oric gives the flavor of one of the Muslim's most effective, yet most brutal commanders:

Short, powerfully built, with closely cropped dark hair and beard. Naser Oric was a twenty-five year old body builder, former bar bouncer, and member of the Yugoslav special military police [sic]; indeed, Oric's martial skills were such that, though he was a Bosnian Muslim—his grandfather had been a member of the hated Ustase—he had been assigned to serve in Kosovo and then appointed a bodyguard to Milosevic himself. In his plans to defend Srebrenica, Oric proved cunning and ruthless . . .

Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81. David Rohde writes that,

According to local stories, the brawny former bodyguard . . . drank a mixture of honey and walnuts—an aphrodisiac—before battle. As Naser passed through villages on his way to the front line, farmers had jars of the potent concoction ready for him. Naser was loved because he always led his men into battle. He was always the first out of the trench. His soldiers told their wives they loved Naser more than them. Soldiers named their sons Naser.

David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1996, p. 75.

Although most reports claim Oric was in the Serbian special police, he may instead have served in the pre-war Federal Secretariat for Internal Affairs elite Special Police Brigade, which served prominently in Kosovo.

¹² Danner describes the Serb actions,

In Bratunac, a few miles from Srebrenica, soldiers patrolled streets with megaphones, ordering Muslims from their homes. Thousands were herded into a soccer stadium. Women and children were loaded aboard buses and trucks and expelled. Seven hundred and fifty men were marched down Bratunac's main street and packed into a school gymnasium. Serb soldiers called the hodza or Muslim holy man, to the front of the gymnasium; there they forced him to shimmy up a climbing rope, poured beer over his head, and then beat him with clubs and iron bars, demanding he make the sign of the Orthodox cross.

After beating him nearly to death, the Serbs stabbed him in the back of the neck and shot him in the head. Then they began to beat the Muslim men; in three days they killed more than three hundred and fifty, and dumped the bodies in the Drina.

Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81. See also Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 149-155.

¹³ The presence of Dragan and the "Red Berets" has been corroborated. See Sarajevo Radio 7 August 1992. Dragan left the Krajina in November 1991, after a dispute with RSK President Babic, and was reabsorbed into the Serbian MUP, when he was quoted as saying, "I am active in the training of a special purposes unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) of Serbia. . ." Belgrade Tanjug 7 November 1991. This unit clearly was the elite "Red Berets" special operations unit of the RDB, under the command of senior RDB officer "Frenki" Simatovic. Dragan later returned to the Krajina in spring 1993, after the Croatian Army offensive near Zadar.

¹⁴ Suljo Hasanovic, quoted in Honig and Both, p. 78.

¹⁵ Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, p. 157. See also the review in Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81.

¹⁶ See also David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1996, pp. 15-16, 215-216 for Serb claims of Muslim atrocities.

¹⁷ See Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 79 for the report claiming that Oric linked up with Zepa. The VRS troops probably were from Milici-raised units of the 1st Birac Infantry Brigade.

¹⁸ Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, p. 158. See also Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81.

¹⁹ The narrative in this section is based almost exclusively on a detailed operational-tactical analysis of contemporary press reporting, supplemented by a few other reports and background gained over five years on the units deployed in the area.

²⁰ The "shock brigade" designator appears to have stemmed from World War II partisan unit honorifics.

²¹ Although this is the total number of VRS troops available, the Serbs consistently failed to fully mobilize most of their units, which often fought at less than full strength.

²² The third tactical group, TG "Kalinovik," may not have been formed until 1993.

²³ By 1993, the Foca Brigade had been redesignated the 11th Herzegovina Light Infantry (later Infantry) Brigade, while the Gacko Brigade became the 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade. The Gacko Brigade probably was shifted to TG "Kalinovik," either later in 1992 or in 1993.

²⁴ See M. Koruga, "War Portrait of the 'White Wolves': In Defense of Freedom," *Srpska Vojska* 25 August 1995, p. 23.

²⁵ These units drifted in and out of Bosnia at the whim of their "commanders." Most appear to have been far more interested in plundering Muslim homes and killing civilians than engaging in combat operations. They were never more than company-sized, and the VRS's ability to exert command and control over them often appears to have been limited during the early phases of the war. By the end of the year most of these units had disappeared, and the VRS allowed them into Bosnia only if they subordinated themselves to the army.

²⁶ In the interim the VRS Foca and Gacko Brigades apparently carried out a strange operation along the road connecting Foca and Gacko, as well as the adjacent Zelengora mountains. The focal point was the village of Tjentiste, some 20 kilometers south of Foca. No previous military activity had been reported in the sector, and it appears the VRS intended a combination of ethnic cleansing and counter-partisan actions. It lasted from 26 September to about 5 October. The VRS Herzegovina Corps trumpeted the success as the first time that troops from southern Herzegovina had linked up with the Drina valley, creat-

ing an "uninterrupted" front from Dubrovnik to Visegrad. Belgrade Tanjug 26 September 1992.

²⁷ The Rogatica Brigade lost 12 personnel killed in action while capturing Rogatica. Vuk Kovacevic, "They Protected Serbian Territory," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 13-14, an article on the 1st Podrinje (Rogatica) Light Infantry Brigade.

²⁸ The Rogatica Brigade lost 15 killed and 30 wounded during the fighting around Trovrb and Jabuka pass in late August. Vuk Kovacevic, "They Protected Serbian Territory," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 13-14, an article on the 1st Podrinje (Rogatica) Light Infantry Brigade. At some point, the Rogatica Brigade was reinforced by elements—probably 1-2 companies—of the 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade/2nd Krajina Corps. Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9.

²⁹ Muslim forces may even have established a tenuous link to Zepa, some 20 kilometers to the north, although it seems unlikely that they actually controlled a strip of territory linking the Gorazde-Zepa area.

³⁰ For a detailed account of the 4 June ambush, see Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 115-117. See also Biljana Djurdjevic, "The Serbs Do Not Attack First," Belgrade *Interview* 11 June 1993, pp. 20-22; interview with Major General Manojlo Milovanovic, Chief of the VRS Main Staff. Milovanovic claims that at first some Muslims in the area refused to fight the Serbs, and were killed by other Muslims.

As early as 20 May last year I had talks with Muslims from the wider area of Zepa, more precisely from the village of Krvica. The fifteen of them were armed with hunting rifles and were located near to one of our units. I asked them: What are you people doing here? They said we are protecting you from the Muslims. What are you? We are Muslims. So which Muslims are you protecting us from? They said: from Sandzak Muslims. They will force us to fight against you. When this happens we will run to you. And this is exactly what happened. The Sandzak people entered Zepa and killed the Muslims who did not want to fight against us.

Although Milovanovic's claim that these Muslims were from the Sandzak seems absurd, the claim that Muslims killed other Muslims is not.

³¹ See "Where It Was Hardest, There Was the 4th Battalion: From Romanija to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 37. The 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade was reinforced with one company each from the 6th and 7th Battalions/43rd Motorized Brigade, and part of the brigade antitank battalion. In addition, elements—1 to 2 companies—of the 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade/2nd Krajina Corps were deployed to the Han Pijesak area. For more details on this operation, see also Mico Glamocanin, "Without a Battle Lost," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 26 August 1994, an article on the 43rd Motorized Brigade, and Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, an article on the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, and Nikola Zoric, "11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade: Order on Krajina Chests," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, pp. 8-9.

³² Biljana Djurdjevic, "The Serbs Do Not Attack First," Belgrade *Interview* 11 June 1993, pp. 20-22; interview with Major General Manojlo Milovanovic, Chief of the VRS Main Staff.

³³ Belgrade Tanjug 13 December 1992.

³⁴ The ex-JNA 336th Motorized Brigade appears to have become the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade. Organized into seven battalions, its professional cadre probably was stretched to the limit. The ex-JNA 14th Motorized Brigade, originally garrisoned in Muslim-held Zenica, was moved to Sokolac when fighting broke out. It became the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, and was split between the Olov-Kladanj area, Han Pijesak-Zepa, and Rogatica-Gorazde.

Annex 31

Sarajevo 1992: The Siege Begins

From the very outset of the Bosnian war, Sarajevo was the political and emotional heart of the nation and the primary focus of the world's attention. Indeed, even before the war began the 1984 Olympics had made Sarajevo the outside world's most familiar image of Yugoslavia. When that image was shattered by artillery fire and replaced with street fighting in the Olympic village, the Kosevo and Zetra stadiums in ruins, rows of new graves dug alongside the soccer field, most Western viewers could relate the carnage to something familiar, and the plight of besieged Sarajevo commanded media attention in a way that the rest of the country, inaccessible and unfamiliar, could not.

Bosnia's capital city of some 430,000 citizens (pre-war) lay on a more or less east-west axis along both sides of the tiny Miljacka river. Tall mountain peaks loom up over the city on all sides, an ideal winter Olympics location but a phenomenally bad defensive one, as besieging artillery could overlook the city center and fire accurately and almost at will. The urban center of Sarajevo was broadly divided into the Old City (Stari Grad) in the east and the new city (Novi Grad) to the west, which were themselves comprised of and surrounded by a multitude of neighborhoods and suburbs, each with their own names.

Even before the war began, Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic had a vision of a partitioned, Serb-dominated Sarajevo. As Silber and Little narrate it:

Karadzic always made plain his ambition to partition Sarajevo...Without shame, he would advocate to journalists and diplomats alike the need to build a wall through the heart of the city...The extreme east of the city, the narrow winding streets of the Turkish old town, together with the broad boulevards of the neighboring nineteenth-century Habsburg quarters, were for the Muslims and Croats. Everything to the west

of Marijindvor—including most of the city's twentieth-century industrial and commercial infrastructure, and most of its residential capacity—was to be inhabited exclusively by Serbs. This was decided on the preposterous grounds that the farmland and villages on which the modern city had been built were originally populated mostly by rural Serb communities.

Karadzic made no apologies for devising a plan which would cram the vast majority of the city's people into the smallest, most crowded sector of the town. "It is the habit of the Muslims to live this way," his deputy, Biljana Plavsic, once memorably declared. "They like to live on top of one another. It's their culture. We Serbs need space."¹

Karadzic even went so far as to describe his views on the future of Sarajevo to then-US Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman: "The city will be divided into Muslim, Serbian, and Croatian sections, so that no ethnic groups will have to live or work together...Our vision of Sarajevo is like Berlin when the Wall was still standing."²

In Sarajevo as elsewhere in Bosnia, one of the first tangible indications that widespread communal violence was looming came immediately after the results of the republic-wide independence referendum were announced on 3 March. Roadblocks, barricades, and checkpoints sprang up all over Bosnia that day, but the division of Sarajevo city along ethnic lines was the largest and most pronounced confrontation in the republic. And with four killed in clashes between roving, rival ethnic gangs it was also the bloodiest. War did not come to Sarajevo in March 1992, but it came closer than it had at any other time or place to date.

Despite all the evidence of impending catastrophe, though, most Sarajevo citizens believed that a negoti-

ated peace could be maintained and war somehow averted. Tens of thousands would cling to this belief until literally the first shells were falling around them. In part this was due to the uniquely multiethnic character of the city. Just over one-third (34.1 percent) of all marriages in Sarajevo in 1991 were inter-ethnic, almost double the country-wide average of 18.6 percent and more than triple the 9.5 percent average for non-urban areas.³ Sarajevo's citizens also tended to be more educated and more politically moderate than anywhere else in the country, except perhaps for Tuzla in northeast Bosnia. But although the "silent majority" of Sarajevans simply wanted peace, a significant Serb minority was girding for war. Although the city census showed a Muslim or "Yugoslav" majority, almost 120,000 Serbs were concentrated in five municipal districts of Sarajevo's city center, and most of these did not share the Sarajevo government's perception of a multiethnic capital.⁴

Ironically, although multiethnic, cosmopolitan Sarajevo was the last place to accept that war could come to Bosnia, it was the first place where organized violence actually began; the shooting in Sarajevo slightly predicated Bosnia's formal declaration of independence, which was the trigger for the fighting elsewhere in the country. On 5 April, well-equipped Serb paramilitaries surrounded and then attacked the Bosnian MUP's large police academy complex on the south side of the city. Not only did the Muslim-dominated academy occupy a commanding position atop Vraca Hill, overlooking the Serb-majority Grbavica neighborhood, it was also stockpiled with guns and ammunition. The Bosnian Serbs, already alienated from the prospective multiethnic government, feared that the academy would put 800 well-armed government police cadets in their rear, and resolved to pre-emptively eliminate this threat with mortar, rocket, and rifle fire.^{5 6 7 8} The building was contested for several hours, and about a dozen of its defenders wounded, before an EC-brokered cease-fire was agreed to late in the day. Under the terms of the agreement JNA troops were brought in to serve as buffers, but in fact they appear to have turned control of the facility over to the Serbs and taken the teenage cadets as hostages.^{9 10 11 12}

The following day was April 6, the anniversary of the city's liberation from the Nazi occupation in 1945, and

any illusion of normalcy in Sarajevo broke down completely. Bosnian Serb gunmen fired indiscriminately from upper floors of the Holiday Inn (later to become the well-known home of many Western war correspondents) into the courtyard of the Bosnian Parliament building across the street, killing several pro-peace demonstrators and injuring numerous others. Bosnian Government Special Police eventually stormed the hotel, capturing six Serb snipers. Few Sarajevans had any doubts that Radovan Karadzic had ordered the shootings—the rooms from which the shots were fired had been rented to the Serbian Democratic Party, and one of the six arrested Serbs turned out to be a Karadzic bodyguard—but his role was never actually proven.¹³

That afternoon Serb forces began directing mortar rounds and rifle fire into the Muslim-majority Stari Grad and Bascarsija neighborhoods on the eastern end of the city.¹⁴ As it had claimed the previous day at the Vrace barracks, the JNA garrison professed to be completely impartial, but at least some JNA elements helped and supported the Serb territorials. JNA 2nd Military District commander Milutin Kukanjac later categorically denied claims that his tanks had fired in support of Serb paramilitaries at any point during the fighting,¹⁵ but a variety of other reports all maintained that olive-green tanks—which at that time must have belonged to JNA units—had indeed fired on Muslim-held positions near Grbavica and at the Vrace police academy.¹⁶

When the fighting had died down and the JNA ended its programmed withdrawal late in May, the new Bosnian Serb Army absorbed the JNA 4th Corps and all the Serb TO forces around the city and molded them into a single force dubbed the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps. This formation, using the structure of the former 4th Corps, controlled three former JNA brigades (including enough equipment for five armor-mechanized battalions), six new light infantry brigades (raised from the TO), a mixed artillery regiment, an antitank regiment, and an air defense regiment.¹⁷ All told, the force comprised about 15,000 men with up to 80 tanks, about 72 field artillery pieces, and 12 multiple rocket launchers, plus several hundred 60mm, 82mm, and 120mm mortars.

Major General Tomislav Sipcic commanded the new corps, but Colonel (later Major General) Stanislav Galic would replace him that fall.

Even more than elsewhere, Sarajevo's non-Serb defenders—initially numbering perhaps 10,000 armed residents of all types—were a haphazard lot.¹⁸ They included much of the former Sarajevo Territorial Defense headquarters and units from the Muslim-majority municipalities, some Muslim JNA deserters from the Marshal Tito and other barracks in the city, probably several thousand Patriotic League members (at least organized, if not fully armed), and a few conspicuous bands of common criminals. The last category, de facto gangster mobs led by flamboyant outlaw chiefs like Juka Prazina, Musan "Caco" Topalovic, and Ramiz "Celo" Delalic, provided some of the city's best-armed and bravest defenders, but they also openly extorted "donations" from the citizens they claimed to be defending and for a time became a law unto themselves.

The rest of April in Sarajevo was to see a series of contests for control over various neighborhoods in which the JNA continued to play an ambiguous role. In these contests of the first few days, most of the battlelines that would last the remainder of the war were drawn. On 13 April intense firing racked the Moj Milo district, a hilly area overlooking the southwestern part of the city.¹⁹ Under cover of the fighting the JNA reportedly withdrew some 12,000 small arms from the Moj Milo Territorial Defense depot and transported them to Pale.²⁰ The JNA openly confiscated the contents of the Faletici Territorial Defense depot in the far northeast part of the city at the same time, leaving the local inhabitants unarmed and outraged.²¹ On 15 April, however, the JNA sent its own armed troops to the Moj Milo-Dobrinja area to suppress the fighting and serve as peacekeepers. The Bosnian Government had little choice but to agree to the deployment after the fact.²²

The Vogosca district, north of Sarajevo city on the far side of the mountainous Zuc ridge was the next to be contested. On 18 April a battle began for control of the Pretis munitions plant in the area, precipitated, according to Bosnian Government sources, by the approach of an army convoy whose purpose was to remove weapons and production machinery from the

factory—a credible enough claim given the JNA's removal of TDF stores from inside the city five days earlier. Summoned by a broadcast call for defenders, Bosnian Territorial Defense and Patriotic League forces moved to prevent the confiscation and occupied the facility themselves.²³ Two days later, however, Serb forces occupied the local police and assembly buildings and established de facto control over most of Vogosca.^{24 25}

At approximately the same time, Serb forces were taking over most, but not all, the residential areas adjacent to the Sarajevo airport runway. Street battles began in the Ilidza district in southwestern Sarajevo on 22 April, including a struggle for control of a complex of hotels.^{26 27} (Many years earlier, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had stayed in one of these hotels the night before they were shot; just a few years later, these same hotels were to become the headquarters of the IFOR multinational peacekeeping mission.) Over the next few days, Serb forces occupied all of Ilidza (at the northwestern end of the airport runway), most of Nedzarici (along the north side of the western half of the runway), and part of Dobrinja (along the north side of the eastern half of the runway). But they could not completely dislodge the Muslims from the remainder of Dobrinja—a compact but densely populated neighborhood of mixed ethnicity—or the Butmir neighborhood adjacent to the south side of the runway. This tenuous connection—with Muslim-controlled neighborhoods touching fractions of the Sarajevo airport runway on opposite sides—was to be the besieged city's Government-held lifeline out of the city center for the next three years.²⁸

The second of May, 1992, was to be one of the most crucial days in the three-year siege of the city. Partly by accident, a series of interrelated events occurred which irrevocably changed the JNA's involvement in the siege and dramatically escalated the level of violence. It all began as President Izetbegovic's plane returned from three days of unproductive international negotiations in Lisbon. As the aircraft began its return flight, the pilot told Izetbegovic that landing clearance had been refused at JNA-controlled Sarajevo airport due to fighting in the area. Izetbegovic ordered the pilot to land at Zagreb instead. But then came a reversal which was to have far-reaching consequences: the pilot said shortly afterward that Sarajevo air traffic

control had changed its instructions and that the President could land at his own risk if he so chose. After a few minutes of reflection, Izetbegovic ordered the pilot to change course back to Sarajevo.²⁹

The UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, Canadian Brig. Gen. Lewis MacKenzie, had sent a Swedish armored personnel carrier to escort Izetbegovic back to the Bosnian Presidency under UN auspices, but after the flight had been delayed for over an hour and a half the APC left. Instead of neutral Swedish peacekeepers Izetbegovic was met by 30 JNA soldiers who escorted him to the JNA barracks at Lukavica. JNA Gen. Djurdjevac, commander of the JNA 4th (Sarajevo) Corps, told Izetbegovic he was being detained "for his own safety," but for all practical purposes the Bosnian President was now the JNA's prisoner.³⁰

However, at roughly the same time JNA was taking the Bosnian President hostage, the Yugoslav army was itself being held captive in most of Bosnia. In Sarajevo itself, the second of May saw Government police and Muslim volunteer forces begin to surround several JNA barracks and the JNA officers' club in Sarajevo—apparently under orders from someone other than Izetbegovic—with demands for the surrender of the Serb troops inside. When the JNA troops refused, the Bosnian Government forces began laying siege to the buildings. The army responded by bombarding Sarajevo's center with heavy field artillery from outside the city, a terrifying escalation from the mortar rounds that had done most of the shelling to date.³¹

In a recent study of the JNA in 1991-1992, former JNA operations officer and Krajina Serb Army (SVK) general Milisav Sekulic states that,

... there was a hasty decision to arrest Alija Izetbegovic as soon as he landed at the airport, which was controlled by units of the JNA. The idea was to force him to order an immediate halt to the mobilization [of the Republic Territorial Defense] and the combat operations. There was also an assumption that the safe passage of the Command of the Second Military District out of Sarajevo would be guaranteed. This decision was approved personally by Gen. Blagoje Adzic, Acting Federal Secretary for National Defense,

with the prior agreement of the Yugoslav President; that agreement had been given by Dr. [Branko] Kostic [the Montenegrin who was the then President of the Federal Presidency]. A mark of the amateurish, dilettante nature of the operation is the fact that the whole muddled enterprise failed to provide a fallback in the event that Alija Izetbegovic refused to comply with the Army's requests. Neither had thought been given to what was to be done if Izetbegovic was cooperative, but his orders were not accepted by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency or the Army of the Muslim-Croat coalition.

Sekulic also notes that the JNA had not given thought to the international response to the arrest of the "legally elected" president of Bosnia.³²

Then the JNA—apparently reacting to the surrounding of its barracks, although the exact sequence of events that day is unclear—dramatically escalated its offensive against Government-held Sarajevo. Acting without pretense for the first time, the JNA sent two armored columns out from their garrisons in an attempt to relieve the other, blockaded JNA barracks in the city and either incidentally or deliberately cut the capital's government positions in half. One armored column advanced into the city from the west near the airport, but was stopped by makeshift Government defenses in the far-western neighborhood of Stup. Another JNA column advanced north from the Lukavica barracks south of the city center, aiming to cross from the Serb-majority Grbavica suburbs on the south side of the Miljacka river over the narrow Skenderija bridge and into the Government-held heart of the city. The JNA tanks succeeded in crossing the bridge and made it to within a hundred meters of the Bosnian Presidency building. Muslim Patriotic League volunteers and Territorial Defense troops stopped the Serb armored advance with Molotov cocktails, rifle grenades, and a homemade artillery piece made out of a drainpipe. Caught at a disadvantage in the close-in fighting, four Serb tanks were destroyed and the rest gave up their ground and retreated to the south. Disaster had been narrowly averted, and Sarajevo's beleaguered defenders scored a major psychological victory.^{33 34}

By the evening of 2 May the President's capture was not only public knowledge but had become a real-time media event. Live, three-way negotiations were begun over Sarajevo Radio as the Bosnian Government, the JNA, and the EC tried to arrange terms for a ceasefire and the President's release. At the same time, the various parties were also contacting the Bosnian Territorial Defense, the Bosnian Serb military forces, and the UN—all of whom had their own stake in the negotiations. The confused multi-level negotiations failed to produce any agreement that evening.³⁵

³⁶

The following day, 3 May, the drama continued. After hours of negotiations, agreement was reached that the President would be exchanged for JNA Gen. Kukajac and over 200 staff officers and enlisted personnel then surrounded in the 2nd Military District headquarters in the city. The Bosnian Government guaranteed a safe conduct for the JNA convoy leaving the barracks, and the evacuation was to be supervised by Gen. Mackenzie's UNPROFOR peacekeepers. Things unraveled almost immediately, however, when Muslim paramilitaries opened fire on the withdrawing JNA vehicles, killing at least six Federal troops and capturing the rear third of the convoy. Izetbegovic was outraged, both that the Government's safe-conduct guarantee had been violated and that his own life had been placed at risk.³⁷

After the dramatic events of 2-3 May, the remainder of the month degenerated into a series of inconclusive battles for control of areas of Sarajevo that were already becoming familiar names to international journalists and their audiences. On 4 May, Government forces mounted an assault which temporarily retook Vrace hill,³⁸ but they were unable to hold on the area. Dobrinja remained hotly contested, with Serb forces shelling the Muslim-held apartment complexes while sporadic infantry battles erupted nearby.³⁹ Muslim forces counterattacked in Ilidza, briefly gaining control of the hotel complex there, but were later forced back out.⁴⁰

One of the most significant events of this period was not a battle at all. Rather, it was the "bread line massacre"—the first of Sarajevo's much-publicized major shelling incidents. Twenty-two Muslim

civilians were killed and 70 wounded when a mortar bomb exploded in a bread line on Vaska Miskin street on 27 May. The Serbs maintained (as they would in several later incidents) that they were not responsible and that the Bosnian Government had fired on its own people. UNPROFOR Gen. Mackenzie (who was in Belgrade at the time) accepted at face value the Serb claims that the Muslims had detonated a landmine at the site in order to gain international sympathy, and publicly stated that the bread line massacre had been a Muslim ploy.⁴¹ The statement was allowed to stand with no UN investigation of the incident; no evidence has been advanced to substantiate the Bosnian Serb claims.⁴²

The Bosnian Government attempted its first major counterattack from within the city on 8 June. Army forces mounted simultaneous offensives in several areas, aiming to capture four critical hilltop positions overlooking the city center. Sarajevo's defenders apparently surprised the besieging Serbs and took their objectives armed with little more than determination. However—as was to prove the case in many future offensives—the lightly armed Bosnian forces found that while they could take positions away from similarly armed defenders, they could only rarely hold them against massed Serb counterattacks and artillery fire. More Government forces attacked out of the Dobrinja neighborhood in the southwest near the airport, pushing the Serbs back several blocks. They made significant gains, too, on the south side of the river, but could retain only part of them. Bosnian forces did manage to capture and hold Moj Milo ridge in the southwest, but only temporarily gained control of the strategic points atop Vrace hill and Vidikovac in the southeast.^{43 44} Bosnian Territorial Defense and Special Police forces⁴⁵ jointly captured Zuc hill, a key position north of the city, but held the peak for only a while and had to re-take it late that year.⁴⁶ At the end of the impressive operation the Bosnian Government had to settle for control of only Moj Milo, which at least removed the sniper threat to the southwest part of the city. The remainder of June saw more fighting but little substantial change.

Already at mid-June the general battle lines had been established within and around the city. The areas of control closely matched the pre-war ethnic majorities in each district, and were to change remarkably little over the embattled months and years to come. Bosnian Government soldiers, mostly Muslims, controlled most of the city center, holding an uneven, barbell-shaped defensive perimeter running east-west along the Miljacka river. The Government-held area was widest in the western part of the city, where the defense lines included the Dobrinja neighborhood south near the airport, held the Rajlovac railyards as the defense's western boundary, and thence ran northeast to include the still-contested Zuc hill. The Government's hold was narrowest near the city center, where the Serb-held Grbavica neighborhood gave the Bosnian Serb forces a toehold along part of the south bank of the Miljacka river and the Serb siege lines came down from the north almost to the former Olympic stadium on Kosevo hill. The eastern lobe of the barbell was smaller than the western, but included the heart of historic Sarajevo and almost all of the key government buildings.⁴⁷

The Muslims and Croats controlled most of the urban core of Sarajevo, then, but the Serbs held most of the hills overlooking the city center and the industrial suburbs such as Vogosca, Hadzici, Semizovac, and Ilijas. Most of the Serb-held areas immediately surrounding the city center were sparsely populated but strategically valuable: the suburban heights nearest to downtown Sarajevo gave a perfect field of view over what later became known as "sniper alley," while the mountains slightly further out provided ideal artillery positions, allowing the guns to fire accurately into the city while leaving them virtually immune to counterattack.

The opening of Sarajevo airport under UN control on 29 June provided significant humanitarian relief to the city's population but had little affect on the military situation. Government forces held strips of territory on either side of the airfield, but could not move troops or supplies across the UN-controlled runway. It was not until a tunnel was dug under the runway a year later that the Bosnians actually had a physical connection to the outside world that would allow them to bring troops, food, and—most importantly—ammunition into the city.

After a lull of several months in offensive operations—meaning that shooting and shelling continued and neighborhoods were contested but little change occurred in the confrontation lines—the next round of serious fighting broke out in December. The Bosnian Serbs opened a month of heavy fighting with an offensive push directed against the Otes and Stup suburbs of western Sarajevo, which were jointly held by HVO and Bosnian Army forces. The Serb offensive began with a day of intense shelling on 1 December, followed by several days of infantry assaults.^{48 49} By 6 December, the hard-pressed defenders had begun to fall back.⁵⁰

Perhaps to help relieve Stup and Otes, the Bosnian Government mounted a second offensive effort against the Serb-held peaks overlooking the city the following day. Trying to reach two of their June offensive objectives, the Government forces attacked Zuc hill in the northwest and the edge of Mt. Trebevic in the southeast for several days after 7 December. Again their initial rush succeeded, and they captured most of Zuc hill and the key peak of Vidikovac on Mt. Trebevic.⁵¹ Almost inevitably, Vidikovac was lost to a Serb counterattack, but by 10 December the Bosnian Government triumphantly claimed firm control of the summit of Mt. Zuc—a crucial victory that largely secured the northern part of urban Sarajevo from Serb attacks.⁵² At a high price in blood and effort, the Bosnian military had managed to close out 1992 as a victor of sorts.

Perhaps more than anywhere else in Bosnia, the siege of Sarajevo illustrated the difference between the Bosnian Government's numerous, determined, but ill-equipped infantry forces and a Bosnian Serb military bristling with heavy equipment but a small body of infantry reserves that had to be carefully husbanded. Sarajevo's defenders could draw on a large pool of manpower but lacked weapons and ammunition to equip most of them. But even the best armed of the defending infantrymen lacked the supporting weapons they needed to fight their most important adversaries: the Serb artillery pieces that shelled the city with cruel impunity from miles away. Unable to counter the guns directly, the Bosnian Army tried to reduce their effectiveness by assaulting the well-defended nearer hills the Serbs used as firing and spotting locations.

These desperate attacks cost them high casualties for what was usually no more than a few hundred yards' advance. Then, heartbreakingly, the exhausted assault troops as often as not had to give up their gains under the fire of Serb artillery and counterattacking reserves. The Serbs enjoyed the luxury of several hundred artillery pieces, tanks, and mortars ringing the city. These could inflict civilian and military casualties, material destruction, and sometimes telling political pressure on the Bosnian Presidency, but in the end artillery bombardments proved incapable of forcing the surrender of either the population or the political leadership.

As 1992 drew to a close, Sarajevo's citizens could take some measure of hope from their painful victories and their few permanent gains: halting the JNA armored advances on 2 May, the capture of Moj Milo ridge in June, and the successful occupation of vital Mt. Zuc in December. But the defense of Sarajevo had been more a saga of disasters averted than of gains made. In a military situation where neither side could force a quick conclusion, the stage was set for a protracted and bloody contest of wills. Such was to prove the case.

Endnotes, Annex 31

- ¹ Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, 1995, pp. 232-233.
- ² *The New Yorker*, "The Victor in Bosnia" by William Finnegan. October 9, 1995, pp. 5-6.
- ³ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, pp. 10-11.
- ⁴ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, p. 10.
- ⁵ The head of the MUP school reportedly stated there were 840 students and teachers in the school compound at the time. (Most of these were teenagers.) Zagreb Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS London LD0504160392.
- ⁶ By an unfortunate and ironic coincidence the gun battles around the surrounded police academy were going on at the exact time as thousands of Sarajevs paraded into the area in a march for peaceful coexistence among all the factions. Unaware of the assault, the crowd crossed south over the Vrbanja bridge and marched towards the Serb paramilitaries attacking Vraca hill. One man was injured, and then a 21-year-old medical student, Suada Dilberovic, was shot through the chest. She died within minutes, and the Sarajevo marchers' dream of a united Bosnia died with her. She is sometimes counted as the first casualty of the Bosnian civil war, although that dubious distinction could perhaps better be awarded to the Muslim victims of Arkan's occupation of Bijelina four days earlier, on April 1.
- ⁷ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA 1995, pp. 226-227.
- ⁸ In the end, the several hundred captive police cadets were exchanged for the six Serb gunmen who fired into the crowd from the Holiday Inn on April 6, 1992. Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, pp. 41-42.
- ⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0504200892.
- ¹⁰ Less intense fighting occurred elsewhere in the city on 5 April. Muslim forces took over the Novo Sarajevo police station (Sarajevo Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0504134292), and shooting and grenade fire were reported in the Dobrinja and Bascarsija neighborhoods. (Sarajevo Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0504224292.)
- ¹¹ Zagreb Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS London LD0504230692.
- ¹² Zagreb Radio, 5 April 1992, FBIS London LD0604000892.
- ¹³ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, pp. 2-3, 22-24.
- ¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 6 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0604184292.
- ¹⁵ As Kukanjac put it, "The Yugoslav People's Army will not bombard Sarajevo. For sure, never, not tonight, not today, not tomorrow." Sarajevo Radio, 7 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0704201092.
- ¹⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 7 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0704234292.
- ¹⁷ The order of battle of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps in 1992 was as follows:
- Headquarters, Sarajevo-Romanija Corps—Lukavica
 - 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade*—Grbavica/Stari Grad
 - 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade*—Dobrinja/Vitkovici
 - 1st Romanija Infantry Brigade*—Hresa
 - Vogosca Light Infantry Brigade—Vogosca
 - Kosevo Light Infantry Brigade—Kosevo
 - Rajlovac Light Infantry Brigade—Rajlovac
 - Ilijza Light Infantry Brigade—Ilijza/Nedzarici/Airport
 - Igman Light Infantry Brigade—Hadzici/Kiseljak
 - Ilijas Light Infantry Brigade—Ilijas/Visoko
 - "White Wolves" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment
 - 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment*
 - 4th Mixed Antitank Artillery Regiment*
 - 4th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment*
- *Ex-JNA brigade/regiment
- Four infantry battalions of the corps—the Trnovo, Pale, Praca, and Jahorina Battalions—appear to have been assigned to the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry (Trnovo) and 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade (the other three). These battalions, however, were not stationed around Sarajevo, but deployed 20 to 25 kilometers southeast of the city as part of VRS operations to contain Bosnian Army forces around Gorazde in the Drina valley. The 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, although assigned to the corps, was never deployed around Sarajevo and fought in the Olovo-Kladanj, Rogatica-Gorazde, and Han Pijesak-Zepa areas. These operations also probably drew off some of the corps' artillery and armor strength from the siege of the city.
- ¹⁸ A senior Bosnian Army official told a Reuters correspondent that Sarajevo's defenders had begun the war with about 4,000 police weapons and about 3,000 weapons of all other types. (Reuters, "Bosnia's Moslem Army Predicts Long Conflict," by Gilles Trequesser, 1 December 1992) Other figures based on Patriotic League membership suggest that the actual number of weapons was probably somewhat higher, though not much.
- ¹⁹ Zagreb Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS London LD1304145192.
- ²⁰ Zagreb Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS London LD1304145192.
- ²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 13 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1304190692.
- ²² Sarajevo Radio, 15 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1504193092.
- ²³ Sarajevo Radio, 18 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1804153592.
- ²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 20 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2004152392.
- ²⁵ One exception appears to have been the Government-held Svrake district of Vogosca, which was surrounded by Serb forces but continued to resist and hope for relief into the next month. Sarajevo Radio, 3 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0305205292.
- ²⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 22 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2204073492.
- ²⁷ Government forces appear to have briefly gained control of the hotel complex in mid-May 1992, but the Serbs recaptured the area and retained control until the center was handed over to UNPROFOR. Sarajevo Radio, 14 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1405210092.
- ²⁸ Since the Sarajevo airport itself was controlled at first by the JNA and then by the UN for most of the war, even this Government-held link was not quite continuous until the construction of the tunnel under the airport runway.
- ²⁹ Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, 1995, p. 231.
- ³⁰ Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, 1995, pp. 232, 235.
- ³¹ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, pp. 98-99.
- ³² Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, pp. 301-302.
- ³³ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, pp. 98-99.
- ³⁴ Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, 1995, p. 233.
- ³⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 2 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0205191992.
- ³⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 2 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0205195592.
- ³⁷ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, p. 99.
- ³⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 4 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0405173692.
- ³⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 12 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1205211392.
- ⁴⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 14 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1405210092.
- ⁴¹ Gjelten, Tom, *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995, p. 117.
- ⁴² Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin USA, 1995, p. 310.
- ⁴³ Sarajevo Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0806181392.
- ⁴⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 9 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0906074492.
- ⁴⁵ Bosnian Army commander Rasim Delic listed the units involved in this battle in a commemorative speech. These were "the Sokolje, Boljakov Potok, and Buca Potok detachments from the Municipal Staff of the

Four infantry battalions of the corps—the Trnovo, Pale, Praca, and Jahorina Battalions—appear to have been assigned to the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry (Trnovo) and 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade (the other three). These battalions, however, were not stationed around

TO (Territorial Defense) Novi grad, the Pofalici and Velesici detachments from the Municipal Staff of the TO Novo Sarajevo, Vogosca detachments, and special units of the MUP (Ministry of Internal Affairs) and the Military Police." Sarajevo *Oslobodenje*, 9 June 1996, p. 3. FBIS Reston VA, 969B0057B, 221438Z Oct 96.

⁴⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS London LD0906015192.

⁴⁷ A more detailed (though still approximate) detailing of the frontline trace is as follows: starting from Sarajevo airport in the southwest, the surrounding Serb forces held parts of the modern built-up neighborhoods of Dobrinja and Nedzarici adjacent to the airport on its north side. Control then ran northeastward along the crest of a Moj Milo hill, curving north to touch the south bank of the Miljacka river in the Hrasno area. The one small chunk of the city center the Serbs held was here in the Grbavica district, approximately one and a half kilometers running along to the south bank of the river. From south of Grbavica the Serb lines extended up to Vraca hill—the police academy site contested the day before the war began—and then ran atop the hill lines extending to the southeast. Serb forces held both of the old Ottoman forts overlooking Sarajevo from the southeast corner of the city. The siege line ran almost north-south at the extreme eastern end of the city, curving around to the Sedrenik area in the northeast and then running

northwest above the Kosevo Olympic stadium, to the Velesici and Pofalici neighborhoods south of Serb-held Vogosca. In the northwest corner of the city, strategic Zuc hill was at this time still being fought over, with neither side able to hold it unconditionally. Serb control ran around the Muslim-held Rajlovac railyard area, from which the western boundary of the siege line also ran north-south. The western boundary was defined by the rail line, with the Serbs holding the western side and the Muslims the eastern. Both Serb and Muslim forces controlled territory adjacent to Sarajevo airport. Serbs held the Ilidza neighborhood at the northwest end of the runway. Muslim forces controlled most of Stup to the east of Ilidza, but Serb forces held part of Butmir on the south side of the runway. (Derived from multiple sources, including Belgrade Radio, 7 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0705151692).

⁴⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 1 December 1992, FBIS London LD0212000992.

⁴⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 2 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0212122092.

⁵⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 6 December 1992, FBIS London LD0612172092.

⁵¹ Sarajevo Radio, 7 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0712161592.

⁵² Sarajevo Radio, 10 December 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1012121192.

Annex 32

The Battles for Herzegovina and the Relief of Dubrovnik, 1992¹

JNA Offensive Operations: Kupres and Southern Herzegovina, April 1992

The Battle of Kupres.² Conspiracy theories abound in the Balkans, and in 1992 the belief that one side was planning to attack the other was virtually an obsession. In the Kupres area during March and April 1992, the JNA and Bosnian Serbs believed it of the Croats, and the Croats believed it of the JNA and the Bosnian Serbs. The JNA (or at least elements of the JNA) appear to have thought—erroneously—that the Croats intended to launch a major offensive from Kupres to link up with Croat forces in the Posavina or elsewhere.³ The Croats, for their part, feared that the JNA—again, improbably—was going to attack and cut off Western Herzegovina from the Croats in Central Bosnia in an operation called “Trojan Horse.”⁴ With such ideas afloat, hostilities were almost inevitable.

More plausibly, the fighting appears to have resulted from the uncertainties, anxieties and tensions that all Bosnians felt about the future of the republic, and the trickle-down effect this had on an ethnically mixed municipality like Kupres.⁵ Suspicions between Croats and Serbs were already smoldering after the 1991 Croatian War, and the early March referendum and the Serbs’ open planning for secession heightened these levels to a white-hot pitch. Both sides armed themselves to “defend” their home villages and the town itself. At the beginning of April, it appears that the Bosnian Croats’ HV commanders decided to pre-empt the possibility of a Serb attempt to seize the strategically located town, which they viewed as a potential Serb dagger pointed at the heart of Croat territory. It was this “defensive” move of 3 April that brought into play the assortment of armed and semi-armed formations poised to dispute Kupres’s future.

The forces available for the coming fight were a study in contrasts. The Bosnian Croats’ nascent army—the Croatian Defense Council or HVO—was in Kupres a barely organized collection of mostly local villagers and townspeople, possibly grouped into three notional battalions under a loose brigade-level command structure.⁶ This was stiffened by the presence of 100-200 veterans of the Croatian Army’s elite Zrinski Battalion, special operations fighters who had “volunteered” to serve in Bosnia. Most were probably ethnic Herzegovinians, who plausibly were returning home; they were led by HV General Ante Roso and Colonel Miljenko Filipovic, both former French Legionnaires, as were many of their men. Roso appears to have been in overall command of Croat defenses in the Livno-Tomislavgrad region, while Filipovic acted as the tactical commander.⁷ All told, their force probably numbered no more than 2,000 troops, most of them poorly equipped and trained; it is unlikely the Croats had more than a dozen 60mm and/or 82mm mortars, plus possibly a few 120mm mortars and the odd 76mm mountain gun or ZIS artillery piece.

Although the Croats holding Kupres could deal with local Bosnian Serb TO forces, they had no hope of winning against the professional, organized, and heavily armed Yugoslav People’s Army formations when they moved to retake the town. Kupres was nominally in the area of responsibility of the JNA’s 5th (Banja Luka) Corps. The 9th (Knin) Corps, however, reinforced the 5th Corps for the JNA’s counter-strike, probably because the bulk of the 5th Corps’ best units remained deployed in Western Slavonia.⁸ The JNA forces collected for the operation comprised two brigade-sized tactical groups, each probably numbering roughly 2,000 troops. The first, under the command of Colonel Stanislav Galic’s 30th Partisan Division/5th Corps, consisted of two partisan battalions, a battalion-sized volunteer “brigade,” a tank company, a heavy mortar battery, and a reinforced

corps artillery battalion.⁹ This group appears to have acted primarily as a holding force directly north of Kupres, on the main road to Sipovo. It was supported on its left flank, near Kupreska Vrata, by another partisan battalion.¹⁰ The second tactical group was drawn from Colonel Slavko Lisica's 9th Armored Brigade/9th (Knin) Corps, including one to two armored battalions, one to two motorized battalions, probably a TO battalion, and probably one or two artillery batteries.¹¹ It was to act as the main strike force, coming from the west/northwest. In addition, the Serbs' Kupres TO, probably some 1,000 personnel, apparently remained positioned in the tip of the Kupres triangle at Vukovsko Polje, where the Croatians' surprise takeover of the town had cut them off the first week in April. JNA and Serb forces marshaled for the counterattack outnumbered and outgunned the defending Croats, with an estimated 5,000 troops, about 30 tanks, and 24 to 36 field artillery pieces over 100mm.

The stage for the Croat takeover of the town had probably been set by fighting between local Serb and Croat forces around 1 April, although there are no reports of clashes on that date.¹² Whatever the antecedents, the Croat initiative dates to 3 April when HV/HVO forces deployed in the Suica area had attacked the Serb villages of Donji and Gornji Malovan, near the Malovan peak, on the road to Kupres. Simultaneously, local HVO troops in the villages of Zlosela and Rasticevo were engaging JNA and Serb troops some 10 kilometers northwest of Kupres, acting as a covering force (by design or by accident) for the main thrust up from Suica. By 4 April, Croat troops had secured a lodgment in the town against Serb TO elements, and Zagreb Radio announced the town's fall on 5 April. The Serbs, however, appear to have retained a hold on at least a small section or outlying area of Kupres, plus a larger pocket centered on Vukovsko Polje. Croat forces were now dangerously exposed in a salient that appears to have stretched some 15 kilometers long, but was only about seven kilometers wide.

The JNA was quick to respond to the Croat initiative. The day after the town's fall the JNA kicked off its counterattack in a blinding snowstorm. According to Colonel Lisica,

I spent the night of 6-7 April with a company at a command post above Zloselo. The previous night the 9th Armored Brigade had advanced from Trbovlje [near Drnis, Croatia], through Knin, Drvar, Glamoc, and Kupres and arrived above Zloselo. On that day, at exactly 1430 hours, I issued an order to my soldiers. The direction of attack was Zloselo-Osmanlje-Olovo-Kupres. That is how we advanced. The operation lasted two and a half hours . . .¹³

Supported by 30th Division troops, the 9th Armored Brigade rapidly advanced some seven kilometers to the outskirts of Kupres, shattering the Croat positions in their path.¹⁴ JNA units fought their way into the town on 7 April, linking up with hold-out TO units. The remaining HV/HVO forces pulled out of town toward Suica, pursued by Lisica's armor. By 10 April, JNA and TO units had retaken Gornji and Donji Malovan, reaching the Suica pass, where they either stopped or were stopped by Croat defenders.¹⁵ As would be expected with such a rapid victory, the JNA and Serb TO forces suffered relatively light casualties, losing 31 killed in action up to 16 April.¹⁶ Croat losses appear to have been far heavier, although no detailed figures are available.¹⁷ Indeed, the combined HV/HVO forces appear to have suffered a near disaster during the retreat when JNA armor overran some units on the open plains.¹⁸

Battles of Mostar-Stolac-Neum, March-May. The JNA's offensive in the Stolac-Neum area was undoubtedly justified by JNA beliefs that Croat dominance of the area would threaten the Bosnian Serb population in eastern Herzegovina. In particular, the continued presence of Croatian Army troops around Neum, where they had been deployed during the 1991 Croatian War, would have encouraged the JNA to take a hand, opposed as it was to deployment or actions of any "Ustasha" forces—as the JNA always referred to the Croats—in Bosnia at this time. The JNA regarded Croat regulars as an automatic threat to native Serbs, and the clashes that broke out the first week in April offered the JNA the opportunity to execute existing plans to secure the Neretva valley from Mostar to Neum, thereby creating a viable "border" between

Croat-controlled western Herzegovina and Serb-controlled eastern Herzegovina.¹⁸

The Croatians viewed the JNA deployments in south-eastern Herzegovina very differently, seeing them as poised against Croatia, including Dubrovnik, the port of Ploce, and all of southern Dalmatia; Zagreb and the HV Main Staff were convinced that the JNA was planning a strategic offensive to seize control of these areas. They expected additional drives from the Knin, Livno, and Kupres areas would support the attack. The Croat assessment was in line with the JNA's original campaign plans for the region during the 1991 war, a plan the JNA had had to abandon because of mobilization problems. Its 1992 campaign plan was nowhere near that ambitious.

In April, the JNA forces in Herzegovina and north of Dubrovnik on the Dalmatian coast were under the command of Colonel-General Pavle Strugar's Fourth Military District, which was better known as Operational Group 2, its Croatian War designator.¹⁹ Strugar had deployed two corps from Mostar to the coast, the 13th (Bileca) Corps and the 2nd (Podgorica) Corps.²⁰ The 13th Corps, under Major General Momcilo Perisic, controlled the 10th Motorized Brigade stationed around Mostar, the Montenegrin 57th Mountain Brigade deployed from Mostar Airfield to near Stolac, and the 13th Motorized Brigade located from near Stolac to north of Neum. The corps was backed by the 13th Mixed Artillery Regiment. Serb Territorial Defense (TO) detachments from Mostar, Nevesinje, Bileca, and Ljubinje also supported the JNA. All told, the corps probably had about 10,000 troops, supported by possibly 1,500 to 2,000 TO personnel. The 2nd Corps area of responsibility ran from south of Stolac to the Dalmatian coast, straddling the Bosnia-Croatia border. Major General Radomir Damjanovic's corps had two motorized brigades in the frontline, the 472nd on the coast, and apparently the Montenegrin 5th Motorized, located between the 472nd and the village of Ravno.²¹ Montenegrin Territorial Defense units, including the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade, continued the JNA 2nd Corps line to a position near Gornji Hrasno, south of Stolac. Elements of the 326th Mixed Artillery Regiment provided fire support. The 2nd

Corps probably had about 8,000 troops deployed between Ston and Stolac.²²

HV and HVO forces were less uniform in organization and deployment.²³ Between Mostar and Stolac, the HVO was still struggling to mobilize and organize local defense units, and had few if any coherent forces to oppose the JNA advance to the Neretva. From north of Neum to the coast, however, Corps General Janko Bobetko's new Southern Front, activated on 10 April, had two full brigades, the 4th Guards and the 116th Metkovic Brigades, a coastal defense infantry detachment, plus elements of the 115th Imotski and 156th Makarska Brigades, a total of 5,000 to 6,000 troops. In addition, the veteran 1st Guards Brigade was en route with at least another 2,000 troops.

The JNA deployment to Herzegovina in 1991 to prosecute the Croatian war around Dubrovnik had been met by fear and hostility among area Croats and Muslims against the JNA and the Serbs. By early 1992 relations between the JNA and the local citizenry were probably the worst of any place in Bosnia. The JNA's war in Croatia had led Croatians in Mostar to regard JNA units as an occupation force and a constant source of provocation. Even when the JNA tried to be impartial and unobtrusive, it was still universally perceived as a force friendly to the Serbs and hostile to the Muslims and Croats, and JNA soldiers and reservists made to feel unwelcome in most of western Herzegovina. On 1 February, a battle between an army patrol and Croat police reservists left a JNA officer severely wounded.²⁴ Three days later hundreds of mostly Croat citizens blockaded the roads from Mostar to Citluk and Siroki Brijeg in protest over the behavior of JNA reservists in the area. The local Serbs responded a couple of days later by blockading the Mostar-Sarajevo road.²⁶

On 4 March, the Croats began a blockade of the JNA's barracks in Capljina, some 25 kilometers south of Mostar, while Mostar citizens traded gunshots with the garrison of the JNA's "Mostar Bataljon" Barracks on 14 March.²⁷ Barricades went up once again the following day as Mostar citizens demanded the withdrawal of JNA reservists from the city.²⁸ Blockades partitioned the city into its ethnic neighborhoods for the next three days, and inter-ethnic gunfire was

¹⁸ See Annex 23, "Yugoslav People's Army Objectives, Strategy, and Operations, April-May 1992."

exchanged in some outlying neighborhoods.²⁹³⁰ Even more serious fighting occurred on 1 April, with skirmishes between JNA soldiers and Croat paramilitaries in several villages and mortar fire in the southern suburb of Jasenica.³¹ Finally, on 3 April 1992—several days before the outbreak of countrywide hostilities—a remote-controlled bomb blew up an oil truck outside the JNA's Mostarski barracks, killing one and injuring 40.³² Mostar was already a virtual war zone even before war was declared.

When that finally happened on 6 April, fighting between the JNA and primarily Croat forces in Herzegovina became general. The town of Siroki Brijeg,³³ west of Mostar, was hit by JNA air attacks on 7 and 8 April,³⁴³⁵ while JNA artillery began shelling some Mostar suburbs and shelled the city periodically thereafter.³⁶³⁷ Croat forces tried and failed to occupy Mostar's JNA-held military airfield on 9 April.³⁸ Serb territorials seized control of two hydroelectric power stations on the Neretva two days later.³⁹

In this environment, the Fourth Military District ordered the 2nd and 13th Corps to attack and take control of all of Herzegovina east of the Neretva.⁴⁰ On 10 April the 13th Motorized Brigade and the 57th Mountain Brigade advanced to the Neretva, surrounded the town of Stolac, and entered the town the next day. By 13 April the JNA had occupied the left (eastern) bank of the Neretva from Mostar to just south of Capljina against minimal Croat opposition. The commander of a JNA armored unit, apparently in the 13th Motorized—who later defected to the Bosnian TO—commented on the advance,

After the tank unit under my command pushed through the defense lines, the reservist units followed. They looted house after house in Divolje Brdo, Domanovici, and other villages [between Stolac and Capljina].⁴¹

Further south, the 2nd Corps attacked HV troops from the 4th Guards and 115th Imotski Brigades deployed northeast of Neum, where JNA and HV forces had clashed repeatedly but inconclusively during late 1991 and March 1992, helping feed JNA paranoia about Croat intentions in Bosnia. The 2nd Corps was now able to capture some key hills and a pass in the HV-held salient, but apparently could not exploit the

seizure to push the HV force back toward Neum town itself. In fact, HV units may have restored the position through a counterattack.

The 2nd Corps renewed the attack on 23 April, this time from the southeast, and with a much stronger force. The 5th Motorized and 472nd Motorized Brigades attacked along their entire front from north of Ston to the Trebisnjica River.⁴² The HV 1st Guards Brigade bore the brunt of the attack, although some supporting attacks hit the 4th Guards, 115th, and 116th Brigades. JNA troops were able to break into the HV defenses at some points, but failed to break out.⁴³ The Croatians' tenacious hold key peaks in the rocky Dalmatian terrain against intense artillery fire was the decisive factor in containing the attack.⁴⁴

A ceasefire was arranged in early May between Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, meeting in Graz, Austria, in an attempt to work out a political arrangement for their people in Bosnia. They issued a formal statement on 7 May agreeing to a cease-fire but acknowledging that disagreement on the division of Mostar and its environs had prevented agreement on a draft "delineation map." The Bosnian Serbs maintained that the Neretva River was the dividing line between Serb and Croat claims, and that the portion of Mostar on the east bank of the river should be Serb. The Bosnian Croats maintained that all of Mostar and the river banks should belong to the Croats. The Bosnian Muslims—the largest percentage of Mostar's population—were not even mentioned.⁴⁵

The ceasefire proved short-lived, for the following day JNA 13th Corps troops—the 10th Motorized Brigade and possibly the 57th Mountain Brigade—joined Bosnian Serb TO forces in mounting a concerted attack against the Croat-held portion of the eastern river bank.⁴⁶ Mostar's defenders were in serious trouble. The Bosnian Croats hung onto a narrow band on the eastern bank, and the Bijelo Polje neighborhood to the northeast. But JNA and Bosnian Serb forces occupied positions on three sides of the city: the high hills overlooking the city from the east, Mt. Hum and some of the suburbs to the south, and some of the high ground to the north. The highway west toward Siroki Brijeg (some 15km away) was still free, but subject to JNA shelling.⁴⁷

The HV Organizes the Defense of Herzegovina, April-May 1992

As already noted, the HV Main Staff—and General Bobetko in particular—believed the JNA was planning a strategic offensive to sever large parts of Dalmatia from the rest of Croatia while overrunning western Herzegovina.⁴⁸ Zagreb felt compelled to intervene to protect its own territory as well as the Croat population of western Herzegovina, in addition to achieving its larger political objectives in Bosnia-Herzegovina.* Croatian Army involvement in Herzegovina was therefore early and extensive (as HV Gen. Janko Bobetko's memoirs make clear), and it is essentially impossible to discuss the Bosnian Croat and Croatian Army forces in Herzegovina at this time as separate and independent entities.⁴⁹ The JNA's advance to the Neretva on 10-13 April brought an immediate response from the HV, and on 12 April Bobetko ordered the deployment of a battalion from the 4th Guards Brigade to positions north of Capljina, near Citluk, in order to stiffen the HVO's defenses. HV officers were already present trying to coordinate and organize Croat defenses from Livno to Mostar, but Bobetko's arrival brought renewed and more professional impetus to these efforts.

In fact, the HV-HVO relationship went beyond even the deployment of allied HV units fighting alongside HVO forces in Bosnia or advisors assisting in their formation. Not only were HV and HVO forces operating under a joint command, the HVO Main Staff was itself an HV forward command post, established on 16 April in Grude at Tudjman's direction.⁵⁰ For all practical purposes, the HVO was at this time a subordinate command under the HV, directed by Bobetko through former HV officers reassigned to the HVO.⁵¹ Bobetko personally selected the first chief of the HVO Main Staff, Croatian Army Col. Milivoj Petkovic, and Petkovic's newly-established HVO headquarters was simultaneously also an HV command post both officially and in practice.⁵² Throughout the war—but especially at this time—the HVO's chain of command, both political and military, ultimately ran all the way back to Tudjman's desk in Zagreb.

Bobetko and his staff reorganized the entire command of the HVO throughout Herzegovina, appointing new

* See Annex 25, "Croatian Political Objectives and Military Strategy in Bosnia, 1991-1992."

HV officers, forming new staffs and units, and generally providing a level of professionalism and expertise previously unavailable. In addition, more HV troops were sent to the Livno-Tomislavgrad (Kupres) front and the Neretva valley to stiffen the inexperienced local HVO forces. By mid-May the combined HV/HVO forces were more than able to hold western Herzegovina, even though the JNA had no actual intention of conquering the region.

Bosnian Government forces played the least important role in the Herzegovina theater in 1992. The Bosnian Army had its base of control primarily in the northern Herzegovina area bounded by the cities of Mostar, Konjic, and Jablanica. (Most of these areas were of mixed Croat-Muslim ethnicity; neither faction really "controlled" this territory since both the ARBiH and HVO maintained forces in the same cities and towns.) At this time, Government forces in Herzegovina were mostly focused on organizing and establishing themselves, and were confined to a largely defensive role most of the time. In addition, the Bosnian Army forces in Herzegovina—what became the ARBiH 4th Corps late in 1992—were the weakest and least well-armed even by the marginal standards of the underequipped ARBiH. (The entire 4th Corps was to fight the war with no more than half a dozen tanks and APCs, and roughly a dozen tube artillery pieces.) Ammunition shortages and mismatched heavy weapons types left the Bosnian Government forces in the area with essentially no heavy weapons other than mortars.

The HV Relieves Dubrovnik, May 1992

While Bobetko was reorganizing the HVO, he was also building up HV forces in the Neum-Ston area in preparation for a major attack to clear JNA forces from the Slano area and the northwestern approaches to Dubrovnik.⁵³ During the period from 28 April to 18 May, the HV Southern Front reorganized and rested its troops while bringing in more supplies for the offensive. The Southern Front campaign plan called for a two-brigade attack along a 20-kilometer front from the Adriatic Highway to Hrasno in Bosnia. The 1st Guards Brigade would make a multi-pronged frontal advance along the highway and along mountain roads to the north towards Cepikuce, with the two axes converging on Slano.⁵⁴ The 4th Guards Brigade

would attack on the 1st Guards left flank towards Zavala and Ravno, taking key mountain features that threatened the flank and rear of the operation.⁵⁵ The brigades' movements were to be conducted in two phases: the first to a 25-kilometer phase line stretching from Slano to the north end of Popovo Polje, and the second, after a seven-kilometer advance, to a natural defense line along a steep ridge northeast of Slano and thence to Zavala-Ravno.⁵⁶

The HV advance was greatly assisted by the withdrawal of JNA forces and the conversion of JNA forces in Bosnia into the Bosnian Serb Army.⁵⁷ The 27 April Federal Presidency decision to withdraw the Serbian and Montenegrin elements of the JNA from Bosnia also probably accepted the need for the JNA to end the siege of Dubrovnik. In any case, it appears that the JNA had been thinning out its forces on the frontline and pulling back artillery assets and supplies before the Croatian attack began. The 2nd Corps was also probably in the process of transferring the Herzegovina-raised 472nd Motorized Brigade back into Bosnia for assignment to the VRS. As a result, when the attack kicked off on 18 May, HV troops rapidly advanced along all axes, recapturing the main objective of the attack—Slano—on 24 May.⁵⁸ Further north, in Bosnia, the JNA forces were less likely to withdraw. However, the infiltration of a reconnaissance company from the 4th Guards Brigade behind a key JNA position at Velja Medja routed the JNA defenders, facilitating the 4th Guards' successful attack to Ravno.⁵⁹ The HV push forced the JNA and the new VRS to expedite their retreat, and they abandoned the Dubrovnik suburb of Mokosica on 26 May.⁶⁰ By the beginning of June Bobetko's Southern Front had linked up with the HV 163rd Dubrovnik Brigade. The siege of the city was over.⁶¹

Operation "Jackal" and the Liberation of Mostar, June 1992

From the outset, the HV/HVO command began preparations for first the complete capture of Mostar itself (e.g. occupation of both the west and east banks of the Neretva river), followed by the capture of Blagaj and Stolac to the southwest. While the relief of Mostar was itself a critical objective, Bobetko was also focused on the longer-term goal of relieving Serb

pressure on Dubrovnik. Even after HV forces had relieved the siege, VRS forces retained control over key positions in Bosnia overlooking the city. To these ends, the combined HV-HVO command devised a plan for a campaign to first retake much of eastern Herzegovina—thereby guarding the left flank of any renewed HV operations around Dubrovnik—and then to relieve Mostar from outside the city, rather than breaking out from within. This plan was codenamed Operation "Jackal" (Cagalj), and was set for early summer of 1992.⁶²

Bobetko's preparations were extensive. He first shored up weak HVO anti-tank capabilities by bringing in an HV unit from Sisak. He then worked to establish several platoon-sized reconnaissance and sabotage units, each intended to locate and attack a specific objective and disrupt Serb forces at the very outset of the HV/HVO offensive. The main offensive effort was also to be assisted by Croatian artillery fire, which was intended to knock out the Serb command post in Aladinovici and to pin Serb forces down while the Croats executed a flanking maneuver through Klepći.⁶³

At the end of May the Bosnian Croats began a series of preliminary attacks against the VRS 10th Motorized Brigade aimed at progressively improving their tactical position around Mostar and relieving Serb pressure on the city. These began with the capture of Mt. Hum to the south on 23 May.⁶⁴ The next Croat advances were on 11 June when HVO forces pushed significantly further, taking Mt. Orlovac and the towns of Varda, Cule, and Krusevo to the southwest and Jasenica and Slipcici to the south.⁶⁵⁶⁶ By 12 June the Bosnian Croats had cleared the Serbs from the western bank of the Neretva.⁶⁷ As an admission of defeat, the Serbs destroyed two of Mostar's other bridges on 13 June leaving only the largely-undamaged Stari Most connecting the two river banks.⁶⁸

At the same time the main event, Operation "Jackal," was launched from Capljina. The first important step was the capture of Tasovici, opposite Capljina on the east bank of the Neretva, on 7 June.⁶⁹ Rapid advances north and east followed. The withdrawal of Montenegrin JNA forces, and the long frontages held by the poorly manned brigades of the VRS Herzegovina

Corps, had left the area vulnerable. On 13 June HVO 1st Herzegovina Brigade forces from Capljina, in conjunction with HV 156th Makarska Brigade units, captured the road junction at Recice and the towns of Bivolje Brdo and Lovke, while elements of the HV/HVO Tactical Group-2, consisting primarily of the 116th Metkovic Brigade, then made a lightning advance eastward up to the outskirts of Stolac.⁷⁰ The advance north along the east bank of the Neretva made similar progress, advancing from Bivolje Brdo through Pijesci and Gubavica to reach the Mostar suburb of Buna by 14 June.⁷¹ By 15 June the HV TG-2 was consolidating its hold on Stolac and the 1st Herzegovina and 156th Makarska Brigades had captured the nearby Serb stronghold of Hodovo.⁷²

The final element of the operation was an advance northwest towards Mostar itself. One of Bobetko's columns advanced north through Buna and Blagaj, reaching Mostar airport from the south. At the same time, another column consisting of the HV's 4th Battalion/4th Guards Brigade and the Mostar HVO forces pushed south through Jasenica. The two Croat columns were able to link up at the Mostar-Soko airfield on 17 June.⁷³ With this major objective accomplished, the Bosnian Croats turned their attention to mopping up the Bijelo Polje neighborhood in the northeast.

At the same time, on 16 June HVO/ARBiH forces—now attacking from the newly captured eastern side of Mostar—overran the key VRS command post/communications facility on Mt. Velez, wiping out the command of the VRS 10th Motorized Brigade, killing its brigade commander, and taking the hill.⁷⁴ The HVO/ARBiH forces then advanced into the foothills of Mt. Velez to the east,⁷⁵ and by 21 June they had made Mostar more or less secure from Serb ground attack.⁷⁶ VRS troops from the stricken 10th Motorized Brigade managed to retake Velez on 24 June but were unable to advance any farther.⁷⁷ Battles continued on and around Mt. Velez, between Mostar and Serb-held Nevesinje, through the rest of the summer and again in early November, but neither side was able to make any significant advances.⁷⁸

Operation "Jackal" was a major success for the combined HV and HVO forces. (Croat-Muslim relations in Mostar were already strained by this time, and the Bosnian Army was not included in any of the planning for Operation "Jackal.") ARBiH troops appear to have

played at most a secondary role in the attacks eastward out of Mostar itself.) Although the Serb-held lines still ran dangerously close to Mostar, enough of the eastern bank of the Neretva (and, most importantly, the high ground directly overlooking the city) had been cleared of Serb forces. Strategically, the operation had also accomplished Zagreb's intermediate objective: establishment of a position from which Croatian forces could mount another operation to relieve Serb pressure on Dubrovnik.

Operation "Tiger" and Dubrovnik Follow-On Operations, July-September 1992

After the initial link-up with HV forces in Dubrovnik, the Southern Front quickly attempted to bounce the VRS 472nd Motorized Brigade from the key mountains and hills it held inside Bosnia and less than five kilometers from Dubrovnik city. Zagreb wanted to ensure that the Serbs could not fire directly on Dubrovnik or threaten Croatian control over it again. VRS shelling of the Dubrovnik area continued unrelentingly, which the HV countered by firing on Trebinje.⁷⁹ On 2 June Southern Front forces from the 1st Guards and 163rd Dubrovnik Brigades, supported by the Zrinski Special Operations Battalion, attacked. Their objective was the two-kilometer-wide pass that ran through Zaplanik and Orah and opened into the flat Popovo Polje region. If HV forces could break into Popovo Polje they could roll up VRS defenses, advance on the Serb-held town of Trebinje, and break the VRS hold over Dubrovnik.⁸⁰

The attack on 2 June took Zaplanik, but the initial penetration was too narrow. The Zrinski Battalion successfully captured the important Golubovi Kamen feature, which overlooked the main attack axis through the pass. However, the battalion was forced to withdraw due to poor coordination with the 163rd Dubrovnik Brigade on its right, which failed to seize the Ivanica area. As a result, the primary attack, apparently by the 1st Guards Brigade, failed to push through the pass. On 8 June VRS troops counterattacked and pushed the HV back to its start line.

The importance of the terrain ensured that the HV would try again, this time with better planning and preparation by the Southern Front for its Operation

“Tiger.” After reorganizing its units and receiving another Guards brigade and a reserve brigade, its forces would attack on a wider front with detailed plans to seize key features that had held up the previous attack.⁸¹

The Southern Front order of battle for the new operation consisted of three Guards brigades, two reserve brigades, an armored battalion, and a corps artillery battalion.⁸² It would get air support from the Croatian Air Force’s single MiG-21 to strike VRS communications nodes and key positions.⁸³ The attack frontage was some 23 kilometers, divided into three sectors for the Guards assault brigades. The 1st Guards, reinforced with the Zrinski Special Operations Battalion, would attack on the left flank to capture a series of mountains and hills on the edge of Popovo Polje and protect the main thrust. This would come from 4th Guards Brigade attacking in the center towards Zaplanik and Orah along the pass into Popovo Polje, while capturing Golubov Kamen and Ivanica. A special operations unit from the 4th Guards, reinforced with armor, was detailed to outflank these two features to ensure that the main force could advance.⁸⁴ The 2nd Guards Brigade was to attack on the right flank of the 4th Guards to tie down VRS units and keep them from reinforcing the sector opposite the 4th. The 1st and 4th Guards would attack on a frontage of seven kilometers while 2nd Guards attacked on a nine-kilometer front.⁸⁵ The operation was to take place in two phases. In the first, lasting three days, all three brigades would advance about four kilometers. In the second phase, lasting two days, the 1st Guards would push on another five kilometers, while the other two advanced only a kilometer or so. Two reserve brigades, the 145th Zagreb-Dubrava (with a battalion of the 156th) and 163rd Dubrovnik, were to relieve the Guards after they reached their final objectives.⁸⁶

VRS forces consisted of two to three battalions from the 472nd Motorized Brigade/Herzegovina Corps, probably reinforced with a special police detachment and a company of tanks.⁸⁷ The brigade 105mm artillery battalion, probably reinforced with one to two batteries of corps 130mm and 155mm artillery, provided fire support. The brigade had very few reserves

to commit against any HV advance because of the long front—40 kilometers—it was holding.

The attack jumped off at 0500 on 4 July and by 9 July had achieved many of its objectives. The 1st Guards with the attached Zrinski Battalion captured all of the features assigned to them on the left, successfully protecting the 4th Guards advance.⁸⁸ The 4th Guards pushed through the VRS frontline position, seizing Zaplanik by 6 July. This advance was facilitated by the infiltration of special units from the 4th Guards, reinforced with tanks, between Golubov Kamen and Ivanica, surprising the Serb troops and turning the VRS defenses of these positions.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the VRS was able to halt the 4th Guards in front of the village of Orah and the important 900-meter Vlastica position, blocking an HV breakout into the plains. The 2nd Guards Brigade appears to have made only minor gains on the right. VRS counterattacks during 12-14 July failed to restore the lost positions.

Encouraged by this partial success, the Southern Front buckled down to seize its unattained goals and additional terrain that would facilitate an advance on Trebinje, slogging ahead during July and on into August and September.⁹⁰ This appears to have resulted in at least four battles, probably not including a number of smaller efforts, plus a major VRS counterattack. The Southern Front continued to rely on the 1st and 4th Guards Brigades to provide the main attack forces, relieving them during pauses with more reserve brigades brought in from elsewhere in Croatia.⁹¹

The first attack in this series of operations came on 16 July, when the HV renewed its advance towards Orah and the Hum village/mountain area at the mouth of the pass into Popovo Polje. HV forces near Stolac and west of Ljubinje appear to have made supporting attacks. HV units, probably led by elements of the 1st and 4th Guards, succeeded in capturing Orah, but the VRS was able to halt the push toward Hum. No gains appear to have been made on the flanks.

For the next two attacks, the HV shifted its focus about 10 to 15 kilometers to the northwest. The VRS

472nd Brigade held a salient jutting into HV lines along the southwestern face of the hills and mountains rising above Popovo Polje. The Southern Front command may have hoped to eliminate the salient and possibly break into northern Popovo Polje. The first attack came on 29-30 July—possibly led by 1st Guards—and appears to have failed with minimal gains. An attack along the earlier axis further south toward Hum also appears to have failed. The Southern Front renewed the attack on 7 August, this time breaking through the VRS defenses and advancing five kilometers to the Bobani feature before the attack was halted.

Colonel Grubac's VRS Herzegovina Corps troops attempted to regain the initiative on 14 August, launching a major counterattack aimed at reversing the gains of Operation "Tiger" and capturing Bobani.⁹² The attack was a stunning success, crumpling elements of the HV 113th Sibenik Brigade then holding the line, and—according to General Bobetko—almost breaking through to the village of Osojnik, north of Dubrovnik and just inside the Croatian border. Bobetko, however, was able to quickly commit the 5th Battalion/1st Guards Brigade from reserve to block the VRS assault.⁹³ The Croatians were then able to recapture most of their previous holdings.⁹⁴

The final attack in this series of minor operations appears to have come on 7 September when the HV renewed its attack in the hills around Bobani. After six days of fighting, however, the Croatians had little to show for their efforts. The VRS retained its hold over most of the hill line protecting Popovo Polje.

Zagreb and Belgrade Negotiate the JNA Withdrawal from Prevlaka, September-October 1992

When the JNA withdrew from Bosnia and its positions north of Dubrovnik in May 1992, it retained control over the Konavli plateau, southeast of Dubrovnik, which included the resort town of Cavtat and Dubrovnik airport. The object of the JNA's concern was a small spit of land at Konavli's far southern tip—the Prevlaka peninsula. Whoever occupied Prevlaka could see across Kotor Bay, the new home of the Yugoslav Navy after its ejection from the Croatian

coast. Coastal artillery or missile batteries erected on or near Prevlaka could wreak havoc on the Federal fleet when it sortied from Kotor. To defend Prevlaka, the JNA needed to retain its hold over Konavli.

The peninsula was within Croatia's administrative boundaries, something that had never mattered to the Federal military in the old Yugoslavia. Now, however, the Vance Peace Plan that had ended the Croatian war required the JNA to withdraw its forces from within Croatia. Belgrade, before it would approve the withdrawal, wanted assurances about Prevlaka. It opened negotiations with the UN over Prevlaka in July and progressed to direct talks with the Croatians in September. Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance helped mediate the talks as part of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and the two sides quickly reached agreement on the demilitarization of Prevlaka and the deployment of a UN observer force to monitor the peninsula. The JNA withdrawal was scheduled for completion on 20 October.^{95*}

The Race for Konavli, October 1992

The withdrawal of the JNA's Podgorica Corps troops that had been holding Konavli would have serious military consequences for the JNA's VRS brothers in the Herzegovina Corps to the north. In addition to guarding Prevlaka, the JNA positions in Konavli had protected the VRS flank from an attack directly towards Trebinje. The pullout would add another 20 kilometers of front to the already overstretched 472nd Motorized Brigade.

General Bobetko and the HV Southern Front command realized that they had to ensure that the VRS did not attempt to fill in behind the JNA when it pulled out, and they could well imagine the advantages of occupying Konavli themselves. So when Bobetko sensed that the VRS was indeed preparing to move units into Konavli as the JNA redeployed its forces, he began making his own plans to beat the VRS to Konavli when the last JNA soldier crossed into Montenegro on 20 October.⁹⁶

* See Appendix 1 for excerpts from a speech by Federal Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic outlining the stages in the talks over Prevlaka.

But there was a daunting obstacle to Bobetko's plans: the JNA had blown Konavli's main road from Dubrovnik to Cavtat, around the Zupa Bay. Without the road, the narrow gap between impassable cliffs and the sea made movement along the coast impossible. Undismayed, Bobetko organized a Croatian Navy landing craft, some local ferries, and other assorted vessels into an ad hoc amphibious landing flotilla. The assault force embarked included the 5th Battalion/1st Guards Brigade, a tank company, a special company from the 163rd Dubrovnik Brigade, and a MUP Special Police unit.⁹⁷

On the evening of 19-20 October, however, as the JNA was finishing its withdrawal, a heavy storm whipped up the sea, apparently dooming the landing. Somehow, the vessels managed to move the ground troops the 20 kilometers from the port of Zaton to Cavtat, where they disembarked under VRS artillery fire. The 5th Battalion/1st Guards Brigade quickly moved north towards the line of hills that ran along the Bosnian border.⁹⁸

The VRS Herzegovina Corps had ordered full mobilization on 16 October in an effort to scrounge every available man to deploy along the rapidly yawning gap that the JNA withdrawal from Konavli was leaving.⁹⁹ On 19-20 October, as the HV troops were attempting to land at Cavtat, the VRS was moving about a battalion of troops from the 472nd Brigade into position along the border. The Serbs were too late. The 5th Battalion/1st Guards Brigade troops, supported by the tank company, hit the VRS near the village of Glavska, just across the border, driving them back. The HV advance flanked the line of hills centered on Vlastica, some 10 kilometers to the northwest, which the VRS had staunchly held for the past four months. Vlastica fell on 26 October to HV troops from the 4th Guards and 163rd Dubrovnik Brigades advancing from positions near Dubrovnik city. The gate to Trebinje was now open.¹⁰⁰

President Tudjman, however, ordered the last phase of the operation halted, according to General Bobetko. Zagreb was under enormous diplomatic pressure from the international community to call off the attack and halt the fighting, and Tudjman felt obliged to yield.¹⁰¹ The daring HV operations around Dubrovnik had relieved the siege, captured some of the most threaten-

ing Serb positions, and reoccupied the Konavli area. The VRS, however, still held Trebinje, and Serb artillery deployed near the town would depress Dubrovnik's tourist industry for years to come.¹⁰²

Evaluation of Herzegovina-Dubrovnik Operations

The operations in Herzegovina and along the Dalmatian coast to Dubrovnik were the most complex offensive campaigns the Croatian Army had fought up to that point.¹⁰³ The HV owed its victories to good staff work and organization, an emerging breakthrough in operational-level doctrine, the use of experienced brigades and elite special units to spearhead all operations, and surprisingly strong logistics support. The experience the HV gained in conducting these operations became the springboard for the Croatian Army improvements that would make it the finest armed force in the Balkans by 1995.

The HV/HVO's success in organizing and moving forces to defend Herzegovina and Dalmatia and then running a series of offensive operations in difficult terrain demonstrated that HV officers had the professional staff skills necessary to conduct actions of impressive complexity. That they had achieved this with a variety of hastily created headquarters and commands was also a tribute to their imagination and flexibility. General Bobetko's headquarters, the Southern Front, was an ad hoc corps level staff formed only during April that reported directly to the HV Main Staff—the JNA would have called it an operational group.¹⁰⁴ While such a staff might prove adequate for a short operation close to its logistics source, it would not normally be suitable for conducting sustained operations at the end of a long supply line, and it had barely sufficed in this case. Bobetko had so few people assigned to his headquarters that he had to practically merge his staff with that of the 1st Guards Brigade in order to get things done.¹⁰⁵ With no organic logistics units, Southern Front was dependent on the Main Staff in far-away Zagreb to collect its supplies and move them forward. To create the dual-hatted Southern Front forward command post/HVO Main Staff under Colonel Petkovic, Bobetko had to raid the HV Split Operational Zone and other units. It was an impressive show of improvisation, but the future Croatian Army could hardly rely on a jury-rigged

command and logistics system for conducting a major offensive, much less a war.

Already during Western Slavonia operations in 1991 and during parts of the Herzegovina and Dalmatian campaigns in 1992, the HV had shown promise in developing its operational-level or campaign doctrine. HV/HVO forces in Operation "Jackal" demonstrated a willingness to quickly exploit the weaknesses of VRS defenses after punching holes in Serb lines. HV units also quickly exploited the defeat and withdrawal of JNA/VRS forces northwest of Dubrovnik in May. This emerging doctrine of forcing a breakthrough into the depths of the enemy's positions to collapse his entire defensive framework was to become a hallmark of HV operations in 1995.

HV tactical methods had coalesced even more, particularly the reliance on the Guards brigades and other special units to spearhead all operations. The HV's territorially raised "R" (for reserve) brigades, such as the 163rd Dubrovnik, did not have the experience, training, or motivation to qualify as shock troops, and General Bobetko had found that special formations were needed to consistently break through the strong defensive crust of the VRS.¹⁰⁶ The doctrine he established for the Dubrovnik campaign in July-September 1992 would henceforth be the doctrine for virtually all HV (and later HVO) operations. A typical HV operation would be organized as follows: One to two Guards brigades, themselves led by elite reconnaissance-sabotage units, Special Police, or similarly trained units, would conduct the attack with "R" brigades following in the second echelon. When the operational objectives had been achieved, the "R" brigades would take over the defense of the frontline while the assault formations were withdrawn into the reserve, ready to mount counterattacks or lead a renewed offensive.

Even the logistic support seems not to have been all that bad: General Bobetko claims that, when he really needed something, he got it, implying that the HV logistics system had substantially improved since 1991. No doubt the importance of the operation to the Croatian Government, as well as the fact that Herzegovina-Dalmatia and Posavina were the only major operations they had to support, made it easier for HV logisticians to support frontline forces than had been the case in 1991. Nevertheless, the fact that Bobetko

had to worry about supplies and sometimes demand them underlines the hazards and difficulties of relying on a supply network stretching all the way back to the capital.¹⁰⁷

As for the Bosnian Serb Army, its strengths and weaknesses were readily apparent during its defensive operations against the HV/HVO from May through October 1992. The major weakness of the VRS—the primary cause of all its lost battles—was its shortage of manpower. The Serbs simply did not have enough troops to hold the frontlines their ambitions forced them to hold. The Herzegovina Corps had few if any operational reserves and its brigades lacked sufficient tactical reserves. As a result, an HV/HVO breakthrough, unless quickly contained, could rapidly result in catastrophe. In addition to its traditional strengths in professional staff skills and firepower, the VRS in Herzegovina helped compensate for this critical shortcoming through its exploitation of the extremely difficult but mostly familiar ground. General Bobetko's operation order for Operation "Tiger" paid tribute to the defensive skill of the VRS in the rocky Herzegovinian terrain,

...the enemy is applying the tactic of guerilla warfare, attacking with small groups (10 to 15 soldiers) and taking advantage of his knowledge of the terrain, while using villages as bases. He is defending his positions with daring maneuvers and offensive actions, thereby utilizing easily moved infantry weaponry (recoilless guns, Maljutkas [antitank missiles], and 82 and 60mm mortars).

*The line of defense . . . is defended by firmly holding positions, adroitly exploiting the advantage of the terrain, which towers over the terrain occupied by our units and suitable approaches to those elevations.*¹⁰⁸

The fact that a single VRS brigade stretched over 40 kilometers of front held off repeated HV attacks from July through September—while nearly breaking the HV front during August—speaks volumes about the tenacity of the Serb defense.

Appendix 1
Excerpts from Speech by Federal Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic on the Prevlaka Negotiations, 16 October 1992¹⁰⁹

Informal negotiations . . . between the representatives of the Republic of Montenegro and Republic of Croatia concerning Prevlaka were held for the first time at the end of 1991 and at the beginning of the 1992 in The Hague, at the International Conference on Yugoslavia, although no progress was made in these negotiations. In the talks of Dr. Borisav Jovic, Head of the State Committee for Liaison with the UN, with UNPROFOR Commander General Satish Nambiar, held on 10 July 1992, General Nambiar raised the issue of the Yugoslav Army's withdrawal form the Dubrovnik region in accordance with Vance's Plan. On that occasion Dr. Borisav Jovic presented the FRY's position regarding Prevlaka. This position was coordinated beforehand at the session of the Supreme Defense Council. It was confirmed that the FRY accepts point 18 of Vance's Plan and that the realization of the FRY Army's withdrawal from that region will be carried out on the basis of a specific agreement between the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army and the UNPROFOR Command. We concluded that the FRY would demand that it be ensured, in the interest of peace, that the Croatian forces would not be able to bring heavy arms into the vicinity of the FRY border and that the FRY will seek the final solution to the Prevlaka issue in political negotiations or at the International Court of Justice. It was also decided on that occasion that the FRY Army will completely withdraw from the territory of Croatia on the condition that UN forces be temporarily deployed in Prevlaka until a political or a court solution is found.

On the basis of the Yugoslav Army's proposal, and through the cooperation of the FRY President with the Serbian and Montenegrin Presidents, the FRY Government on 17 July 1992 compiled a memorandum

concerning Prevlaka, which was coordinated with the leadership of the Republic of Montenegro and sent to the UN Security Council. The memorandum explained in detail the historical and legal reasons, and the geostrategic basis [for the peninsula] to be a part of the FRY's territory.

The issue of Prevlaka was also thoroughly discussed in the talks that I held with Mr. Vance and Lord Owen, Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia, on 28 September 1992. In the talks that FRY Prime Minister Milan Panic and I held with the Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia . . . we examined the issue of Prevlaka in great detail. On that occasion we reached an agreement on the conditions under which the FRY Army would withdraw. In the talks of FRY President and FRY Prime Minister with Vance and Owen, Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia, held on 28 September 1992, we coordinated the details and speed of the FRY Army's withdrawal, which were agreed upon by General Panic [Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army] and General Morillon [Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Hercegovina]. On that occasion I informed Vance and Owen of the danger stemming from the Croatian occupation of a part of eastern Hercegovina and demanded that the Croatian forces withdraw from there . . . Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on Yugoslavia, offered guarantees that they will strive for Croatia to observe the agreement and refrain from embarking upon any military actions that would endanger Trebinje, Herceg-Novi, and Boka Kotorska. In the talks I held with Croatian President Tudjman under the auspices of the Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia on 30 September 1992, we agreed on and realized the signing of a joint declaration. This declaration says: The two presidents agree that the Yugoslav Army will pull out of Prevlaka by 20 October 1992 in accordance with Vance's Plan.¹¹⁰

Endnotes, Annex 32

¹ The analysis of these operations is based primarily two sources, the memoirs of the Croatian Army (HV) regional commander, General Janko Bobetko, *Sve Mo Bitke (All My Battles)* and contemporary press reporting from Zagreb Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug. General Bobetko's account—if somewhat bombastic and rambling—is indispensable for an understanding of Croatian strategic thinking and the operational-tactical situation in the Herzegovina-Dubrovnik areas. In addition, Bobetko has included detailed situation maps and photographs of many key documents, including operations orders for several battles. Nevertheless, Bobetko's memoirs must be read very carefully and crosschecked with the daily press coverage of events, supplemented by detailed map analysis of the operations, because the general has omitted at least two key time periods when HV operations were less than successful.

² Kupres town lies on the north side of a somewhat triangular plateau, Kupresko Polje, which was surrounded by a semi-oval of tall, tree-lined mountains. Starting clockwise around the semi-oval, the town is dominated to the north by the Demirovac feature at 1,765 meters. The feature is part of a range that separated Kupres from the towns of Donji Vakuf and Bugojno. Between Bugojno and Kupres, the range is about 10 kilometers wide with peaks ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 meters in height. A key chokepoint is the Kupreska Vrata pass/tunnel on the road between Kupres and Donji Vakuf. At the tip of the triangle or oval lies Vukovsko Polje, which was separated from the rest of Kupresko Polje by an upside-down L-shaped set of mountains intruding into the plateau from the north. Continuing around the oval, back toward the northwest, lies another range, the Cincar Mountains, bordering the plateau some 15 kilometers from Kupres, and intersected by two passes, the most important being Suica pass, on the route from Kupres to Suica village and Tomislavgrad. The pass is dominated by the 1,806-meter peak of Malovan. Northwest of Kupres town, on the key road to the town of Sipovo, the plateau narrows, then widens a bit before ending about 15 kilometers from Kupres as it reaches the Viterog massif. Veliki Viterog, the highest point on the range, rises to 1,906 meters in height.

³ See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 6, for a convoluted and conspiratorial discussion of Croat intentions. A Belgrade *Politika* article from 1993 claims that HV forces intended to break through to the Sava River near Banja Luka and cut the Serb-controlled Bosanska Krajina in two. Dusan Kecman, "Kupres is the 'Umbilical Cord of the Balkans,'" *Belgrade Politika* 25 August 1993, p. 8.

⁴ Mentioned in Attila Hoare, "The Croatian Project to Partition Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1990-1994," *East European Quarterly*, March 1997, pp. 121-138. Hoare cites his source as a 17 April 1992 Zagreb *Globus* story. Unfortunately, the original *Globus* article is unavailable. However, there is no evidence to support the view that the JNA was planning a major offensive to achieve such an objective. In addition, the JNA forces involved, while clearly adequate to retake Kupres, would have been inadequate for a larger operation.

⁵ Kupres had a population numbering some 9,600, of which about 51 percent were Serb, almost 40 percent Croat, eight percent Muslim, and one percent other. Miroslav Krleza Lexicographical Institute, *A Concise Atlas of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Zagreb: Graficki Zavod Hrvatske, 1993, p. 125.

⁶ HVO units appear to have included the Kupres Battalion, the 1st Tomislavgrad Battalion, and the XIII HOS Battalion "Jure Francetic," (raised in the Tomislavgrad area, but probably comprised of radical Croats from throughout the area). These battalions later combined as the King Tomislav Brigade, under Zeljko Glasnovic. In addition, elements of a Bosnian Croat special operations unit from Posusje, which later became the "Ante Bruno Basic" Regiment, appear to have deployed to Kupres.

⁷ See Snjezana Dukic, "If we had been only 10 minutes late..." Split *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 23 May 1994, p. 9. An interview with Colonel Miljenko Filipovic. For Roso's background, see Marko Barisic, "The

Colonel or the Corpse," Split *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* 24 November 1993, p. 6.

⁸ It is unclear which corps exercised overall command of the operation, although it would seem that the 9th Corps did, given the repeated references to it in contemporary radio and wire service traffic, as well as the presence of Mladic and Colonel Savo Kovacevic, his chief of staff during the fighting. See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 6.

⁹ The units included the 3rd Battalion/11th Partisan Brigade (from the Bosanska Dubica area) and 2nd Battalion/13th Partisan Brigade (from the Bosanski Petrovac area), each probably with about 500 men, a volunteer "brigade," probably with another 500 to 750 personnel, and the 2nd Battalion/5th Mixed Artillery Regiment. See Cekic, pp. 135-136. Colonel Miodrag Sovilj may have been in direct command of the tactical group. See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 6.

¹⁰ 1st Battalion/19th Partisan Brigade.

¹¹ The 9th Armored Brigade probably was formed at the beginning of 1992 from the Knin-based 221st Motorized Brigade—previously commanded by Lisica—and an independent armored battalion. The TO battalion(s) appears to have come from Bosansko Grahovo and/or Bosanski Petrovac. Milenko Sukalo, "Anniversary of Liberation of Kupres Marked: Freedom in Wounds," *Vojска* 6 May 1993, p. 27.

¹² Contemporary press and wire service reporting from Belgrade Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, Zagreb Radio, and Sarajevo Radio provide the bulk of the information on the day-to-day events during the battle.

¹³ Milenko Sukalo, "Anniversary of Liberation of Kupres Marked: Freedom in Wounds," *Vojска* 6 May 1993, p. 27.

¹⁴ The JNA attack plan involved fairly straightforward two-pronged advance directly on the town via the two main roads from the northwest, more or less shearing off the top of the Croat salient. The JNA was unable to attack the base of the salient to cut off the entire Croat force because the impassable terrain of Cincar Mountains abutted the base of the salient. Milenko Sukalo, "Anniversary of Liberation of Kupres Marked: Freedom in Wounds," *Vojска* 6 May 1993, p. 27.

¹⁵ In addition to the contemporary reporting, some other sources include Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic*, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Publishing Enterprise, 1996, Chapter 6, and Ljubomir Grubic, "Pulling Down the Pants," Belgrade *Nin* 23 July 1993, pp. 12-14—an interview with Slavko Lisica.

¹⁶ Belgrade Radio 16 April 1992. There is no reason to question these totals.

¹⁷ Colonel Filipovic was also wounded during the fighting.

¹⁸ Both sides claimed that the other committed atrocities against civilians after they had captured the Kupres area. Both claims are likely true to some degree. The JNA and the Serbs, however, used their more lasting victory to thoroughly expel all Croats from the region, while any Serbs the Croats may have ejected were able to return.

¹⁹ Operational Group 2 was formed in 1991 from the headquarters of the Montenegrin Territorial Defense headquarters, headed by General Strugar, to prosecute the JNA campaign along the Mostar/Split-Dubrovnik axes. In the JNA reorganization at the end of 1991, the operational group became the new Fourth Military District controlling all JNA forces in eastern Herzegovina, Montenegro—except the coast—and the Serbian 37th (Uzice) Corps.

²⁰ The Montenegrin city of Titograd had assumed its pre-Communist name of Podgorica by early 1992, so the JNA 2nd (Titograd) Corps also took on the new title.

²¹ General Bobetko's memoirs identify the brigade between the 472nd and the 13th Motorized as the "V. Vlahovic" Motorized Brigade. Veljko Vlahovic was an associate of Tito's and the brigade's barracks probably were named after him. The 5th Motorized Brigade from Podgorica, which was involved throughout the 1991 Dubrovnik campaign and the early 1992 fighting almost certainly is the brigade in question. If this

unit was not the 5th, it may have been the 179th Mountain Brigade from Niksic, which fought in the area during 1991. Belgrade *Vojnska* indicates that the Montenegrin TO's 1st Niksic Partisan Brigade was remobilized in January 1992 for service. Bobetko, p. 287, shows the "Sava Kovacevic" Partisan Division on the 5th Motorized Brigade's right flank. The 1st Niksic Brigade's nickname was the "Sava Kovacevic" Brigade, so it was probably this brigade that served between the 5th and 13th Motorized Brigades, together with other Montenegrin TO units. M. Vukosavljevic, "An Unbridgeable Rampart Against the Enemy," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, pp. 8-9, "War Bulletin," Belgrade *Vojnska* 28 January 1998, p. 9, articles on the 1st Niksic Partisan TO Brigade.

²² The maps in Bobetko, pp. 284-287 are a generally accurate portrayal of the JNA force disposition at this time.

²³ See Bobetko's force disposition maps, pp. 284-287.

²⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 1 February 1992, FBIS London LD0102223992

²⁵ Zagreb Radio, 1 February 1992, FBIS London LD0102172192

²⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 6 February 1992, FBIS London LD060294192

²⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 14 March 1992, FBIS London LD1403202192

²⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 15 March 1992, FBIS London LD1503214192

²⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 17 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1703161492

³⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 18 March 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1803161992

³¹ Belgrade Radio, 1 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0104155992

³² Belgrade Tanjug, 3 April 1992, FBIS London LD0304221192

³³ Also known as Listica.

³⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 7 April 1992, FBIS London LD0704184192

³⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 8 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU0804195992

³⁶ Zagreb Radio, 8 April 1992, FBIS London LD0804133993

³⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 22 April 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2204201592

³⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 9 April 1992, FBIS London LD0904201192

³⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 11 April 1992, FBIS London LD1104133292

⁴⁰ The JNA Operational Group 2—the Fourth Military District's other designator—officially announced it had defeated Croatian forces in the area. See Belgrade Tanjug 12 April and 17 April 1992.

⁴¹ M. Sutalo, Belgrade *Borba* 17 April 1992, p. 8.

⁴² Simultaneously, the 63rd Airborne Brigade carried out an air assault at Capljina barracks, assisting the 13th Corps in rescuing the 170 JNA personnel surrounded there. According to former JNA operations officer Milisav Sekulic,

After a blockade lasting several days of the barracks at Capljina, units of the 13th Corps, working together with forces of the 97th Aviation Brigade, successfully mounted an operation to evacuate people from the besieged barracks. All people and weapons were withdrawn from the beleaguered barracks following a helicopter landing operation with proper combat cover. This was an extremely well conducted and efficient operation undertaken by JNA specials [specijjalaca—the abbreviated term used for JNA special operations troops] . . .

Milisav Sekulic, *Jugoslaviju Niko Nije Branio A Vrhovna Komanda Je Izdala (Nobody Defended Yugoslavia and the Supreme Command Betrayed It)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2000, p. 297; Belgrade Tanjug 23 April 1992; L. K., "Osa Has Fallen," Belgrade *Nin* 13 August 1998, p. 16, which mentions operations of the 63rd Airborne Brigade during 1991-1998.

⁴³ For a discussion of the battle, see Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 276-279, plus the situation maps on pp. 284-287. Also see Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16, an article covering the 1st Guards Brigade.

⁴⁴ The 1st Guards in particular had a difficult time adjusting to the terrain in Dalmatia and Herzegovina, having served throughout the Croatian war in the flatter, more agricultural spaces of Western Slavonia.

⁴⁵ Zagreb Radio, 7 May 1992, FBIS London LD0705163192

⁴⁶ Zagreb Radio, 8 May 1992, FBIS London LD0805110692

⁴⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 10 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1005213292

⁴⁸ See Bobetko pp. 200-201, and 275-276 for a discussion of his perception of the JNA threat.

⁴⁹ The documents General Bobetko reproduces in his memoirs provide clear evidence that the Croatian Army formed, organized, and commanded the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) during the spring and summer of 1992. The most important section covering the HV's actions in Herzegovina is "The Preparation and Organization of the Defense of

the General Herzegovina Region and Preparations for Operation Jackal," Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 200-270.

⁵⁰ A photographic copy of Tudjman's order authorizing Bobetko to assume command of all Croatian forces from Split to Dubrovnik is reproduced in Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, p. 202.

⁵¹ See particularly Bobetko pp. 212-216, 220-221, 224, 229 for photographs of Bobetko's orders to HV officers organizing HVO defenses in key areas of Herzegovina.

⁵² See Bobetko pp. 206-208 for photographs of the orders establishing this forward command post with Petkovic as its chief when Bobetko was not present.

⁵³ Bobetko, p. 294.

⁵⁴ In addition to its own five battalions, one battalion of the 115th Imotski Brigade was attached. Andjeljka Mustapic, "The Knights from Imotski—For Croatia and For God," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 14-15. The 1st Guards Brigade was commanded by Colonel Marijan Marekovic.

⁵⁵ The 4th Guards Brigade at this time was under the command of Colonel Mirko Sundov.

⁵⁶ This account is based primarily on Bobetko's narration, pp. 295-296. Unusually for such an importation action, Bobetko did not provide an operation order. In addition see Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16, an article covering the 1st Guards Brigade.

⁵⁷ This judgment is based on an analysis of public statements from VRS and FRY officials. (See particularly Belgrade Tanjug 27 May 1992) plus the ease of the HV's advance, which Bobetko seems to believe was a great victory over a strong enemy. It certainly was a success for the HV, but except for certain parts of the 4th Guards Brigade's sector, the JNA and VRS clearly seemed to be withdrawing. The HV advance would have hastened the retreat.

⁵⁸ Zagreb Radio, 24 May 1992.

⁵⁹ Bobetko, p. 296.

⁶⁰ Zagreb Radio, 26 May 1992.

⁶¹ There is conflicting evidence in some cases about when and how Bobetko's troops linked up. For example, Vesna Puljak's article on the 1st Guards Brigade claims it did not enter Slano until 27 May or link up with the 163rd Dubrovnik Brigade until mid-June. However, the contemporary Zagreb Radio reports clearly indicate that Slano fell on 24 May, that the JNA had pulled out of Mokosica by 26 May, and that the HV was in control of the key town of Osobjnik, above Dubrovnik, on 30 May.

⁶² Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 200-270.

⁶³ Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke (All My Battles)*, Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996, pp. 200-270.

⁶⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 23 May 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2305213192

⁶⁵ Zagreb Radio, 11 June 1992, FBIS London LD1106113292

⁶⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 11 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU1106201092

⁶⁷ Zagreb Radio, 12 June 1992, FBIS London LD1206183292

⁶⁸ Zagreb Radio, 13 June 1992, FBIS London LD1306221192

⁶⁹ Zagreb Radio, 8 June 1992, FBIS London LD0806141692

⁷⁰ Zagreb Radio, 13 June 1992, FBIS London LD1306215492

⁷¹ Zagreb Radio, 14 June 1992, FBIS London LD1406115392

⁷² Zagreb Radio, 15 June 1992, FBIS London LD1506114892

⁷³ Zagreb Radio, 17 June 1992, FBIS London LD1706204792

⁷⁴ O. Zerajic, "Nevesinje Brigade: On the Ramparts of Serbian Hearths," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 12, an article on the VRS 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, which used its former JNA designation. 10th Motorized Brigade, throughout 1992. The dead brigade commander was Colonel Tomo Pusara.

⁷⁵ Zagreb Radio, 18 June 1992, FBIS London LD1806200592

⁷⁶ Zagreb Radio, 21 June 1992, FBIS London LD2106163892

⁷⁷ Belgrade Radio, 24 June 1992, FBIS Vienna AU2406172492; O. Zerajic, "Nevesinje Brigade: On the Ramparts of Serbian Hearths," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 12, an article on the VRS 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, which was the former JNA 10th Motorized Brigade.

⁷⁸ Zagreb Radio, 8 November 1992, FBIS London LD0811145492

⁷⁹ It is often difficult to tell which side fired first in these exchanges.

⁸⁰ Bobetko conveniently does not discuss this failed attack, although he alludes to it in at least two places, p. 297 and p. 318, noting that HV troops had failed for 20 days to capture the important hill, Golubov Kamen, which in the context of the passage dates before the start of Operation "Tiger" in July. The failed attack is also mentioned in Snjezana Dukic, "If we had been only 10 minutes late..." *Split Slobodna Dalmacija* 23 May 1994, p. 9, an interview with Colonel Miljenko Filipovic, commander of the Zrinski Battalion. A close analysis of Belgrade Tanjug reporting from 2 through 9 June, amplified by detailed map work, illuminates the ebb and flow of this battle. In addition, the locations described in these Tanjug reports as having been captured initially by HV troops and then recaptured by VRS units are later identified as HV objectives for Operation "Tiger" in July.

⁸¹ The description of Operation "Tiger" is found in Bobetko, pp. 302-313 (which are contained in a photograph of the operation order) and pp. 316-321, plus the official HV situation map on pp. 314-315.

⁸² Note that the HV artillery battalions at this stage often fielded a mixture of several different artillery pieces and 120mm mortar tubes, and generally were not comparable in strength to a VRS artillery battalion.

⁸³ Belgrade Tanjug reported an air strike on the Mount Leotar radio relay tower site on 1 July. Belgrade Tanjug 1 July 1992. See part 4 of Bobetko's operation order, pp. 302-313.

⁸⁴ The Independent Novi Zagreb Company "Cobras" was attached to the 4th Guards and also helped lead the attack. Andjeljka Mustapic, "The Zagreb 'Cobras'—Poison for the Enemy, Life for the Homeland," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 2 July 1993, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁵ The 2nd Guards Brigade was short one reinforced battalion that was deployed in the Posavina.

⁸⁶ The 145th Brigade appears to have been using the designator "Tactical Group 5" at this time.

⁸⁷ The brigade was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bogdan Kovac. See Radovan Kovacevic, "A Brigade is Defending the Heart of Herzegovina," Belgrade Politika 5 October 1992, p. 6. By 1993 the 472nd Motorized Brigade had been redesignated the 1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, but was more commonly referred to as the "Trebinje" Brigade.

⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the 1st Guards Brigade continued to experience difficult fighting in the mountainous, rocky terrain. Bobetko states,

The 1st Brigade had plenty of problems executing its mission, given the fact that no model could be applied here; instead, it had to use smaller groups of companies and platoons. Clearly the battalion was the basic tactical unit. It was necessary to deliberately and systematically capture every dominant elevation, but in such a way that one elevation that dominated another was always taken, thus disrupting their entire system of defense. It took several days for people to adjust to the new tactical approach to warfare and execute their specific mission in this terrain, which was not characteristic of wars in Slavonia and other places. On the whole it was not exactly easy to achieve the necessary pace in this sort of operation.

Bobetko's analysis applies across the board to all units fighting in Dalmatia and Herzegovina. Bobetko, p. 316.

⁸⁹ Bobetko, pp. 317-318; Andjeljka Mustapic, "The Zagreb 'Cobras'—Poison for the Enemy, Life for the Homeland," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 2 July 1993, pp. 25-26.

⁹⁰ Bobetko is virtually silent about this period, although he does make brief references to important Serb-held hills after "Tiger" which were objectives of that attack. He also discusses an almost successful VRS counterattack in August. This section therefore relies on a close reading of the daily press traffic and detailed map plotting of these actions.

⁹¹ These included elements drawn from the 112th Zadar, 113th Sibenik, 114th Split, 115th Imotski, 126th Sinj, 141st Split, 144th Zagreb-Sesvete, 148th Zagreb-Trnje, and 163rd Dubrovnik Brigades. This list is drawn primarily from Vesna Puljak, "Four Years of Operation Tiger," Zagreb Velebit 12 July 1996 p. 8. See also the following articles in *Hrvatski Vojnik* and other periodicals for brief references to service by HV units in Dubrovnik or the "Southern Battlefield." Neven Valent Hribar, "The Petka Coastal Artillery Battery," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, p. 83.

Damir Dukic, "The Scorpions in Defense of Croatia," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 16-18; article on 114th Split Brigade.

Damir Dukic, "Honorable and Ready for the Homeland," *Split Slobodna Dalmacija* 10 April 1994, p. 10; interview with Major Marko Skejo on the 9th HOS Battalion "Sir Rafael Boban"/114th Split Brigade.

Andjeljka Mustapic, "The Knights from Imotski—For Croatia and For God," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 4 June 1993, pp. 14-15; article on 115th Imotski Brigade.

Vesna Puljak, "Units of the Croatian Army 'The Neretva is Still Flowing,'" *Hrvatski Vojnik* 29 July 1994, p. 26; article on the 116th Metkovic Brigade.

Gojko Drljaca, "From Dubrava to Dubrovnik," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 18 June 1993, p. 12; article on the 145th Zagreb-Dubrava Brigade.

Sinisa Haluzan, "Through Thorns to Glory and Victory," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 20 May 1994, pp. 19-21; article on the 148th Zagreb-Trnje Brigade.

Ante Matic, "Even the Last Stone of Croatian Land," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 9 April 1993, pp. 14-16; article on the 156th Makarska Brigade.

⁹² The corps, using troops from the 13th Motorized Brigade, also made a simultaneous attack around Stolac some 50 kilometers to the north that was partially successful.

⁹³ The commander of the 5th Battalion was Ivan Korade. The 5th Battalion would later serve as the nucleus for the 7th Guards Brigade "Pumas" formed in 1993 under Korade's command. The 7th Guards would gain fame in 1995 during Operation "Storm" and HV operations in Bosnia.

⁹⁴ Based on Bobetko, pp. 318-319 and pp. 335-336, as well as Belgrade press reporting.

⁹⁵ See Cosic's speech in the appendix, plus David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich, 1995, pp. 51-52, and Borisav Jovic, *The Last Days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Daily Notes from the Period 15 May 1989 to 8 July 1992*, Belgrade: Politika, 1995, entry for 7 July 1992, plus Paris AFP 30 September 1992, and Belgrade Tanjug 6 October, 14 October, 20 October, and 21 October 1992.

⁹⁶ Bobetko, pp. 328-329.

⁹⁷ Bobetko pp. 328-329 and Vesna Puljak, "Three Years of Tigers," *Hrvatski Vojnik* 5 November 1993, pp. 12-16, an article covering the 1st Guards Brigade.

⁹⁸ Bobetko, pp. 328-330.

⁹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug 16 October 1992.

¹⁰⁰ Bobetko, pp. 328-331.

¹⁰¹ Bobetko, p. 330-332.

¹⁰² Bobetko claims that the Southern Front developed a plan to capture Trebinje at this time, but that Zagreb would not approve its implementation. Bobetko, p. 331.

¹⁰³ The only comparable operations were those in Western Slavonia in 1991.

¹⁰⁴ The Southern Front initially had difficulties coordinating the advance of its formations. Bobetko writes,

We saw situations in the beginning in which forces of the 1st Brigade were attacking while some parts of the 4th Brigade were observers, even though from their positions they could have offered effective support and created favorable conditions for the 1st Brigade units in capturing rather sensitive and difficult positions. Thus, that problem too had to be overcome organizationally and tactically.

Bobetko, p. 289.

¹⁰⁵ See Bobetko, pp. 276, Parts 11 and 12 of the operation order for "Tiger," p. 313, and p. 336.

¹⁰⁶ Bobetko states that the 163rd,

... had spent a long time, more than two years, defending [Dubrovnik] itself, and it took a certain amount of time to adapt to movement, to a new command method, which up to then had been exclusively defensive. It was not capable of broader and deeper envelopments, so that it had to occupy the territory and positions of the 4th Brigade, parts of the 2nd Brigade, parts of the 1st Brigade . . . it was a reserve structure with nearly 2,500 people. Among them were many brave men, but nevertheless they lacked experience.

Bobetko also writes about the unreliability of most of the reinforcements the Main Staff sent him, nearly all of which—except the 2nd Guards Brigade—were reserve formations. He states that ". . . the units that arrived were unprepared, untrained, and unreliable for any serious combat mission." Bobetko p. 320. See also Bobetko, p. 335.

¹⁰⁷ Bobetko, p. 298.

¹⁰⁸ A photograph of this order is reproduced in Janko Bobetko, *Sve Moje Bitke* (All My Battles), Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1996. pp. 302-313.

¹⁰⁹ Upon the formation of the new Federal Yugoslav Republic in spring 1992, the collective Federal Presidency was abolished. Instead, there was to be a single Federal President elected by the Federal Assembly. In addition, a Supreme Defense Council, composed of the Federal President and the Serbian and Montenegrin Presidents, would make all major decisions regarding national security. Serbian nationalist writer Dobrica Cosic was elected the first Federal president.

¹¹⁰ Belgrade Radio 16 October 1992.

Annex 33

The Role of the Bosnian Serb Air and Air Defense Force in 1992

The Bosnian Serb Air and Air Defense Force (V i PVO) was a highly visible component that played a subordinate role during the Bosnian Serb Army's operations in 1992. This visibility caused the UN Security Council to approve the creation of a "no-fly zone" over Bosnia in October 1992 that quickly curtailed fixed-wing combat flights, although helicopter sorties and occasional fighter-bomber attacks were to continue throughout the conflict.* The V i PVO was a small force, and its ability to provide a decisive punch to VRS ground operations was limited. It had about 20 J-22 "Orao" light strike/reconnaissance aircraft and J-21 "Galeb-Jastreb" dual-purpose light strike/trainer aircraft, 15 light attack/observation helicopters, and 15 transport helicopters, as well as a number of air defense units. It flew both reconnaissance and ground attack missions for the VRS, its combat sorties focusing primarily on interdiction but including some close air support. During a typical VRS campaign, such as Operation "Vrbas 92" at Jajce, VRS attack aircraft, operating in two- and four-plane formations, might

* "UN Council Declares Bosnia A Military No-Fly Zone," Reuters 9 October 1992. Almost simultaneously, Bosnian Serb President Karadzic offered to send the V i PVO aircraft to Yugoslavia in a political gesture designed to score points with the West. This effort came to naught after negotiations between Karadzic and EU envoy Lord David Owen broke down when the VRS blocked Karadzic's attempt to give away its aircraft. Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio 13-15 October 1992. The initial "no-fly zone" resolution provided no enforcement mechanism to ensure that no one flew aircraft over Bosnia. The Security Council approved the enforcement of the zone in early 1993 after Bosnian Serb An-2 biplanes attacked Bosnian Army positions around the Srebrenica enclave by rolling bombs out of the planes' cargo doors.

carry out one or two air strikes a day against enemy headquarters, artillery/mortar positions, bridges, and road junctions, and, probably less frequently, enemy frontline positions. For such missions the VRS could also use Gazelle light attack helicopters equipped with AT-3 antitank missiles, unguided rockets, and machine guns to target enemy frontline defenses. These helicopters were more vulnerable to enemy ground fire, however, and the VRS appears to have employed them even more sparingly than it did its strike planes. In a support role, the VRS Mi-8 and Gazelle observation helicopter fleet was used to transport wounded quickly to VRS and Yugoslav Army medical facilities, delivering critical supplies, and moving VIP passengers to the battlefield.

While the VRS certainly was glad to have air support for its ground campaigns, in some ways the psychological effect of being attacked from the air had a greater impact on Croat and Muslim troops than the actual physical damage the V i PVO could inflict on these forces. The V i PVO had too few aircraft to saturate enemy positions with dumb bombs and unguided rockets, and there were not enough precision guided weapons available to have any decisive effect. The mountainous, forested terrain and the type of military formations deployed in Bosnia—primarily light infantry and small armor and artillery units—made targeting by aircraft difficult. Flying low and slow enough to identify these targets would have made V i PVO aircraft more vulnerable to enemy ground fire, so the Serbs flew at higher altitudes that reduced their effectiveness even more.

Annex 34
The Charge of the Light Blue Brigade:
UNPROFOR First Deploys in Bosnia,
Fall-Winter 1992

"The Balkans...are not worth the bones of a single healthy Pomeranian grenadier."

— Otto Von Bismarck

"There is no reason why men and women from faraway countries should shed their blood on behalf of communities unwilling to come to terms with each other."

— Indian Lt. Gen. Satish Nambiar,
then departing UNPROFOR commander¹

As early as December 1991, then-Bosnian Republic President Izetbegovic had made a face-to-face appeal to UN Envoy Cyrus Vance (who was negotiating the cease-fire in Croatia) for UN troops to monitor his own republic's borders.² But both Vance and the UN's lame duck Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, were wholly preoccupied with the just-beginning peacekeeping operations in Croatia, and undoubtedly felt that a new UN deployment at the time would distract attention and divert already limited resources away from the Vance Plan's implementation. Moreover, the collapse of a UN-brokered cease-fire in Croatia at the time of the Vance-Izetbegovic meetings left Vance hesitant over even the Croatian peacekeeping deployment.³ Perez de Cuellar was similarly reluctant to take on any additional UN responsibilities in the face of a visibly worsening situation, and he opposed the deployment of peacekeeping forces in an environment without at least a workable cease-fire and the outlines of a negotiated agreement. The Secretary General argued publicly against premature diplomatic recognition of the breakaway Yugoslav republics, predicting (correctly, as it turned out) that such actions would destabilize what was left of Yugoslavia and push not-yet-independent Bosnia or Macedonia over the brink into war.⁴

One indication of the UN's preoccupation with Croatia and its lack of understanding of the looming Bosnian problem can be seen in the closing days of 1991, as UN leaders surveyed possibilities for a suitable headquarters location and logistical base for the newly-created "UNPROFOR" (United Nations Protective Force), which would oversee the peace settlement in Croatia.⁵ ⁶ The new Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, declined to choose a location within Croatia, since it would necessarily have to be in either a Croat- or Serb-held area. The choice would thus appear to favor one side to the detriment of the other. The UN therefore cast about for a location in adjacent—and seemingly peaceful—Bosnia. The large city of Banja Luka—close to the UN sectors and the center of a large transportation network—would have been ideal, but its large Serb population made it an insufficiently impartial choice. Instead, the UN selected a city whose multiethnic mix made it appear (at least from the United Nations headquarters in New York) the most neutral and logical choice in the former Yugoslavia. On 9 March 1992—less than 30 days before the Bosnian civil war was to begin—Indian Lt. General Satish Nambiar, the first UN peacekeeping force commander, landed in the Olympic city of Sarajevo and established his headquarters a few blocks from where the fighting would break out.⁷

By the end of December 1991, as the first handful of the roughly 12,000 UN peacekeeping troops began arriving in Croatia to separate the warring Croats and rebel Krajina Serbs, the European Community (led by the Dutch, who then held the EC Presidency) began to press harder for a UN preventive peacekeeping role in Bosnia.⁸ As war approached, in late March 1992, then-Bosnian Government Presidency member Ejup Ganic reiterated Izetbegovic's request for the UN to send in military observers or peacekeepers to prevent hostilities.⁹ But Boutros Boutros-Ghali shared his predecessor's reluctance to commit UN peacekeepers

without a “clear and viable mandate” and in the absence of a workable agreement among the warring parties.¹⁰ Boutros-Ghali publicly rejected the idea of a UN commitment in late April 1992, shortly after fighting had broken out.¹¹ However, several of the UN Security Council members—most notably France and Austria—strongly opposed Boutros-Ghali’s position and tentatively began investigating peacekeeping options behind the scenes.¹²

As their mission was being debated within the Security Council, the UN peacekeeping headquarters troops attempted to establish themselves on the ground in Bosnia.¹³ Only weeks after their arrival, in mid-May, UNPROFOR’s first high-visibility action failed to inspire observers in or out of Bosnia as most of UNPROFOR’s staff in Bosnia evacuated to Belgrade in the wake of heavy fighting in the Sarajevo suburbs near the airport. About 100 UN personnel remained behind to show the flag and attempt to carry on the UN mission until they could be reinforced.¹⁴ After a protracted series of negotiations, the UN passed UNSC Resolution 758 on 8 June 1992, setting the terms for the reopening of Sarajevo Airport under UN control.¹⁵ The first 80 peacekeepers arrived ten days later to inspect the airfield, but battles near the former Olympic village in Dobrinja further delayed the airport’s opening. First Serbs and then Muslims were accused of breaking the cease-fire, despite a UN ultimatum directed at both factions.¹⁶ The first humanitarian relief flight eventually landed on 29 June, one day after French President Mitterand made an unscheduled but highly publicized six-hour stop in Sarajevo.

The UN’s unanticipated humanitarian relief mission in Bosnia—exemplified by the Sarajevo airlift—brought with it a requirement for a greatly expanded peacekeeping force which would come under a UN Sector Sarajevo command directed by UNPROFOR’s Chief of Staff, Canadian Brig. Gen. Lewis Mackenzie. With the opening of the airlift, the UN first ordered a full battalion of Canadian peacekeepers to take charge of the airfield and maintain security. Shortly thereafter, the force was expanded to include a Ukrainian and an Egyptian battalion, all deployed in the Sarajevo area. This arrangement cosmetically provided one peace-

keeping unit representing each of Bosnia’s principal faiths—Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim.

The UN’s commitment to Bosnian peacekeeping increased slowly but continuously. The multinational Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BH Command), a headquarters staff essentially transferred from NATO, was established in the fall of 1992. Under it the battalion-sized Canadian, Ukrainian, and Egyptian contingents remained in the Sarajevo area while additional units contributed by UN member nations were deployed across the country. The British, supported by Belgian and Dutch logistical elements, were based at Vitez and took responsibility for central Bosnia. The Spanish contributed a battalion based at Mostar. The French and Portuguese initially took over the Bihać area. Denmark and Norway contributed units that began operating from Kiseljak, adjacent to the British sector. Canadian and Dutch forces were originally intended to operate from Serb-held Banja Luka, but were refused entry. (The displaced Canadians were first moved to Macedonia and eventually became the first peacekeeping unit sent to the UN-declared “Safe Area” of Srebrenica.)¹⁷

By the end of 1992, UNPROFOR had some 7,500 troops in Bosnia and was already finding itself overtaxed. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali abandoned a proposed plan to seal off Bosnia’s borders to prevent the infiltration of additional men and weapons from Croatia and Serbia, citing the need for at least 10,000 more troops against the small likelihood of finding contributors for such a force. Indeed, after an October 30 call for 75 military observers to monitor Bosnia’s airfields for No-Fly Zone violations, the UN had received only 33 by the end of the year.¹⁸ The UN in Bosnia was finding itself with a vague but expanding mission largely forced upon it by its principal member nations without the force contributions necessary to execute the mission. It was to be one of UNPROFOR’s principal dilemmas for the next three years.

In New York, the UN was expanding a mandate that remained troublingly vague. UNSC Resolution 770, passed on 13 August 1992, authorized the peacekeeping forces of member states in Bosnia to use “all

measures necessary" to deliver humanitarian aid, though stressing that this was not a prescription for the use of force.¹⁹ Interpreting this caveat, the Rules of Engagement (ROE) adopted by UNPROFOR and transmitted to its subordinate contingents were extremely restrictive. If attacked, UN peacekeepers were to return fire with only a single round, and that only after positively ascertaining the source of the firing. If shooting continued, UN forces were to withdraw without returning fire unless there was absolutely no other alternative.^{20 21 22} In practice, these ROE proved unworkable in an environment like Bosnia, and most national contingents adopted their own, unwritten Rules of Engagement, which were more or less in accordance with the spirit of the UN's peacekeeping guidelines.^{23 24} In practical terms, the UN forces in Bosnia had potentially contradictory missions (which additional firepower or more lenient

rules of engagement would not necessarily have helped) since the peacekeepers were directed primarily to protect and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid, but increasingly were being called on to respond somehow to any other violations of UN resolutions by the warring factions. UNPROFOR's humanitarian missions largely tied the peacekeepers' hands, since a certain degree of factional goodwill was essential for the free movement of relief convoys. An aggressive UN response to any abuses or humiliations from one of the factions (generally, the Bosnian Serbs) could immediately lead to a complete shutdown of the relief effort with just a few shots fired in the direction of humanitarian flights or convoys. The UN in Bosnia was caught wearing one iron fist and one velvet glove—and could not use one without handicapping the other.

Endnotes, Annex 34

¹ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "U.N. Stretched to Limit by Crisis Upon Crisis" by Rick Lyman, 7 March 1993, p. 1.

² Reuters, 6 December 1991.

³ Reuters, "Vance Steps Up Diplomatic Activity, Yugoslav Fighting Goes On" by Vjekoslav Radovic, 8 December 1991.

⁴ Reuters, "U.N. Chief Warns Against Recognising Croatia, Slovenia" by Evelyn Leopold, 12 December 1991.

⁵ On 15 December 1991, the UN Security Council voted to send a small group of 21 observers to reconnoiter potential locations for the peace-

keeping forces in Croatia. They arrived in Croatia a few days later.

⁶ UNPROFOR (United Nations Protective Force)—the first UN peace-keeping operation on the continent of Europe—was formally created on 21 February 1992, with an initial mandate of 12 months. At the time of its creation its mandate was to establish and patrol the supposedly demilitarized UNPAs (United Nations Protected Areas) in Croatia, thereby separating the warring Croatians and Krajina Serbs until a political settlement could be reached. The UN would maintain its peacekeeping mission in the UNPAs until August 1995, when the Croatian Army's "Operation Storm" overran the areas and rendered the mission irrelevant.

⁷ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA 1995, p. 204.

⁸ Reuters, "EC Wants U.N. Peacekeepers Sent To Bosnia" by Stephen Nisbet, 20 December 1991.

⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Asks U.N. to Intervene as Fighting Worsens" 27 March 1992.

¹⁰ Reuters, "U.N. Chief to Investigate Peace-keepers for Bosnia" by Evelyn Leopold, 28 April 1992.

¹¹ Reuters, "U.N. Says it Can't Send Peace Force to Bosnia" by Anthony Goodman, 24 April 1992.

¹² Reuters, "France Quietly Lobbies for U.N. Force in Bosnia" by Evelyn Leopold, 28 April 1992.

¹³ At this time, UN military commanders were frequently critical of the UN headquarters' lack of organization and experience, and of the perception that the UN authorities were trying to micromanage events in the field from a detached headquarters thousands of miles away. This criticism (largely unjustified, in our view) hit home when Canadian Maj. Gen. Lewis Mackenzie (then UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in the Former Yugoslavia) delivered the stinging and unusually pointed public statement: "Do not get in trouble as a commander in the field after 5 PM New York time or Saturday or Sunday. There is no one to answer the phone. It is a nine-to-five civilian operation." *Jane's Defense*

Weekly, 13 March 1993, pp. 23-28. To its credit, the UN did respond to MacKenzie's indictment of its organization by establishing a round-the-clock "situation center" and a small military planning organization of some 100 full-time staffers. *The Economist*, "United Nations Peace-keeping: Trotting to the Rescue" 25 June 1994, pp. 19-22.

¹⁴ Reuters, "U.N. Convoy Ready to Leave Sarajevo" by Richard Meares, 16 May 1992.

¹⁵ Reuters, "Text of Operative Part of Sarajevo Resolution" 8 June 1992.

¹⁶ Reuters, "Serbs Comply With Truce But Bosnia Forces Fight—U.N. Chief" by Evelyn Leopold, 27 June 1992.

¹⁷ Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 108-118.

¹⁸ Reuters, "U.N. Chief Says Bosnia's Borders Need 10,000 Troops" by Evelyn Leopold, 29 December 1992.

¹⁹ UNSC 770 was amended by UNSC 776, passed on 14 September 1992, authorizing the expansion of UNPROFOR's mandate to include protection of humanitarian convoys.

²⁰ *The Times*, "Serb Warlords and UN Politics Frustate British Mission," 13 November 1992.

²¹ *The Christian Science Monitor*, "For UN Peacekeepers in Croatia, Isolation is Tough Challenge," 14 December 1992.

²² *The Times*, "British Troops Chafe at No-Fire Rule as Serb Lines Creep Toward Them," 20 December 1992.

²³ Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 108-118.

²⁴ This view has been contradicted by the then-UNPROFOR Sector Sarajevo commander in Bosnia, Canadian Maj. Gen. Lewis Mackenzie. He stated not long afterward that "It is a common—and incorrect—assumption that UN forces have to tolerate shooting, and are heavily restricted in their ability to fire back. Under the Rules of Engagement, at least when I was there, anybody in the UN can fire back at any equipment or formation attacking." Maj. Gen. Lewis Mackenzie, "Military Realities of UN Peacekeeping Operations," *RUSI Journal*, February 1993, pp. 21-24.

Section IV

Bosnia 1993

Annex 35
Widening the Corridor: Brcko Operations,
January-July 1993

Cutting the Corridor . . . Again; January Battles at Brcko-Orasje

At the end of 1992, VRS Colonel Novica Simic's East Bosnian Corps, supported by 1st Krajina Corps units, made a successful attack to seize several Muslim-held villages some 10 kilometers west of Brcko town, from which Bosnian Army forces had been cutting and squeezing the corridor around Markovic Polje, Loncari, and Gorice.¹ The VRS success was short-lived; on 2 January ARBiH 1st Operational Group/2nd Corps troops from the 21st Srebrenik Brigade, the ARBiH 108th Motorized Brigade, and the HVO 108th Brigade, reinforced by other 2nd Corps units from Tuzla, were able to attack and again sever the corridor in these areas.² The HV/HVO provided artillery support from the Orasje pocket and Croatia itself.

Elements of the VRS 2nd Posavina Light Infantry, 3rd Semberija Light Infantry, and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades counterattacked almost immediately and by 5 January appear to have blocked the ARBiH advance. On 7 January the Muslims renewed their assault and fighting raged until mid-January when the battle tapered off, leaving the corridor open. It was the last major Bosnian Army-HVO effort to cut the Serb supply line.

The VRS Attacks . . . and Fails, May 1993

After the January fighting, clashes in the Brcko sector settled into a routine of regular exchanges of mortar and small arms fire even when no major action was underway. By now, the two sides faced each other from a maze of trenches and bunkers divided by a no-man's land that made the area one of the most dangerous sectors in Bosnia.

The VRS shattered this relative calm in May when the East Bosnian Corps made another attempt to widen the corridor. Colonel Simic's attacking force opposite Brcko comprised the three sector brigades covering the Brcko area—the 2nd Posavina, 3rd Semberija, and 1st Posavina—reinforced with the corps' mobile brigade, the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers."³ The total force probably amounted to some 5,500 troops, although the troops making the actual assault probably numbered only about a third of the total. Elements of the 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps artillery regiments—probably up to two battalions of 155mm howitzers—reinforced the brigade-level fire base.

The ARBiH 1st Operational Group/2nd Corps and the HVO defended the sector with forces from three local brigades, the 21st Srebrenik, 108th Motorized, and 108th HVO Brigades. This force comprised about 12,000 troops, about half of them employing only small arms.⁴ Fire support was confined to a few mortars and some direct fire antitank guns and recoilless rifles.

The VRS attack began on 13 May, led by the "Panthers," who succeeded in breaking into the ARBiH 108th Motorized Brigade positions between Dizdarusa and Omerbegovaca at the southeastern corner of the front. Elements of the 1st Posavina and 3rd Semberija attacked further to the north and west around Brod and Ulice-Bukovac. Despite the Serbs' initial gains, the Muslim defenders managed to hold their second-line positions and prevented the Serbs from widening their foothold. By 16 May, the 108th Motorized, with assistance from its sister 108th HVO Brigade, managed to push the "Panthers" back to their start line. Renewed VRS attacks over the next four days all along the line, particularly on 20 May, failed to dent the joint ARBiH-HVO defense.

The VRS Succeeds—Operation “Sadejstvo (Joint Action) 93,” July 1993⁵

The VRS waited until July to make another attempt at widening the corridor. This time the VRS had the added objective of securing a route for a 110-kilovolt power line that would provide electricity for the power-starved Bosanska Krajina region in western Bosnia.⁶ The Serb effort again came under the command of Colonel Novica Simic’s East Bosnian Corps.⁷ Simic had the same formations he used in the May attack, bolstered by two brigades from 1st Krajina Corps—the 5th Kozara Light Infantry and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades—plus an armored battalion from the 1st Armored Brigade, the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade, and elements of the elite 1st Military Police Battalion. Elements of the 1st and 3rd Mixed Artillery Regiments—155mm howitzers and 128mm multiple rocket launchers—were to provide corps-level fire support. All told, the VRS had assembled over 10,000 troops for the attack (including sector holding units), almost double the strength of the May assault. The ARBiH and HVO fielded the same brigades that had defeated the Serbs in the May fighting.

Simic’s attack plan envisaged two main thrusts designed (apparently) to converge on the large village of Gornja Brka, some 10 kilometers from central Brcko. VRS forces comprising the first thrust—Tactical Group 1 controlling the “Panthers,” the “Pesa” special assault detachment from the 1st Posavina Brigade, elements of the 1st MP Battalion, and the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade, plus the sector troops from the 1st Posavina Infantry Brigade—would directly assault the main defense line in front of Brcko from the east. The second thrust—Tactical Group 2 comprising the 5th Kozara Light and 16th Krajina Motorized Brigades, plus sector units from the 2nd Posavina and 3rd Semberija Brigades—would attack from Ulice, some 10 kilometers west of Brcko, towards the south.

The VRS attack began on 20 July. TG-1 led the way, hitting ARBiH 108th Motorized Brigade positions near Brod and Suljagica Sokak. Initially, however, TG-1 made little headway. TG-2 carried out a preliminary attack only, near Bajici, surprising Muslim forces and gaining 500 meters.⁸

On 23 July, TG-2, spearheaded by the 16th Krajina, launched its main assault, while the 5th Kozara attacked on the right flank of the 16th.⁹ The 16th attacked with all three battalions on line.¹⁰ The 1st and 2nd Battalions, supported by a tank company from 1st Armored Brigade, attacked toward Bajici, but quickly bogged down.¹¹ The 3rd Battalion assaulted Lucici and achieved more success, seizing the Muslims’ first trench line, but then was halted at the 108th’s reserve position.¹² TG-1 also attacked, but gained only minimal ground.

The major break came on 24 July in TG-1’s sector when the “Panthers,” the “Pesa” unit, and the 1st MP Battalion stormed Muslim defenses around Brod.¹³ This success unhinged the ARBiH defenses and allowed the 3rd Battalion/16th Krajina to seize Lucici. The two forces then converged toward Lipovac, seizing Kolonija and advancing along the railway line. The ARBiH 108th Motorized was forced to pull back toward Donja Brka, also losing Omerbegovaca further south. To the west, however, at Bajici, the 108th was enjoying greater success, completely halting the 2nd Battalion/16th Krajina’s attack.

The next day the 108th counterattacked against TG-1, but failed to penetrate the new Serb line. Meanwhile, TG-2 redoubled its stalled efforts to seize the Bajici-Djurkici line. The 16th Krajina pushed again with all three battalions, including a flank attack from the 3rd Battalion toward Djukici from its newly captured positions at Lipovac. The 5th Kozara attacked further west. According to *Krajiski Vojnik*,

. . . the enemy defense was very strong, and the terrain unfavorable for us. The cleared area made the approach of infantry impossible, and at the same time it was cut through with numerous canals, which made the use of tanks impossible. In the battle, which lasted the whole day, an advance of about one kilometer was achieved. The high power transmission line was on our side, but we did not succeed in conquering Djukici and Bajici.¹⁴

TG-2’s role in the operation was over.

TG-1, however, continued to edge its way forward toward Donja Brka. On 26-27 July, Serb troops captured additional territory, including an agricultural complex. By the end of 27 July, Donja Brka (which the Serbs renamed Srpska Brka) had fallen. VRS forces dug in along the final line running from in front of Bajici and Djukici to positions southwest of Lipovac to Donja Brka and south of Omerbegovaca. At its deepest penetration, the East Bosnian Corps had advanced five kilometers.

Evaluation of Brcko Operations

The battles around Brcko in 1993 once again demonstrated Serb superiority in planning, organization, and firepower. In particular, Operation "Sadejstvo 93" showed the VRS's ability to professionally plan a substantial operation involving more than 10,000 troops. The VRS was able to shift additional units into the sector and coordinate fire support between two different corps, while also integrating brigades and other elements from two separate corps to form the attack force. The combination of professional planning, the employment of the elite 16th Krajina Brigade, "Panthers," and 1st MP Battalion, and substantial firepower allowed the Serbs to overrun some of the strongest Muslim defenses in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Army, helped by its HVO allies, as usual fought hard, but could not completely stop the Serb juggernaut. But the Serbs' setback in May and during part of the July operation demonstrated that well-prepared defensive positions—bunker and trench systems—could often halt a Serb attack. VRS armor and infantry units were usually reluctant to close with the Muslim infantry, and relied heavily on artillery plus tank main gun fire to break ARBiH defenses. As Bosnian Army fortifications became more elaborate and well-constructed, the Serbs found it harder to suppress these defenses; the VRS had only a finite number of artillery tubes spread across the country to defeat increasingly strong ARBiH fortifications.¹⁵ Thus entrenched, the staunch Muslim infantry grew more and more capable of holding positions against the better-armed Serb opponent. Serb forces could break into ARBiH defenses but could not shake the Muslims loose to expand or even hold newly gained ground. This trend was to continue during 1993, and gain momentum in 1994.¹⁶

Endnotes, Annex 35

¹ As noted in the 1992 Posavina operations study, the exact time period for this VRS attack remains hazy. It may in fact have occurred in early January in response to the 2 January ARBiH/HVO attack described in this section. See the 1992 Posavina operations sector for details.

² The 1st Operational Group/2nd Corps exercised command and control over the sector running from Celic south of Brcko, through Brcko itself, and over to Gradacac inclusive. It included the following brigades:

- 21st Srebrenik Mountain Brigade
- 107th Gradacac Motorized Brigade
- 108th Motorized Brigade
- 208th Celic Mountain Brigade

In addition, the 1st OG coordinated its operations with the 108th HVO Brigade in Brcko. The 1992 108th HVO Brigade split into two formations either late in 1992 or early 1993, both designated 108th—the ARBiH 108th Motorized Brigade and the 108th HVO Brcko Brigade. The 1st Operational Group was regularly reinforced by elements of the 5th Operational Group headquartered in Tuzla (covering the Majevica Mountains), plus elements of the 115th HVO Zrinski Brigade in Tuzla. The 5th OG was organized into three brigades, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Tuzla Mountain Brigades with 7,000 to 8,000 troops. The 115th Zrinski had an estimated 2,500 troops.

See Said Huremovic, "The Miners Brigade: From a Patriotic League to a Modern Army," *Prva Linija* June 1997, p. 15, an article on the 3rd Tuzla Brigade; and Melenko Horvatic, "Enormous Contribution to the Defense," *Zagreb Velebit* 19 July 1996, p. 15, an article on the HVO 115th Zrinski Brigade, for brief references to the service of these brigades in the Posavina.

³ Elements of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade may also have been involved in the attack in the sector west of Brcko, but it appears that the brigade had been withdrawn into reserve in February after the January battles. See Dusan Vrzina, "The Weapons Awoke: Sketch for A Monograph: The Brcko Battlefield," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 20.

⁴ Elements of the 5th Operational Group/2nd Corps from Tuzla may also have reinforced the 1st Operational Group. See earlier footnote for the composition of the 5th OG.

⁵ This account of Operation "Sadejstvo 93" is drawn from contemporary press traffic in Belgrade Radio, Sarajevo Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug, plus the following sources:

- Mico Glamocanin, "Without a Battle Lost," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 26 August 1994; an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade.

- Mile Mutic, "The Brigade of the Long and Honorable Warpath: The Warpath of the 5th Kozara Brigade," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984.

- Zivko Ecim, "The Serbs Dislike the Easy Tasks," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984; an interview with Colonel Pero Colic, commander of the 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade.

- Dragan Stegic, "The 16th, Directory of Heroes," *Srpska Vojska* 25 June 1994, pp. 12-14; an interview with LTC Vlado Topic, commander of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

- "Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23.

- "The Wartime Journey of the 1st Armored: A Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, pp. 26-29; an article on the 1st Armored Brigade.

- "Where It Was Hardest, There was the 4th Battalion: From Romania to the Una and Sava," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 37; an article on the 4th Battalion/43rd Motorized Brigade.

- Dusan Vrzina, "The Best Unit of the 1st Krajina Corps: 1,000 War Days of the 16th," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, pp. 15-16; an article on the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

- Radmila Zivic, *Pesa: Jedna Ratna Legenda (Pesa: One War Legend)*, Belgrade, Novi Dani, 1995.

- Videotape, *Garda Panteri*, narrated by Major Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, a videography of the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers," also known as the "Serbian Guard."

Sefko Hodzic, "The Sava is Far Away," *Sarajevo Oslobođenje* 14 December 1995, p. 10, an article on the 215th Mountain Brigade, discussing the Brcko front; the 108th Motorized Brigade was redesignated the 215th in late 1994.

Edhem Ekmesic, "We Have to Have a Strong Army Because It Is the Guarantee of Our Return Home!" *Travnik Bosnjak* 2 January 1996, pp. 12-13; an interview with Major Ibrahim Salihovic, a former officer in the 21st Srebrenik Brigade and later commander of the 211th Liberation Brigade.

⁶ According to *Krajiski Vojnik*,

It was necessary to liberate several villages in the vicinity of Brcko so that 100-kilovolt long-distance power line could be repaired and put into operation. The line went through the villages of Brod, Srpska [Donja] Brka, Kolonija, Lipovac, Djukici, and Bajici.

"Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23.

⁷ One source claims that "Sadejstvo 93" was a joint 1st Krajina/East Bosnian Corps operation with Lieutenant Colonel General Momir Talic, the commander of 1st Krajina Corps, in overall command with Simic as his chief of staff. This is highly plausible given the large-scale 1st Krajina Corps involvement. See Radmila Zivic, *Pesa: Jedna Ratna Legenda (Pesa: One War Legend)*, Belgrade, Novi Dani, 1995, p. 56. Zivic also claims that Simic was promoted to major general (one star) as a result of the VRS victory. This is also very likely, given that Simic was positively identified as a major general later in 1993.

⁸ "Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23; this article provides a detailed account of the 16th Krajina's role in Operation "Sadejstvo 93."

⁹ The 5th Kozara Light Infantry Brigade relocated from the Gradacac front under Tactical Group 4 to Ulice on 9 July. A tank company from the 1st Armored Brigade and a light air defense battery from the 1st Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment were attached. Mile Mutic, "The Brigade of the Long and Honorable Warpath: The Warpath of the 5th Kozara Brigade," *Kozarski Vjesnik* 29 July 1994, Issue 984.

¹⁰ The 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade was organized into the following sub-units:

- Reconnaissance Company
- Military Police Company
- Communication Company
- NBC Defense Platoon
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd Motorized Battalions
- Armored Battalion
- Mixed Antitank Artillery Battalion
- 122mm Howitzer Artillery Battalion
- Light Air Defense Artillery Battalion
- Engineer Battalion
- Rear Battalion

Dragan Stegic, "The 16th Directory of Heroes," *Srpska Vojska* 25 June 1994, p. 12-14; an interview with Lieutenant Colonel Vlado Topic, commander of the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

¹¹ The 1st Krajina Corps journal, *Krajiski Vojnik*, states that, [the loss of a company commander] . . . as well as poor coordination between the 1st and 2nd Battalions, hindered the performance of the mission so that the attack was broken off.

"Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23; this article provides a detailed account of the 16th Krajina's role in Operation "Sadejstvo 93."

¹² "Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23; this article provides a detailed account of the 16th Krajina's role in Operation "Sadejstvo 93."

¹³ See Radmila Zivic, *Pesa: Jedna Ratna Legenda (Pesa: One War Legend)*, Belgrade, Novi Dani, 1995, pp. 55-60.

¹⁴ "Battle for 'Strujni' Corridor," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1996, p. 23; this article provides a detailed account of the 16th Krajina's role in Operation "Sadejstvo 93."

¹⁵ An analysis of British artillery during the Battle of the Somme in the First World War illustrates the importance of comparing the number of guns available to the absolute task at hand.

What then of numbers? Did [the British commander] possess so many more guns than at previous offensives that he might expect sheer weight of fire power to overwhelm the German defence? Certainly he had guns in unprecedented quantity . . . [the British commander] may have been tempted to conclude that he could destroy any defensive system, no matter how strong.

It is important not to be mesmerized by these . . . figures.

Rather, it is the number of guns (and shells) relative to the task in hand that is crucial (emphasis added) . . . The vital question . . . was whether [the British commander] possessed sufficient artillery to subdue these particular defenses.

Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, London: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 166-168

The main point of all this is to note that while the VRS may have had more artillery than the Bosnian Army, that was not what ultimately mattered. The Serb artillery (and armor) was not trying to suppress the Muslims' artillery. It was trying to knock out their trenches and bunkers. The stronger these got, the stronger the Serbs' artillery needed to be. The Serbs, however, had to stretch their artillery and mortar assets to cover an immensely long frontline. As a result, the relative number of guns per kilometer of front to be attacked was always relatively low, and with ARBiH defenses getting stronger, the Serbs' ability to take them on got weaker.

¹⁶ This analysis applies primarily to the heart of the territory controlled by the Bosnian Government in northern and central Bosnia. The eastern enclaves did not enjoy the same advantages as did ARBiH forces in these areas. In addition, the strength of Bosnian Army fortifications appeared to increase as one moves from south to north, possibly because of terrain factors.

Annex 36

Battles on the Drina, Round Two:

December 1992-August 1993

The Srebrenica Campaign,

December 1992-April 1993¹

Bosnian Army Offensive Operations,

14 December 1992-26 January 1993

Following up its successes in attacking Bosnian Serb Army forces and Serb villages in the Srebrenica-Bratunac-Skelani area in 1992, the Bosnian Army launched a major assault on the VRS in late December. This attack was designed to link Srebrenica with the Muslim-held Cerska-Kamenica pocket, some 15 to 20 kilometers to the northwest, while expanding Muslim territorial control in the region. To reach Cerska, Naser Oric's troops needed to capture the Konjevic Polje-Bratunac road.

Oric's force still numbered only 4,000 to 6,000 men in three brigades. But even though the number of armed personnel probably had gradually increased during 1992 as the Muslims captured more weapons, no more than 3,000 of these soldiers probably were armed. The VRS Drina Corps under Colonel Milenko Zivanovic had up to 2,000 troops in the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade and the Skelani Battalion deployed in the north and southeast opposite Oric; another 500 to 1,000 troops from the 1st Birac Infantry Brigade were deployed along the western side of the Srebrenica enclave.²

Oric launched a preliminary attack east of Bratunac on 14-15 December, hitting three Serb villages in the Loznica Rijeka area—Voljavica, Bjelovac, and Sikirica—and cutting off Bratunac's water supply. The Serbs claim that a large number of civilians died in the attack.³ The main assault began on 24 December against the Bratunac-Konjevic Polje road and the vil-

lages alongside it. The initial advance cut the road between the village of Kravica and Bratunac, although Kravica remained linked to VRS forces at Drinjaca, and from there to Zvornik.⁴ ARBiH troops also captured the important Glogova mountain area (500 to 700 meters in height), some five to ten kilometers northwest of Bratunac. This terrain dominated the area along the road. Several Serb villages fell as well.

VRS and ARBiH troops fought back and forth along the road and east of Bratunac throughout December and into January; it looked as if the Muslim offensive had been contained. But Oric was not finished yet. The biggest shock to the Serbs came on 7 January—the Orthodox Christmas—when Oric's troops overran the village of Kravica. Drawing on Chuck Sudetic's account, Mark Danner writes,

Serb women had worked for days preparing suckling pigs, fresh bread, pickled tomatoes and peppers—an intoxicating feast to the starving torbari of Srebrenica. And Oric had also been working for days, preparing the attack.⁵

Sudetic himself notes,

After dark on Christmas Eve, some three thousand Muslim troops assembled on the slushy hilltops around Kravica. Behind them lurked a host of torbari who lit campfires to warm themselves. At dawn they started clattering pots and pans. 'Allahu ekber! God is Great!' the men shouted. The women shrieked. Shooting began. The Serb men in Kravica scrambled into their trenches . . .⁶

Danner then states,

The Serbs were vastly outnumbered; the Muslims, many in white uniforms that blended with

*the snow, seemed to come from every direction. By mid-afternoon, thirty Serbs had died and the front line had collapsed. Serbs ran into the town center, screaming for everyone to flee.*⁷

Sudetic's account describes the plunder,

*The first of the torbari to arrive in Kravica found entire Christmas dinners that had been waiting to be eaten by Serb men who had gone off to fight that morning thinking they would be back by noon. Three Muslim soldiers barged into one home and stood there as if paralyzed at the sight of the pastries and the jelly, the bottles of brandy and the roast pork on the stove. They laughed and shouted and plunged into a cake. The ashes of burning houses . . . fell like snow on the hillside. The pigs ran wild. Sheep were butchered and roasted on the spit or herded back to Srebrenica with the cows and oxen. The dead lay unburied, and within days the pigs, dogs, and wild animals had begun to tear away at the bodies.*⁸

Meanwhile, even as the looting continued, the Muslim forces quickly moved up the road, linking up with Ferid Hodzic's troops in the Cerska-Kamenica enclave. The offensive's main objective had been achieved.

On 16 January, Oric followed up this success with an attack toward the village of Skelani, on the Serbian border, some 25 kilometers southeast of Srebrenica. The Muslim forces nearly captured it and the entire sector along the border. It was the Yugoslav Army's Operational Group "Drina"—controlling a combination of local VRS troops from the Skelani Battalion and VJ border guard and territorial defense units from the Uzice Corps, reinforced with regular VJ troops drawn from the 95th Protection Motorized Regiment, the 2nd Mechanized Brigade, and probably the VJ Corps of Special Units—that managed to halt the Muslims within a kilometer of Skelani.⁹ The Muslims were so close that one of Oric's men was able to machine-gun women and children fleeing across the bridge to the Serbian town of Bajina Basta.¹⁰ By 20 January, the VRS and VJ troops had managed to rescue a VRS company cut off at the key Jezero hilltop, some 12 kilometers northwest of Skelani. Never-

theless, the Muslims were able to consolidate their positions and dominate the village and the border. The Bosnian Army troops also took time to mortar Serbia near Bajina Basta and the town of Ljubovija. The VRS lost at least 30 soldiers killed and almost 100 wounded in the fighting.

VRS Preliminary Counterattacks, 26 January-10 February 1993

Reacting to these Muslim successes, the VRS and the VJ rushed reinforcements to the Bratunac-Skelani area to bolster VRS defenses and make some preliminary counterattacks while the VRS Main Staff made preparations for a full counteroffensive to crush the Srebrenica-Cerska enclave. In late January, Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer's elite Special Brigade "Panthers" arrived in Bratunac via Serbia.¹¹ Two battalions of the 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade were also on the way.¹² The VJ contributed a military police company from the 95th Protection Regiment and elements of the 2nd Mechanized Brigade.¹³ The Serbian State Security Department (RDB) appears to have provided a volunteer reconnaissance-sabotage company from its special operations unit.¹⁴ By 1 February, the "Panthers," elements of the 1st Bratunac Brigade, and the VJ units were counterattacking towards the south and southeast in order to give the VRS elbow room around Bratunac and capture the village of Voljavica so that the town's water supply could be restored. VJ artillery units provided fire support from across the Drina River in Serbia. Despite the reinforcements, it was hard going, and it was not until 10 February that VRS troops were able to storm the important Caus Hill, overlooking both Bratunac and the Muslim-held industrial suburb of Potocari.¹⁵ Voljavica remained untaken.

Serb forces also made counterattacks near Skelani to push the Muslims away from the Serbian border and create some maneuvering room. A mixed force of VJ and Serbian RDB special operations troops and Serbian Chetnik volunteers provided the main striking power.¹⁶ A mixed artillery battalion of the VJ 152nd Mixed Artillery Brigade backed up the infantry. By 26 January, the joint VRS and VJ/Serbian force managed to create a five-kilometer buffer between Skelani

and the frontline. By 30 January, Serb forces had retaken the key Jezero hill. The Serbs then consolidated their positions.

Operation “Cerska 93”—VRS Counteroffensive Begins, 10 February–16 March 1993

While these counterattacks were opening up space, the VRS Main Staff was shifting forces into position to begin the step-by-step destruction of the Srebrenica-Cerska enclave. Adding to the redeployment of the “Panthers,” the Main Staff moved two of its most elite formations, the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment and the newly formed 1st Guards Motorized Brigade—some 4,000 troops—to positions near Cerska to reinforce the Drina Corps.¹⁷ These units joined some 2,500 to 3,000 local Drina Corps troops that were already surrounding the enclave on three sides.¹⁸ Elements of the Drina Corps’s 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment provided fire support.

On 10 February, Lieutenant Colonel Milomir Savcic’s soldiers from the 65th Protection Regiment, supported by Zvornik Brigade troops, launched their attack on the northern half of the Cerska-Kamenica enclave.¹⁹ The VRS, making a three-pronged advance from the direction of Zvornik, Drinjaca, and Sekovici, fought its way into Kamenica in six days of fighting. The Muslim forces pulled back into the Cerska area.

Meanwhile, near Bratunac, the “Panthers” and 1st Bratunac Brigade troops reinvigorated their push to recapture the southeastern approaches to the town. By 17 February, VRS troops appear to have retaken the villages of Boljevac, Voljavica, and Sikirica on the Drina, freeing up the Bratunac water supply. The Muslims, however, were able to halt the Serbs at the entrance to Gradina and the Sase lead and zinc mines, some seven kilometers to the northeast of Srebrenica.

About ten days later, the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade and the 1st Birac Brigade assaulted the Cerska area.²⁰ The main effort came from the west and south. By 1 March, Muslim defenses had collapsed and VRS troops had entered the cluster of hamlets collectively known as Cerska. With unfortunate irony for the Muslims, the US chose 1 March for its first humanitarian

air drop of food supplies, with Cerska as the first target. All of the supplies fell into Serb hands. Over the next two days, Serb forces mopped up the area, burning Muslim villages as the populace fled to the Konjevic Polje area—a small open plain along the Milici-Zvornik road—some seven kilometers east of Cerska.

The Serb counteroffensive against Srebrenica had already caused grave concern in the West even before Cerska’s fall—as evidenced by the US air drops and several failed UN aid convoys.²¹ The loss of the Cerska-Kamenica area finally pushed the UN into acting. On 5 March, General Morillon, the commander of UN Protection Forces in Bosnia, arrived in the area to survey the situation and negotiate the evacuation of civilians. He also visited Konjevic Polje itself on 8 March. He then trekked to Srebrenica where he made his famous “I will never abandon you” statement.²² Morillon’s expedition and his efforts to evacuate many of the refugees seem to have nudged the VRS Main Staff into accepting a momentary pause in Serb operations. This would soon change.

The loss of Cerska made it imperative that the Bosnian Army do something to try to relieve Srebrenica. On 8 March, Sefer Halilovic, the commander of the Bosnian Army, publicized his order to the ARBiH 2nd Corps to launch a relief operation. The 2nd Corps, however, had almost no hope of success. Colonel Andjelko Makar, the corps chief of operations, later stated,

We were ordered to attack towards Srebrenica. But Serb tanks and artillery had opened up the corridor and they were now trying to take Gradacac and push us back to Majevica. All our forces were engaged in defending Gradacac, Brcko, Olovo, and Tesanj. We were so heavily engaged defensively that whoever ordered us to attack towards Srebrenica did not understand that we simply could not.²³

Nevertheless, 2nd Corps tried. Troops from the 3rd and 4th Operational Groups flung themselves against the 1st Birac Brigade between Kladanj and Kalesija, and were quickly and predictably stopped.

The ARBiH attack does not appear to have delayed the next VRS move, which began on 13 March, as soon as the British UN troops had left Konjevic Polje the previous day. The VRS objective was to overrun Konjevic Polje and reopen the Bratunac-Konjevic Polje-Zvornik road. Troops from the 65th Protection Regiment and the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, with support from the 1st Zvornik Brigade, again led the attack from the northwest. A Yugoslav Army armored battalion directly supported the advance.²⁴ Elements of the 1st Bratunac Brigade, and possibly the "Panthers" and 6th Sanske, attacked from the southeast. In three days of fighting the VRS/VJ force pushed the Muslim defenders south of the Bratunac-Konjevic Polje road. Kravica, Glogova, and most of the villages along the road were again in Serb hands.

The Final Push: 20 March to 18 April 1993

After their success on the Bratunac road, the VRS Main Staff shifted the main effort to the southeastern sector, near Skelani, from which they intended to make the final push against Srebrenica itself. During an almost week-long pause, VRS shifted both the 65th Protection and 1st Guards to the Skelani area while regrouping its forces in the Bratunac area.²⁵ (Simultaneously, the Serbs were allowing the UN to establish procedures for helicopter evacuation of wounded from Srebrenica and allowed a UN aid and evacuation convoy into Srebrenica).²⁶ The VRS order of battle for the new attack had the 65th Protection Regiment, supported by VJ paratroopers from the 63rd Airborne Brigade and possibly the 72nd Special Brigade, making the main effort along the Skelani-Srebrenica road.²⁷ The 1st Guards would attack on the right of the 65th. These forces probably comprised a single tactical group.²⁸ Near Bratunac, the "Panthers," probably with help from Serbian RDB "Red Berets" and the Chetnik volunteers, would attack to the right of the 1st Guards, initially seizing the Sase lead and zinc mine area, then pressing toward key hills near Zalazje, about two kilometers northeast of Srebrenica. At least two VJ artillery battalions appear to have supported the attack, one near Ljubovija and another on the Tara plateau, near the Perucac dam.²⁹

The attack kicked off on 20 March with VRS/VJ units from Jezero, led personally by General Mladic, advancing along the road and the hilltops approaching the Muslim stronghold of Kradlj Vode, some five kilometers from Jezero.³⁰ By 22 March, Kradlj Vode had fallen, and the Serb forces were pushing on towards Osmace, a village sitting on a 900-meter hill overlooking the road.³¹ The Serbs, led by the VRS 65th Protection Regiment and the VJ 63rd Airborne Brigade, finally stormed the village on 24 March, and quickly pushed seven kilometers up the road towards the Srebrenica industrial zone in the village of Zeleni Jadars.³² Zeleni Jadars was the keystone of the remaining defenses of the town, and its loss would put the Serbs within striking distance of Srebrenica itself, five kilometers to the north, and cut off the town's water supply.³³ To defend it Oric ordered a last-ditch counterattack by every available man. The Muslims managed to fling the Serbs back towards Osmace, where the 65th endured what *Srpska Vojska* called "a night of terror."³⁴ Then the VRS dug in about two kilometers from Zeleni Jadars. The frontline now ran about five kilometers to the northeast and seven kilometers to the east and southeast of Srebrenica.

Another pause in the battle now occurred. The UN negotiated a humanitarian cease-fire between the two sides that went into effect on 28 March so that UNHCR could try to evacuate many of the thousands of refugees trapped in the town. Bosnian Government officials, however, considered that the departure of most of the civilians would hand the Serbs their goal of ethnically cleansing the area, and blocked the evacuation. The VRS, meanwhile, was more interested in using the UNHCR to negotiate the surrender of the town. A representative of the VRS Main Staff, Colonel Dragutin Ilic, told senior UNHCR official Jose Mendiluce to inform the Muslims that they should surrender or the VRS would take the town in two days.³⁵

The VRS renewed the battle promptly on April first with its usual preparatory shelling.³⁶ On 3 April, following a diversionary attack on the northwestern side of the enclave, troops from the 1st Guards Motorized

Brigade attacked toward the village of Skenderovici, some seven kilometers due east of Srebrenica.³⁷ The “Panthers” pressed the attack toward the Sase area in the northeast, while the 65th Protection and 63rd Airborne advanced on Zeleni Jadar. The VRS captured the town water supply while Serb forces inched toward Srebrenica on the other axes. But on 7 April Oric’s elite reconnaissance-sabotage troops spearheaded a counterattack that retook Zeleni Jadar and the water supply.

Over the next week, Serb and Muslim forces grappled in intense combat while the VRS pounded away at Bosnian Army defense lines. On 14 April the VRS reported the loss of 43 men killed and 71 wounded in just the past two days of fighting. Their break came the next day, 15 April, when all three main VRS formations crashed through the weakened Muslim forces and took the major heights overlooking the town. Major Savic-Mauzer’s “Panthers” grabbed the village of Zalazje and the 825-meter Zanik hill less than two kilometers northeast of Srebrenica. On Mauzer’s left, 1st Guards seized the 1,000-meter Kvarac feature and the 800-meter Pribicevac, both about three kilometers due east of town.³⁸ Meanwhile, the 65th Protection broke into Zeleni Jadar again, where heavy fighting spilled over to 16-17 April.

The day before the VRS breakthrough, 14 April, Oric had decided that he could no longer hold Srebrenica.³⁹ He asked the UNHCR official in town, Louis Gentile, to relay the message to UNPROFOR headquarters so that the VRS did not find out and make a final push against the town. Gentile states that,

The commander told me that they had decided to surrender. He said it was not simply the shelling in the center of the town, but that their defensive lines had collapsed. They looked desperate and finished.⁴⁰

The UN began negotiating with the Serbs for a cease-fire and—although the UN refused to call it that—a Muslim “surrender.” On 16 April, Mladic agreed to the deployment of a Canadian UN infantry company to the town to disarm Oric’s troops. On 17 April the two sides agreed to a cease-fire that came into force the next day.⁴¹ The UN Security Council’s declaration

on 16 April that Srebrenica was now a UN “Safe Area” had almost no effect on Oric’s determination to defend his town. The Canadians arrived, and although the Muslims handed over some weapons, they never fully disarmed. From their UN sanctuary Oric and his men would continue to harass VRS forces and Serb villagers in the area until July 1995. Then, the Serbs would brush UNPROFOR aside and Mladic would direct his vengeance-seeking troops to massacre nearly all of the males, soldiers and civilians alike, they found in Srebrenica.

Zepa Interlude, May 1993

Following the Serb victory at Srebrenica, the VRS Main Staff shifted its gaze to its next target: Zepa. The elimination of this enclave would further consolidate Serb control over the upper Drina valley. It would also secure the Han Pijesak-Mount Zep area against the guerilla raids from Zepa that had plagued the Main Staff headquarters during 1992. The VRS attack against this enclave, however, did not commence until May and was to be a short-lived affair.

A single Bosnian Army brigade, the 6th Zepa Shock Brigade under the command of Avdo Palic, defended Zepa. It probably numbered 1,000 to 2,000 personnel, of whom no more than half may have had weapons. The VRS attack units comprised a relatively small force of about 2,000 troops organized in three to four battalions—from 1st Guards Motorized, 2nd Romanija Motorized, and 1st Podrinje (Rogatica) Light Infantry Brigades—under the command of a tactical group headquarters.⁴² Lieutenant Colonel Radislav Krstic from 2nd Romanija Motorized appears to have commanded the attack, with supervision from the Main Staff.

The VRS stepped up its shelling of Zepa at the end of April, and attacked on 3-4 May. The Serbs attacked along two axes, against the southwest corner directly toward Zepa village itself, and against the northwest corner along the few tracks leading into the enclave. The Muslims staunchly defended the very difficult approaches and held back the VRS for three days.

On 7 May, the VRS appears to have partially cracked the Muslim defense line, but was unable to penetrate into the heart of the pocket. Meanwhile, Muslim pleas for international support had pushed the UN to negotiate with the Serbs for the deployment of UN peace-keeping troops and observers to the newly declared “Safe Area.” Although the VRS initially blocked UN attempts to get observers into Zepa, on 8 May Mladic acceded to an arrangement with General Morillon that allowed the UN into the enclave. Why Mladic and the Main Staff called off the operation still remains unclear. They may have decided that Zepa was not worth the effort and the losses that total occupation of the enclave would require at that point. Or they may have believed the UN would do their work for them, since, as with Srebrenica, the deal called for the UN to “demilitarize” Zepa by disarming its defenders. But, as also happened in Srebrenica, demilitarization had to wait until 1995 when the VRS would “demilitarize” Zepa on its own terms.

Gorazde-Visegrad, January-June 1993

The fighting in the Gorazde-Visegrad area during 1993 began in January when the Bosnian Army renewed the offensive it had broken off in 1992. On 12 January, a force of approximately two brigades of ARBiH troops from Ferid Buljubasic's East Bosnian Operational Group attacked toward Visegrad and Rudo. In fighting over the next ten days, Muslim forces edged forward in the direction of Rudo before the VRS 4th Podrinje (Rudo) Light Infantry Brigade halted the attack near the villages of Strmica and Strgicina. The Muslims were also able to infiltrate a sabotage team into Serbia, but VJ border guards intercepted and destroyed the unit on 23 January. VRS counter-attacks in late January gained minimal ground and the frontline remained roughly where it was before the ARBiH attack.

Three months later, the VRS Drina Corps shifted over to the attack as part of the strategic offensive to clear the Drina valley. The first operation came in early April, during the Srebrenica campaign, when Colonel Dragisa Masal's Tactical Group “Visegrad” tried to take the Muslim-held salient southwest of Visegrad.⁴³ The attack began on about 4 April along the frontline

north of the village of Mededa. Almost three weeks of fighting gained the Serbs virtually nothing. The VRS renewed the operation on 30 April with an attack on the important Zaglavak hill, whose capture would have allowed the Serbs to look down on the Muslim-controlled Ustipraca-Mededa-Visegrad road running along the Drina. After three fruitless days, the Serbs called off the attack.

Determined to wipe out the Muslim-held salient, the VRS at the end of May brought in more troops that may have included some VJ elements.⁴⁴ The principal reinforcement was the Main Staff's 1st Guards Motorized Brigade under Colonel Milenko Lazic.⁴⁵ TG “Visegrad” kicked off the new operation on 26 May. Troops from the 1st, 2nd, and 5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigades, probably spearheaded by elements of the 1st Guards, hammered the ARBiH 1st Rogatica and 1st Visegrad Brigades. Within two days the Serbs had breached Muslim defenses southeast of Rogatica, and by 31 May had seized Mededa and entered the outskirts of Ustipraca, having advanced more than 15 kilometers from the old frontline near Visegrad. By 4 June, the VRS had consolidated its gains along a new frontline that ran along the Praca River from Ustipraca to five kilometers southwest of Rogatica. With the destruction of the salient, captured Muslim villages were burned to the ground.

As this phase of its offensive ended, TG “Visegrad” shifted its focus to the Cajnice-Gorazde axis with the apparent intention of eliminating the Muslim bridgehead on the south (right) bank of the Drina. Elements of the 1st Guards Motorized and 3rd Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade attacked the ARBiH 43rd Drina Shock Brigade beginning on about 2 June.⁴⁶ In four days of fighting VRS troops appear to have made small gains, but by 8 June Muslim forces had brought the assault to a halt.

Operation “Lukavac 93”—The Capture of Trnovo and Mount Igman

During June, to the west of Gorazde, VRS Herzegovina Corps units and ARBiH 6th Corps forces fought a

series of small engagements along the Muslim supply corridor to Gorazde, trying to seize key terrain that would make the route safer. The biggest attack came on 9 June when 81st Mountain Brigade/“Igman” Operational Group troops—probably supported by other units—attacked positions of the VRS 18th Herzegovina (Gacko) Light Infantry Brigade south of Rogoj pass, capturing Dobro Polje. Although VRS counterattacks appear to have made good the loss, the fighting spread further east to the center of the logistics route at Jabuka-Grebak. Although the Serbs do not appear to have yielded any ground, the attacks kept the VRS off balance.

The VRS Main Staff was able to use these Muslim attacks as a pretext for launching the final operation of its strategic offensive—Operation “Lukavac 93.” The objectives of “Lukavac 93” were twofold. The first was to directly link the Herzegovina region with the rest of Republika Srpska.⁴⁷ So far, the Serbs lacked any primary road connecting Herzegovina and the Serb-held areas around Sarajevo. Their only territorial link was the narrow strip running from Foca to Cajnice and then Visegrad.⁴⁸ The second objective was the severing of the Muslim supply route to Gorazde, which would be a natural by-product of a successful link-up with Serb forces near Sarajevo.

General Mladić and the VRS Main Staff directly supervised the operation, employing forces from the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps and the Herzegovina Corps.⁴⁹ In addition, the Main Staff brought in at least two of its top formations: 65th Protection Motorized Regiment and 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, probably some 3,000 to 4,000 troops.⁵⁰ These units reinforced local VRS forces drawn from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized, 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry, 1st Ilidza Infantry, 1st Igman Infantry, 11th Herzegovina Light Infantry, and 18th Herzegovina (Foca) Light Infantry Brigades. All told, the Main Staff assembled about 10,000 troops.

The reinforcements left the Bosnian Army’s “Igman” Operational Group/6th Corps outgunned and outmanned. Elements of the OG’s five brigades—4th Motorized, 8th Mountain, 9th Mountain, 81st Moun-

tain, and 82nd Mountain—held positions on the north side of Mount Igman and in the Trnovo-Gorazde corridor with about 8,000 to 8,500 troops. Elements of two additional 6th Corps brigades, the 43rd and 49th Mountain, with some 1,000 to 1,500 troops, held the southern end of Bjelasnica, west of Kalinovik.

On 2-3 July, Colonel Ratko Bundalo’s Tactical Group “Kalinovik”/Herzegovina Corps opened the offensive, striking with 1st Guards Motorized Brigade towards Rogoj pass from the south.⁵¹ The 18th Herzegovina Brigade covered the Guards’ left flank, and Colonel Marko Kovac’s Tactical Group “Foca”/Herzegovina Corps protected the right flank with elements of the 11th Herzegovina Brigade. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps appears to have launched a supporting attack from the north. Mladić personally led the operation, marching alongside the assault forces or overseeing the attack from his Gazelle helicopter.⁵² After eight days of fighting the 1st Guards finally broke through the ARBiH 81st Mountain Brigade, seizing the Rogoj pass and the town of Trnovo. After the breakthrough, VRS troops quickly converged from north and south and swung toward the west towards Mount Igman and Mount Bjelasnica.⁵³ The 1st Igman Brigade/Sarajevo-Romanija Corps made supporting attacks against the Golo Brdo feature on the northwest side of Igman. By 20 July VRS forces had advanced another 10 kilometers to the west and sat at the southeastern feet of Igman and Bjelasnica. But Bosnian Army defenses, now apparently under the control of the 1st Corps, appeared to be firming up and the battle now paused.

To the east, two days after the VRS breakthrough to Trnovo, the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, probably led by the 65th Protection Regiment, penetrated ARBiH lines at Jabuka-Grebak in the center of the Gorazde supply route.⁵⁴ Herzegovina Corps troops from the 11th Herzegovina Brigade linked up with the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps units. The VRS then pushed the remaining Muslim forces east into the Gorazde enclave, and the frontline coalesced roughly along the Osanica River. The Serbs had finally destroyed the Muslim supply corridor and achieved all of their objectives.

But Mladić wanted more—to cut off the Muslim supply route into Sarajevo over Bjelasnica and Igman.⁵⁵ On 31 July he launched a surprise attack on the 2,000-meter summit of Mount Bjelasnica, apparently with a helicopter air assault supported by missile-firing Gazelle helicopters. Elements from the 65th Protection and the 1st Guards then stormed the rest of Bjelasnica and Igman over the next four days, driving back the stunned Muslim defenders, most of them from the 81st and 82nd Mountain Brigades.⁵⁶ Troops from the 1st Igman Brigade attacked from the Hadzici area, hoping to link up. The VRS advanced some 10 kilometers up the mountain from the previous frontline, reaching the Veliko and Malo Polje area and the site of 1984 Winter Olympics ski jump.

Despite the shock of losing the vital twin peaks, General Delić and the Bosnian Army General Staff reacted quickly to the VRS attack. The 1st Corps dispatched at least a brigade of troops drawn from several formations through the airport tunnel, while the 3rd Corps sent elements of the crack 7th Muslimski and 17th Krajina Mountain Brigades.⁵⁷ By 5-6 August, the ARBiH had consolidated its defenses on the main Igman mass, northeast of Veliko Polje and to the west, while international pressure forced the Serbs to halt their drive.

Mladić had struck a sore nerve in the international community. Until the Igman-Bjelasnica assault, there had been little reaction to the Serb offensive operations in Gorazde and Trnovo, but anything threatening Sarajevo was a different matter. The Serb siege of Sarajevo was the focus of most Western diplomatic and media attention. Anytime the fighting or shelling around the city increased, there was an accompanying rise in the intensity of Western rhetoric and threats of action. With the VRS now on the verge of severing the city's last supply link, Western concern that the city defenses would collapse took center stage.

Bosnian Serb President Karadžić was attending peace talks at the time in Geneva, Switzerland, and diplomats there put pressure on him to order Mladić off the mountains. As threats of NATO air strikes filled the air, Karadžić agreed on 5 August to a VRS withdrawal to its 30 July positions. Karadžić's conditions, however, were that UN troops take over the Serb positions

and that Muslim forces be barred from re-entering the zone. Over the next week, French UN troops began deploying onto Igman and Bjelasnica to supervise the VRS withdrawal.

The Serbs announced the beginning of their pullout on 6-7 August, but their withdrawal claims were quickly challenged. On 9 August NATO agreed to a phased air strike program to protect the UN Safe Areas and force the Serbs off of Igman if they did not withdraw. When UN spokesmen the next day claimed that VRS troops were not withdrawing and still occupied Igman, the VRS retorted that it was merely rotating units that had been in the frontline for some time.⁵⁸ Despite the Western threats and Karadžić's prodding, Mladić only slowly withdrew his men from the mountains over the next week, while they broke and burned anything of value they could not take with them.⁵⁹ By 15 August all but 200 of the VRS troops had fallen back to their earlier positions, and by 19 August only small groups of Serbs—probably reconnaissance units—were observed moving clandestinely among the trees on the mountains.

Evaluation of Drina Valley Operations

The VRS strategic offensive of 1993 decisively achieved most of its goals. For much of 1992 Bosnian Army forces had been able to hold large sections of the Drina valley, threatening Serb dominance and frustrating a key Serb war aim. The 1993 offensive drastically reduced the amount of territory under Muslim control and wiped out or dispersed most of the Muslim population. It effectively achieved the Serb war aim of establishing the Serb republic's eastern border on the Drina and more firmly linked the Herzegovina region to the rest of Republika Srpska. Finally, the VRS operations almost eliminated the threat of Muslim attacks on Serb towns and villages, although they would suffer from sporadic raids until 1995.

The VRS was able to achieve this strategic victory by methods that were in direct contrast to those used during 1992. The essential element in the Serb success

was the Main Staff, which set goals, allocated resources, and then systematically orchestrated a series of well-designed operations. Each campaign proceeded logically from the last as the VRS moved from north to south down the valley. In 1992 there had been little coordination between the major sectors and the array of Serb forces had lacked the resources which only the commitment and authority of the Main Staff could produce.

VRS units in 1992 had been untrained, undisciplined, and often tactically inept, and the higher-level tactical commands did a poor job of directing them. During the 1993 offensive, each operation was well organized and focused and the staff planning measured up to the high standards inherited from the JNA. The Main Staff also brought in elite units as well as VJ and Serbian MUP special operations units to spearhead attacks, dramatically increasing Serb tactical proficiency, while a year of combat experience had also improved the performance of many local units. The

VRS, in some cases with VJ help, also increased the amount of fire support available to combat units, which had enjoyed only a small relative weaponry advantage during the 1992 battles.

Most Muslim units—particularly in Srebrenica—fought with the same skill and tenacity they had exhibited in 1992. The small-unit infantry tactics at which the Muslim mountain units excelled proved effective in delaying the Serb advance, particularly when Muslim teams infiltrated the Serb attack columns' flanks. Even these effective methods were not enough to offset the revamped VRS organization, professionalism, and firepower. The Muslim enclaves' limited access to additional troops and supplies from northern and central Bosnia ensured that the VRS, given ample men and firepower, could systematically reduce the pockets.

Endnotes, Annex 36

¹ As with all the combat operations sections in this volume, the day-to-day narrative is based primarily on contemporary press reporting from Belgrade Tanjug, Belgrade Radio, and Sarajevo Radio, to which additional information and detailed map analysis has been applied.

² The elements from Lieutenant Colonel Svetozar Andric's 1st Birac Brigade may have been absorbed into the new 1st Vlasenica and 1st Milici Brigades, although their dates of formation have not been found.

³ The Serbs initially claimed 100 people died in the attack, although three days later they stated 63 were killed. Belgrade Tanjug 15 December 1992; Belgrade Radio 18 December 1992. See also Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 160-162 for a description of Oric's attack in the area.

⁴ Major Vinko Pandurevic's Zvornik Brigade had opened a corridor to Drinjaca between the Kamenica pocket and the Drina River on 22 December. From Drinjaca, the Serbs could reach Kravica.

⁵ Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81. As discussed in the 1992 Drina valley section, the *torhari* were the desperate Muslim refugees that followed the advance of Oric's forces to plunder the Serb villages of food and anything else of value. *Torhari* translates as "bag people." This information is based on the Sudetic study and Danner's article. See Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 157-158, 161-162.

⁶ Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, p. 162. See also Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81.

⁷ Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81.

⁸ Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, p. 163-164.

⁹ Two VJ commands from two separate armies had responsibility for the border east of Srebrenica. The First Army's "Drina" Operational Group under Major General Tomislav Sipic—the former commander of the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps—controlled the frontier from north of Bijeljina, to the village of Rogacica, some 12 kilometers northeast of Skelani. This included the town of Ljubovija, directly east of Bratunac. A border guard battalion at Lozница manned a series of watchtowers along the river. The Second Army's Uzice Corps, under Major General Dragoljub Ojdanic, controlled the border from Rogacica south to the Montenegrin border. It had one border guard battalion at Bajina Basta and one border guard battalion at Pribos, southeast of Gorazde, controlling the frontier. In addition, the VJ deployed the following units along the border:

- territorial defense detachment—now called "military-territorial"—from Bajina Basta.
- an armor-mechanized battalion in Lozница
- a 122mm howitzer battery at Radalj.
- an additional armor-mechanized or motorized infantry company, a 120mm mortar battery, a 128mm M-71 single-barrel rocket launcher battery, a 122mm howitzer battery, and an M-77 "Oganj" multiple rocket launcher battery in Ljubovija
- a military police company in Mali Zvornik.
- a reconnaissance company with elements in Mali Zvornik and Ljubovija.

Bratunac Brigade Special Sitrep 2 1942/24 to GS VRS and Command of Drina Corps, 24 January 1993 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/lats/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 116.

The VJ General Staff's elite Corps of Special Units, headed by Vukovar veteran Major General Mile Mrksic, also reinforced these local forces. The corps had been formed in 1992, grouping together most of the VJ's

special operations units. The Corps of Special Units was organized into three brigades:

1st Guards Motorized Brigade, HQ Belgrade

63rd Airborne Brigade, HQ Nis

72nd Special Brigade, HQ Pancevo

The 1st Guards was Mrksic's old unit which led the JNA attack at Vukovar. It was responsible for both ceremonial and protection duties in Belgrade. The 63rd, although designated an airborne brigade, was actually a reconnaissance-sabotage force organized into companies and usually broken up into small teams rather than employed in a traditional airborne infantry role. The 72nd included a wide variety of elite military police antiterrorist/countersabotage troops, reconnaissance-sabotage units, and assault infantry personnel. The 63rd and 72nd probably provided the bulk of the VJ reinforcements from the Corps of Special Units that were sent to the Skelani-Bajina Basta area.

The 95th Protection Motorized Regiment, which provided elements along the border, served as the bodyguard force for the VJ's First Army in Belgrade and included elite military police units. The 2nd Mechanized Brigade, elements of which also bolstered the border forces, was part of the VJ's Mechanized Corps—the former 1st Guards Mechanized Division—and had fought in the 1991 Croatian war in eastern Slavonia. It was garrisoned in Valjevo.

In addition to the artillery units listed above, the VJ dispatched a mixed 130mm M-46 field gun and M-77 "Oganj" multiple rocket launcher battalion drawn from the First Army's 152nd Mixed Artillery Brigade in Cuprija. The battalion deployed into the Uzice Corps sector at the Tara plateau, near the Perucac dam, from which VJ artillery observers could see most of the area southeast of Srebrenica.

See also Belgrade *Vojска* 11 February 1993 and 20 May 1993. In Politika, First Army chief of staff Lieutenant Colonel General Nikola Mandaric stated that,

The Yugoslav Army from the right bank of the river—that is, from its own territory—is helping out the Army of the Serbian Republic in defense of everything Serbian.

By the decree of the President of the republic and the Supreme Defense Council, the Yugoslav Army is deploying a part of its forces on the right bank of the River Drina to give assistance to the Army of the Serbian Republic in the protection of the Serbian population from genocide, and is at the same time successfully protecting the Yugoslav border along the River Drina.

For the time being that assistance consists of a certain support of the Army of the Serbian Republic and of preventing sabotage-terrorist groups from penetrating into the territory of Serbian and Yugoslavia, which is their intention, as we have learnt from the experience from Rudo and Visegrad. As for the desires of the Muslim and Ustasha forces to conquer this region on the left bank of the River Drina and to populate it with Muslims, well, that will not work, and if we receive the orders we will cross the river to help the Serbian people.

D. Pejak, "Yugoslav Army Helping Army of Serbian Republic," Belgrade *Politika* 26 January 1993, p. 8.

¹⁰ Mark Danner, "Clinton, the UN, and the Bosnian Disaster," *The New York Review of Books* 18 December 1997, pp. 65-81.

¹¹ Belgrade Radio 2 February 1993; an interview with Lubisa Savic-Mauzer. See also Marko Ručnov, "Among Fighters from Majevica: 'Panthers' in Battle Every Day," Belgrade *Vojска* 4 April 1993, pp. 6-7 and Videotape, *Garda Panteri*, narrated by Major Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, a videography of the Special Brigade "Panthers," also known as the "Serbian Guard." The brigade appears to later have been later redesignated 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade. The "Panthers" were originally a small volunteer unit formed from parts of the Bijeljina TO in 1992 with the assistance of Arkan's Serbian Volunteer Guard. The unit

was later expanded into a light motorized brigade titled "Special Brigade" and assigned to the East Bosnian Corps to act as the corps mobile formation, although the Main Staff often used the brigade outside the corps AOR as well. The unit's strange mixture of ad hoc armored fighting vehicles cobbled from trucks, steel plate, antiaircraft guns, helicopter rocket pods and other odds and ends, earned the nickname "Mad Max" brigade from the authors. Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, originally the unit's chief of staff, commanded the brigade from August 1992 until the end of the war.

¹² From the War Bulletin (Ratni Bilten) of the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade 15 September 1994 which includes a short history of each battalion in the brigade. See also 1KK (1st Krajina Corps) Forward Command Post Order to 1KK 6th Light Infantry Brigade, 3 January 1993 cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 117.

¹³ Bratunac Brigade Special Sitrep 2-1942/25 to GS VRS and Command of the Drina Corps, 25 January 1993, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 117.

¹⁴ The "Gray Wolves" reconnaissance-sabotage unit appears to have been a Serbian MUP/RDB unit, possibly a volunteer unit attached to "Frenki" Simatovic's "Red Beret" unit below. Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel Milan Urosevic appears to have originally commanded the 1st Bratunac Brigade, with Ognjenovic in place by February.

¹⁵ The 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Ognjenovic, spearheaded its counterattacks with the "Gray Wolves," which apparently was the unit that captured Caus. V. Kovacevic, "Reconnaissance Units from Bratunac: Only a Heart of Steel," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 30. Ognjenovic was himself replaced by Colonel Cvijetin Vuksic in April-May, moving to an important staff job in the higher VRS command structure around the enclave.

¹⁶ The units were drawn from Major General Mile Mrksic's VJ Corps of Special Units (see footnote above), together with "Frenki" Simatovic's Serbian MUP/RDB "Red Beret" special operations troops, and a 300 man volunteer unit led by Branislav Vakic from Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Chetnik Movement. The Serbian Chetnik Movement was the paramilitary arm of Seselj's Serbian Radical Party (SRS).

In a 1994 interview, Vakic provided extensive details about the support his unit received from the VJ and the MUP throughout the Srebrenica campaign.

... we were to some extent armed by the Yugoslav Army and then by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) of Serbia. However, there were many volunteers, I alone had 300 men on that section of the battlefield. There were not enough weapons and uniforms for all of us. I sought help from General Momcilo Perisic, currently chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, who was then the commander of the 3rd Army in Nis. I went from Skelani to meet him three times. He promised, and supplied, uniforms for 80 fighters, underwear, some food, and a set of night-vision binoculars that I needed. I did not receive any weapons from him, but he put me in contact with Major General Ojdanic, Uzice Army [Corps] commander. General Ojdanic later sent me to General Mile Mrksic who was stationed in Skelani. At that time, the Yugoslav Army needed us and the cooperation was good.

There was a lot of such cooperation [with the Serbian MUP]. In battles from Skelani to Srebrenica, we fought alongside the special forces of the MUP, under the command of Obrad Stevanovic, the third man in the Serbian MUP. I had excellent cooperation with him on the Skelani battlefield. He had his headquarters in Bajina Basta, and I would travel from Skelani to talk to him. I would go to him whenever I needed something, and he would issue orders about where one should go. From the beginning of April until 25 May last year [1993], we fought alongside the special forces of the MUP.

A note of appreciation was sent to the "Old Serbia" Volunteer Unit. We received the note—as it says on it—from the War

Headquarters of the Special Units of the MUP Serbia located in Bajina Basta. The note bears the date of 25 May 1993. The reason given for presenting it to us is as follows: 'For successes and cooperation during combat operations in the liberation struggle of the Serbian people in the Serbian Republic.' The document is stamped and signed . . .

. . . I also possess an authorization note . . . The note bears the following inscription: The Republic of Serbia, the MUP of Serbia, Special Units. It also bears a clearly written date—25 May 1993—and a place: Bajina Basta. It is an authorization note allowing the MUP members to take with them from Skelani 'things that have been taken as war booty from territories where war operations were carried out.' The note I possess lists what they may take from the battlefield: a television set, a water heater, two typewriters, and a cooker. It also says that the document is issued on the basis of an order by General Mile Mrksic, commander of TG-1.

Zorica Mladinovic, "General Perisic Gave Us Uniforms, the Army Gave Us Weapons, and Special Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia Trained Us" Belgrade *Telegraf* 28 September 1994, pp. 6-7; an interview with Branislav Vakic.

¹⁷ The 65th Protection Motorized Regiment was the bodyguard force for the Main Staff. It was an ex-JNA formation, previously assigned to guard the JNA Second Military District Headquarters (the Main Staff's predecessor) and, prior to that, the Fifth Military District Headquarters in Croatia. It comprised elite military police antiterrorist/countersabotage units, which the VRS used as shock troops. See also Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25; an article on the Protection Regiment.

The 1st Guards Motorized Brigade was a new unit that began forming in December 1992 and became operational on 19 January, directly subordinate to the Main Staff. It was modeled on the JNA/VJ 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, and was comprised of young Serb personnel from throughout the Republika Srpska. It was organized and trained similarly to the 65th as a countersabotage force to protect key personnel and installations and perform ceremonial duties. Invariably, the Main Staff employed it as an assault formation instead. See also Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

¹⁸ These Drina Corps troops came from the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, the 1st Bihać Infantry Brigade, the "Drina Wolves" special operations unit, and a Bosnian Serb MUP special police detachment headquartered in Sekovici.

Although the brigades involved in the several phases of the Srebrenica campaign have, for the most part, been identified, the exact command and control arrangements between the VRS Main Staff, the Drina Corps, and the subordinate tactical formations remains unclear and apparently were confusing at the time to even the actual VRS commanders. The VRS 1st Bratunac Brigade chief of operations reported in late January to the Drina Corps and the VRS Main Staff that,

In view of the number of VRS and VSRJ [VJ] units, I suggest you form a Corps IKM [forward command post] (Main Staff) in Bratunac, which would consolidate the operations in the Drina River valley (Zvornik, Bratunac, and Skelani), because it is no longer possible to go on this way.

Bratunac Brigade Special Sitrep 2-1942/25 to GS VRS and Command of the Drina Corps, 25 January 1993, cited in International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 117.

The VRS Main Staff appears to have responded to this and did take a direct interest in the actions around Srebrenica and directly supervised key portions of the operation from its genesis to the final act in April. This supervision included on-the-ground oversight from both General Mladić and General Milovanović. In addition, a series of senior VRS colonels, at least two of whom served on the Main Staff, also appear to

have been involved in controlling the battle. Colonel Miladin Prstojevic, Chief of Operations and Training/Drina Corps, arrived in Bratunac in early January to coordinate the defense of Bratunac and Skelani and liaise with supporting VJ forces. He was followed by Colonel Svetozar Parezanic. Parezanic previously commanded or was the chief of staff in the "Podrinje" Operational Group/Herzegovina Corps covering the southern Drina valley prior to the formation of the Drina Corps. It is unclear whether he was on the Drina Corps staff or worked for the Main Staff. Colonel Dragutin Ilic, the former commander of the East Bosnia Corps and described on 8 March as "from the headquarters of the Army of the Serbian Republic," followed Parezanic and may have been authorized to exercise command responsibility for the entire operation—absent Mladic and Milovanovic—given his apparent involvement in the 24 March mortar incident in Srebrenica. After Ilic came Colonel Rajko Balac, whose normal position was Chief of Artillery/VRS Main Staff, who may have had the same responsibilities as Ilic.

In addition to the VRS, the VJ and Serbian MUP each had at least one senior commander on site. Major General Mile Mrksic—of Vukovar fame—was the commander of the VJ Corps of Special Units and apparently was present in Skelani to oversee the employment of VJ forces (and possibly more—see below). "Frenki" Simatovic, the right-hand man of Serbian State Security chief Jovica Stanisic, and Obrad Stevanovic, Serbian Special Police commander, coordinated the operations of the "Red Beret" troops, possibly together with Captain Dragan Simatovic, Stevanovic, and the "Red Berets" also exercised operational control over Branislav Vakic's Serbian Chetnik Movement volunteers (see Vakic footnote above.)

With so many high-powered officers floating around, it is difficult to find where the Drina Corps staff under Colonel Zivanovic fit in. Instead of relying on the Drina Corps, the Main Staff may have set up its own operational group—possibly under the succession of colonels listed above—with a set of tactical groups covering the different attack axes. Thus one tactical group would cover Vlasenica-Cerska, another Zvornik-Kamenica, another Bratunac-Potocari-Srebrenica, and another Skelani-Srebrenica. One note of caution, however, is Branislav Vakic's revelation of a document that showed General Mrksic as commander of "Tactical Group-1" in Skelani. It is unlikely that Mrksic was serving under a VRS colonel if he was leading a tactical group on the Skelani-Srebrenica axis. Mrksic's tactical group may instead have included just the VJ troops on the border, rather than any VRS tactical groups fighting against Srebrenica. See Zorica Mladinovic, "General Perisic Gave Us Uniforms, the Army Gave Us Weapons, and Special Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia Trained Us" Belgrade *Telegraf* 28 September 1994, pp. 6-7 for an interview with Branislav Vakic in which he displays a document affirming Mrksic's position as commander of TG-1.

At the end of the operation the Drina Corps formed a new operational or tactical group under the command of Colonel Vukota Vukovic (with former 1st Bratunac Brigade commander Lieutenant Colonel Ognjenovic as his deputy) to control the units remaining in position around the enclave. "On Position With Bratunac Troops: No One Can Defeat the People," *Vojiska* 6 May 1993, pp. 26-27.

¹⁹ Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25; an article on the Protection Regiment. Honig and Both claim that the attack began on 8 February, vice 10 February. Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 81. The 10 February date is based on an analysis of the fighting as reported in Sarajevo Radio and Belgrade Tanjug. Sarajevo Radio provided the most detail on 10 February as to the attack axes of the VRS advance. It is true that on 7 February the same station had claimed that the VRS had attempted a breakthrough at Cerska on 7 February, but no further detail was provided. Given that the fighting focused on Kamenica rather than Cerska, it has been judged that the main assault came on 10 February.

²⁰ Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

²¹ See Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, pp. 82-89 for details of the UN efforts.

²² Again, see Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, pp. 82-89, and Silber and Little pp. 266-268 for details of the UN efforts.

²³ Makar is quoted in Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 84.

²⁴ The battalion's parent brigade is unclear, but appears to have been either the 252nd Armored Brigade from Kraljevo, 1st Mechanized Brigade from Belgrade, or 1st Guards Motorized Brigade, also from Belgrade, in that order of likelihood. Croatian press accounts suggest that a VJ officer, Lieutenant Colonel Momir Cvijovic, was in charge of the action along the Bratunac road and that he was wounded during the action. Karlo Jeger, "The Army of Yugoslavia Has Crossed the Drina, Attacked Bosnia, and Taken Cerska," Zagreb *Globus* 12 March 1993, pp. 9-10.

²⁵ Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25; an article on the Protection Regiment; Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

²⁶ See Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 91 and Belgrade Tanjug 16 March 1993, 22 March 1993, and 24 March 1993.

²⁷ The VRS Skelani Battalion probably covered the left flank of the shock troops along the Drina River, near the Perucac dam. See Donald Forbes, "Bitter Serbs Seethe Over World's Concern for Their Foes," Reuters 8 March 1993, for a portrayal of the views and life of VRS soldiers from the Skelani Battalion. As a VRS lieutenant told Forbes, "The men here are from the villages and some are quite elderly . . . they are not real fighters or chetniks . . . just ordinary citizens." Such low caliber troops were not trained or equipped to make the main thrust of the counteroffensive, which required the deployment of the elite 65th and 1st Guards and the VJ/Serbian units. See also L. K., "Osa Has Fallen," Belgrade *Nin* 13 August 1998, p. 16, for a note on the operations of the VJ 63rd Airborne Brigade at Srebrenica in 1993.

²⁸ The Main Staff may also have directed the Drina Corps to attach at least some of its brigades' elite sub-units to the tactical group southeast of the town. At a minimum, the RDB "Grey Wolves" volunteer unit that had been attached to the 1st Bratunac Brigade was part of the force and took part in the march toward Srebrenica from Skelani, including the fighting at Osmace and Zeleni Jadar. V. Kovacevic, "Reconnaissance Units from Bratunac: Only a Heart of Steel," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 30.

²⁹ The battalion on the Tara plateau came from the 152nd Mixed Artillery Brigade headquartered in Cuprija.

³⁰ Mladic later described part of the advance,

... in one patch of forest on that Kragivode (sic), the Muslims had dug a series of battle and communications trenches. Among other things this protected them from artillery fire. They used a sort of Vietnam tactic. They went along digging like hamsters. They hid. You could not see them in the daytime or at night . . . I had an observation post in the village of Jezero, where I arrived by helicopter from an elevation. The observation post was some 600 meters from the front line. In some directions it was even closer . . . From the observation post I saw on that Kragivode elevation one of our tanks stopped in the middle of the road. I asked why that tank was stopped there. The officers present said that the Muslims had damaged part of the road, so they were waiting for it to be repaired. It looked to me like a Muslim trap. Night was already falling. I asked that it be fixed as quickly as possible, but it was impossible, even though a bulldozer had arrived to repair the road . . . Since the situation was very specific and critical, I asked one of the commanders to remain at the observation post so that I could go out and take a look.

I set out for the location in a 'Puh' [Steyer-Puch military vehicle]. Along the way, I came across the battalion commander, who was waiting for me . . . There was fighting going on in his immediate vicinity. Bullets were whizzing by. He suggested that

I get out of the 'Puh' and get into a BOV (armored combat vehicle) . . .

The BOV had already arrived, at his calling. We got in, my escort, a colonel, and I. I did not know the crew. I quickly issued orders, because I was in a hurry. I was afraid that the Muslims would capture the tank, because they were known to let us get into a 'shooting trap,' and that, regardless of the casualties, they would attack in order to get their hands on heavy equipment. I did not have time to communicate with the gunner on the BOV. Thus, I quickly assigned roles. I told the colonel, who knew the people, that I would not take the radio set from him and that I would command, since I did not yet know his system of command and his subordinates. I was not familiar with their voices, and someone else could handle communications for me: 'You, colonel, keep your men on the line and watch to the left and straight ahead.' To the driver I said, 'you are responsible only for driving.' To the assistant driver I assigned a precise area of activity. Behind me, on specially installed mounts, I placed a rifle, for my escort. Thus, each person had his role regarding who would watch what. I watched to the right and straight ahead . . .

We went ahead. We found the tank, but we wanted to go up to a curve to reconnoiter, and then extract the tank and go further. At one point, however, I saw a Muslim bunker above some cut. We had already passed below it. All that was going on in the course of combat. We heard blows against the BOV. We heard our gunner firing from the BOV. Periodically we too, inside, fired short bursts. Since the Muslims were showering us with fire, our gunner pulled back a little into the cabin, probably to protect himself, so that he did not see the bunker. As soon as I saw that bunker, I told the driver, 'Stop!' and I told the escort, 'get out, the bunker is up there.' He said to me, 'please, you mustn't get out! We'll do it . . .' I said, 'It's not important who does it, just get out!' The escort, one soldier, and I got out. That little soldier was very brave and competent. He told me, 'Should I throw a grenade?'" 'Do it!' I said. He threw a grenade at the bunker . . . When we entered that bunker, we wandered into a labyrinth of communication trenches which went out in all directions . . .

. . . the Muslims again began to fire from somewhere with an 'Osa' or 'Zolja' which had come between us and the tank . . . They had a strong sideways position for firing from a dominant elevation at the 'Bajina Basta' [Perucac] dam. From there they pounded us until we neutralized them . . . Our reinforcements arrived, so that we pushed them back and occupied very favorable positions.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 10.

³¹ Mladic also described his frontline frolics around Osmace. The next day, we had strong skirmishes for the village of Osmace. That was a big Muslim base. General Milan Gvero and I arrived in that village by helicopter once it had already been taken. Since I like to visit units everywhere and offer a little encouragement, I often used helicopters in combat. I had competent pilots, so that in the course of battle, at the most critical moments, I could call on several units, all the way up to the front . . . The next day, I landed again at the same location. The same day, we set out for the Serb village of Brezani, which the Muslims had burned down. The Serb village of Turija is also nearby. It is between Osmace and Srebrenica. We wanted to liberate those Serb villages as well. There we had a [Hill] 945. One commander invited me to come to that hill the next day . . . Then I left for Zvornik. Around that time I also had a helicopter accident—I flew into some high voltage wires. The next day, I returned to the same place . . . I'm going to [Hill] 945 . . . I did a few landings here. These were the first Serb landings. I gave 30 soldiers a lift to positions near the village of Brezani. I was sorry that they had to trudge through those holes and was afraid for them to go through the forest, because they might step on mines. While I was giving them a lift, I said, 'You go from here to Brezani, so we will see who is the first to arrive at [Hill] 945!' . . . From the helicopter I saw the completely burned-down village of Brezani and the routed Muslim groups

who were withdrawing. Our soldiers had not yet entered that village, but we set down in Brezani, again next to a house.

Thus, we had crossed the front, ahead of our units. Indeed, this was not the first time I had done that . . . We arrived at the elevation, and then the other units arrived, and later we set out . . . toward Zeleni Jadgar . . . This was a magnificent operation. The Muslims offered feverish resistance. Our soldiers, officers, and MUP members passed the test with the highest grades.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 10.

³² The same day, a number of civilians, including children, were killed and wounded by Serb shells at a soccer field just after UN helicopters had evacuated wounded from the field. Two Canadian UN soldiers in town from Morillon's earlier foray were also wounded. See Silber and Little, p. 72.

³³ See also L. K., "Osa Has Fallen." Belgrade *Nin* 13 August 1998, p. 16, for a note on the operations of the VJ 63rd Airborne Brigade units at Srebrenica in 1993, including the capture of Zeleni Jadgar. The 63rd Airborne elements were under the command of VJ Major Goran Ostojic, who was later killed in action in Kosovo during the summer of 1998 while leading 63rd Airborne units during counterinsurgency operations.

³⁴ Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25; an article on the Protection Regiment.

³⁵ Silber and Little, p. 268.

³⁶ There are some indications that the VJ withdrew its infantry units from the operation due to unwanted international attention by the beginning of April. The Serbian MUP forces and the Serbian Chetnik Movement volunteer troops, however, remained, and the VJ continued to provide artillery support. Belgrade also continued to allow the VRS to resupply its forces northwest of Skelani via Serbia, while probably providing some of the supplies itself.

³⁷ During the final push against Srebrenica during March and April, VRS forces on the north/northwestern face of the enclave, probably from the 1st Zvornik, 1st Birac, and 1st Bratunac Brigades, mounted a series of small-scale, but violent attacks to pin down Bosnian Army troops in the area and keep them from reinforcing the main sector in the southeast. David Rohde states,

In 1993—armed with automatic rifles and homemade guns that consisted of iron pipes filled with nails and gunpowder—the Muslims had fought desperately to hold half of Buljim, a 2,300 foot [about 800 meters] peak that loomed over the northwest corner of the enclave.

David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1996, p. 8.

³⁸ Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

³⁹ The best account of the town's surrender is in Silber and Little, pp. 270-275.

⁴⁰ Silber and Little, p. 271.

⁴¹ Silber and Little, pp. 272-273; Paris AFP 17 April 1993.

⁴² Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade. Note that the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade and the 1st Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade both normally had elements deployed around Zepa. The tactical group was apparently designated either Tactical Group "Drina" or Tactical Group "Zepa."

⁴³ The 1st Podrinje (Rogatica) Light Infantry, 2nd Podrinje (Visegrad) Light Infantry, and 5th Podrinje (Gorazde) Light Infantry Brigades made the main effort. Major Rajko Kusic, Lieutenant Colonel Luka Dragicevic, and Lieutenant Colonel Radomir Furtula respectively commanded the brigades.

⁴⁴ Colonel Zivanovic, commander of the Drina Corps, and the civilian chief of Visegrad municipality visited Uzice on 11 May, possibly in an effort to coordinate the upcoming VRS operation with the VJ and

receive VJ assistance. However, there is no conclusive evidence of VJ involvement in the attack. Belgrade Tanjug 11 May 1993.

⁴⁵ Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Rade Danilovic commanded the 3rd Podrinje.

⁴⁷ Mladic has stated that,

[Lukavac '93] related to the area between Mounts Jahorina, Igman, Bjelasnica, and Treskavica. That is the area from Gorazde to Ivan Sedlo. The goal of this operation was to link Herzegovina with the other territory of the Republika Srpska and to territorially connect the Serb nation . . .

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic Novi Sad*: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁴⁸ Herzegovina, however, was not cut off in the same way that Bosanska Krajina and the Republic of Serb Krajina were in 1992. The region still bordered on Montenegro and necessary supplies and commercial traffic passed through that republic.

⁴⁹ See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic Novi Sad*: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁵⁰ See Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14; an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade; Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25, an article on the Protection Regiment; and the video, *Garda Panteri*, narrated by Major Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, a videography of the Special Brigade "Panthers," also known as the "Serbian Guard." ⁵¹ Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14, an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade.

⁵² Mladic took particular glee in taunting the UN later on Mount Bjelasnica with the use of helicopter, in violation of the "No-Fly Zone." Mladic told UN observers that "It's my right as a commander . . . General Mladic cannot walk." Mladic, in fact, as UN spokesman Commander Barry Frewer stated, "flew away in his helicopter" with UN personnel standing nearby and watching in disbelief. Reuters 7 August 1993. Mladic described his encounter with the UN over the helicopter on Bjelasnica.

They found me up top, at the very peak, where the cabins for the cableway turn around. We were on the roof, and then we climbed down, took chairs, and sat. I watched the progress of the fighting there across Bjelasnica, our drive to the west, and also looked to the west across Igman. At one point that [UN observer] Piterson asked me, 'Whose army is on Igman?' I said, 'Ours.' He said, 'That's not right. I just came from there, and that is the Muslims' headquarters.' But before that he had reproached me for flying by helicopter. I told him, 'I flew, what of it? I am General Mladic, the commander of the Forces of the Republika Srpska, surely you don't expect me to ride a donkey!?' And since he had thus provoked me, as if he would give me permission and as if I would ask him how I could travel, I said this about his claim that there were Muslims on Igman: 'Fine, I will go there now . . .' I told the pilot, 'Get the helicopter ready!' I sat down in the helicopter and went down. (When they saw where my pilot was taking me, they could not believe their eyes.) I set down below, gathered my commanders, held a meeting, issued the necessary orders, did my job, and then returned to Bjelasnica. Then I asked him (Piterson), 'Well, whose army is down there?!'

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic Novi Sad*: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁵³ As at Srebrenica, Mladic was again up front with his troops. Mladic later described part of the advance from Trnovo.

Above the village of Sabic, at Precko Polje, on 14 July 1993, we set out to seize the road to Igman. There are some medieval tombstones there. Precko Polje is a small plateau of several hundred meters. It looks like some sort of terrace. To the north is Igman, while to the west the Serbs held a characteristic peak, Proskok. That elevation, between Treskavica and Bjelasnica, is like an ax, with its cutting edge turned to the sky. The eastern slope is wooded. That is where the Muslims were firmly entrenched. They bitterly defended the approaches to Proskok and Igman. The Muslims had completely burned down the vil-

lages below Treskavica, such as Serb Ledici, expelling and killing Serbs along the way. Here were also the Muslim villages of Dejcinci [sic—Dejcici], Vojkovici, Sabici . . .

Part of the unit was operating out of the village of Ledici, toward Proskok [defended by the ARBiH 82nd Mountain Brigade]. We knew that they had strong forces up there. We had done a good job observing and reconnoitering them. But our position down below was unfavorable. We were in a hole, a ravine, so that they could easily fire on us . . . We entered the village of Dejcinci (sic) and routed a smallish unit of theirs there, which was offering the last resistance in the village of Sabici. They fled Sabici head over heels, whereby some of them were killed, some were wounded, and some were captured. From there we had to advance further, to Precko Polje. I knew that they had defenses there, that it would be very 'firm.' That is why I ordered the commander of the Ilidza Brigade to direct his forces from Dejcici toward Proskok, to pass between Proskok and Siljak under Bjelasnica itself, in the Baba Valley. Since I had no other forces working on securing the road and we were avoiding the road because they were firing on anything moving on it (by maintaining control of that road, they also made it impossible for us to use that route to transport equipment), that is why I and my escort set out in that direction while I sent the others to the left and right of the road, because they were directing a lot of fire at us. In Dejcici they fired at us with some of their howitzers and mortars, but fortunately to no avail. Because of their artillery fire, I forced an attack. I placed my escort and ordered them to maintain a connection with that unit.

We left for Precko Polje. The Muslims attacked there strongly all day long, all the way until evening. At one point, the situation was very critical. Colleagues who were next to me suggested that I withdraw from there and let them continue. 'No, God forbid!' I said. 'I am not retreating!' There were no more than ten of us there, one girl, several soldiers, and several of us officers. At the point when one of the officers was bringing me a report on the situation of the neighboring units and asking me to withdraw, to go back, one soldier from escort, who had just had a bullet pass through his pants below the knee, (leaving no wound, fortunately), said, 'Now you cannot go back there, I have just returned from there. One of our soldiers died right next to me. A bullet hit a grenade on his belt. He died from the explosion . . .' Since I had the habit of addressing soldiers as 'chief,' that is also how they often addressed me. That soldier stopped and turned to me again: 'Chief, you cannot continue with the road operation. The Turks have cut the road off . . .' I was a little angry with him for saying in front of the others that one of our soldiers had been killed; I was afraid of panic erupting among our men. That is why I angrily yelled at him, 'Who ordered you to come back here?!' He was a little confused: 'Well, I came here to inform you . . .' I ordered him, 'Back to your position!' He returned and the ones next to me now stepped up their efforts to get me to withdraw from there. I said curtly and angrily: 'Stop that! I never retreat!' After that, no one dared mention retreating to me. That evening, at 2020, the rest of our units arrived there. . .

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic Novi Sad*: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁵⁴ Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25, an article on the Protection Regiment. See also Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic Novi Sad*: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁵⁵ Mladic again later stated,

First, we did not go to Igman and Bjelasnica with the aim of taking Sarajevo. Our goal was not all of Sarajevo; rather, we simply wanted to divide it. Second, we went to Igman and Bjelasnica because the Muslims, with the help of UNPROFOR, especially General Morillon, had dug a tunnel under the Sarajevo Airport, from Dobrinja to the Sokolovic colony. They dug it under Serb land, under the airport, which we had given up for

humanitarian purposes. With that tunnel they distributed forces and resources, alternately sending reinforcements into Sarajevo and pulling them out of Sarajevo.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

⁵⁶ Goran Maunaga, "Magnificent in Military Order," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, pp. 12-14, an article on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade; Mirjana Micic, "Constantly in Motion," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 25, an article on the Protection Regiment. See also Mustafa Borovic, "Trnovo and Hadzici Are Now Fighting for Igman," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 13 November 1996, pp. 26-27, for some details of the military situation from the Bosnian Army side.

Bosnian Army sources told Reuters that, "Most of these units never had combat for 14 months and suddenly they were confronted by tanks and helicopters . . . they just couldn't take it." Reuters 5 August 1993. It also had not helped that, according to Bosnian Army deputy chief of staff Jovan Divjak, the ARBiH had earlier withdrawn 1,500 to 2,000 troops to fight the Croats. As a result, the thinly held Muslim defenses quickly cracked under the strain.

⁵⁷ The 1st Corps formations included elements of at least the 10th and 101st Mountain Brigades. The ARBiH also deployed a number of small special operations units. See the following articles:

Edhem Badzak, "'Glorious' for the Second Birthday," Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje* 5 April 1996, p. 10, an article on the Muderis Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, which later formed the basis of the 4th Muslimski Light Brigade.

Sefko Hodzic, "Unsuccessful Chetnik Setup," Ljubljana *Oslobodjenje* 21-28 December 1995, p. 11; interview with Sead Rekic, commander of 3rd Reconnaissance-Sabotage Battalion. At the time of "Lukavac 93," Rekic commanded the "Dido" Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment.

Fikret Julardzija, "There Can Be No Success Without Good Units and Fighting Men," Travnik *Bosnjak* 4 July 1995, pp. 28-29; interview with Brig Nedzad Ajnadzic, the commander of the 37th Division in 1995, but a commander in 1st Corps during 1993. Ajnadzic described the reinforcement of Igman with troops from 3rd Corps, including elements of the 7th Muslim Mountain Brigade.

⁵⁸ The unit rotation story at least appears to have been true. The VRS redeployed the Special Brigade- "Panthers" (i.e. 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade) from the Brcko area after the end of Operation "Sadejstvo 93" on 27-28 July to the Igman area in order to relieve the tired 1st Guards Brigade and 65th Protection Regiment. See the video, *Garda Panteri*, narrated by Major Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, Special Brigade "Panthers," also known as the "Serbian Guard."

⁵⁹ Mladic strongly opposed withdrawal. See Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 11.

Annex 37

UN Peacekeeping Operations in 1993: By Sea, Air, and Land

"...may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."

— Authorities of the United Nations Security Council, as specified by Article 42 of the United Nations Charter

In 1993 the UN's peacekeeping roles were to expand significantly, both in terms of the geographic area covered and in terms of the mandates the UN was taking on. These were the heady days of "the New World Order" and multilateral peacekeeping efforts were at their zenith. Worldwide, the number of peacekeeping troops deployed under UN auspices was skyrocketing. Just three years earlier, the UN had deployed only about 11,000 peacekeepers around the world. By July 1993 this number had increased more than sevenfold, reaching a peak of 78,744 troops from 67 separate nations deployed on peacekeeping missions around the globe.¹ Costs had, of course, risen to match: in 1990, the UN spent \$400 million on peacekeeping but the tab for operations in 1993 ran over \$3 billion.^{2 3 4}

A series of UN Security Council resolutions expanded UNPROFOR's role, along with NATO's, far beyond the original core mission of assisting humanitarian aid deliveries, including such diverse functions as preventing combatant military air flights and enforcing UN-imposed economic sanctions at sea. Many of the UN's new missions did not prove easy ones, and 1993 was to be a frustrating year for the peacekeepers.

By Air: The "No-Fly Zone"

The first UN air operations in Bosnia had begun on 3 July 1993 with the opening of the air bridge into Sarajevo.⁵ Operations continued until 3 September, when an Italian Air Force Alenia G-222 transport was

hit by a surface-to-air missile and destroyed with the loss of four crewmembers. The danger was further underscored when Bosnian Croat troops fired on the four US Marine Corps helicopters conducting search-and-rescue operations in the crash area. UN air operations were halted for more than a month afterward, resuming on a semi-routine basis in October.

The Sarajevo air bridge that brought UNHCR humanitarian aid soon adopted the unofficial name of "Maybe Airlines," based on the adage that "maybe the plane comes, maybe not...maybe it lands, maybe not...maybe it gets shot at, maybe not." It was an apt enough name, given the circumstances the pilots and aircrews had to work under. In addition to the all-too-obvious threat of hostile ground fire, there were also the very real dangers of terrible weather and inadequate airport facilities. The Joint Air Operations Cell (JAOC) at Ancona Air Base in Italy oversaw operations by US, British, French, German, and Canadian military transports flying primarily from UN-run Camp Pleso airfield at Zagreb in Croatia.

On 28 February 1993, US Air Force planes from Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany began airdropping humanitarian aid directly to the encircled Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde, which could not be reached by UNCHR land convoys. French and German aircraft joined the effort the following month. Operations were substantially curtailed as the need fell off in early summer 1993, but occasional airdrop missions were flown as late as 19 August 1994.

NATO had been providing aerial surveillance of Bosnian airspace since 16 October 1992 following the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 781 declaring a ban on flight operations by the Bosnian factions. Not surprisingly, the Bosnian factions soon discovered that a flight ban with no enforcement mechanism was a joke, and hundreds of "No-Fly

Zone" violations were soon recorded. The Bosnian Serb Air Force's use of a turboprop plane on tactical bombing missions around Srebrenica in March 1993 was deemed too blatant a violation to be ignored, and the UN Security Council passed a second resolution authorizing NATO fighters to enforce the previous No-Fly Zone resolution.

Although the UN humanitarian airlift and AWACS electronic surveillance flights had been underway for months, the commencement of Operation DENY FLIGHT—the NATO No-Fly Zone enforcement missions—on 12 April 1993 was unquestionably a major step in a new direction in air operations. NATO's 5th Allied Tactical Air Force (5 ATAF) was assigned the mission of enforcing the No-Fly Zone, and established a Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Vicenza, Italy to oversee operations. US, British, French, Dutch, and Turkish Air Force fighters based either in Italy or on aircraft carriers operating in the Adriatic began searching for No-Fly Zone violators.⁶ ⁷

Both practical and political difficulties severely hampered the No-Fly Zone enforcement mission. In practical terms, it was difficult for the NATO fighters to locate, intercept, and identify low-flying aircraft over Bosnia conducting short missions, sometimes at tree-top level. (Virtually all of the identified No-Fly Zone violations were by helicopters rather than fixed-wing aircraft.) Politically, the enforcing fighter pilots were highly constrained as to what they could do in any case. Although their mandate technically allowed them to down any offending aircraft of any type, UN and NATO decisionmakers directed that NATO fighters engage only aircraft that could positively be identified in the act of conducting combat operations—bombing or strafing ground targets—to avoid the possibility of downing a medevac helicopter or civilian aircraft. Not surprisingly, although the No-Fly Zone was established in October 1992 and enforcement flights began in April 1993, no NATO aircraft would actually engage Bosnian Serb aircraft until early the following year.⁸

By Sea: Operation Sharp Guard

The UN's effort to create an ever-tightening net of economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro began shortly after the start of the war in early 1992

and was to grow larger and more complex throughout the conflict. Although UN Security Council Resolution 757 first imposed sanctions in May 1992, no enforcement of any type began until July 1992, when NATO and the Western European Union (WEU) jointly contributed forces for a naval enforcement mission in the Adriatic. The NATO warships could challenge vessels suspected of being sanctions evaders, but they had no authority to do anything about it until UN Security Council Resolution 787 on 16 November 1992 empowered them with stop-and-search authority on both the Adriatic and the Danube river.

The NATO/WEU naval enforcement mission underwent several changes of name during its first year, beginning as "Sharp Vigilance," then becoming "Maritime Guard," and finally "Sharp Guard." This last redesignation, in June 1993, accompanied an important improvement in the command structure that brought together the NATO and WEU warships as a Combined Task Force (CTF) under a single joint commander, which would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the operation as a whole.⁹ Thereafter, Operation Sharp Guard would, on average, consist of eight ships from NATO's Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED), seven ships from the Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT), and six WEU vessels, as well as several maritime patrol aircraft.¹⁰

On balance, the maritime sanctions enforcement mission was to prove a UN success. Once the necessary forces and authorizations finally became available in late 1992—and especially after the command arrangements were streamlined in mid-1993—the NATO/WEU task force was largely able to shut down the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (FRY) maritime imports of proscribed goods. UN Security Council Resolution 820, passed on 17 April 1993, tightened the sanctions regime even more and effectively declared the FRY's territorial waters a commercial shipping exclusion zone. While cigarette boats and other small craft could still evade the naval blockade, the volume of traffic was sharply curtailed and the FRY's ability to bring in certain key goods—most notably, oil and gasoline—was critically undercut.

On Land: UNPROFOR in 1993

On the ground in Bosnia, UNPROFOR's peacekeepers soldiered on under difficult and trying circumstances. By mid-1993 UN headquarters (UN HQ) in Kiseljak had established itself and its command structure, with just under 10,000 peacekeepers operating almost exclusively in Muslim and Croat-held Bosnia. UNPROFOR now had seven national maneuver battalions in Bosnia (still less than the twelve in adjacent Croatia). Three of these were the French, Egyptian, and Ukrainian battalions brought in to provide a peacekeeping representative for each of the major religions in Sarajevo. There was another French battalion based at Velika Kladusa in the Bihac Pocket, a British battalion at Vitez, a Canadian battalion at Kiseljak, and a Spanish battalion at Medjugorje. Support troops made important contributions and added to the manpower total, but it was the maneuver battalions that served as the backbone of UNPROFOR's presence in Bosnia throughout the war.

As in the previous year, these forces did what they could to show the UN flag, promote local agreements where possible, deliver humanitarian aid, assist refugees and embattled citizens, and generally mitigate the horrors of war for the Bosnian population. This basketful of missions proved an immense task, and even in the best of circumstances UNPROFOR could hardly hope to achieve all of them fully. And Bosnia-Herzegovina was not the best of circumstances. UNPROFOR remained plagued by ill-defined missions, limited resources, and adversarial local commanders, and these conditions would daily tax the patience, abilities, and ingenuity of the UN commanders to their limits.

A single incident on 8 January 1993—only weeks after UNPROFOR had firmly established itself in Bosnia-Herzegovina—made chillingly clear how little respect the new peacekeeping force could expect when push came to shove. On that day, Bosnia's Deputy Prime Minister for Economics, Hakija Turajlic, was traveling in a French UNPROFOR armored personnel carrier from Sarajevo airport to the city center after meeting with a visiting Turkish delegation. Along the way two Bosnian Serb tanks blocked the UN convoy and stopped it at a checkpoint (known to

the UN as "Sierra-4"—Serb checkpoint four) manned by about 40 Bosnian Serb soldiers. The Serb soldiers insisted on inspecting the vehicles; the French troops refused; a two-hour standoff ensued while the French waited for their battalion commander, Col. Patrice Sartre, to arrive, and while he attempted to resolve the dispute. Inexplicably, and in direct violation of UN rules of engagement, the UN peacekeepers opened the doors of Turajlic's vehicle. One Serb drew his pistol, aimed over Sartre's shoulder, shot the Muslim cabinet member seven times, and left him dead inside the French APC. The UNPROFOR peacekeepers were horrified, but took no action against the Serb gunman. Although the far greater horrors of Srebrenica have since eclipsed it, the Turajilac assassination marks one of UNPROFOR's darkest hours.

Throughout the year, the humanitarian aid delivery mission—UNPROFOR's fundamental *raison d'être*—was beset by obstacles, both natural and artificial. Heroic efforts by British Army Royal Engineers, for instance, had kept the overland link from the ports in Croatia to Mostar and Vitez open, despite icy roads, weak and damaged bridges, roadblocks, and sniper fire. As if these military handicaps weren't bad enough, in early July both the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats began to charge the UN exorbitant road tolls—hundreds of dollars per vehicle, payable in cash—for transit rights.¹¹ Conditions worsened as winter approached and the two factions, both adversaries of the Bosnian Muslims, tried harder to obstruct UN aid deliveries to besieged Muslim areas such as Maglaj and Gorazde.¹² In October a Danish truck driver was killed and eight Dutch peacekeepers wounded when a UN convoy was caught in the cross-fire between Muslim attackers and HVO defenders south of Novi Travnik. This last straw impelled the UN to halt its humanitarian relief effort entirely^{13 14} until, on 18 November, the leaders of the three Bosnian factions signed a formal agreement in Geneva guaranteeing safe passage for all UN convoys.¹⁵ The paper at least allowed the convoys to resume, but the fact remained that the factions could and would obstruct humanitarian aid deliveries whenever it suited them.¹⁶

UNPROFOR's dilemma is perhaps best illustrated by UN Security Council Resolution 836, passed on 4 June 1993, which created the six UN-designated "safe areas" of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihać, Gorazde, Srebrenica, and Zepa. The import of the resolution was entirely unclear to the parties on the ground and to the UN peacekeepers assigned to protect the safe areas. The UN had clearly assumed some sort of responsibility for these six cities and towns, and the UN's arm in Bosnia, UNPROFOR, was obviously the body to implement the resolution. But to the last day of the war, UNPROFOR's mandate and responsibilities in regard to the safe areas were never spelled out.

Just as importantly, the passage of UNSCR 836 had given UNPROFOR a new, if ambiguous, mission but not the new forces needed to carry it out. At the time the resolution was passed UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reported that he would require an additional 34,000 UN peacekeepers to properly secure the newly designated safe areas. The Security Council authorized only 7,600 more—and it was up to Boutros-Ghali to find member nations willing to contribute them. The three principal sponsors of the

resolution—the US, UK, and France—made it clear that they would not provide additional troops for even this requirement.¹⁷ The UN's decisions—or lack of decisions—about missions and forces made in 1992 and 1993 would haunt the international community in 1994 and especially 1995, when the events at Srebrenica were to bring the flaws in the safe area concept into glaringly sharp relief.

There is no question that UNPROFOR accomplished much good in 1993—helping to force, cajole, or negotiate the passage of UN aid convoys, brokering an endless succession of cease-fires, and probably limiting the worst excesses of the Croat-Muslim war simply by being there. But UNPROFOR also endured many humiliations and travails, and the UN's perceived impotence was to undercut the international community's credibility at times and start UNPROFOR down a road that would in many ways discredit the very concept and tradition of UN peacekeeping operations.

Endnotes, Annex 37

¹ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Are Winding Down" by Thalif Deen, 25 February 1998, p. 6.

² *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 March 1993, pp. 23-28.

³ See also "Blue Helmets, Empty Guns" by Brian Hall, *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 January 1994.

⁴ *The Economist*, "The United Nations: Heart of Gold, Limbs of Clay," 12 June 1993, pp. 21-24.

⁵ The first actual flights in were President Mitterand's helicopter arrival on 28 June, followed by several flights over the next few days that brought in an airport guard force of 125 French marines and assorted equipment for the airport. However, the UNHCR airlift as such did not begin until 3 July.

⁶ *Air Force Magazine*, "The Fully Deployable Air Campaign" by Tony Capaccio, January 1994, pp. 50-54.

⁷ *Air International*, "RAF DENY FLIGHT Operations," March 1994, pp. 150-151.

⁸ *Jane's International Defense Review*, "Bosnia Mission Stretches Airborne Eyes and Ears" by Tim Ripley, January 1994, pp. 54-56.

⁹ *Jane's International Defense Review*, "Shalikashvili Admits Blockade 'Less Than Satisfactory,'" November 1993, p. 842.

¹⁰ *Jane's International Defense Review*, "Isolating Yugoslavia" by Tim Ripley, October 1994, pp. 75-79.

¹¹ *The Times*, "Croats and Serbs Order Huge Tolls on UN Convoys," 2 July 1993.

¹² Reuters, "UN Says Bosnian Rivals Hampering Convoys" by Giles Elgood, 12 October 1994.

¹³ Reuters, "Dane Dies When UN Trucks Hit in Bosnia Crossfire" by Mark Heinrich, 24 October 1994.

¹⁴ Reuters, "UN Blames Bosnian Moslems for Convoy Attack" by Philippe Naughton, 27 October 1994.

¹⁵ *The Times*, "Bosnian Factions Offer Convoys Safe Passage," 19 November 1993.

¹⁶ Reuters, "Aid to Bosnia Still Delayed Five Days After Deal" by Kurt Schork, 23 November 1993.

¹⁷ *The Economist*, "Rescue the Rescuer," 12 June 1993, pp. 18-19.

Annex 38

Sarajevo 1993: The Siege Continues

By 1993 the Bosnian Army and the Bosnian Serb Army forces around Sarajevo had fully settled into the grim routine of trench warfare. Sporadic but daily shelling and small arms exchanges, punctuated by the occasional battle for a key suburb, terrain feature, or defensive position, became the norm for the soldiers of both sides.¹ As part of its siege warfare, the VRS harassed civilian areas of the city with sniper bullets, machinegun fire, mortar rounds and artillery shells that claimed many civilian lives and kept Sarajevo in the world headlines day after day.

The biggest military event of the siege during 1993, described in the previous section, was the VRS capture of Mount Igman in August that cut the city's last supply line—other than the UN—and stirred an international response that forced a Serb withdrawal. Other important clashes included battles at Azici and Stup in February and March, which were part of an operation the VRS had initiated in December, beginning with the capture of Otes, to further isolate Sarajevo. Loss of the suburbs, particularly if followed up by the capture of Dobrinja, would leave Bosnian Army troops even further from the UN-controlled airport and the ARBiH troops in Hrasnica-Butmir-Mount Igman. It would also have precluded use of the new tunnel the ARBiH was digging under the airport to Hrasnica. The Bosnian Army victory at Stup, following the loss of Azici, thwarted this plan. Other minor battles during the year included failed VRS attempts in July and December to recapture the prominent Zuc Hill, which the Serbs had lost in December 1992. ARBiH units and VRS forces also regularly clashed in the Grbavica district, the only Serb-held section of central Sarajevo, particularly around the Vrbanja bridge-Jewish cemetery sectors. The year ended with a spate of bloody shelling incidents in the city center that killed a number of civilians.²

The Campaign for the Western Suburbs and the Outer Siege Ring, December 1992-April 1993³

In early December, the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps under Major General Stanislav Galic organized a two-pronged campaign to further tighten the siege of the city while consolidating the territorial integrity of the collection of suburbs and districts known as "Serb Sarajevo." The first sub-operation in the campaign was designed to seize control over three key western suburbs of Sarajevo, which would strengthen the tenuous Serb-held link between Ilijadz and Nedjarici while making Muslim access to the UN controlled airport more difficult and blocking potential relief operations from Bosnian Army-held Butmir-Hrasnica. A follow-on attack against the Dobrinja district would have then cut the last link to the airport and eliminated the newly constructed supply tunnel under the airport to Butmir. At the same time, General Galic's troops would undertake a second sub-operation to capture key hills and roads north of the city, near Ilijas, Semizovac, and Vogosca. The seizure of these positions would eliminate key positions from which Bosnian Army forces could undertake further operations to attempt the city's relief, while more closely linking the Ilijas area with Serb-held territory to the east.

The VRS took the first step in the suburb operation in early December 1992, blasting their way through the suburb of Otes, some 15 kilometers west of central Sarajevo.⁴ In mid-February, the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps launched the second part in the campaign, attacking Azici. Troops from the 1st Ilijadz Infantry Brigade attacked with supporting tanks and APCs from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade. Several special assault units spearheaded the attack. The total assault force probably numbered 1,000 to 1,500 troops. Artillery and mortars from units throughout

¹ See Annex 31, "Sarajevo, 1992: The Siege Begins."

the area backed up the attack with substantial fire support, including 155mm howitzer and multiple rocket launcher fire from the 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment. Against the planned assault the 3rd Motorized Brigade/1st Corps was defending the Azici-Stup sector with more than 4,000 men, but only half had small arms. As Serb intentions became clear, the 1st Corps reinforced the brigade with mobile elements of the other formations manning the city defense lines.

The VRS attacked on 15 February, quickly breaking into ARBiH positions as direct tank fire and artillery and mortar shells hammered the government defenders. The Serbs slowly advanced through the town over the next five days, pushing the mixed Muslim-Croat units back building by building. By 20 February, Serb troops had occupied Azici. The defeat brought court martials for four Bosnian Army officers and redesignation for the 3rd Motorized Brigade.⁴

A month later, on 17 March, the VRS moved against Stup, the last suburb outside the main Sarajevo districts. The Serbs appeared to be on their way to victory over the re-titled 102nd Motorized Brigade, and when they claimed to have captured Stup on 20 March, residents fled the town. The ARBiH 1st Corps quickly moved additional reinforcements into the Stup area, digging in around the Stup highway bridge and the Stupsko Brdo sectors. The corps also shifted its small tank force—no more than 10 tanks—to the area, and on 22 March fought unusual tank-against-tank engagements with the VRS. UN observers counted over 2,400 detonations before they almost certainly lost count in the heavy fighting. Overextended by their desire to make good their claim to Stup, the Serbs exposed themselves to a counterattack by ARBiH troops that drove them back almost to their start line. The defeat forced the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps to halt its campaign to capture the rest of the western suburbs.⁵

While the battles for the suburbs raged, the 1st Ilijas and 1st Vogosca Brigades launched an attack in mid-February to capture the Semizovac-Srednje road and plateau. This time it was the VRS that was able to drive the enemy back, capturing 16 villages and eliminating a key sally point for attacks toward the city while widening their tenuous link between Ilijas and Vogosca. In mid-March the 1st Ilijas and 1st Igman

Brigades followed up with an attack southwest of Ilijas, pushing ARBiH forces away from the town. The Sarajevo-Romanija Corps concluded this series of attacks in April when the 1st Ilijas Brigade seized the important Ravni Nabozic position overlooking the Semizovac-Srednje road.⁶

The Battles for Zuc Hill, July and December 1993

The VRS made a significant effort in late July 1993 to recapture the important Zuc Hill area, actually a series of hills, the most important of which are Point 850, Orlic, and Golo Brdo, that looks down over central Sarajevo. Bosnian Army troops had seized the foremost hills in December 1992, right after the fall of Otes. Its recapture by the VRS would further tighten the siege around Sarajevo, while the timing of the attack would divert ARBiH attention from the imminent continuation of Operation "Lukavac 93" and the capture of Mounts Igman and Bjelasnica.*

The VRS "Vogosca" Operational Group of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps commanded the Vogosca, Rajlovac, and Kosevo Infantry Brigades which normally controlled the sector around Zuc. For the attack, the VRS Main Staff apparently reinforced the OG with two infantry battalions from the 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade/1st Krajina Corps, armor support from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, and probably small VRS or special police assault units to bolster organic brigade-level special units. The total number of combat troops probably was about 2,500 to 3,000 men.

The ARBiH 1st Corps also had three brigades, the 2nd, 1st, and 9th Motorized Brigades, in the Zuc sector, deployed respectively opposite Rajlovac and Vogosca, and north of government-held Kosevo. ARBiH troops probably numbered 8,000, with the usual complement of about 50 percent possessing small arms.

The VRS artillery preparation began on 22 July, and UN military observers counted over 3,700 shells impacting the Sarajevo area on that day. The brunt of the attack hit the ARBiH 1st Motorized Brigade,

* See Annex 36, "Battles on the Drina, Round Two, December 1992 - August 1993."

which had led the attack that captured the mountain in December. As the infantry fighting intensified, the Serbs kept up the artillery support, firing another 3,000 rounds into Sarajevo on 25 July and reportedly using tear gas against ARBiH trenches. By 28 July VRS troops had seized several key positions on Zuc from the 1st Motorized, left rudderless after the brigade commander, Enver Sehovic, was killed in action. In response, the 1st Corps shifted some of its best units, including Bosnian Ministry of Internal Affairs special police troops, to Zuc for a counterattack. By 30 July joint ARBiH and MUP forces were able to retake most of the Serb gains and the fighting tapered off. The successful VRS assault against Igman and Bjelasnica began the next day. Although the Zuc attack itself had failed, the VRS had diverted many of the 1st Corps reserves away from its main operation.

The December 1993 battle for the Zuc area appears to have been less intense, although it lasted almost as long, and occurred simultaneously with renewed fighting in the Grbavica-Jewish cemetery area (see below). On 21 December, the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps stepped up its bombardment of the Zuc area, with UN observers reporting 1,500 rounds on Sarajevo, primarily Zuc, that day. Fighting continued for the next two days but subsided on Christmas Eve. On 27 December VRS troops attacked Zuc before dawn, capturing several trench lines from ARBiH forces. The Serbs, however, failed to drive government units from the mountain and Zuc remained under ARBiH control.

The Battles for Grbavica and the Jewish Cemetery

The Grbavica section of Sarajevo was the only Serb-controlled central district of the city, and it allowed the VRS to fire on key government-held areas. As a result, the trench and bunker lines that ran through the yards and buildings along the Miljacka River near the Vrbanja Bridge and the Jewish cemetery and up the slopes of Mount Trebevic were some of the most heavily contested positions in the entire city.⁷ The Jewish cemetery and the adjoining slope formed the right shoulder the Serb position in Grbavica. As a result, the ARBiH made repeated attempts to seize this sector in the hope that its loss would force the Serbs

out of the area. The government forces also hoped to sever the tenuous road link between Pale and the Serb-controlled suburb of Lukavica—a key VRS garrison—that ran along Trebevic.

Although clashes were frequent throughout the year, some of the larger battles were fought in mid-January, late May, and throughout December. Troops from the ARBiH 10th Mountain Brigade, until October under the command of the notorious Musan Topalovic—
• Caco-faced elements of the VRS 1st Sarajevo Mechanized and 1st Romanija Infantry Brigades. They fought pitched battles from the pine-tree lined slopes of Trebevic to the surreal ruins of the Jewish cemetery. Two descriptions of this front from 1994 and 1995 illustrate these continuous scenes of battle,

A stubble of pine forest climbs the hillside [along Trebevic], its trees snapped and scorched by months of artillery fire . . . [to] the left . . . the old Jewish cemetery lies in ruins—ornate balustrades and gravestones toppled, mausoleums shattered by relentless machine-gun and mortar exchanges.⁸

Many of its centuries-old tombs and monuments have been blasted into oblivion by shellfire, and military trenches now snake through the tangled undergrowth of what was once a manicured graveyard.⁹

A few abandoned houses dot the lane with gaping holes in their red tile roofs and walls pocked by shrapnel. Unexploded mortar bombs and rocket-propelled grenades lie in driveways and weed-infested gardens.

Clusters of mines lurk amidst the litter of empty shell casings, rain-sodden garbage, and bullet riddled barricades.¹⁰

Despite the intensity of the combat, the Bosnian Army efforts to capture the cemetery or cut the road were for naught and the two sides faced each other across the trenches for the rest of the war.

Operation “Trebevic-1”: The Bosnian Army Cleans House

In late October 1993 a battle was conducted within Sarajevo itself as the Bosnian Army cracked down on two of its own units that had gotten out of hand. These were “Celo” Delalic’s 9th and “Caco” Topalovic’s 10th Mountain Brigades, two units that had begun in the early days of the war as criminal gangs that had their own guns and proved ready and able to defend Sarajevo. But these patriotic criminals soon became homefront problems, extorting money and coercing labor from the neighborhoods they were supposed to defend. In mid-October 1993, Topalovic’s 10th brigade overstepped the line, stealing two UN armored personnel carriers and causing a major

embarrassment for the Bosnian Government. The authorities responded by mounting operation “Trebevic-1” on 26 October 1993, a joint army/police action intended to round up “Caco,” “Celo,” and their most notorious associates. Both bandit chiefs resisted. “Caco” took several MUP special police troops hostage and tortured them to death before the army was able to track him down and capture him. “Celo” seized 25 civilians as hostages but eventually released them unharmed and gave himself up. About 20 people including 6 civilians were killed in shootouts during the operation. Of more lasting importance, the “Trebevic-1” operation was the first and most dramatic step in Commander Delic’s campaign to regularize and professionalize the Bosnian Army.¹¹

Endnotes, Annex 38

¹ The three-day battle for Hill 935 (Crkvica) northwest of Hadzici in early January 1993 is a good example of the World War I-style trench warfare that typified the fighting over key positions, even when neither side was undertaking a major operation. On 5 January ARBiH troops—probably from the 302nd Mountain Brigade—seized the hilltop from the VRS 1st Igman Brigade, which reclaimed it two days later. This account is from the VRS journal *Srpska Vojska*.

On the day before [Orthodox] Christmas Eve, 5 January, an infantry-artillery attack on Zenik and Vela began along the lines of defense. The attacks by the enemy forces were directed especially toward Crkvica, the highest elevation and most important peak along the Vela-Zenik-Tresnjice line. The attack began at around 2000 from Vela, moving toward Crkvica, which was attacked at around 2230 . . . After several hours of fierce fighting, platoon leader Brane Draskic and soldiers Menad Malinovic and Milomir Boskovic were killed. The other fighters retreated toward Zenik and formed a reserve line of defense from the southwestern side of Crkvica.

On Christmas Eve, 6 January, in the morning hours, our fighters from the direction of Vela and Zenik formed a semi-arc around Crkvica. The artillery rained down with unabated intensity until the afternoon, so that it was impossible to move further. The action was temporarily delayed, for only several hours, until 30 fighters could set out in the direction of the enemy from Zenik . . . In hand to hand combat, the enemy was engaged in close fighting, and our fighters approached Elevation 935. Several trenches were also recaptured. Dusk began to fall quickly. In the fierce fighting, platoon leader Mirko Jokanovic was killed. The deputy commander of the Zenik Company, Trivko Ateljevic, and Branko Kujaca, were wounded. Among the [enemy] dead were neighbors from Vidovici and Godusa. The action was over by the next morning.

On Christmas Morning, the fighters of the Rakovica Battalion and the other battalions that were part of the Igman Brigade, together with the "Lightning" and "Hedgehog" Special Units and Special Units from the Ilidza Brigade, set out from Vela and Zenik for the final showdown . . . A semi-arc was formed . . . The artillery did its work. The infantry advanced step by step. Our fighters liberated one trench after another. The [enemy] forces retreated, leaving their dead behind . . . Elevation 935 was ours again.

Trisa Kujaca, "At the Three-Border Area of Republika Srpska: Battle for Crkvica," *Srpska Vojska* 25 January 1994, p. 29.

² Reuters, 2 January 1994.

³ The combat narrative for this and the other battles around Sarajevo is based primarily on contemporary press reporting from Sarajevo Radio, Belgrade Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, and Pale SRNA.

⁴ Reuters carried the Sarajevo newspaper *Osllobodjenje*'s report of the ARBiH charges against the officers, which noted that,

Some events that have taken place during combat in Azici undoubtedly show serious weakness among the officers in charge of detachments, squads, battalions, and brigades...this weakness is shown especially when it comes to the preparation of military units for combat.

Reuters, "Bosnian Officers Face Charges Over Defeat," 24 February 1993.

⁵ A VRS tank commander attached to the 1st Igman Brigade, Radmilo Samardzic, gave a vivid account of the fierce fighting, reporting that his crew "burned" during the attack on Otes, while at Sokolj—apparently near Rajlovac—his tank was hit by three M-79 antitank rocket rounds. During another incident at Sokolj, his tank fell into a trench and was nearly overrun by ARBiH infantry. Samardzic said he was ready to take his own life rather than surrender, but he and his gunner were able to drive the infantry off with grenades. Aleksandar Petranovic, "Note From the Hadzici Battlefield: Under the Cannon's Barrels," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 29.

⁶ See Aleksandar Petranovic, "1st Ilijas Light Infantry Brigade: Shield for Central Bosnia," *Srpska Vojska* 15 July 1993, p. 10. See also Belgrade Tanjug 21 and 22 January 1993, and 20 February 1993; Belgrade Radio 8 January 1993, Sarajevo Radio 22 January 1993, 3 February 1993, 8 March 1993, 27 April 1993; Zagreb Radio 25 January 1993.

⁷ Trebevic was the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics bobsled events.

⁸ Reuters, "Russian Troops Patrol Sarajevo's Hottest Hot Spots," by Kurt Schork, 9 March 1994.

⁹ Reuters "Passover Book Safe in Sarajevo, Much Else Lost," by Kurt Schork, 15 April 1995.

¹⁰ Reuters "Russian Troops Patrol Sarajevo's Hottest Hot Spots," by Kurt Schork, 9 March 1994.

¹¹ "Caco" Topalovic was killed (under highly suspicious circumstances) while allegedly trying to escape. "Celo" Delalic was arrested and sentenced but was subsequently freed with a reduced sentence. He eventually became a restaurant owner in Sarajevo and reputedly maintained his ties to organized crime.

Annex 39
“The Man Who Would Be King,”
Fikret Abdic and the Autonomous Province of
Western Bosnia in 1993

Within a strange and complex civil war, the rise and fall of Fikret Abdic and his self-proclaimed “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia” (APWB) was one of the strangest and most complex interludes.

Fikret Abdic was one of Yugoslavia’s most charismatic but controversial figures even before the breakup of the country. In the twilight period of Socialist Yugoslavia’s massive state-owned industries, he had become famous as the director of the “Agrokomerc” food processing consortium—the Bihać area’s largest employer. A self-made man, Abdic had started out as an employee in a tiny food co-op and over the course of two decades built it up into a huge empire comprising some 13,500 employees, 430 farms, and 52 factories.¹ One secret of Abdic’s success emerged in 1987, when it turned out that his company had issued roughly half a billion dollars worth of unbacked promissory notes—the company had in effect been printing its own money. The ensuing scandal rocked the Yugoslav government and its banking system but Abdic, though found guilty of fraud charges, was only briefly imprisoned.^{2 3}

Apparently unharmed by the scandal and his conviction, Abdic was by 1990 one of the most prominent Muslim politicians in Bosnia. In the then-republic’s first multiparty elections he won the largest number of votes of any Muslim SDA candidate. Although this entitled him to be President of Bosnia, Abdic stepped aside—for reasons still unexplained—to allow the SDA’s second-largest vote-getter, Izetbegovic, to take office as the republic’s President.⁴

By June 1993, as Izetbegovic’s hold on power appeared to be waning, Fikret Abdic was being seriously regarded as a challenger to his leadership of the Bosnian Government. The first public signs of divi-

sion within the Muslim camp came on 21 June in the run-up to one of the EC-sponsored discussions in Geneva. Izetbegovic announced he would not attend the meeting because what he called the “genocidal” new Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan would codify the gains of Serb ethnic cleansing and the de facto partition of the country into Serb, Croat, and Muslim-controlled areas.⁵ Abdic publicly criticized Izetbegovic’s refusal to attend, setting off an uproar within Bosnia’s nine-member collective Presidency.⁶ The next day Abdic and the other Presidency members announced that they had met without Izetbegovic and voted to attend the peace talks even if the President did not.⁷ Many interpreted this to mean that Abdic was seeking to displace Izetbegovic. Although Abdic denied the claims, he appeared to be a serious contender for the future leadership of Bosnia.⁸

Only days later, however, the story took another turn. The Bosnian Interior Ministry announced on 26 June that Abdic was being sought by the Austrian government on charges of defrauding Bosnians resident in Austria who had contributed money to help war refugees through the Agrokomerc company’s Vienna-based subsidiary.⁹ Ignoring the charges—and Izetbegovic’s objections to the EC peace proposals—Abdic remained the Bosnian Presidency’s Muslim representative at the Owen-Stoltenberg negotiations in Geneva.

By the end of the summer Abdic had gone beyond open defiance of Izetbegovic’s presidential authority. On 7 September a self-selected parliamentary assembly met in Abdic’s home town of Velika Kladusa to discuss the possible creation of an “autonomous province” within Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁰ Abdic stopped short of declaring that this would mean the full secession of all or part of the Bihać region from the Sarajevo government, but the distinction was a purely academic one. Even before the assembly vote on

27 September formally proclaimed Abdic the head of the newly-established “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia,” Abdic had already assembled his own privately-raised military force and used his money and influence to build a local empire in the northwestern corner of the country.¹¹ Sarajevo responded by ejecting Abdic from the Bosnian Collective Presidency on 2 October.

With now two rival claimants for sovereignty over the besieged Bihać enclave—Fikret Abdic and his APWB “army” versus the Bosnian Army’s 5th Corps then under Ramiz Drekovic—it remained to be seen where loyalties lay and who would control which territory. Abdic called on the 5th Corps brigades to defect to his new flag, while Izetbegovic ordered the army to remain loyal and stamp out this new insurrection. Abdic rapidly established his authority in the Velika Kladusa, the municipality that had long been his power base. Abdic loyalists quickly claimed control of the Bihać enclave’s central town of Cazin, but a flying column of 500 Bosnian Army troops from Bihać (ironically, driving in “Agrokomer” vehicles) arrived in Cazin on 20 September and eventually secured it for the ARBiH 5th Corps.^{12 13} Abdic’s support was weakest in Bihać itself, which generally sided with the Izetbegovic government.

When the decision was forced, two Bosnian Army brigades—the 521st and 527th, both raised from the Velika Kladusa area—defected virtually wholesale to the Abdic camp. (These were to be redesignated as the APWB’s 1st and 2nd Brigades, respectively). Much of the 504th and part of the 503rd Brigade in Cazin also changed sides. The 517th Brigade from the small town of Pjanici remained loyal to the Government, but lost many of its men to defections. These units were to provide the manpower equivalent of about three to four brigades to the rebel forces.

Open violence between the rival forces began in the first days of October, as for the first time Muslims fought not only Serbs and Croats but also other Muslims. UNPROFOR’s General Briquemont tried to negotiate a truce between the two factions before the violence escalated out of hand, but the Abdic representatives refused to attend the talks.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs welcomed this opportunity to stand

down and let their Muslim opponents fight among themselves.

Bosnian Army forces at first confined the Abdic supporters to the extreme northern area around Velika Kladusa, but Drekovic’s overtaxed 5th Corps lacked the troop reserves to guard against both the Bosnian and Krajina Serb armies while simultaneously putting down the Abdic rebellion. On 15 October Abdic’s forces made a comeback, regaining control over Cazin without firing a shot, but the following day Bosnian Army troops hastily assembled from the surrounding area forced them back out after a brief, sharp fire-fight.^{15 16 17} (Government sources claimed—credibly—that the Bosnian Serbs helped the Abdic rebels by mounting simultaneous attacks in several areas to tie down ARBiH forces while the APWB moved into Cazin.) The Bosnian Army mounted a counterattack on 18 October, shelling Velika Kladusa, but was unable to eliminate the APWB as a military threat.¹⁸

While the Bihać situation hung in the balance, the wily Abdic moved to cover his flanks by seeking separate agreements with the Croats and Serbs. His first move was to secure a deal with the Croats, traveling to Zagreb on 21 October to sign an agreement whereby Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban would arrange a truce with the Bihać HVO.¹⁹ The following day, press reports announced that Abdic had met with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and Serbian President Milosevic in Belgrade, where Abdic concluded a similar deal with the Bosnian Serbs.²⁰ A public statement followed, to the effect that the Abdic forces and the Serbs had signed a peace agreement, while Karadzic’s Republika Srpska (itself unrecognized) announced it was recognizing the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia as a separate entity.²¹ Abdic completed his triad of deals on 28 October by placing his seal on a nonaggression pact with the Krajina Serbs that included the demilitarization of the Serb-held Bosanska Bojna area inside Bosnia, which the Croatian Serbs had seized in late April.²² Ever the consummate opportunist, Abdic had thrown in his lot with his former Serb opponents in order to gain backers for his breakaway empire.

Abdic's forces regained the initiative when fighting resumed on 4 December, after Krajina Serb forces allowed Abdic's troops to travel through Serb-held territory in Croatia and mount a flanking attack from the western side of the Bihać pocket near Licko Petrovo Selo. Advancing from this unexpected direction, a relatively small number of APWB troops (perhaps 1,000-1,500) was able to gain a significant foothold in the western Bihać enclave, occupying a strip of territory several kilometers deep along the Croatian border and advancing as close as 10km outside Cazin itself. At the same time, Abdic forces in the north succeeded in capturing Johovica and Skokovi, two hotly contested towns several kilometers south of Velika Kladusa. UN observers confirmed that the Serbs, in addition to allowing the rebel forces to transit their territory, supported the APWB attack with artillery and tank fire.²³ ²⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ ²⁷

The ARBiH's newly-appointed Bihać area commander, Atif Dudakovic, reacted promptly and effectively, committing forces stripped from his southern defensive line opposite the Bosnian Serbs. This risky move proved successful, containing the Abdic

advance by 8 December and eventually shrinking the APWB encroachment to negligible proportions.²⁸

The end of 1993 left Abdic's APWB twice-surrounded empire very modest in size—roughly the northwestern third of the Bihać enclave—but still too powerful for the Bosnian Army 5th Corps to reduce or eliminate. Abdic had built himself a small army of six brigades—5,000 fighters or so—from his own followers and major elements of two defecting Bosnian Army brigades. The Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic back in Belgrade welcomed a Muslim proxy force of limited capabilities that could be used to draw off 5th Corps fighters, and they carefully saw to it that Abdic's forces were adequately outfitted with small arms and mortars but were prevented from obtaining heavy artillery or armor.²⁹ When actively supported by the Krajina or Bosnian Serbs—as they were in November and December—the APWB army could threaten the ARBiH and take ground from it, but it lacked any actual offensive potential of its own. For the time being, Abdic's rebel forces had achieved a standoff with the Bosnian Army.

Endnotes, Annex 39

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- ⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Presidency Meets Without Izetbegovic" by Steve Pagani, 21 June 1993.
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- ⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslem Leader Denies Presidency Ambitions," 22 June 1993.
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- ¹¹ Reuters "Moslems Declare Autonomous Province in Maverick Enclave," 27 September 1993.
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- ¹⁵ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Seize Bosnian Town" by Giles Elgood, 15 October 1993.
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- ¹⁸ Reuters "Moslem Rebels Say Bosnian Troops Launch Attack," 18 October 1993.
- ¹⁹ O'Shea, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihac: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998, p. 23.
- ²⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Moslem Dissident Meets Karadzic, Milosevic," 22 October 1993.
- ²¹ Reuters, "Rebel Moslems Sign Peace Deal With Bosnian Serbs," 22 October 1993.
- ²² O'Shea, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihac: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998, pp. 17-18, 23.
- ²³ Reuters, "Rebel Forces Say They Advance in Bosnia Pocket," 11 November 1993.
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- ²⁶ Reuters, "Serbs Shell Bosnians to Support Rebel Moslems," 15 December 1993.
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- ²⁸ O'Shea, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihac: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998, p. 27.
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Annex 40

The “Ahmici Massacre” of 16 April 1993: A Military Analysis

“They are criminally responsible for the murder and wounding of Moslem civilians or detainees, the attacking and bombarding of undefended towns, villages and dwellings, deliberate attacks on the civilian population, the unlawful destruction of businesses, homes, personal property and livestock...”

—International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Lasva Valley indictment

“...it is clear to me that the attack on Ahmici was a well-organized and systematic Croat operation. It took place only four kilometers away from Blaskic’s own Headquarters and only five hundred meters away from a local Croat Headquarters.”

—Lt. Col. Bob Stewart, UNPROFOR British battalion commander¹

The centerpiece of the HVO’s ethnic cleansing strategy for the Lasva Valley was the “Ahmici massacre” of 16 April 1993. The massacre came to light almost by accident, when UNPROFOR’s British battalion commander, Lt. Col. Bob Stewart, met a group of Bosnian Army soldiers ranging for revenge because the Croats had killed the entire population of a town, including its babies. Not willing to believe the outlandish claims, Stewart diverted his peacekeepers from their route to disprove the accusations and lay the matter to rest.²

They soon found out that the Bosnian claims were all too true: the entire village had been systematically destroyed. Most visibly, the main mosque had been burned and its minaret felled by explosives detonated at the base. Most of the houses had also been put to the torch, their roofs collapsed by the flames. The few

exceptions proved to be Croat-owned residences, which were left intact. Cars were destroyed in driveways; dead livestock littered the streets and gardens. An entire family of seven was found dead in one house, at least two of them young children who had almost certainly burned to death. The images from this small central Bosnian town—the Guernica of the Bosnian conflict—were to shock and outrage the world.^{3 4 5}

It is difficult to reconstruct exactly what happened that day, but investigations by the UN and other agencies indicate that the village was taken by surprise early in the morning—about 5AM—by simultaneous attacks from the north and south. Mortar rounds and sniper fire cut down anyone who tried to escape across the open ground. Within the town, squads of soldiers moved methodically from house to house, killing the occupants with close-range gunfire. After everyone in the town had been killed, many of the bodies were dragged into their homes and the buildings were set aflame with gasoline—probably in an effort to conceal or destroy as much evidence as possible.^{6 7 8}

The UN counted at least 176 buildings, including two mosques, destroyed, and determined that at least 103 people, including 33 women and children, died at Ahmici; the actual number likely was considerably higher. According to the indictment published by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Ahmici’s official population had been 466, of whom 356 were Muslims. However, the town’s population on the morning of the attack may have been as high as 800 because of an influx of refugees from Jajce, Foca, and Visegrad. Of those who survived, perhaps half escaped into the hills and eventually made their way to Muslim-held territory. The remainder were taken prisoner by the HVO but were not otherwise harmed—possibly as a result of prompt UN intervention and the international outcry at the massacre’s discovery.^{9 10 11 12 13 14}

Several days later, on 24 April, HVO Central Bosnia Operational Zone (OZ)¹⁵ commander Tihomir Blaskic—later promoted to become commander of all HVO forces—acknowledged to the UN that HVO forces in his area of responsibility had been responsible for the attack on Ahmici. But Blaskic and the HVO command in Mostar denied that they had ordered the attacks, maintaining that “some commanders and their troops are acting and behaving on their own initiative and taking independent actions.” The HVO authorities claimed that those responsible would be identified and prosecuted, but failed to name any individuals or units.¹⁶

All the available evidence suggests that the Ahmici operation was pre-planned and executed by a select group of assault troops. Unsubstantiated but persistent rumors claim that a group of senior Bosnian Croat leaders met on 15 April, the night before the attack, to decide whether to mount the operation, which they allegedly referred to as “48 hours of blood and ashes.”¹⁷

Several HVO units have been implicated in the Ahmici operation, with varying degrees of evidence against them. Two of these were special forces units: the *Jokeri* (“Jokers”) and the *Vitezovi* (“Knights”). Both were company-sized elite units subordinate to the Central Bosnia Operational Zone (a corps-level equivalent). A third unit was the HVO’s local “Vitez” brigade, then under the command of Mario Cerkez.^{18 19}

The *Jokeri* special forces detachment has frequently been mentioned, by a variety of sources, as a main suspect in the Ahmici massacre. The detachment was formed early in the war, and apparently as an independent unit directly subordinate to the Central Bosnia Operational Zone. During the Croat-Muslim war, the unit was employed as a mobile reserve for the Croat-held Vitez enclave (the Vitez, Busovaca, and Novi Travnik areas). By the beginning of 1994, the “Jokers” had apparently been resubordinated as the “intervention” or “anti-terrorist” company of the HVO’s 4th MP Battalion, headquartered in Vitez.

- At the time of the Ahmici massacre, the detachment—with a strength of perhaps 100-150 troops—was commanded by Ante Furundzija and headquar-

tered in the small town of Nadioci, 5 km east of Vitez. The detachment probably was large enough to have accomplished the human and material destruction inside the village itself (although it did not necessarily do so); UN peacekeepers later estimated that about 70 HVO soldiers had assaulted Ahmici.²⁰

- As a special forces or military police unit, the Jokers would have been well equipped with personal weapons (e.g. assault rifles, grenades, flak jackets, and communications equipment) but would not normally carry heavy weapons other than hand-held rocket launchers.

The *Vitezovi* special purpose detachment (Postrojba Posebne Namjen—PPN) has also been accused at times of participating in the Ahmici massacre. The unit was formed some time in late 1992 or at the beginning of 1993, and was headquartered in the Vitez area. The unit apparently was active through January 1994 as an independent subordinate of the HVO’s Vitez Corps district, according to press reports. Shortly thereafter, the unit appears to have been absorbed into another HVO unit—probably the then-forming 3rd HVO Guards brigade. The unit’s primary responsibility was the defense of a key hill north of Novi Travnik that overlooked the Muslim-held Pucarevo weapons factory.^{21 22}

- The *Vitezovi* unit was led by Darko Kraljevic, the nephew of Blazo Kraljevic—a prominent commander in the HOS organization—who was assassinated by the HVO in August 1992. The younger Kraljevic—who had been accused of war crimes during the Croat-Muslim conflict but was never indicted—died in a car accident on 26 June 1995.^{23 24}

The HVO’s Vitez brigade²⁵ was the locally raised, territorial-based unit that had general responsibility for the defense of the area. Unlike the *Jokeri* or *Vitezovi*, the Vitez brigade was composed largely of draftees. A relatively large HVO brigade, the Vitez brigade had at least three battalions and probably about 1,500 troops. The brigade fielded about a dozen heavy and medium mortars and probably one or two 76mm field guns of its own. If necessary, it could also call on some of the

Central Bosnia Operational Zone's artillery resources for additional fire support.²⁶

- The available evidence suggests that the Vitez brigade and/or the Central Bosnia Operational Zone's mixed artillery battalion at least supported the assault force with heavy weapons fire, even if they did not contribute troops to the actions inside the town. UN peacekeepers reported signs of shellfire and UN investigators reported that mortars were used in the attack, while the Tribunal's indictment states that the HVO troops first shelled the town from a distance with mortars, rockets, and anti-aircraft guns. The use of such heavy weapons would imply the involvement of the Vitez brigade or the mixed artillery battalion—the only units in the Vitez enclave equipped with mortars or heavy artillery.
- Even if the Vitez brigade was not the main perpetrator of the Ahmici massacre, it is likely that Cerkez still exercised overall tactical control of the operation. Cerkez was by this point a fairly senior HVO commander—at least within the Central Bosnia Operational Zone—and units such as the “Jokers” that operated within his geographic area and were supported by the Vitez brigade and the OZ's artillery battalion would doctrinally have fallen under his operational control.

The Ahmici attack was not a legitimate military operation, it was a deliberate massacre: the HVO troops positioned themselves so they could catch any civilians attempting to flee the town in fields of fire, while others systematically executed the inhabitants. Nor would a straightforward military attack have required the cover-up operations that followed immediately afterward.

Moreover, the indications that one or both of the relatively small, special-purpose units directly subordinate to the Operational Zone commander—Blaskic—was employed strongly suggest that the Ahmici massacre was planned, ordered and executed as exactly that. These were not, as Blaskic and the HVO were quick to claim and then insist on, any sort of renegade units operating outside HVO command authority. The *Jokeri* and *Vitezovi* were among the HVO's most select units of their size, and they were frequently given the most difficult missions in the area. The presence of either unit would imply a higher level of command attention and involvement than a similar operation by the local territorial brigade might have.

Endnotes, Annex 40

¹ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. p. 310.

² Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 278-299.

³ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 278-299.

⁴ *White Warrior: The Cheshires in Bosnia, 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment*. Regimental HQ, Chester, 1994. pp. 57-60.

⁵ Bell, Martin. *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug*. London: Penguin Books, 1996. pp. 152-155.

⁶ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 278-299.

⁷ *White Warrior: The Cheshires in Bosnia, 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment*. Regimental HQ, Chester, 1994. pp. 57-60.

⁸ Bell, Martin. *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug*. London: Penguin Books, 1996. pp. 152-155.

⁹ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 278-299.

¹⁰ *White Warrior: The Cheshires in Bosnia, 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment*. Regimental HQ, Chester, 1994. pp. 57-60.

¹¹ The figures of 800 residents during the attack and 500 before the war are taken from UNHCR estimates. British peacekeepers saw HVO soldiers escorting at least 150 Muslim prisoners away from Ahmici after the assault. When the British soldiers demanded to know what was going on, the HVO soldiers changed direction and eventually released the prisoners to the UNHCR. The prisoners firmly believe they were about to be executed and that UNPROFOR's intervention saved their lives. Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 278-299.

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¹³ *White Warrior: The Cheshires in Bosnia, 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment*. Regimental HQ, Chester, 1994. pp. 57-60.

¹⁴ Reuters, "Croatian War Crime Suspects Surrender to UN" by Andrew Kelley, 6 October 1997.

¹⁵ Later renamed the Vitez Corps District.

¹⁶ Reuters, "Croat Commander Promises Inquiry Into Family's Death" by Corinne Dufka, 24 April 1993.

¹⁷ Split *Feral Tribune*, interview with Ivan Santic, former president of Vitez Opcina, "There are 200 Who Are Worse!" 20 November 1995.

¹⁸ Split *Feral Tribune*, "Death Came From Herzegovina" by Vjeran Grkovic, 20 November 1995.

¹⁹ Zagreb *Nacional*, "The Hague Tribunal, According to the Secret Bill of Indictment, is Demanding that the Croatian Government Extradite Miroslav Bralo Cicko, Former Member of the HVO Special Unit" by Jasna Babic and Visnja Gotal, 7 January 1998.

²⁰ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 298.

²¹ Reuters, "Croats Battle Mud, Exhaustion in Bosnian Trenches" by Kurt Schork, 12 December 1993.

²² Reuters, "Croats Left With No Escape in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 September 1993.

²³ Rijeka *Novi List*, "Officer Ivica Rajic Arrested for Massacre of Muslims," 12 July 1995.

²⁴ Split *Feral Tribune*, "Death Came from Herzegovina" by Vjeran Grkovic, 20 November 1995.

²⁵ Later redesignated the 92nd "Vitez" Home Defense Regiment.

²⁶ What was then the Central Bosnian Operational Zone was supported by a mixed artillery battalion, later re-designated the 35th Mixed Artillery-Rocket Battalion.

Annex 41

The Croat-Held Vitez Enclave: Vitez, Busovaca, and Novi Travnik, June-December 1993

In 1991, the entire Vitez opstina was about 45 percent Croat, 41 percent Muslim, and 5 percent Serb.¹ A fairly populous town of 28,000 residents, Vitez occupied a position right in the middle of the Lasva Valley, about a third of the way along the highway between Travnik and Kiseljak. But in addition to Vitez's strategic location, it had one vital facility both sides desperately wanted to control: the "Slobodan Princip Seljo" explosives factory two kilometers west of the town center. For all of these reasons, Vitez and its environs were bound to be hotly contested between the Croat and Muslim factions.

What would later become the Vitez enclave had been a battleground even before the main Croat-Muslim conflict began in April, thanks especially to the republic-wide conflict over subordination of ARBiH and HVO units to each others' commands. In Vitez the HVO's demand in late January 1993 that the Bosnian Army units in the area disarm or subordinate themselves to local HVO command precipitated a substantial firefight with the numerically superior Muslims in which the Bosnian Croats clearly were the losers. The action started when the Muslims surrounded the Croat-held areas of Busovaca and shelled the town. Intense fighting raged for two days before a cease-fire was arranged on 27 January. According to the HVO's own statement, the incident left 44 HVO troops dead and 82 others injured—a noteworthy loss by any standard for such clashes in the Bosnian conflict.^{2 3 4 5 6 7}

Intermittent but much less severe firefights continued through February.^{8 9} By the end of February, Croat-held Busovaca was effectively blockaded by surrounding Muslim forces and both sides had established checkpoints and barricades on roads throughout the area.¹⁰ Another local cease-fire was signed on 3 March, but it was evident that the underlying problems were too serious to be contained by cease-fires alone.¹¹

Although the January and February clashes may have been seen as harbingers of events to come, the really serious fighting in the Vitez area began with the HVO offensive in mid-April. During the HVO's Lasva Valley offensive the Vitez area was to endure some of the bloodiest and most violent Croat-Muslim clashes of the war. The bellwether of violence in the area was the detonation of a huge truck bomb outside a mosque in Muslim-majority Stari Vitez on 16 April, killing or injuring nearly two hundred civilians and leveling most of the old town's center.^{12 13}

The HVO's lightning offensive in the Lasva valley allowed the Bosnian Croats to capture or destroy many of the villages in the area immediately around Vitez in a couple of days. Cautious of its gains, though, and with limited resources, the HVO Vitez Brigade did not press the attack strongly after the first few days of fighting. The HVO brigade appears to have tried to link the Vitez enclave with the HVO-held Kiseljak area some 10 km to the east with an attack along the highway on 25 April, but was blocked by significantly superior Bosnian Army forces determined to keep the two Croat-held areas separate.¹⁴ With the advantage of surprise and against negligible or disorganized opposition, the Bosnian Croats had seized territory easily, but now they were stymied against determined Muslim opposition. After another cease-fire in late April brought another vexed calm to the area, the HVO assumed a largely defensive posture, giving the ARBiH 3rd Corps an opportunity to build its forces for a counterstroke.^{15 16}

The battle for the Vitez enclave resumed in earnest with the a major area-wide counteroffensive launched by the Bosnian Army on 5 June as it wound up the expulsion of HVO forces from nearby Travnik.¹⁷ After the capture of Travnik on 10 June, the ARBiH 3rd Corps intensified its offensive with attacks north and northeast of Vitez itself.¹⁸ The HVO's "Frankopan" and "Travnika" Brigades, after being driven

from Travnik, had established blocking positions to the northwest along the line Puticevo-Mosor-Guca Gora, and it was along this line that ARBiH and HVO forces clashed in late June.^{19 20}

The Bosnian Army forces pressed the Croats relentlessly until the HVO held a roughly barbell-shaped position extending from just east of Novi Travnik to just west of Busovaca, along the main highway adjacent to the Lasva river. But at the same time the Bosnian Muslims were surrounding the Vitez enclave the Bosnian Croats were laying siege to the Muslim-majority neighborhood of Stari Vitez deep inside the city where about 1,300 Muslims defended a tiny Government-held enclave of perhaps a kilometer on a side.²¹

The fighting declined for most of August but resumed on 1 September. Bosnian Army forces again pressed the Croats hard from two directions, launching repeated attacks over the next several days against the villages of Jardol and Divjak to the northwest and Zaselje to the southwest. The HVO counterattacked on 8 and 9 September, pushing outward a short distance to establish control over important Bila hill northwest of Vitez and the nearby towns of Divjak and Grbavica.²² But the Bosnian Government retained the initiative and resumed its offensive along a broad front to the north on 10 September.^{23 24 25 26 27 28}

On 16 September the Bosnian Croats threatened to flatten the Stari Vitez enclave-within-an-enclave after the Bosnian Army's massacre of Croat villagers in Uzdol. UN sources confirmed that the Bosnian Croats first demanded that the neighborhood's Muslims "vacate the area by noon or face the consequences" and then opened fire with mortars and artillery after the deadline passed without a response.²⁹

Undeflected, on 18 September the Bosnian Government again took up the offensive with a broad, coordinated assault on the Croat-held portions of the Lasva valley. It had regrouped its forces since its last major effort, and now the Bosnian Army was able to open a multi-pronged, general offensive, driving on Vitez while renewing the fighting in and around Travnik, Fojnica, Busovaca, Nova Bila west of Vitez, Gornji Vakuf, and Mostar.

Government attacks on several towns around Vitez were a major feature of the broader offensive. Bosnian Army forces attacked simultaneously from the north and south to pinch the Vitez enclave tighter near its narrowest point east of Vitez. The ARBiH's elite 17th Krajina brigade captured the village of Bobas 3 km southeast of the city, but the HVO's "Vitezovi" special operations unit led a counterattack that retook the village shortly afterward. Muslim forces also pressed the village of Krcevina 2km north of the city, hoping to relieve the embattled Stari Vitez neighborhood. They broke through HVO lines at one point and reached up to the edge of Vitez, but were ultimately forced back with no net gains.^{30 31}

At the same time the Bosnian Army was attacking Vitez town from the north and south, it was also attacking from the southwest in the direction of the Croat-held explosives factory. Rather than give it up the Croats went so far as to claim that they had made the entire explosives factory into a giant "Doomsday Bomb" which they would blow up along with the surrounding town if the Muslims tried to capture it. The Bosnian Croats wired detonation cord and explosives to the tanks of sulfuric and nitric acid and claimed they had created a giant fuel-air explosive which would generate hundreds of tons of explosive force and fling acid into the air. No one ever learned how serious the Croats were since the Muslims never captured the factory.^{32 33 34}

Fighting dragged on through the entire month of October with serious casualties on both sides—especially the outnumbered Bosnian Croats—but only marginal changes in the confrontation lines.³⁵ Toward the end of the month Goverment forces began positioning themselves for another major push and on 26 October succeeded in rolling back the HVO in the extreme west of the enclave, capturing the town of Loncari and the adjacent 650-meter hill. On 7 November—just after the Bosnian Government capture of Vares—the ARBiH intensified its pressure on the Vitez enclave. The 17th Krajina Brigade drove HVO defenders out of the villages of Zabrdje and Jelik and seized a commanding 1,105-meter peak 5 km southwest of Vitez. Hard-pressed HVO forces struggled to hang on to the high ground overlooking the explosives factory,

finally rallying to retake the peak after an intense barrage. Three more assaults the following day by the 17th Krajina failed to capture the factory.³⁶ ³⁷ ³⁸

Toward the end of the year the Bosnian Government took one last crack at the Croat enclaves, launching coordinated attacks on Kiseljak, Gornji Vakuf, and Zepce enclaves just one day before a Christmas-New

Year's cease-fire was due to take effect. The 22 December attacks pressed especially hard against the western edge of the Vitez enclave at the Croat-held villages of Lazine and Vecerske, but made no significant gains.³⁹ Although Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were quiet, the last few days of the truce would again see fairly sharp fighting in the suburbs around Vitez.⁴⁰ ⁴¹ ⁴²

Endnotes, Annex 41

- ¹ Split *Feral Tribune*, "Death Came From Herzegovina" by Vjeran Grkovic, 20 November 1995.
- ² Zagreb Radio, 25 January 1993. FBIS London LD2501204893, 25 January 93.
- ³ Zagreb Radio, 26 January 1993. FBIS London LD2601191693, 26 January 93.
- ⁴ Paris AFP, 26 January 1992. FBIS Vienna AU2601213993, 26 January 93.
- ⁵ Zagreb Radio, 26 January 1993. FBIS London LD2601224093, 262240Z January 93.
- ⁶ Zagreb Radio, 27 January 1993. FBIS London LD2701194093, 271940Z January 93.
- ⁷ Zagreb Radio, 27 January 1993. FBIS London LD2801000393, 280003Z January 93.
- ⁸ Zagreb Radio, 2 February 1993. FBIS London LD0202154893, 021548Z February 93.
- ⁹ Zagreb Radio, 4 February 1993. FBIS London LD0402155293, 041552Z February 93.
- ¹⁰ Zagreb Radio, 27 February 1993. FBIS London LD2702173393, 271733Z February 93.
- ¹¹ Zagreb Radio, 3 March 1993. FBIS London LD0303011693, 030116Z March 93.
- ¹² Reuters, "U.N. Tries to End Moslem-Croat Clashes in Bosnia" by Steve Pagani, 20 April 93.
- ¹³ Stewart, Col. Robert, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*. London: HarperCollins, 1994. pp. 289-290.
- ¹⁴ Zagreb Radio, 25 April 1993. FBIS London LD2504122693, 251226Z April 93.
- ¹⁵ Paris AFP, 28 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2804110393, 281103Z April 93.
- ¹⁶ Zagreb HTV, 12 May 1993. FBIS London LD1205180493, 121804Z May 93.
- ¹⁷ Pale Radio, 5 June 1993. FBIS London LD0506180693, 051806Z June 93.
- ¹⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 10 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1006120793, 101207Z June 93.
- ¹⁹ Zagreb Radio, June 1993. FBIS London, LD1906151093, 191510Z June 93.
- ²⁰ Zagreb Radio, 23 June 1993. FBIS London LD2306151693, 231516Z June 93.
- ²¹ Reuters, "Siege Within a Siege Strands Bosnian Moslems" by Kurt Schork, 16 July 1993.
- ²² Paris AFP, 9 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0909142193, 091421Z September 1993.
- ²³ A group of about 100 Muslim refugees petitioned the UK battalion for asylum in Vitez at this time. They were refused entry to the UNPROFOR compound, but were turned over to UN relief authorities in Zenica a few days later. Reuters, "Moslem Troops Seek UN Protection as Croats Advance" by Kurt Schork, 9 September 1993.
- ²⁴ Reuters, "Fate of Moslems Linked to Massacre of Croats in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 16 September 1993.
- ²⁵ Zagreb Radio, 8 September 1993. FBIS London LD0809123793, 081237Z September 93.
- ²⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 9 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0909164093, 091640Z September 93.
- ²⁷ Zagreb Radio, 10 September 1993. FBIS London LD1009144293, 101442Z September 93.
- ²⁸ Zagreb Radio, 13 September 1993. FBIS London LD1309124293, 131242Z September 93.
- ²⁹ Reuters, "Fate of Moslems Linked to Massacre of Croats in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 16 September 1993.
- ³⁰ Reuters, "No-Surrender Croats Say Moslems Plan New Attack" by Kurt Schork, 20 September 1993.
- ³¹ Reuters, "Croats Left With No Escape in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 September 1993.
- ³² Reuters, "Croats Threaten to Blow Explosives Factory in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 21 September 1993.
- ³³ Reuters, "Croats Craft 'Doomsday Bomb' in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 12 November 1993.
- ³⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Resume Attacks in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 25 September 1993.
- ³⁵ Reuters, "Croats Use Exploding Trenches in New Bosnian Tactic" by Kurt Schork, 15 October 1993.
- ³⁶ Reuters, "Croats Fear Sell Out in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 9 November 1993.
- ³⁷ Reuters, "Moslems Shell Croat Munitions Factory" by Kurt Schork, 8 November 1993.
- ³⁸ Reuters, "Three Children Among Eight Dead in Sarajevo" by Mark Heinrich, 10 November 1993.
- ³⁹ O'Shea, Brendan. *Crisis at Bihać: Bosnia's Bloody Battlefield*. UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998. p. 28.
- ⁴⁰ Reuters, "Moslems Attack Croats in Central Bosnia Valley," 22 December 1993.
- ⁴¹ Zagreb Radio, 22 December 1993. FBIS London LD2212172593, 221725Z December 93.
- ⁴² Zagreb Radio, 22 December 1993. FBIS London LD2212131393, 221313Z December 93.

Annex 42

The Kiseljak Enclave in 1993: The Battles for Kiseljak, Kresevo, and Fojnica

Kiseljak itself was a town of about 24,000 residents, slightly over half of them Croats. About 40 percent were Muslims and the remainder Serbs and other nationalities. Since the latter half of 1992, Kiseljak's claim to fame had been as the black market capital of Bosnia. The siege of Sarajevo had made Kiseljak—a few kilometers northwest of the city center—the key gateway for smuggling supplies into the city. Croats and Muslims wanted control of the road that made the lucrative black market trade possible.^{1 2} Interethnic tensions were already high in the region following a number clashes in early 1993.^{3 4}

When full-scale ethnic warfare came to the Kiseljak area, it was the HVO that struck first, massing northwest of the town on 18 April to shell the Muslim-majority town of Bilalovac and destroying parts of Svinjarevo, Gomionica, and Rotilj after forcing their inhabitants to flee.⁵ Muslim civilians in Kiseljak were either rounded up and detained or forced to leave the town.⁶ Battles continued for an arc of villages several kilometers west of Kiseljak, with the HVO gaining effective control over Svinjarevo, Jehovac, Gromiljak, Visnjica, and Rotilj by the end of April.^{7 8 9}

Heavy fighting resumed north and west of Kiseljak at the very end of May around the villages of Lisovo and Kazagici.¹⁰ On 1 June, according UN observers, the HVO launched a pre-emptive attack against a Muslim-held ridge overlooking the road to the northwest.¹¹ The countrywide truce agreed to June 10 in Kiseljak by Bosnian Army commander Delic and HVO commander Petkovic brought the local fighting to a halt the following week.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the cease-fire failed to hold and fighting resumed in the area shortly thereafter. In mid-June the Bosnian Army opened an offensive effort against the Croat-held Kresevo area south of Kiseljak, first

attacking the village of Mratinici just east of Kresevo on 17 June and shelling Kresevo itself on 18 June.¹³ At the same time the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps squeezed the opposite end of the enclave by attacking Croat-held towns north and northeast of Kiseljak.¹⁴ Other ARBiH 3rd and possibly 1st Corps forces brought in from Fojnica and Tarcin pressed the southern tip of the Kiseljak enclave very hard over the next few days, and by 22 June Kresevo appeared in danger of falling.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the HVO managed to hang on and stabilized the defense lines just outside Kresevo.

After pressing the southern edge of the Kiseljak enclave, the Bosnian Army shifted its emphasis to the west and attacked Fojnica at the beginning of July. Fojnica, a quiet lumber town of some 15,000 residents in the mountains west of Kiseljak, was one of the last places to give itself up to Croat-Muslim violence; UNPROFOR Bosnia Commander Morrillon had cited the ethnically-mixed town as an "island of peace" only days before it became yet another central Bosnian battleground. The dove of peace fluttered away and the battle began when a single mortar round exploded outside the police station in the Croat half of the town. Bosnian Army forces, apparently brought up from the south after their attacks on Kresevo, supported their attack with scarce artillery and mortar rounds for two days. Following up with pitched battles for the town streets, the Bosnian Army occupied the town on 3 July and removed one point of the Fojnica-Kiseljak-Kresevo triangle that had previously defined the Croat-held enclave.¹⁶

It was about this time in early July that evidence began to accumulate of open Bosnian Croat-Bosnian Serb collusion in the Kiseljak area. Croats and Serbs were seen manning positions together and jointly attacking Muslims in the Kiseljak and Zepce areas. UN military observers reported Bosnian Serb tanks passing unhindered through Croat-held territory in the

Kiseljak enclave and passed on unconfirmed reports of HVO soldiers riding atop the VRS armor.¹⁷

After the Bosnian Army capture of Fojnica, the Kiseljak enclave enjoyed a relative reprieve for the next few months. Intense fighting flared in mid-July on Mt. Inac just west of Kresevo, where the HVO managed to retain control.^{18 19} There was another flareup of fighting in early October as the Ban Josip Jelacic Brigade attempted unsuccessfully to wrest part of the Kiseljak-Tarcin road from the ARBiH's 9th Mountain Brigade.^{20 21} The two sides also periodically shelled each other's villages, hurting civilian lives and property with negligible military impact.

On 12 November, as the Bosnian Army effort against nearby Vitez was grinding to a halt, the Kiseljak HVO made its most substantial counterattack of the year. HVO forces from the enclave punched outward in the Citonje-Bakovici area several kilometers due west of

Kiseljak. The HVO drive—visibly backed by Bosnian Serb armor and artillery support, and simultaneous with a Serb-only offensive against Muslim-held Olovo—captured the town of Bakovici and pushed Bosnian Government forces back about five kilometers by 13 November.^{22 23} HVO troops reached right up to the edge of Fojnica, but failed to occupy it.²⁴ Government forces appeared ready to cede Fojnica—which would have returned the Croat-held enclave to its original borders—but they were able to stall the HVO offensive just short of victory, after which the Bosniacs rallied on 15 November and managed to reoccupy the town.^{25 26 27 28}

The HVO's failed attempt to recapture Fojnica in November marked the end of large-scale fighting in the area. For the remainder of the winter, both sides dug in, regrouped, recovered...and awaited the resumption of fighting in the coming year.

Chart 1

Croatian Defense Council (HVO) Order of Battle, Kiseljak Enclave, 1993

3rd (Central Bosnia) Operational Zone, HQ Gornji Vakuf (*Glavni Stozer, Oruzani Snaga Srednja Bosna*) (Later Vitez Corps District)

Established 19 May 1992
Col. Tihomir Blaskic, Commander
Franjo Nakic, Dep. Commander

Operational Group 2, HQ Kiseljak Col. Ivica Rajic, Commander through early November 1993

Ban Josip Jelacic Brigade, HQ Kiseljak (Later split into the 94th "Ban Josip Jelacic" and 95th "Marinko Bosnjak" Home Defense Regiments)

Established 20 December 1992
Formed from the Kiseljak, Kresevo, Fojnica municipal HVO headquarters;
redesignated the Ban Josip Jelacic brigade probably in late 1992.
Ivica Rajic, Commander

Nikola Subic Zrinski Brigade, HQ Busovaca (Later the 93rd "Nikola Subic Zrinski" Home Defense Regiment)

Bobovac Brigade, HQ Vares/Dastansko (Later the 96th "Bobovac" Home Defense Regiment)

Kotromanic Brigade, HQ Kakanj (Later disbanded)

Endnotes, Annex 42

- ¹ Reuters, "Bosnia's Black Market Town Braces for War" by John Fullerton, 3 June 1993.
- ² Belgrade *Vreme*, "War Crime: Fighting to the Last Booty" by Filip Svarn, 8 March 1993. FBIS Reston VA 93BA0793A, 061944Z April 93.
- ³ Sarajevo Radio, 27 January 1993. FBIS London LD2701203493, 272034Z January 93.
- ⁴ Zagreb Radio, 16 February 1993. FBIS London LD1602221993, 162219Z February 93.
- ⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 19 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1904124493, 191244Z April 93.
- ⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 21 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2104161893, 211618Z April 93.
- ⁷ Zagreb Radio, 24 April 1993. FBIS London LD2404161993, 241619Z April 93.
- ⁸ UNPROFOR spokesmen reported on 30 April that the villages of Hercazi, Ulsnjica, and Gomionica had been damaged or, in the case of Gomionica, destroyed outright, but did not specify which side had been responsible for the destruction. Paris AFP, 20 April 93. FBIS Vienna AU3004114393, 301143Z April 93.
- ⁹ The Bosnian Government charged the HVO on 25 May 1993 with violence against the civilian populations of a number of villages during the April-May fighting in the Kiseljak area, including the burning down of between 450 and 500 houses. Specifically, the War Presidency of the Kiseljak Municipality accused the Bosnian Croats of crimes against people and/or property in Rotilj, Visnjica, Svinjarevo, Gomionica, Gromiljak, Mihovac, Mehrići Mahala, Rudnik, and Gazugici. Sarajevo Radio, 25 May 1993. FBIS London LD2505211093, 252110Z May 93.
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- ¹² Sarajevo Radio, 10 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1006120793, 101207Z June 93.
- ¹³ Sarajevo Radio, 17 June 1993. FBIS London LD1706170293, 171702Z June 93.
- ¹⁴ Zagreb Radio, 18 June 1993. FBIS London LD1806181093, 181810Z June 93.
- ¹⁵ Reuters, "Moslems Ignore Truce and Attack in Central Bosnia" by Gilles Trequesser, 22 June 1993.
- ¹⁶ Reuters, "Bosnian Town's Dream of Peace Blown to Pieces" by Gilles Trequesser, 3 July 1993.
- ¹⁷ Paris AFP, 2 July 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0207062593, 020625Z July 93.
- ¹⁸ Zagreb Radio, 12 July 1993. FBIS London LD1207180793, 121807Z July 93.
- ¹⁹ Zagreb Radio, 20 July 1993. FBIS London LD2007150693, 201506Z July 93.
- ²⁰ Paris AFP, 4 October 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0410101493, 031014Z October 93.
- ²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 12 October 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1210194793, 121947Z October 93.
- ²² Reuters, "Moslems Attack UN Headquarters Town in Bosnia" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.
- ²³ Reuters, "Bosnian Leaders Press for Truce But Troops Fight On" by Mark Heinrich, 13 November 1993.
- ²⁴ The UN at this time was chiefly concerned about the safety of some 570 patients at two hospitals in Fojnica and Bakovici. UNPROFOR troops eventually posted guards around the facilities and looked after the patients after the hospital staffs fled. Reuters, "UN Troops Guard Front-Line Hospitals in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 14 November 1993.
- ²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 12 November 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1211212693, 122126Z November 93.
- ²⁶ Paris AFP, 15 November 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1511113893, 151138Z November 93.
- ²⁷ Reuters, "Croats, Moslems Step up Peace Talks" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.
- ²⁸ Reuters, "Moslems and Croats Fight, Leaders Call for Truce" by Mark Heinrich, 12 November 1993.

Annex 43

The Bosnian Army Capture of Bugojno, July 1993

During the summer 1993 fighting between Croat and Muslim forces in Central Bosnia one of the most heavily contested towns was Bugojno, both because of its location and the presence of the “Slavko Rodic” munitions factory, damaged but still functioning at a reduced level. Bugojno was a large town that before the war had numbered about 46,000 residents with a Muslim plurality (42 percent) and substantial minorities of Croats (34 percent) and Serbs (about 20 percent). The ethnic balance in the town began to change soon after the war began in the spring of 1992, when most of the Serbs left almost immediately for Serb-controlled areas, while both Bosnian Croat and Muslim refugees streamed in from Jajce and other areas lost to the Bosnian Serb Army. Although the town’s total population remained roughly the same, the Serb exodus and the refugee influx had probably increased the proportion of Bosnian Muslims by mid-1993, when the Muslims decided to take over the town for themselves.

The town had been defended from the Bosnian Serbs by the HVO’s “Eugen Kvaternik” brigade and the Bosnian Army’s 307th Mountain Brigade. Interethnic relations were relatively good until the first Croat-Muslim fighting began in Gornji Vakuf in January 1993, after which they became extremely tense. The two brigade commanders agreed to allow each other’s troops free movement with their weapons, but the armed truce was punctuated by a series of incidents between January and July, most of which appear to have been Muslim provocations against Bosnian Croats.

At the time the commander of the HVO’s “Eugen Kvaternik” brigade was Ivica Lucic.¹ The unit had been established in May 1992 and charged with defending the greater Bugojno area from Bosnian Serb attacks.² Most of its soldiers were local Bosnian Croat residents, some of whom brought their own

weapons, and they entered combat with little or no formal training. The brigade apparently captured a few crew-served weapons from the munitions factory in town, but may have lacked adequate ammunition and skilled crews for these weapons. In theory, the Eugen Kvaternik brigade had a strength of perhaps 1,000-1,200 troops, organized into three battalions, a military police company, and a small mixed artillery battery. In reality, however, the force was not as strong as it looked. The unit’s nominal manpower total probably included 200 or more Muslims—who would have deserted before or during the July 1993 fighting—and most of the brigade’s Croat troops were on leave or deployed outside the town on the day the Muslims attacked. The HVO’s actual fighting strength may have been no more than 200-400 at the specific time and place of the Bosnian Army attack.

The ARBiH unit that launched the mid-July attack was the town’s own 307th “Bugojno” Brigade under Tahir Granic.³ The 307th Brigade was assigned to the ARBiH III Corps’ “Operational Group West,” then commanded by Brigadier General Selmo Cikotic. (Like other Bosnian Army Operational Groups, OG West was a semi-permanent tactical headquarters established to coordinate the operations of several brigades.) Typically, the 307th had many troops but relatively few weapons. At the time it could probably field 3,000-3,500 troops at full mobilization, with as many as three to four dozen mortars but no field artillery or armor.

The Bosnian Army forces began their attack on Bugojno early in the morning of 18 July 1993. Street battles raged in and around the town for the next several days, with the numerically superior Muslims progressively forcing the Croats back. After particularly heavy fighting in the town center on 21 July, the Bosnian Army occupied most of the key facilities—including the Eugen Kvaternik Brigade’s barracks—

the following day.⁴ The HVO brigade's third battalion, surrounded in an elementary school in town and down to 73 effectives from its authorized strength of 350 troops, surrendered on 23 July, and the other two battalions—the first had only 40 men left—gave up under similar circumstances. The last large pocket of Bosnian Croat resistance—the military police company surrounded in the Kalin Hotel—surrendered on 25 July.⁵ The last fighting in the area, in which Croat and Muslim soldiers fought over several Muslim villages on the road to the southeast, was over by about 29 July.

The intense fighting caused high casualties on both sides.^{6 7 8} The Bosnian Army and the HVO each lost several dozens killed, and probably about 350 HVO soldiers were captured.⁹

The battle for Bugojno was one of the few in the Bosnian war in which the advantages lay with the Bosnian Army. The 307th Brigade probably had at least three times as many troops as its HVO opponent, and was comparably or better equipped. The HVO's Eugen Kvaternik brigade had no apparent advantage in leadership, and observers described its officers as inexperienced and disorganized. The Bosnian Army's advantages were magnified by the factor of surprise: the HVO troops were caught unprepared, undermanned, and ill-positioned. With its forces separated, the HVO in Bugojno had to fight three separate battalion-sized battles rather than one brigade-sized one. Outnumbered and surrounded, the HVO battalions were defeated in detail. But even against an unimpressive opponent, the Bosnian Army was beginning to display greater proficiency.

Endnotes, Annex 43

¹ Often called simply the HVO "Bugojno" brigade, but here referred to as the "Eugen Kvaternik" brigade to distinguish it from the Bosnian Army's Bugojno brigade.

² Initially referred to as the "Bugojno municipal HVO headquarters," the force adopted the title "Eugen Kvaternik brigade" in probably October 1992.

³ The unit may have been reinforced for the attack by elements of the 17th Krajina Brigade from Travnik or the 7th Muslimski Brigade from Zenica, but there is no substantial confirmation of this.

⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 21 July 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2107191193.

⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 25 July 1993. FBIS London LD2507151293.

⁶ Reuters, "Moslems, Croats Battle for Bosnian Town" by Davor Huic, 20 July 1993.

⁷ Reuters, "Sarajevo Shelling Intensifies as Peace Talks Near" by Mark Heinrich, 22 July 1993.

⁸ Reuters, "Bosnia's Moslem-Led Army Takes Central Town of Bugojno," 22 July 1993.

⁹ The Eugen Kvaternik Brigade was essentially destroyed in this operation. Its remnants were regrouped into a single battalion and eventually combined with two other defeated and exiled HVO units—the former "Kupres" and "Jajce" brigades—to form the 55th Home Defense Regiment.

Annex 44

Northern Herzegovina: Konjic, Jablanica, and Vrdi in 1993

"My enemy's enemy is my best friend."

— Mirko, a Bosnian Serb soldier sharing brandy with his former HVO adversary in the hills overlooking Konjic¹

Konjic and Jablanica—just under 20 km apart from and due east and west of each other—were the two main towns anchoring northern Herzegovina. Jablanica, to the west, was the smaller of the two, with a pre-war population of about 4,500 citizens. About three-quarters of these residents were Muslims, with a bit under 20 percent Croats and a small number of Serbs. To the east, Konjic was substantially larger, with a prewar population of about 14,000. Slightly over half of these residents were Muslims, with another one-quarter Croats and about 14 percent Serbs.²

On the whole, the Bosnian Serb threat to northern Herzegovina was not great,³ and although the area held by the Croat and Muslim forces were subject to occasional shelling there was little threat of major offensive action from the already overtaxed VRS Herzegovina Corps. Rather, the greatest threat lay within—the Croat-Muslim schism that threatened to rip the area apart like other mixed areas of Bosnia. The problem was intensified by the prospect that, although Croats represented only a small fraction of the population in both Konjic and Jablanica, all of northern Herzegovina was to be assigned to a Croat-majority canton under the Vance-Owen peace plan. The seeds of discord had already been sown; Vance-Owen stimulated them to germinate.

The sizeable Muslim population of northern Herzegovina was reflected in the substantial force raised from the area, all collective elements of ARBiH General Arif Pasalic's 4th Corps.⁴ Probably the premier

unit in the area was the 43rd "Suad Alic" Mountain Brigade,⁵ drawn from the Konjic area. In addition, there were the 44th "Neretva" Mountain Brigade from nearby Klis and the 45th "Neretvica" brigade raised from the Jablanica area. Together, these three Bosnian Army brigades could probably field at least 5,000 fighting men, though they suffered from a paucity of supporting heavy weapons.

The Croatian Defense Council, by contrast, had only a single, subdivided unit in the region. This was the "Herceg Stjepan" Brigade headquartered in Konjic, an essentially isolated element of HVO General Miljenko Lasic's Southeastern Herzegovina Operational Zone. In each area where the Bosnian Army had a brigade, the HVO had only a subordinate battalion of the Herceg Stjepan Brigade. Moreover, although the Herceg Stjepan Brigade might have been slightly larger than an ARBiH mountain brigade, it was probably no better equipped and could not count on the support of other HVO or HV units from adjacent areas. If the Croat-Muslim contest came to blows here, the HVO was outnumbered roughly three to one and ill-positioned for success.

Local tempers first rose dangerously in mid-January as Croats and Muslims battled openly in the streets of Gornji Vakuf some 40 km to the northwest. But although the two races came to the brink of violence, there were no clashes in the Konjic-Jablanica region.⁶ Croat-Muslim tensions spiked once again two months later when HVO soldiers arrested three prominent Muslim leaders from Konjic on 23 March.⁷ Sharp firefights supported by artillery fire exploded until HVO commander Petkovic and ARBiH 4th Corps Pasalic intervened to defuse the crisis.⁸ The situation in Konjic calmed after the three detained Muslim were released and a ceasefire took effect on 28 March, quieting the area for just under two weeks.^{9 10 11} Fighting resumed outside Konjic on 8 and 9 April, followed by yet another uneasy calm.^{12 13 14} Sharpening these ten-

sions was the HVO's 15 April deadline for the voluntary disarmament or departure of Bosnian Army units in Croat-designated cantons—which included the Konjic and Jablanica areas. The roots of conflict were the same as in the Lasva valley to the north. But in this area, unlike the Lasva Valley, the Muslims would have the upper hand—and would strike first.

The first deliberate attacks between Herzegovina's armed Croats and Muslims came on 14 April—one day in advance of the HVO's disarmament deadline—when Bosnian Muslims attacked the Croat-held village of Busici outside Konjic.¹⁵ HVO forces responded by attacking and capturing three villages northeast of Jablanica—Kostajnica, Buturovice, and Ljesevina—on 15 April. UNPROFOR could only confirm that the fighting had begun, not who had started it.¹⁶ The Bosnian Army then claimed the Croats had looted and burned the Muslim villages of Sovici and Doljani northwest of Jablanica on 23 April.¹⁷ Clashes continue in Sovici and Doljani, as well as at Ostrozac northeast of Jablanica, on 25 April.¹⁸ More fighting raged as Bosnian Croat forces were expelled from Konjic and Jablanica, incidentally blocking the main route for UN relief convoys between the coast and Sarajevo.¹⁹ The crucial hydroelectric power dam near Jablanica was also hotly contested, ultimately remaining in Muslim hands.²⁰ The intensity leveled off in the area at about the same time as the Lasva Valley fighting burned out, towards the end of April. But a UN-mediated ceasefire had even less effect in the Konjic-Jablanica area than elsewhere in Bosnia.^{21 22}

Fighting resumed after only a matter of days, first along the area's key road routes on 7 and 8 May. HVO artillery and mortars shelled the now Muslim-controlled towns of Konjic and Jablanica and some of the surrounding villages. The Bosnian Croat shelling of Konjic was occasionally joined by Bosnian Serb artillery.²³ Meanwhile, the Bosnian Muslim forces consolidated their control over the areas immediately around Konjic and Jablanica by occupying most of the smaller villages around both major towns, though in some directions their lines extended only a few kilometers outside each town. Yet another UN-sponsored ceasefire agreement was negotiated and signed by the two army commanders, but although it alleviated the

fighting in areas such as Mostar the agreement had little visible effect around Konjic and Jablanica.²⁴

By early June the former Bosnian Croat residents of Konjic had been expelled from the town limits²⁵ and the HVO troops of the Herceg Stjepan Brigade found themselves holding a very small area just to the south. In almost every direction these Croats were cut off and surrounded by kilometers of Muslim-held territory. Lacking any other options, the Konjic HVO allied with the local Bosnian Serbs with whom they shared a small border to the east. The Konjic HVO was to rely entirely on the VRS for artillery, logistic, and medical support.²⁶

Meanwhile, the Muslims holding Jablanica were linked only with Konjic to the east. The ARBiH's challenge was to connect Jablanica with another Muslim-held city to the northwest, as the Croat-held area commenced around Doljani just a few kilometers northwest of Jablanica, firmly blocking any road traffic along the highway in that direction. Eventually that same road went through HVO-held Prozor and on to Gornji Vakuf and Bugojno. To the south, the highway was secure for about ten kilometers until it reached the Muslim-held town of Drenica. From there southwards the HVO could interdict the next 20 km of road south to Mostar.

Substantial fighting resumed once again around 20 June when the Bosnian Croats launched a serious attack against the Jablanica area.²⁷ Absorbing the attack, the Bosnian Army around 1 July took its turn at the offensive, pushing south from Jablanica in the hopes—unfulfilled, as it turned out—of linking up with a simultaneous Muslim thrust north from Mostar.²⁸ Despite hard fighting that continued for the rest of the summer and into the fall, neither side made any significant progress in northern Herzegovina until early October.

After months of bloody but inconclusive fighting the Bosnian Army mounted a sizable offensive effort in the area east of Prozor on 14 September. It was during this action that the “Uzdol massacre” of 14 September occurred in the Croat-held village of Uzdol seven kilometers east of Prozor. The incident appears to

have begun as a successful military operation in which a company-sized unit of 70 to 100 ARBiH military police infiltrated past the Bosnian Croat defense lines and wiped out an HVO command post in the village. But having completed their military mission, the Muslim troops went on a killing spree, murdering the inhabitants of Uzdol and adjacent Kriz with firearms, knives, and axes and burning down some of the houses. UNPROFOR observers and western reporters corroborated Croat claims that the Muslims had killed 34 civilians during a three-hour rampage.²⁹ ³⁰

Between Prozor and Jablanica, the ARBiH 44th "Neretva" Brigade pushed the confrontation line slightly to the west.³¹ After several days of fighting, the UN confirmed that the Government forces had advanced south from Jablanica and Dresnica towards Mostar, capturing a band of territory along a 20-km segment of the highway.³²

A focus of the Government attack was the town of Vrdi, a small town on the Neretva River halfway between Jablanica to the north and Mostar to the south. After an artillery bombardment the Bosnian Army first attacked the town unsuccessfully with infantry on the morning of 19 September, while also battling for the nearby Medvjed Hill and Mt. Cabulja to the west.³³ Shortly after the failed effort, UN observers reported seeing Government reinforcements being brought in from the north.³⁴ A second Bosnian Army effort, begun on 4 October, was more successful: the ARBiH entered the town the following day, although Vrdi was to remain on the confrontation line for the remainder of the war.³⁵ ³⁶

The situation between Vrdi and Mostar was violent and chaotic. For a time no frontline could be fixed as units from both sides roamed up and down the hills and battles erupted wherever the two armies met.³⁷ Still further to the south the Bosnian Army tried again to break the siege of east Mostar on 17 September, and ARBiH and HVO troops tangled in Mostar city and its Bijelo Polje and Rastani suburbs.³⁸ ³⁹ ARBiH forces attacked outward from the city in three directions, making some limited gains.⁴⁰ The HVO responded by blocking aid convoys into east Mostar and dropping an intense artillery barrage on the city on 23 September,⁴¹ following up with a fruitless infantry counterattack the following day.⁴² Artillery duels continued to smash the shattered city, but neither side was able to make significant headway on the ground. However, Government "recon-diversionary" forces appear to have caused considerable confusion south of the city, operating behind HVO lines and conducting ambushes and sabotage operations.⁴³ After several days of negotiations fighting wound down and yet another Mostar cease-fire took effect on 3 October.⁴⁴

After the Bosnian Army's Vrdi offensive fighting in the area virtually ceased for the remainder of the year. The ARBiH's attention and resources were to be directed elsewhere, most notably towards Vares, permitting a relative calm to permeate northern Herzegovina as the winter set in and 1994 drew to a close.

Endnotes, Annex 44

- ¹ Reuters, "Serbs and Croats Bury the Hatchet in Battle for Bosnian Town" by Natela Cutter, 26 June 1993.
- ² Reuters, "Serbs and Croats Bury the Hatchet in Battle for Bosnian Town" by Natela Cutter, 26 June 1993.
- ³ The Konjic area was within easy shelling distance of the Bosnian Serb lines, and the VRS would occasionally shell the town. The VRS, however, had neither the resources nor the inclination to mount a serious attack to capture the area. Jablanica was essentially secure from Bosnian Serb attack.
- ⁴ These units were transferred to the ARBiH 6th Corps when it was formed in early June 1993, and then transferred back to the 4th Corps when the 6th Corps was disbanded in 1994.
- ⁵ Originally the 7th "Stad Alie" Mountain Brigade, and later redesignated the 443rd.
- ⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 19 January 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1901164093, 191640Z January 93.
- ⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 23 March 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2303121593, 231215Z March 93.
- ⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Commander Orders Halt to Battle With Croats," 25 March 1993.
- ⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 23 March 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2303201493, 232014Z March 93.
- ¹⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 24 March 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2403105295, 241052Z March 93.
- ¹¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Ceasefire Close to Collapse," 15 April 1993.
- ¹² Zagreb HTV, 8 April 1993. FBIS London LD0804192393, 081923Z April 93.
- ¹³ Sarajevo Radio, 9 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0904155293, 091552Z April 93.
- ¹⁴ Zagreb HTV, 9 April 1993. FBIS London LD0904193693, 091936Z April 93.
- ¹⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Croats Say Moslems Attack Croat Villages," 14 April 1993.
- ¹⁶ Sarajevo *Prva Linija* "Bridges of Defense and Friendship" by Edin Logo, June 1997 pp. 37-38.
- ¹⁷ Reuters, "U.N. Group Heads for Bosnia as Serbs Ponder Peace Plan" by Mark Heinrich, 23 April 1993.
- ¹⁸ Reuters, "Croat, Muslim Forces Start Disengaging But Fighting Persists" by Mark Heinrich, 25 April 1993.
- ¹⁹ Reuters, "At least 50 Killed in Moslem-Croat Fighting" by Steve Pagani, 17 April 1993.
- ²⁰ Paris AFP, 24 April 1993. FBIS Vienna AU_241301Z April 93.
- ²¹ Reuters, "Croat-Muslim Fighting Halves U.N. Aid to Central Bosnia," 7 May 1993.
- ²² Sarajevo Radio, 4 May 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0405094893, 040948Z May 93.
- ²³ Reuters, "Serbs Launch Attack in Brcko Area" by Kurt Schork, 14 May 1993.
- ²⁴ Zagreb HTV, 12 May 1993. FBIS London LD1205192993, 121929Z May 93.
- ²⁵ Indeed, the HVO "Herceg Stjepan" brigade lost command of its own headquarters in Konjic on 15 April, the second day of sustained fighting. Thereafter, the brigade carried on from outside Konjic proper. Zagreb Radio, 15 April 1993. FBIS London LD1504211593, 152115Z April 93.
- ²⁶ Reuters, "Serbs and Croats Bury the Hatchet in Battle for Bosnian Town" by Natela Cutter, 26 June 1993.
- ²⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Fiercely Contest Territory" by Giles Ellgood, 21 June 1993.
- ²⁸ Reuters, "Serbs Halt Aid Convoy As Guns Pound Moslem Enclave" by Giles Ellgood, 1 July 1993.
- ²⁹ Reuters, "Croats Say Civilians Massacred in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 15 September 1993.
- ³⁰ Reuters, "U.N. Urges Punishment After Village Massacre," 16 September 1993.
- ³¹ Sarajevo Radio, 18 September 1993. FBIS London LD1909023793, 190237Z September 93.
- ³² Sarajevo Radio, 20 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2009161893, 201618Z September 93.
- ³³ Zagreb Radio, 19 September 1993. FBIS London LD1909123793, 191237Z September 93.
- ³⁴ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211102Z September 93.
- ³⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 4 October 1993. FBIS London LD0410225493, 042254Z October 93.
- ³⁶ Reuters, "Overnight Fighting Reported in Bosnia," 5 October 1993.
- ³⁷ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211059Z September 93.
- ³⁸ Zagreb Radio, 17 September 1993. FBIS London LD1709134693, 171346Z September 93.
- ³⁹ Zagreb Radio, 20 September 1993. FBIS London LD2009073593, 200735Z September 93.
- ⁴⁰ Reuters, "Mostar Moslems Launch Three-Pronged Attack on Croats," 20 September 1993.
- ⁴¹ Reuters, "Croats Shell Moslem City of Mostar," 23 September 1993.
- ⁴² Reuters, "Croat and Moslem Fighters battle in Mostar" by Giles Ellgood, 24 September 1993.
- ⁴³ Paris AFP, 21 September 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2109105993, 211059Z September 93.
- ⁴⁴ Reuters, "U.N. Confirms Ceasefire in South Bosnian Town," 3 October 1993.

Annex 45
The Vares Enclave and the Stupni Do Massacre:
October-November 1993

"The Nordic battalion found that all 52 houses in the village had been burned to the ground. At last report, UNPROFOR soldiers had searched half the houses and found the bodies of 15 persons who had either been shot or burned to death."

—UNPROFOR public statement, 27 October 1993

"It seems there was a massacre committed in Stupni Do, but not of the size it was reported earlier."

—HVO spokesman Veso Veger, 27 October 1993, after repeated Bosnian Croat denials that there had been a massacre in the village.¹

Background: The Vares Enclave

At the outset of the Bosnian war, Vares was a small mining town with a slight Croat majority among its population of about 12,000 residents. It is located roughly 50km northwest of Sarajevo, at the end of a primary road running north from Sarajevo through Breza and connected thereafter by secondary roads to Tuzla.² The Vares area had been more or less free of inter-ethnic tensions even through the summer of 1993, despite the Croat-Muslim violence that had torn through central Bosnia only 20 or 30 kilometers away. The Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Muslim leaders remained relatively moderate, and the two communities continued to coexist while the rest of Bosnia collapsed around them.³

Problems first began to surface in Vares after the Bosnian Army's mid-June counteroffensive forced the

Bosnian Croat population out of the Kakanj area about 20km to the west. Some 12,000-15,000 Croat refugees streamed into Vares from Kakanj and its surrounding villages, roughly doubling the population of Vares itself.⁴ The Bosnian Croats, with more people than housing, responded by forcing the Muslim residents out of three villages outside Kakanj on 23 June.⁵ The Bosnian Croats also demanded that the Muslims in several nearby villages—including Stupni Do—turn over their arms to the HVO, although this ultimatum appears to have been ignored.⁶

While the residents of Vares were coping with a refugee influx that skewed the ethnic balance, the Muslim and Croat military leaders were disputing the issue of overall military control in the region. The Bosnian Croats had military control over the Vares area itself, with the locally-raised "Bobovac" Brigade occupying the town and guarding against Bosnian Serb forces to the east. The Bosnian Army's Second (Tuzla) Corps, however, began pressuring the Vares Croats to resubordinate themselves from the HVO's Central Bosnia Operational Zone to the ARBiH 2nd Corps (as, for instance, the HVO's 108th and 110th brigades had already done further north). In effect, the Bosnian Muslims were asking the local HVO to acknowledge Sarajevo's political and military authority over the region. The Vares Croats tried to balance their relations with the Bosnian Muslims, who surrounded them on all sides, with their allegiance to the Bosnian Croat mini-state of which they were also part, but it was a losing proposition.⁷

At this delicate juncture in mid-October 1993—with an enclave on the edge of war but not yet come to blows—came a convergence of events that was to culminate in the Stupni Do massacre and the eventual Muslim takeover of Vares.

On the Bosnian Croat side, the situation in the Vares enclave changed dramatically with the arrival of Ivica

Rajic⁸—commander of the HVO Central Bosnian Operational Zone's Second Operational Group, hailing from the hardline Bosnian Croat Kiseljak enclave to the south—on or before 20 October.⁹ (To reach Vares, surrounded on three sides by the Bosnian Muslims, Rajic and his followers transited through friendly Bosnian Serb territory to the east.) In what could best be described as a local coup, Rajic and an armed group of extremist Croat supporters assumed political control of the Vares enclave on 23 October—the same day as the Stupni Do massacre. Rajic ousted and jailed the mayor and police chief, replacing them with supporters from outside. Similarly, Rajic placed Kresimir Bozic, one of his allies from Kiseljak, in charge of the HVO's local Bobovac Brigade. Then the municipality's substantial Muslim population, who had until then been left alone, were harassed, robbed, and systematically driven from their homes. Within days most of the enclave's Muslim population had fled to the village of Dabrovina well to the south.^{10 11}

At roughly the same time that Ivica Rajic was arriving and installing a hardline Bosnian Croat government in Vares, the Bosnian Army was massing its forces to attack the enclave. Which event precipitated which—or, indeed, if the two are even linked—remains uncertain. But whether or not it was Rajic's arrival that spurred the ARBiH into action, it is a fact that the Bosnian government had transferred all or part of at least three brigades into the area and was poised to attack by late October.

Although the Bosnian Croats may have instigated events by driving the Muslims from their homes, the Bosnian Army was the first to begin actual military operations in the Vares area. The ARBiH appear to have made its first attack against the town of Ratanj, halfway between Kakanj and Vares, on 19 October. Government forces went on to capture the Croat-majority village of Kopjari—10 km southwest of Vares—on 21 October, killing three HVO soldiers and forcing the town's population to flee. This latter attack apparently infuriated Rajic, and evidently motivated him to order an HVO assault against a Muslim village in response. It is possible that Rajic and the Vares Croats had already concluded that the Vares enclave was indefensible, and were planning to evacuate the population to Serb-held territory to the east. If

so, the HVO may have concluded that it had to clear out Stupni Do to secure the escape, since it lay along the road to the south. For whatever reason, Rajic directed his anger against Stupni Do, a tiny town of some 260 Muslim residents on one side of a mountain about 4 km south of Vares itself.^{12 13}

The HVO Assault on Stupni Do, 23 October 1993

The HVO infantry attack began on the morning of 23 October, probably supported with mortars and some artillery.¹⁴ Unlike Ahmici, Stupni Do was defended, although only by a platoon-sized force of 39 Bosnian Army troops with no heavy weapons. Resistance was ineffective at best, and in all likelihood any armed Muslim residents of Stupni Do were asleep, scattered, caught by surprise, and unable to mount any form of organized resistance. Over the next several hours, the attacking HVO soldiers completely destroyed the town, dynamiting or burning every single building to the ground and killing any residents who did not escape in time.¹⁵

The HVO, while denying that a massacre had occurred, at first prevented UN peacekeepers from entering the village to investigate Bosnian Government claims of Croat atrocities. HVO troops simultaneously placed mines on the road approaches to the town and threatened UN vehicles with anti-tank weapons. Troops from UNPROFOR's newly-arrived Nordic Battalion 2¹⁶ were blocked at the outskirts of the town on 25 October, but were able to approach close enough to at least confirm that the village had indeed been razed.¹⁷

Swedish peacekeepers finally gained access to the destroyed village late on 26 October, three days after the attack. While it was clear that the Bosnian Croats had used the intervening time to clean up the town and remove or destroy evidence, there was still enough left that there was little question what had happened. Most striking was the discovery of three dead women who had been discovered hiding under a trap door and then executed. An investigation conducted by UNPROFOR military police found that all 52 houses in the village had been burnt, and some of these “were

described as having the appearance of crematoria.” An absolute minimum of 23 residents were confirmed killed, with another 13 unaccounted for, but the actual figure is probably higher. The Bosnians claimed at the time that the HVO had killed 60 of the village’s 260 residents.¹⁸ An exact accounting may never be possible; for while it is clear that dozens more were killed, most of their bodies were never found.^{19 20}

Although some of the Bosnian Croat soldiers attacking the village were seen wearing HVO insignia, there are no reports of specific unit insignia that would conclusively identify which HVO unit was responsible. The UNPROFOR report—based primarily on interviews with most of the 193 identified survivors of the attack—indicated that many witnesses saw HVO troops wearing black uniforms with white bands on the left shoulder (probably a recognition sign) or green camouflage uniforms.²¹

At the time, the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff, Brigadier Angus Ramsay, took the highly unusual step of publicly assigning blame for the massacre to a particular unit and individual, stating on 27 October that “This was done by the Bobovac Brigade whose commander is Kresimir Bozic...But his soldiers are not soldiers, they are scum, if they do this sort of thing.”²² It is not in fact certain that the Vares-based Bobovac Brigade was the main unit responsible—or indeed if it even participated in the massacre. There is no direct evidence of the Bobovac Brigade’s involvement, although it is true that Bobovac Brigade elements in Vares consistently obstructed UNPROFOR in the area before and after the Stupni Do attack (e.g. troops from the brigade were almost certainly responsible for firing on a Swedish APC attempting to check on Muslim prisoners at a schoolhouse in Vares on 26 October). The strongest implication comes from the numerous reports of heavy weapons activity during the day on 23 October. If mortar and especially artillery fire were indeed used, they most likely came from the Bobovac Brigade, the only unit within the Croat-held enclave that had its own artillery and mortars.

There is circumstantial but persuasive evidence that the attack was in fact carried out—or at least spearheaded—by the “Maturice,” an entirely different unit brought in from outside the Vares pocket shortly

before the attack. Ivica Rajic himself reportedly founded the Maturice special forces unit with troops from the Kiseljak area in early 1993. The unit was known for its composition of extreme Croatian nationalists, a substantial percentage of whom may have been Bosnian Croat refugees. The Maturice reputedly were used for “special missions” like the secret executions of Muslims around Kiseljak. (They also likely indulged in war profiteering—Kiseljak being the gateway to besieged Sarajevo and the capital of the black market trade.) During the 1993 fighting, the Maturice defended the Croat-held Kiseljak, Kresevo, and Fojnica areas against primarily Muslim opponents.^{23 24}

Both Muslim and Croat sources strongly suggest that Rajic brought with him to Vares a sizable group of hardline HVO fighters who would have been ideally suited for an operation like the Stupni Do attack. Sarajevo Radio claimed that when he arrived in Vares a few days before the Stupni Do attack he was accompanied by 700 special fighters (probably an exaggerated figure) from Kiseljak. Shortly after the massacre the previous Bosnian Croat municipal authorities (who incidentally had a powerful incentive to pass the blame on to someone else) also charged “a special HVO unit from Kiseljak led by Col. Ivica Rajic” with responsibility. Finally, the UNPROFOR investigation found that “The main suspects for the commission of these crimes appear to be extremist elements of the Croatian Defense Council from Kiseljak, Travnik, and Kakanj under the command of Ivica Rajic...Those wearing black uniforms also wore black baseball caps and were suspected to be members of an HVO ‘death squad’ or a special forces unit from Kiseljak.” Perhaps most significantly, the UN report notes that of the over 100 interviewees, “With only two exceptions, none of the witnesses recognized any of the HVO soldiers as being from the local area, nor did they hear any names being used, other than nicknames.”^{25 26 27}

The Bobovac Brigade probably does not bear primary responsibility for the Stupni Do massacre, but after the operation was over it clearly obstructed UN investigative efforts and threatened UN peacekeepers. While the UNPROFOR investigation report points to Kisel-

jak extremists as the primary suspects, it goes on to say that “The HVO Bobovac Brigade, operating under its Deputy Commander [sic], Kresimir Bozic, prevented UNPROFOR units from entering the village after the attack.”²⁸ The Bobovac Brigade was almost certainly also involved with the rounding up of Bosnian Muslims in Vares on the morning of 23 October, and their subsequent detention in a school in the town. A few months after the Stupni Do operation, on 18 January 1994, the Maturice were incorporated into the 2nd “Kiseljak” Battalion of the newly established 3rd HVO Guards Brigade.²⁹

After the Massacre: The Bosnian Army Takeover of Vares

The Bosnian Army’s capture of Kopjari and the HVO’s destruction of Stupni Do escalated the series of strikes and counter-strikes that would peak with the Bosnian Army’s occupation of Vares a week and a half later.

Vares was now cleansed of all Muslims except for 110 terrified civilians clustered around the Swedish UN contingent’s vehicles for safety. The last week of October was a time of utter pandemonium as the town’s Croat residents looted the abandoned Muslim homes and businesses. Then, suddenly, word spread that the Bosnian Army was coming. In the early morning hours of 3 November, the town’s remaining residents gathered everything they could carry and fled the town.^{30 31}

When morning came, the advancing Bosnian Government forces found Vares an eerily silent ghost town.

Against all expectations, the Bosnian Army walked into the former Bosnian Croat bastion without firing a shot. Coming from two directions, the ARBiH 2nd and 3rd Corps entered the town simultaneously. (Other, probably secondary, elements of the ARBiH 6th Corps were also involved.)³² The 3rd Corps’ 7th Muslimski Brigade occupied Vares from the west, while 2nd Corps forces entered from the north.^{33 34}

The Croats having sown havoc in the days before, the Muslims raised havoc in the days to follow. Drunk and disorderly Muslim soldiers roamed the streets of Vares for days, carrying off anything the Bosnian Croats had left behind. Ill-disciplined 2nd and 3rd Corps troops almost came to blows before the Bosnian Army command stepped in and restored order. Over the next few weeks, Vares’ ejected Muslims returned to their homes while formerly Croat residences were occupied by thousands of Muslims cleansed out of other areas of Bosnia during the Croat-Muslim war.³⁵

Meanwhile, most of the thousands of Bosnian Croats who had lived in Vares fled for Kiseljak, leaving only a minuscule Croat-controlled island (not more than two square kilometers) around the little town of Dastansko 4 km southeast of Vares. In just a few weeks Vares itself had gone from an ethnically-mixed population to an exclusively Croat one to a majority Muslim one. When Ivica Rajic began expelling Muslims from their homes in late October, he had originally intended to force the Muslims out of the Vares region and claim it for the Bosnian Croats. Less than a month later his actions had resulted in exactly the opposite outcome.

Endnotes, Annex 45

¹ At one point, an official HVO communique claimed that the massacre victims were in fact Serbs from the town whom the Muslims had used as human shields during a Bosnian Army attack on the HVO defense lines. Paris AFP, 31 October 1993. FBIS Vienna AU3110153193, 311531Z Oct 93.

² Reuters, "Huge New Refugee Problem in Central Bosnia" by Gilles Trequesser, 23 June 1993.

³ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA 1995. pp. 300-302.

⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Said to Capture Key Central Town" by Mark Heinrich, 16 June 1993.

⁵ Reuters, "New Wave of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia" by Giles Ellgood, 23 June 1993.

⁶ Paris AFP, 18 June 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1806082693, 180826Z June 93.

⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 1 Sept 1993. FBIS Vienna AU0109202093, 012020Z Sept 93.

⁸ Also known as Viktor Andric.

⁹ The Second Operational Group (OG) was a more or less permanent subcommand under the Central Bosnia Operational Zone (OZ). The Second OG was established in 1992 and remained in existence through the end of the war in 1995. It was one of three (initially four) groupings of brigades under the Central Bosnia OZ. The Second OG, headquartered in Kiseljak, had responsibility for the HVO's defense of the Kiseljak-Kakanj-Busovaca-Vares area. Under its command fell the "Nikola Subic Zrinski" Brigade (Later the 93rd "Nikola Subic Zrinski" Home Defense Regiment, transferred to the First OG) headquartered in Busovaca, the "Ban Josip Jelacic Brigade" (later split into the 94th "Ban Josip Jelacic" and 95th "Marinko Bosnjak" Home Defense Regiments) headquartered in Kiseljak, the previously-mentioned "Bobovac" Brigade, (later the 96th "Bobovac" Home Defense Regiment) headquartered in Vares, and the "Kotromanic" Brigade headquartered in Kakanj. (The "Kotromanic" Brigade was disbanded and incorporated into the "Ban Josip Jelacic Brigade" after the fall of Kakanj in June 1993.) In addition, the Second OG may have had nominal authority over the HVO's "Kralj Tvrtko" Brigade in Sarajevo, but by the fall of 1993 the Bosnian Croats in this unit had been disarmed or resubordinated to the ARBiH 1st Corps. Ivica Rajic appears to have been the Second OG's commander from its creation through all of the events of the Vares and Stupni Do fighting.

¹⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 26 Oct 1993. FBIS Vienna AU2610095593, 260955Z Oct 93.

¹¹ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA 1995. pp. 300-302.

¹² There is, however, another road to the north and east of Stupni Do that the Vares Croats could probably have used instead, undermining this theory.

¹³ Reuters, "New Showdown Looms Between Croats and Muslims in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 30 October 1993.

¹⁴ UN peacekeepers reported hearing mortars and artillery fired in the area into the night of 23 October, but also saw little evidence of shell

impacts or mortar fragments when they gained entry into the town on 26 October. It seems likely that the HVO removed any evidence of shelling—as it did with spent small-arms cartridges—but it is difficult to prove this, especially after the town's structures were subsequently burned. Reuters, "Charred Bodies, Smouldering Ruins in Bosnian Hamlet" by Kurt Schork, 26 October 1993.

¹⁵ Reuters, "Evidence Mounts of Massacre in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1993.

¹⁶ The Nordi battalion 2 was reinforced over the next few days by a company from UNPROFOR's Canadian battalion 2 and a platoon from the British battalion.

¹⁷ Reuters, "Evidence Mounts of Massacre in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1993.

¹⁸ Reuters, "U.N. Aid Convoys Caught in Bosnian Crossfire" by Mark Heinrich, 24 October 1993.

¹⁹ Reuters, "Charred Bodies, Smouldering Ruins in Bosnian Hamlet" by Kurt Schork, 27 October 1993.

²⁰ Reuters, "U.N. Identifies Croat Extremists as Massacre Suspects" by Anthony Goodman, 14 February 1994.

²¹ Reuters, "U.N. Identifies Croat Extremists as Massacre Suspects" by Anthony Goodman, 14 February 1994.

²² Reuters, "Croat Attack in Bosnia a War Crime—U.N. Official" by Sean Maguire, 27 October 1993.

²³ Rijeka *Novi List*, "Officer Ivica Rajic Arrested for Massacre of Muslims," 12 July 1995.

²⁴ Sarajevo *Ljiljan*, "The Croatian List of Bosnian Officers to be Killed" by Aziz Handzic, 6-13 March 1996. FBIS Vienna AU1203091296.

²⁵ Zagreb *Velebit*, "They Defended Central Bosnia" by Anto Pranjic, 12 January 1996.

²⁶ Paris AFP, 18 November 1993. FBIS Vienna AU1811090093, 180900Z Nov 93.

²⁷ Reuters, "U.N. Identifies Croat Extremists as Massacre Suspects" by Anthony Goodman, 14 February 1994.

²⁸ Reuters, "U.N. Identifies Croat Extremists as Massacre Suspects" by Anthony Goodman, 14 February 1994.

²⁹ Zagreb *Velebit*, "Pillars of the Defense," 3 Jan 1997. FBIS Reston WA2805185297.

³⁰ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA 1995. pp. 300-302.

³¹ Reuters, "Moslems Tell of Rape, Murder in Central Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 2 November 1993.

³² Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captured Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

³³ Reuters, "Izetbegovic Says Bosnian Forces Entering Croat Bastion," 4 November 1993.

³⁴ Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captured Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

³⁵ Reuters, "Looting Continues in Moslem-Captured Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 5 November 1993.

Section V

Bosnia 1994

Annex 46

On the Ropes: An Analysis of VRS Resiliency, 1994

The VRS had always been an army divided in two. At brigade level and higher, the VRS generally operated as a well-oiled military machine, efficiently planning operations, ordering the movement of units, and procuring and distributing supplies. This, as has been stated many times earlier, was a product of its professional JNA origins. Below brigade level, the VRS often resembled a rabble, the result of having mobilized with insufficient field-grade and junior officers and NCOs who had little time to train their conscripts and reservists before shoving them into battle. When soldiers who lacked discipline and training had to endure the Republika Srpska's dismal wartime economy, low pay, extended frontline duty, and heavy casualties, morale plummeted and desertions soared. By 1994 many units had grown so brittle that they collapsed when they encountered unexpected tactical situations.

The sanctions imposed on Federal Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska by an outraged international community, combined with the draining effects of war, virtually destroyed the Bosnian Serb economy. The impact on the enlisted soldiers was profoundly debilitating. Most enlisted men received little or no pay, and their army rations were meager. Bereft of paid employment by their conscription in the army, they could no longer provide their families with even the basic necessities of life, and their widows and orphans received pittances as pensions. The knowledge that a small bevy of wealthy war profiteers were driving expensive cars and living well did not help the spirit of the foot-slogging frontline soldiers.¹

The shortage of citizens to man the frontline meant that the infantry was often overtaxed and forced to serve long frontline tours; more frequent leaves would have dangerously weakened the thin defenses and

strained the defenders even more. As casualties increased in 1994 combat units strained ever harder to operate with fewer and older personnel. Martin Bell recorded a snapshot of the situation drawn from the war diary of a Yugoslav Army officer serving in the VRS.

On the 14th of January 1994 he recorded the strengths and weaknesses of the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry [Brigade] to which he was attached. It had thirty-four officers where it should have had eighty and forty NCOs where it should have had seventy-seven. Its numbers were further reduced by casualties. In his entire brigade of 1,672 men, 271 had been lightly wounded, 120 seriously wounded, and 164 killed. Every able-bodied man in the region was already mobilized, and many from outside. Pavlovic wrote: "Any chance to draft more people is gone. The problem is influencing our chain of command and our readiness. The BiH (Bosnian) Army does not have these problems . . ."²

Because the VRS line brigades were constantly being stripped of their best and youngest men to maintain the effectiveness of the elite assault, reconnaissance, and intervention units, the combat effectiveness of the brigades suffered a straight-line decline that boded ill for the future.

As conditions worsened, soldiers' families went without food and amenities, and more and more soldiers died or were wounded, the decline in army morale led to a tremendous increase in desertions.³ Discipline in the remaining ranks collapsed as the poorly trained junior officers and NCOs, whose original ineffectiveness had hardly improved in two years, proved unable to deal with the conditions and complaints of their troops and even compounded their problems with exploitative black marketeering.^{4,5} The ex-JNA officers at the higher-levels, while clearly aware of these

difficulties, could do little to alleviate endemic structural problems in the officer and NCO corps, let alone the economic and pay situations.

As a result, many units that on the surface appeared strong and well-armed were thin, burned-out formations with little cohesion, primed to collapse at the slightest push or—in particular—when caught off guard. A Bosnian newspaper article quoting VRS documents captured in 1994, states,

'The units are unfit and therefore subject to any kind of surprise, especially if the enemy appears from the back of their own defense lines—instead of fighting, they flee in panic, leaving behind their personal weapons and other combat equipment as well as their wounded comrades in an attempt to save their own lives . . . the lowest commands do not function . . . a company's commander is usually stationed in a comfortable facility two or three kilometers from the front line, so that 'when it comes to an attack he is not where he should be, he is far away from his soldiers, so that they reach him fleeing from the field of battle more quickly than he can reach them on the front line to organize the defense.' The same is true of battalion commanders . . .

*the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina is succeeding—by infiltrating two or three sabotage battalions—in breaking Serbian 'battalions, even brigades,' seizing most of their weapons and ammunition and 'worst of all, killing Serbian soldiers, as has been the case in Vjenac, Vlasic, near Donja Brka, etc.'*⁶

It was only the professional skills of its officers at the brigade level and above directing its array of mechanized firepower that enabled the VRS to compensate for these deficiencies at the lower levels.

But now the resources that the motorized and fire-power-oriented VRS used to win its battles were beginning to run low. Two years of combat had drained much of the pre-war JNA stocks, while poor discipline and training among soldiers and junior and mid-level officers caused troops to damage equipment and waste ammunition.⁷ In 1994, expenditures increased as the tempo of the war picked up and battles broke out all over Bosnia. The most vital commodity was motor fuel, which allowed the VRS to rapidly shift its best units to threatened spots throughout the country. Without this mobile support local reserves would have been quickly overwhelmed.

Endnotes, Annex 46

¹ A captured VRS document prepared by General Mladic and described in the Bosnian Muslim newspaper, *Ljiljan*, reports that,

"As a special problem that influences the morale of the army . . . the problem of the regularity, the amount, and the way the soldiers are being paid." Mladic wrote that by 24 July 1994 his soldiers had received salaries only for the first three months of 1994; in other words, payments were over three months late. In places where there are no Serbian dinars, soldiers get government bonds payable after 18 months. Mladic stated that his soldiers "had understanding for the objective difficulties," but that "they were irritated by things that degrade the position of the soldiers." As proof of this, he claimed that "the employed" of Sokolac had received their June salaries in the first half of July, whereas soldiers had still not received their April salaries!

Based on a letter from General Mladic to the Chairman of the Bosnian Serb Assembly and Government of the Republika Srpska, and forwarded from 1st Krajina Corps as Document No. 262-1/94 "Highly Confidential." This report was summarized in S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 9 November 1994, p. 15.

² Martin Bell, *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug* (Revised). London: Penguin Books, 1996, pp. 242-243.

³ The Mladic letter cited above also noted that,

. . . soldiers were refusing to obey orders and they were arbitrarily leaving the front lines and refusing to take part in combat. Since their position is horrible, the soldiers try to leave the army and find a job with a company or at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Mladic even points out that "there is an increasing number of trivial and serious crime" in the army.

Mladic letter in S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 9 November 1994, p. 15.

⁴ *Ljiljan* cites a captured report from the VRS 6th Sanske Infantry Brigade that reported,

. . . 10 percent of the soldiers of this brigade are in prison for disciplinary offenses, and that another 10 percent are absent from the front lines. The same author writes about one of the soldiers: "He comes to the trench drunk, drinks in the trench, and is drunk when he leaves the trench."

S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 9 November 1994, p. 15.

⁵ The same *Ljiljan* article cites another captured VRS document produced by Colonel Vladimir Arsic's VRS "Doboj" Operational Group 9/1st Krajina Corps entitled "Experiences from Muslim Offensive Combat Activities: Mistakes and Weaknesses of the 1st Krajina Corps units," Highly Confidential Document No. 4017-1, 17 August 1994. It was distributed to tactical group headquarters and chiefs of staff. *Ljiljan* writes,

The most important element in commanding direct combat does not function in Mladic's army. The command system, divided into the command of platoons and companies, is either bad or does not function at all. Serbian soldiers are therefore "incapable of acting and performing combat activities on their own." Serbian soldiers at the front lines are apathetic because "they have poor intelligence about the enemy," and their reconnaissance units have not infiltrated the rear of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina at all. They can perform no terrorist or sabotage actions, which—according to the Serbian generals—Bosnian soldiers do every day. The Serbs have no reserve positions . . . "Unit commanders do not go into the field for 10 months at a time; they do not talk to soldiers; they do not check whether their soldiers are in condition to carry out combat operations.

S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 9 November 1994, p. 15.

⁶ Information drawn from the Arsic analysis cited in footnote above. S. Cehajic, "My 'Serbian Republic' Is Shaking," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 9 November 1994, p. 15.

⁷ Milutin Kozarica, "Discipline—The Foundation on Which An Army Is Built," *Srpska Vojska* 28 December 1995, pp. 17-19; a critical article summarizing an end-of-war VRS conference on discipline and the internal condition of the army.

Annex 47
My Enemy, My Ally:
The End of the Croat-Muslim War and
the Washington Agreement,
January-March 1994

By early 1994 developments born of necessity had put the Bosnian Army at least on a par militarily with the Croatian Defense Council (HVO). The HVO was still probably better organized at the unit level, may have had a higher fraction of professional (ex-JNA) officers, and had on average more and better equipment. However, the Bosnian Army had made major advances in organization, discipline, and coordination of larger military operations. It had become a fairly even fight, and—even in the case of the Croatian Army's intervention in support of Herceg-Bosna—the Bosnian Army had the weight of numbers on its side.¹

The new year's fighting commenced on 9 January 1994 with a Bosnian Army attack on the Vitez enclave—just hours before peace talks began between Croat and Muslim representatives in Germany. Government troops attacking from the north apparently surprised the HVO defenders with a pre-dawn attack. The offensive fell hardest on the towns of Dubravice and Santici as the Bosnian Army drove to cut the Vitez-Busovaca enclave in two at its narrowest point.² Infantry battles raged in the Vitez suburbs on 9 and 10 January, supported by the liberal use of heavy weapons fire on both sides. Another Bosnian Army drive from the south against Croat-held Kruscica further squeezed the HVO, to the point where the Croat defenders held only a few hundred meters on either side of the road. By 14 January Bosnian Army attackers had pushed even slightly further, reaching the edge of the road on the north side. But the desperate HVO defenders hung on doggedly and never surrendered control on the south side. The small village of Buhine Kuce, along the Vitez-Busovaca road, was the most fiercely contested point of battle, with hand-to-hand and house-to-house fighting over shattered buildings that changed hands each day. Although the Croats were at times reduced

to a little less than a kilometer-wide isthmus, the HVO managed to retain control of the vital east-west road link—although road traffic was always vulnerable to Bosnian Army gunfire.^{3 4 5 6}

At this point—roughly the third week of January—the Government forces eased their offensive on the Vitez enclave, for reasons that remain unclear. The Bosnian Army offensive may simply have run out of steam, with its exhausted troops daunted by the prospect of the infantry assaults across level ground that probably would have been required to overrun the Croat positions. Or the Bosnian Government may have decided to simply contain the pocket, either for military reasons or political ones. The Bosnian Government appears to have been more concerned with gaining control over the Vitez munitions plant and the Vitez-Busovaca road than in occupying Vitez town itself.⁷ The Army leadership may have concluded that containment of the Croat-held enclave would be adequate—especially in view of the Croat threats to demolish the munitions plant rather than allow it to fall into Muslim hands—and therefore decided that their military resources were better directed elsewhere. It is also possible that at this delicate juncture—with Croat-Muslim peace talks beginning and the international community's attention focused on the Bosnian Government—the Sarajevo leadership concluded that the political fallout associated with occupying the enclave would have outweighed the military gains. On the one hand, the capture of Vitez would have essentially secured all of central Bosnia and its lines of communication for the Bosnian Government, allowing several thousand displaced Muslims to return home. But the town's capture would almost certainly have disrupted the tentative steps toward a Croat-Muslim peace so badly needed by the Sarajevo government, and drawn the ire of the international community by—intentionally or not—prompting the mass exodus of thousands upon thousands of Bosnian Croats, as had occurred at Vares the previous year. Whatever the reason, the Bosnian Army failed to press home its advantage at a crucial moment. The Bosnian Croats counterattacked and

regained a little breathing space, and the Vitez-Busovaca enclave remained in Croat hands.^{8 9}

Beginning on 24 January, the HVO made a weak counterpunch from the south, attacking from Prozor in two directions. One blow was directed northwards against the Muslim-held areas around Gornji Vakuf, while another was aimed southward towards Jablanica.¹⁰ The HVO made some gains on the first day, taking the village of Here and its road junction east of Prozor.¹¹ However, by 26 January, UN spokesmen were reporting that the offensive had died out, degenerating into destructive but militarily insignificant shelling of the two towns.¹² The HVO continued its attacks on the residential areas around Gornji Vakuf for the next several days, making a few modest advances but failing to achieve any decisive breakthroughs.^{13 14 15}

While the fiercest battles of the 1994 Croat-Muslim war occurred in the central Bosnian Lasva Valley, the other towns along the Croat-Muslim faultlines were by no means peaceful. Muslim-held east Mostar remained the subject of unrelenting HVO artillery bombardment, which slowly pounded the eastern half of the city into dust and rubble. Southeast of Mostar, Muslim-held Blagaj was also shelled frequently from adjacent Croat-held Buna. Although Maglaj's Muslim defenders' foremost foes were Serbs, there were also exchanges of mortar fire and occasional infantry clashes between the ARBiH and the HVO forces along the northern edge of the Zepce enclave.¹⁶ Bosnian Croat forces south of Konjic and west of Jablanica also periodically shelled Muslim-held positions and villages. The Bosnian Army continued to occupy most of Gornji Vakuf, but the Croats had the preponderance of artillery in the area and frequently shelled the Muslim-held parts of the town. The Kiseljak enclave, though not pressed nearly as hard as nearby Vitez, suffered sporadic fighting and shelling. However, in none of these areas was either side able to make any significant gains, and the outlines of a potential military stalemate were becoming visible to both sides.

With both the Bosnian Army and HVO offensive efforts stymied at the beginning of February, it fell to

Zagreb—with the strong prodding of the international community—to formally broach the subject of a peace arrangement. Croatian President Tudjman and his associates had been feeling the heat more than usual over the past few days, as UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had publicly accused the Croatian Army of sending units into Bosnia, and Italy had threatened to call for European Union sanctions against Croatia for its military involvement. Determined to avoid economic sanctions like those that were crippling his counterpart Milosevic in Serbia, Tudjman ordered a diplomatic initiative to appease the international community. On 10 February Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic and Bosnian President Izetbegovic met in Geneva and issued a joint statement calling for Bosnian Government-Bosnian Croat talks on a possible cease-fire arrangement. ARBiH commander Delic and HVO commander Roso were to meet in Kiseljak ten days later to begin the talks.^{17 18 19 20 21}

At only their second meeting in Zagreb, on 23 February, the two army commanders signed a cease-fire and mutual withdrawal agreement—to the surprise of many.²² Even more surprising, the cease-fire agreement (which took effect at noon on 25 February) was generally observed after several days of lingering Croat-Muslim violence. At the beginning of March the two sides began exchanging prisoners and tensions very gradually began to subside over most of Bosnia. Both sides cautiously drew their heavy weapons back from the confrontation lines and a tenuous peace took root.^{23 24}

Peace came slowly—and never completely—in some parts of the country. The divided city of Mostar remained just as divided, literally as well as politically. Gornji Vakuf (or, as the Croats called it, Uskoplje) remained similarly partitioned. Relations were at best strained with the tiny Croat enclaves outside Vares and Konjic. Croat-Muslim peace perhaps came hardest in the chaotic world of the Zepce enclave, where the Croats had allied with their Serb opponents against their erstwhile Muslim allies. They were now in the awkward position of again

turning their coats to ally with the Muslims they had just been shelling against the Serbs who had just been backing them with heavy weapons fire. The HVO's Zepce-based 111th Home Defense Regiment ended up attempting to play both ends against the middle, no longer attacking the Muslims in formerly-besieged Maglaj but allowing Serb units to pass through Croat-held territory to attack the town.²⁵

The Washington Agreement, 1 March 1994

"Only a fool fights in a burning house."
— Klingon proverb, from "Star Trek"

The Croat-Muslim peace was formalized with the Washington agreement, signed in the United States on 1 March 1994. The political aspects of the treaty established a federal arrangement governing the Croats and Muslims in Bosnia, and a special confederal relationship between this new "Bosnian Federation" and Croatia. Under the military provisions of the treaty, the Bosnian Army and the HVO—until the day before, military adversaries—would henceforth become a "Federation Army" (Vojska Federacije, or VF) consisting of two separate but cooperating armed forces. This military arrangement was further elaborated in the "Split agreement" signed by the two army commanders on 12 March.²⁶ In a development reminiscent of Orwell's "1984," two formerly warring factions overnight became allies against a third opponent.

Each party signed for its own reasons—although none of them had a fundamental stake in the long-term success of the newborn Bosnian Federation. The Sarajevo-based Bosnian Government arguably took a step backwards in terms of its sovereignty, but its leaders knew they had to seem to be agreeable to maintain the support of the international community. Much more importantly, the Croat-Muslim peace allowed the ARBiH to end its desperate two-front war and concentrate on the crucial conflict with its Bosnian Serb foes. The Bosnian Croats were probably even less enthusiastic about the political arrangements of the Bosnian Federation, but by early 1994 they needed to get out of a losing military struggle even more than the Bosnian Muslims. Having narrowly

avoided international censure and sanctions for their military intervention in Bosnia, they even came out of this venture with an image as peacebrokers. Zagreb's improved standing with the international community undoubtedly helped it to secure a much-needed \$125 million loan from the World Bank shortly thereafter,²⁷ and also allowed the Croatian military to disengage from Bosnia and devote its energies toward Croatia's core concern—the reconquest of the Serb-held Krajina.

A temporary convergence of three self-interests, codified in a treaty essentially imposed from outside, was not a very auspicious genesis for the Bosnian Federation. But at the time it was the best there was, and in such desperate circumstances an imperfect peace and an uneasy alliance were better than the available alternatives. Bosnia's Croats and Muslims might still keep one eye on each other, but now they could both start looking toward their common Serb enemy.

The Croat-Muslim Cease-Fire: A Quiet Success

Within days of the initial signing of the Croat-Muslim Federation agreement on 1 March 1994, UNPROFOR took on yet another new role as cease-fire monitors, juxtaposing UN peacekeepers between the formerly warring parties as the two armies withdrew from the confrontation lines and the full terms of their new alliance were worked out. UN peacekeepers were quickly dispatched to take over former ARBiH and HVO checkpoints in and around Mostar, Vitez, Gornji Vakuf, Prozor, Konjic, and Jablanica.²⁸ Following an arrangement similar to that employed for the Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone—and which would later be copied in the Dayton Agreement—the two sides agreed to withdraw their heavy weapons a set distance from the former confrontation lines (10 km for mortars, 20 km for tanks and artillery) or to place them into five UN-monitored collection points.^{29 30 31 32}

UNPROFOR's role in facilitating the Croat-Muslim peace was one of the UN's largely unrecognized

successes in Bosnia. This is true despite the fact that many, perhaps most, of the heavy weapons were never withdrawn or turned in as agreed, and that sporadic cease-fire violations and interethnic disputes erupted long after the agreement was signed. The fundamental point was that the Croat-Muslim conflict had been ended before either side had exhausted itself or succumbed, and that UNPROFOR in some measure helped make this possible by facilitating the military disengagement of the ARBiH and HVO. This success

illustrated a crucial fact about peacekeeping operations in the Balkans: UN forces could and did play an important role in monitoring and facilitating agreements that were in the best interests of the several parties involved. Sadly, such circumstances—or the recognition of them—were all too rare in the Bosnian war.

Endnotes, Annex 47

- ¹ For a good general discussion of the shifting military trends in Bosnia at this time, see "A New Stage in the Bosnian Conflict," by Patrick Moore, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 4 March 1994, pp. 33-36.
- ² At its narrowest point, the Vitez enclave was less than 2 kilometers wide—narrow enough to see across.
- ³ Reuters, "Moslems Offensive in Central Bosnia Clouds Peace Talks" by Nicole Courtney, 9 January 1994.
- ⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Battle Outnumbered Croats in Central Bosnia" by Dan de Luce, 10 January 1994.
- ⁵ Reuters, "Moslems Press Offensive Against Croats, Snub Peace Talks" by Dan de Luce, 11 Jan 1994.
- ⁶ Reuters, "U.N. Says Jets Violate No-Fly Zone in Bosnia" by Samir Koric, 14 January 1994.
- ⁷ During the Croat-Muslim meetings in Bonn, Izetbegovic proposed an arrangement whereby the HVO and ARBiH would withdraw their forces from Vitez and Busovaca and turn administration of the towns over to a joint Croat-Muslim police force. An understandably skeptical Bosnian Croat leadership rejected the offer. Sarajevo Radio, 10 January 1994. FBIS London LD1001224294, 102242Z Jan 94.
- ⁸ Zagreb Radio, 21 January 1994. FBIS London LD2101233794, 212337Z Jan 94.
- ⁹ Zagreb Radio, 18 February 1994. FBIS London LD1802230194, 182301Z Feb 94.
- ¹⁰ Reuters, "Croat Guns Lash Moslem Targets in Bosnia" by Mark Heinrich, 25 January 1994.
- ¹¹ Zagreb Radio, 24 January 1994. FBIS London LD2401200494, 242004Z Jan 94.
- ¹² Reuters, "Bosnian Croat Attack Peters Out," 26 January 1994.
- ¹³ Sarajevo Radio, 1 February 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0102194994, 011949Z Feb 94.
- ¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 3 February 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0302191294, 031912Z Feb 94.
- ¹⁵ Zagreb Radio, 13 February 1994. FBIS London LD1302125394, 131253Z Feb 94.
- ¹⁶ The HVO's 111th Home Defense Regiment in the Zepce enclave also obstructed UN aid convoys into besieged Maglaj at this time.

¹⁷ Specifically, Boutros-Ghali's letter charged that the Croatian Army had 3,000 to 5,000 troops from the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 7th HV Guards Brigades, the 114th and 116th Brigades, and various military police elements.

¹⁸ Reuters, "UN Chief Lists Croatian Military Units in Bosnia" by Evelyn Leopold, 2 Feb 1994.

¹⁹ Reuters, "Italy Tells Croatia it Faces Possible Sanctions" by Paul Holmes, 3 Feb 1994.

²⁰ Reuters, "Bosnia, Croatia Request UN Border Monitors," 10 Feb 1994.

²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 20 February 1994. FBIS London LD2002194394, 201943Z Feb 94.

²² Zagreb Radio, 23 February 1994. FBIS London LD2302220794, 2322078Z Feb 94.

²³ Reuters, "Moslems, Croats, British Forces Wary of New Bosnian Truce" by Kurt Schork, 24 Feb 1994.

²⁴ Reuters, "189 Moslem, Croat Prisoners Freed in Bosnia," 1 March 1994.

²⁵ Reuters, "Croats Wedged Between Moslems, Serbs in Bosnian Town" by Kurt Schork, 15 March 1994

²⁶ Zagreb Radio, 12 March 1994. FBIS London LD1203125094, 121250Z Mar 94.

²⁷ Reuters, "Bosnia Accord Paves Way For IMF Help To Croatia" by Kolumbina Bencevic, 20 March 1994.

²⁸ Paris AFP, 4 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0403135994, 041359Z Mar 94.

²⁹ Paris AFP, 5 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0503193294, 051932Z Mar 94.

³⁰ Paris AFP, 7 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0703120294, 071202Z Mar 94.

³¹ Zagreb Hina, 7 March 1994. FBIS London LD0703152594, 071525Z Mar 94.

³² Paris AFP, 8 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0803184394, 081843Z Mar 94.

Annex 48
Sarajevo, 1994:
The Guns Are Silenced, But the Siege Continues

**February 1994: The First Marketplace Shelling
and the International Response**

The Sarajevo area had been relatively quiet during the early part of 1994, although the usual VRS siege tactics of sniping and sporadic shelling continued at their normal pace, punctuated by occasional clashes along the frontline. On 5 February 1994, however, a 120mm mortar round hit the Markale marketplace in downtown Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding approximately 200 more.¹ It was one of the worst single shelling incidents in the Bosnian war.

International outrage over the incident brought a new UN effort to achieve a cease-fire and a NATO ultimatum issued on 9 February.² The new UN commander, General Michael Rose, called for the creation of a 20-kilometer heavy weapons exclusion zone around the city as part of his draft cease-fire agreement, which the NATO ultimatum was designed to enforce.³ The deadline for Serb compliance was 20 February.

The Bosnian Serb political and military leadership at first refused to comply, fearing that VRS forces deprived of their heavy weapons would be overrun by Bosnian Army infantry.⁴ A Russian commitment to send a battalion of paratroopers to help monitor the agreement offered on 17 February broke the ice. The VRS promptly began to pull out a large proportion of its heavy weapons, placing the rest under UN "control."⁵ By the deadline, the VRS had more or less completed the withdrawal, placing about half its heavy weapons (defined as anything 20mm and over) in UN-monitored storage sites, and redeploying the other half. Sarajevans could now move around the city in relative safety for the first time in almost two years.

The unusually strong Western response eased the situation of the people of Sarajevo considerably. The shelling stopped, people no longer died at random,

and citizens could walk freely around the city. The city's tram cars started up again, and food was allowed in more regularly. But the city remained surrounded, the frontlines were still manned, and occasional fire-fights broke out. The VRS could very easily resume a shooting siege—defying the NATO threat—any time the Serb leaders ordered it. It was a siege without the shooting. As Silber and Little note,

Even as the Serb guns finally fell silent it became clear that the siege would remain as tight as ever. The interpositioning of UN troops along the front line, particularly in the city center, brought the eventual partition of Sarajevo—a key Serb war aim—a step closer.⁶

The Serbs had clearly made the best of a difficult situation, complying with the letter of the imposed agreement without giving up anything vital to their interests.

Strategically, the agreement had even less effect. The ultimatum did not apply to any other Serb military operations going on at the time of the incident (Maglaj-Tesanj and Bihać),⁷ nor was there any deterrent effect on VRS or ARBiH military planning for the rest of the year. It did not influence the ARBiH decision to assume the strategic offensive in March nor did it stop the Serbs from attacking Gorazde in response during April. The only impact was to decrease the Serbs' ability to make the siege of Sarajevo a political pressure point against the Bosnian Government.

The NATO ultimatum represented another step toward international engagement with the former Yugoslavia. After its successful application of an ultimatum to the Mount Igman situation in 1993, NATO, with Russian help, had again forced the Serbs to comply with a Western demand. Western satisfaction with this apparent success overlooked the minimal effect it had on the Sarajevo battlefield even as it reaffirmed the Western preoccupation with Sarajevo rather than the broader conflict.

March: The Sarajevo Exclusion Zone and the Serb Tank Affair

The UN's credibility among the warring parties was further diminished by the revelation on 4 May 1994 that the United Nations Special Envoy for the Former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, had agreed to allow seven Bosnian Serb tanks to pass through the Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone so they could participate in a battle the Serbs claimed the ARBiH was planning to initiate near Trnovo to the south.⁸ (In exchange, the Bosnian Serbs said they would unblock a convoy of 170 British troops and allow UN observers into Brcko.) Bosnian Government officials were predictably outraged at this exception to the exclusion zone terms, and Akashi was forced to back down and rescind the deal the following day.⁹ But the story was still unfolding. On 6 May UN spokesmen announced that the Bosnian Serbs would be allowed to transit the zone after all because UN headquarters' decision to cancel the deal had not been communicated from Zagreb to Sarajevo in time.¹⁰ The story grew more surreal when the UN—which had insisted that the tanks were no threat since they were under UN supervision at all times—admitted on 8 May that one of the Serb tanks had managed to escape while traveling in a UN-supervised convoy and was at large somewhere in the Sarajevo exclusion zone.¹¹ Having waived its own rules to favor one belligerent over another, reversed itself twice, and misplaced a

fully-armed tank in the space of a week, the UN emerged from the “Sarajevo tank affair” covered in something less than glory.¹²

September: The ARBiH at Sarajevo/Sedrenik

Following the 5 February marketplace shelling and the establishment of the 20-kilometer heavy weapons exclusion zone, Sarajevo remained largely quiet for most of 1994. “Quiet” was a relative term, as sporadic sniper and small-arms fire continued to terrorize the civilian population. But the terrifying artillery and mortar fire that had caused most of the casualties and devastated portions of the city had essentially ceased.

The one noteworthy break in the calm came in September, when the Bosnian Army launched a very small offensive to capture part of the Sedrenik neighborhood in the northeastern part of the city north of Sarajevo’s old quarter. ARBiH forces from the Muslim-held Grdonj neighborhood launched a surprise attack against Serb-held Sedrenik on 18 September.¹³ The Bosnian Army gained ground on the first day and fighting intensified as the Serbs counterattacked the following day. The isolated two-day fight ended with minor ARBiH gains, and UN observers reported that the VRS had recaptured some of its lost ground.

Endnotes, Annex 48

¹ The UN never announced definitively which of the warring parties was responsible for the attack. UN experts were able to determine only that the market was hit by a 120mm mortar round fired from the northeast, where both Bosnian Serb and Government forces had positions and probably mortars. Circumstantial evidence pointed to the Bosnian Serbs but both sides publicly traded accusations of responsibility. It seems unlikely to the authors that a Bosnian Army mortar crew would have been able to intentionally hit a difficult target like the market—wedged between several buildings—without first firing a few ranging shots. It seems more likely that the mortar round was fired randomly from VRS positions and happened to hit the market. For a detailed discussion of the UN investigation, see David Binder, "Anatomy of a Massacre," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1994-1995, pp. 70-78. Also see Silber and Little, pp. 310-311 for an informative commentary on the idea that the Muslims fired the mortar round at themselves. An excerpt from their analysis notes,

"The common sense observation that if you fire around 500,000 mortar, artillery, and tank rounds into a small city over twenty-two months (as the Bosnian Serbs did)—many of these randomly lobbed into civilian areas—sooner or later one will land somewhere where crowds are gathered, was swept away in the ensuing row."

² This account is based primarily on Silber and Little, Chapter 24, "A Question of Control: The Market Square Bomb and the NATO Ultimatum, February 1994," pp. 309-323.

³ Rose's "Four Point Plan" called for a cease-fire, a withdrawal of heavy weapons outside of a 20-kilometer exclusion zone (or their placement under UN control), the interpositioning of UN troops along the confrontation line, and the creation of a joint implementation committee. Silber and Little, p. 313. For a description of General Rose's flamboyant personality, see Martin Bell, *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug* (Revised). London: Penguin, 1996, pp. 174-185. For a discussion of Rose and the UN strategy in early 1994, see James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 145-155.

⁴ The Serbs demanded on 12 February that the Bosnian Army withdraw its infantry from the frontlines in exchange for the pullback of their heavy weapons.

⁵ Silber and Little note that the UN's definition of "control" quickly slid from UN personnel maintaining physical possession of the weapons to what became mere observation of them as monitors desperately struggled to obtain compliance and keep the threatened air strikes at bay. The Serbs were even allowed to choose the "weapon control points," many of which were broadly defined field-deployed areas where mortars and artillery pieces were already stationed to maintain the siege. Silber and Little, pp. 316-317.

⁶ Silber and Little, p. 318.

⁷ Predictions by the Bosnian Government and others that the VRS would simply move all the heavy weapons allowed to withdraw from Sarajevo to attack the Muslims elsewhere proved to be greatly exaggerated. In theory there was no bar to the VRS using the sidelined armor and artillery units in other sectors, but their importance to the defense of Serb-held portions of Sarajevo in the event that fighting resumed required that they be kept close at hand. Some were in fact used in operations near the city, such as Gorazde and the Nisici plateau, although the VRS should have been able to mount the Gorazde operation without this equipment.

⁸ Reuters, "UN Allows Serbs Exception to No-Weapons Zone," by Giles Elgood, 4 May 1994.

⁹ Reuters, "Boutros-Ghali Says Akashi Has His Full Confidence," by Philippe Naughton, 5 May 1994.

¹⁰ Reuters, "UN Restores Tank Escort Deal with Serbs," by Giles Elgood, 6 May 1994.

¹¹ Reuters, "Serb Tank Affair Dents UN Credibility," by Giles Elgood, 8 May 1994.

¹² Paris AFP, 8 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0805154494, 081544Z May 94.

¹³ Paris AFP, 18 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1809190894, 181908Z Sept 94.

Annex 49

Operation “Zvezda 94”: The VRS Assault on Gorazde, April 1994

The Bosnian Serb leaders feared the onset of what they called the Muslim “spring offensive,” which dashed their original expectations that early Serb military successes would force the Bosnian Government to accept Serb terms for a permanent, countrywide cease-fire. Still hoping to avoid a protracted war, they planned a strategy of placing in jeopardy an important territorial holding of the Bosnian Government.¹ The target they chose for the operation was the embattled Gorazde enclave. If the Sarajevo government refused the Serb terms, the VRS was prepared to eliminate the enclave, which would consolidate another Serb war aim—the occupation of the Drina valley.

Order of Battle and Campaign Planning

The VRS. The Main Staff assigned Major General Radovan Grubac’s Herzegovina Corps the task of undertaking Operation “Zvezda 94,” giving it control over all VRS forces surrounding the Gorazde enclave to ensure unity of command.² General Mladic and other representatives of the Main Staff closely monitored the operation.

The campaign plan called for a three-pronged advance from the north, east, and southeast. The southeastern axis was to be the main thrust, driving along the main road between Serb-held Cajnice and Gorazde and clearing the entire southern (right) bank of ARBiH forces. Here, the Herzegovina Corps set up a forward command post or operational group headquarters under Colonel Jezdimir Lakicevic to control the attack frontage from roughly the Drina south of Ustipraca through Cajnice (Lakicevic’s headquarters) over to Foca (Srbinje). Lakicevic’s spearhead was a 2,000-man tactical group drawn from nearly every brigade in the Herzegovina Corps and the MUP Special Police Brigade.³ It reinforced the sector-holding units of the

3rd and 4th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigades (previously part of the Drina Corps) and the 11th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade. All told, VRS forces on the main axis numbered about 6,000 troops backed by an armored battalion and probably two composite corps artillery groups (large battalions).⁴

A Drina Corps operational group or forward command post under corps commander Major General Milenko Zivanovic commanded the northern and eastern attack axes. On the northern axis the VRS intended to advance from the Rogatica area through the Jabuka pass toward the town, while in the east the VRS would cross the Praca River west of Serb-held Ustipraca and push along the main road into Gorazde through Kopaci. Zivanovic normally had three sector-holding brigades—1st, 2nd, 5th Podrinje—of Tactical Group “Visegrad” assigned to these areas, to which he appears to have added an armored-mechanized battalion borrowed from the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade.⁵ Zivanovic probably formed a tactical group from the rest of his corps, and each axis probably had the support of a corps artillery group. In total, he likely had about 5,000 to 6,000 troops. Rounding out the Serb forces along the northwestern frontline were sector-holding elements of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps with three to four infantry battalions.⁶ The VRS probably fielded 13,000 to 14,000 troops for the entire operation.

The ARBiH. Only a single Bosnian Army operational group defended Gorazde, the East Bosnian Operational Group under the command of Colonel Ferid Buljubasic. Buljubasic was both outmanned and outgunned. His OG had only five brigades—1st Drina, 1st Rogatica, 1st Visegrad, 31st Drina, and 43rd Drina—comprising about 8,000 troops strung out in a cordon defense along the frontline. Buljubasic’s primary reserve appears to have consisted of the OG’s reconnaissance-sabotage company and perhaps one or two battalions drawn from the line brigades. He had little artillery or mortar support, and essentially no armor.

Operation “Zvezda 94” Commences, 28 March-10 April 1994⁷

The VRS artillery preparation began on 28 March followed by combined infantry-armor attacks on all three axes the next day.⁸ In the northern and eastern sectors, ARBiH 31st Drina and 1st Visegrad Brigade defenses running along a series of ridges from the Drina northwest through the Trovrh area to Jabuka pass blocked a rapid Serb advance. Initial progress was slow, with VRS troops inching forward along much of the front. By 7 April, the Drina Corps forces on both axes had penetrated no more than two kilometers.

The VRS was more successful in the southeast. On 31 March Serb units, probably from the 3rd and 4th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigades, claimed to have captured Gostunj hill on the far southeastern corner of the enclave, although ARBiH troops appear to have maintained their hold on part of the hill. The biggest breakthrough came on 5 April when the Herzegovina tactical group pierced the ARBiH 43rd Drina Brigade lines along the main Cajnice-Gorazde road, allowing Serb forces to advance four kilometers on an eight-kilometer front between Trebinjaca hill and Gradina hill. By 8 April Serb forces had advanced another two kilometers, seizing the village of Biljin and isolating ARBiH forces on the southern bank in two pockets, one centered on Uhotic Hill and the other around Gradina. On 10 April VRS forces eliminated the pocket around Uhotic while continuing the advance along the road, capturing the village of Zupcici. The VRS now controlled the Drina River bank up to Zupcici.⁹ The 43rd Drina Brigade troops nevertheless hung on at Gradina—the key to ARBiH defenses in the sector—despite repeated VRS attempts to capture it.¹⁰

NATO Arrives, 10 April 1994

Talks between the two sides, which the UN had scheduled for 7 April, never began because the Bosnian Government refused to accept the VRS precondition for the meetings—an “instantaneous halt” to all combat operations throughout the country.¹¹ The Sarajevo government, recognizing that acceptance of these terms was tantamount to agreeing to the partition of the country, pinned its hopes for Gorazde’s survival on the West. And, indeed, as the Serb offensive gathered

steam, Western concern about Gorazde’s fate grew. When the Herzegovina Corps approached the outskirts of the town on 10 April, the UN asked for NATO air strikes against VRS targets on the southeastern approaches, ostensibly to safeguard the lives of UN personnel but in reality to deter the Serb attack. US Air Force F-16s and US Marine Corps F/A-18s made two separate air strikes during 10 and 11 April.¹² The first, on 10 April, hit a VRS command post 12 kilometers southwest of Gorazde and the next day VRS armor two kilometers from the town was hit. Although the VRS seems to have suffered little damage (and at least one bomb did not detonate), it nevertheless halted its advance¹³—but then “detained” about 150 UN personnel, holding them until the Gorazde crisis was resolved.¹⁴

VRS Resumes the Advance, 15 April-20 April 1994

The VRS halt proved to be nothing more than a pause in its attack, and might not even have been a response to the air strikes but simply a planned pause to reorganize and resupply its units. In any event, on 15 April, the VRS launched a major assault along all three axes and the ARBiH lines quickly buckled. In the north and east, Drina Corps units overran the main ARBiH defenses along the ridgeline, capturing the Jabuka pass and reaching Kopaci, an advance of some four kilometers.¹⁵ By 18 April VRS troops had pushed on another five kilometers from Jabuka and Kopaci and seized three more hills—Jelah, Konjbaba, and Sjedokosa—ringing the town from the north and east. In the southeast, Herzegovina Corps troops finally took Gradina on 16 April and then quickly pushed on toward the town, seizing the last important ARBiH-held hilltop, Biserna, less than a kilometer from town, on 17 April.¹⁶ With these advances, the VRS now had Gorazde surrounded on three sides and could pour direct fire into the town with impunity. Gorazde was at the mercy of the Serbs.

Cease-Fire Talks and the NATO Ultimatum, 18 to 22 April 1994

Again, Western pressure on the Serbs to halt the offensive grew as the Bosnian Army’s defenses

crumbled. On 18 April Karadzic's office announced that at a meeting with UN Special Representative Yasushi Akashi the Serbs had agreed to a UN proposal for a cease-fire, including the withdrawal of VRS troops from a three-kilometer exclusion zone on the left bank of the Drina and the deployment of UN troops to the town.¹⁷ The so-called agreement appeared to have no effect whatever on the VRS, which continued to shell Gorazde, apparently including its hospital, and on 20 April armor and other units again attempted to capture the ammunition factory just north of the town. Beset by public and official demands to "do something," NATO finally reacted to the Serbs' defiance with a new ultimatum on 22 April.¹⁸ Unless the VRS halted its shelling, pulled its troops back the previously stipulated three kilometers, and allowed UN aid into Gorazde by 24 April, NATO air strikes would be sent against military targets within 20 kilometers of the town.¹⁹ Karadzic—now under pressure from both NATO and Serbian President Milosevic—agreed to the terms the same day.²⁰ In addition to the pullback of VRS troops, heavy weapons were withdrawn from the 20-kilometer zone or placed under UN observation. After some fumbling, the VRS carried out the ordered withdrawals as UN troops and military observers took up position to monitor the three-kilometer zone and the heavy weapons withdrawal.²¹ By 24 April the VRS claimed it had pulled all its forces, including heavy weapons, outside of the zones.

Evaluation of the Gorazde Operation

Despite the clear battlefield successes of "Zvezda 94," none of the operation's primary objectives were achieved. Holding the enclave hostage had failed to frighten the Bosnian Government into accepting a permanent cease-fire because the price—permanent partition—was just too high. Even if the entire enclave has been captured it seems unlikely—given the resurgence of the Bosnian Army in northern and central Bosnia—that Sarajevo would have agreed to the Serb terms. Likewise, for the Bosnian Serb leaders the cost of eliminating Gorazde and securing the Drina valley would have been full NATO involvement in the war, which in their view outweighed those territorial gains.²² All the VRS had to show for its military prowess was the capture of additional ground around

Gorazde, including nearly all of the southern (right) bank of the Drina.

But "Zvezda 94," classically planned and executed, had also demonstrated that the VRS could take Gorazde at almost any time it chose. As with most successful VRS offensives, the Serbs exploited their advantages in organization, staff work, and heavy weapons to overwhelm the undermanned and undergunned Bosnian Army troops. The unity of command that the VRS Main Staff imposed on the operation through General Grubac and the Herzegovina Corps Headquarters, together with the use of division-level forward command posts and operational groups to control each major sector, demonstrated the VRS's skill in higher-level staff and command functions. The relatively weak defenses the VRS faced around Gorazde and the Bosnian Army's lack of any significant reinforcements allowed the VRS to exploit its armor and artillery advantages to the full, which kept its losses to a modest estimate of about 100 killed and some 300 to 350 wounded in action.²³

Nevertheless, if the VRS was able to defeat the isolated ARBiH forces in Gorazde but could not achieve any lasting success in its earlier operations against main line ARBiH units in Olovo, Maglaj-Tesanj, or Bihać, it was clear that the balance of military effectiveness was shifting. It was not that the VRS was any less capable but rather that the Bosnian Army had dramatically improved. The East Bosnian Operational Group was not a representative sample of the new Bosnian Army. It was isolated from central Bosnia, could receive few troop reinforcements or supplies, had even fewer heavy weapons than other Bosnian Army forces, and probably was not organized or disciplined as tightly as the forces in central and northern Bosnia. Nevertheless, these Muslim troops did fight hard—UN claims to the contrary notwithstanding—against overwhelming VRS skill and firepower. There is no compelling evidence that ARBiH forces intentionally let their defenses collapse in order to win NATO sympathy and support, as was suggested at the time.²⁴ On the contrary, the ARBiH defenders suffered rather heavy losses. Their casualties appear to have numbered about 300 killed in action and almost 1,000 wounded—a 16 percent casualty rate.²⁵

Endnotes, Annex 49

¹ See statements from President Karadzic and General Mladic on 7 April. Mladic refused to negotiate with Bosnian Army commander General Delic, demanding that "only an instantaneous halt of all combat activities on all the separating lines in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina can be discussed." Belgrade Radio 7 April 1994. According to Belgrade Tanjug, "in connection with the situation in Gorazde," Karadzic said that

the Serb side had earlier warned of the planned Muslim spring offensive, saying that it would respond with all available forces. If the Muslims do not stop attacking, we will launch a counter-offensive and then let the Security Council save them . . . Belgrade Tanjug 7 April 1994. Silber and Little seem to misconstrue the offensive as Mladic's attempt to eliminate the Gorazde enclave before peace talks solidified the frontlines. Rather, as the general's own statement indicates, he and the Serbs wanted the assault to lock in their territorial gains by forcing the Muslims into an early agreement. See Silber and Little, p. 325.

² Normally, the Herzegovina Corps controlled only the southwestern corner of the frontline, while the Drina Corps manned the southeast and northeast sectors and the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps guarded the northwest.

³ The tactical group appears to have been comprised of four to five battalions, one each from the 1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade (Trebinje), 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade (Nevesinje), 15th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade (Bileca), and 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade (Gacko), plus probably a battalion from the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade (Kalinovik). The 8th Herzegovina Motorized also contributed an armored-mechanized battalion. The tactical group may have been designated the "Combined Herzegovina Brigade." The MUP Special Police Brigade, under Goran Saric, assigned two detachments (probably the 3rd Detachment from Trebinje and the 9th Detachment from Srbinje) to help lead the attack. Saric and his deputy Ljubisa Borovcanin personally led Special Police units during the battle.

⁴ Despite Muslim claims that major elements of the Yugoslav Army's Uzice Corps took part in the operation, there are no indications that this was the case. Some elements of the VJ's Corps of Special Units or Serbian MUP Special Police may have been involved, but, if they were, likely numbered no more than 100 to 300 personnel.

⁵ Sarajevo Radio claimed on 3 April that an armored battalion had arrived in the Gorazde area from Pale the night before. Sarajevo Radio 3 April 1994. This is entirely plausible given the additional armor assets from 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade available to the VRS when it drew substantial forces from Sarajevo after the February 1994 NATO ultimatum.

⁶ The Pale, Jajorina, and Praca Battalions, which probably were part of the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade, were the normal sector units here. They probably received an additional battalion from other parts of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps.

⁷ This narrative is based on 1/50,000 scale map analysis of Sarajevo Radio, Belgrade Radio, and Belgrade Tanjug reporting covering 25 March 1994 to 26 April 1994.

⁸ Despite claims to the contrary, there is no evidence of any large or small ARBiH attacks against the VRS near Gorazde that might have "provoked" the VRS offensive. The ARBiH made harassing raids from the enclaves throughout the conflict. Any ARBiH attack or raid that happened to precede a VRS offensive was used as a pretext for an operation that was already in preparation. See Martin Bell, *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug* (Revised) London: Penguin, 1996, p. 180 for claims that Muslim attacks caused the Serb offensive; such claims clearly originated with biased UNPROFOR reports that sought to blame the Muslims for getting themselves attacked and thereby discomfiting the peacekeepers.

⁹ Elements of the 1st Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, plus probably the 11th Herzegovina Infantry Brigade, appear to have been involved in the assault at Uhotic, while elements of the 18th Herzegovina Light

Infantry Brigade and the Special Police Brigade, together with armor from the 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade, advanced along the road toward Zupcici. The Special Police Brigade commander, Goran Saric, was in the van of the attack. See Belgrade Tanjug 12 April 1994.

¹⁰ UN reports on 9 April 1994 that the VRS had taken the hill were in error, or else the ARBiH managed to retake the hill after VRS troops had captured it.

¹¹ See endnote 1.

¹² British Special Air Service (SAS) personnel infiltrated into the enclave acted as forward air controllers for the strike. Silber and Little, p. 328. See Reuters 11 April 1994 for descriptions of the attacks.

¹³ A 13 April 1994 Associated Press photo shows what clearly is an unexploded US-made iron bomb, probably a Mk 82, being guarded by two VRS soldiers. According to the caption, the bomb passed through two floors of a building without exploding. See James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 149-151 for a discussion of the chaos in the UN/NATO chain of command over use of airpower at Gorazde.

¹⁴ Silber and Little, p. 328.

¹⁵ Two SAS personnel were wounded (one later died) during this attack when the VRS overran the ARBiH line so quickly that the two were hit by Serb fire. Silber and Little, p. 329. In this deteriorating situation, the UN requested additional NATO air strikes, but UN Special Representative Akashi refused to authorize them.

¹⁶ NATO's earlier air strikes had not deterred the assault, and on 16 April the VRS downed a British Royal Navy Sea Harrier about to make a bombing run. The VRS Herzegovina Corps's 7th Light Air Defense Artillery Regiment claimed to have downed the plane. See Slavko Alekovic's article on post-war VRS 7th (Herzegovina) Corps' air defense regiment in *Srpska Vojska* 26 December 1997, p. 11. The current commander of the regiment has a piece of the Sea Harrier mounted on his wall.

¹⁷ In addition, the Bosnian Serbs agreed to allow medical aid to reach Gorazde and permit the UN to evacuate wounded and sick from the town. UNHCR and the Red Cross were to be allowed to continue humanitarian aid convoys and freedom of movement for all humanitarian workers was to be guaranteed throughout the Serb republic. Belgrade Tanjug 18 April 1994.

¹⁸ See Silber and Little, pp. 332-333 for a discussion of the wrangling within NATO that preceded the ultimatum.

¹⁹ Paris AFP 22 April 1994 carries the text of the North Atlantic Council (NATO's senior political decisionmaking body) ultimatum.

²⁰ Karadzic met with Milosevic and Akashi in Belgrade on 23 April. Belgrade Tanjug 23 April 1994.

²¹ The initial UN force comprised about 500 French, British, Russian, Norwegian, Egyptian, and Ukrainian troops. Reuters 25 April 1994.

²² Gow claims that the threat of air strikes around Gorazde achieved only a tactical success, and that strategically they were a failure because the operation "undercut the role that air power might play in the future." Gow, p. 150. However, Gow fails to look at the impact the NATO ultimatum appears to have had on Serb decisionmaking and thus on their strategic objectives. Certainly the entire process of air strike requests and their execution during the crisis was muddled and often completely ineffective—particularly the early "pinprick" attacks. Nevertheless, the Serbs did not achieve their secondary aim—the capture of the Gorazde enclave (after the Muslims refused to be coerced into agreeing to the Serbs' primary objective)—directly because of the NATO threat.

²³ This estimate is based primarily on Colonel Lakicevic's reported totals for the Herzegovina Corps only, which he claimed as 30 killed in action and 160 wounded in action (of which 40 were seriously wounded). Belgrade Tanjug 25 April 1994.

²⁴ See Bell, p. 184. General Rose certainly believed that the Muslims had intentionally let themselves be defeated; in his words,

I mean, how the h____ they let a tank down that g_____ route. One man with a crowbar could have stopped it. It's a five-mile road down a wooded ravine; they could have just dropped a boulder on it. I think they basically turned and ran and left us to pick up the bits.

Despite General Rose's beliefs, the VRS had clearly demonstrated over the past two years its ability to seize rugged ground from the most dogged of Bosnian Army defenders. Bosnian Army troops under Naser Oric fought desperately and sacrificially to halt the VRS advance at Srebrenica a year earlier in terrain just as difficult as that found at Gorazde, yet they were crushed just the same as those at Gorazde. Rose's assumption that if the VRS pushed armor up a mountain road unsupported by infantry on its flanks it could be stopped by Muslim infantry and antitank units shows that he did not have sufficient

information on VRS mountain warfare tactics and ignored the ARBiH's lack of anti-tank weapons.

²⁵ See Silber and Little, p. 332. It is difficult to separate military and civilian casualty figures for the Muslims. Presuming that army casualties were a far greater percentage than civilian, and that many Muslim dead may not have been recovered, these totals seem to be in the ballpark. Claims that most of the casualties in the enclave were civilian seem unlikely given that the VRS was intent on hitting ARBiH defense positions and troops. Civilians seem to have fled their villages at the first sign that the VRS was about to overrun them, and the VRS typically set fire to Muslim villages after they seized them. This is not to imply that there were not many civilian casualties, only that most of them were military.

Annex 50
“Just Out of Reach”:
Donji Vakuf, 1994

Background

Before the war, Donji Vakuf had had a population of some 25,000 residents, a little over half of them Muslim and the remainder Croats and Serbs.¹ The Bosnian Serbs, however, took over the town early in 1992, driving thousands of Muslims from their homes to join the thousands of other refugees in the Travnik area. The triumphant Serbs renamed the town “Srbobran” and incorporated it into their expanding republic. After the Bosnian Government’s capture of Bugojno in July 1993, however, the Serb-Muslim frontline had been pushed back to within a few kilometers of the outskirts of Donji Vakuf. The Bosnian Muslims—foremost among them ARBiH 7th Corps commander Mehmet Alagic—made no secret of the fact that Donji Vakuf was high on the list of places they intended to retake.² But the prize remained out of reach. The few remaining kilometers between Bugojno and Donji Vakuf were to prove some of the hardest-fought and most bitterly contested battlegrounds of the entire war.

On the Bosnian Army side, the newly established 7th Corps was eager to flex its muscles. Composed largely of Muslims evicted from the Donji Vakuf area (including the displaced 770th “Donji Vakuf” brigade)³ the 7th Corps fighters had been hardened by the experience of ethnic cleansing and were coldly determined to return to their homes. As always, the 7th Corps could call upon its crack 17th Krajina Brigade (similarly composed of displaced Muslims) to move out front whenever an offensive had to be led. Additional support could be drawn from the local 707th Mountain Brigade⁴ from Bugojno just to the south, and some from Travnik to the north—elements of the 727th Krajina,⁵ 705th Jajce,⁶ and 706th Mountain⁷ brigades. But most of the latter brigades were dedicated to the concurrent assaults on nearby Mt. Vlasic to the northeast and were thus unavailable for the planned attacks toward Donji Vakuf.

On the Bosnian Serb Army side, the 19th Krajina and 11th Mrkonjic Grad Light Infantry Brigades of the 1st Krajina Corps’s 30th Light Infantry Division, commanded by Colonel Jovo Blazanovic, bore the weight of the defense of the Donji Vakuf area. The 19th Brigade was deployed directly in front of the town, with the 11th on the 19th’s left flank to the north. Still further north was the 30th Division’s other brigade, the 1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, facing the town of Turbe west of Travnik. The division probably mustered about 6,000 troops in all. Colonel Blazanovic’s command was to receive reinforcements as the year progressed, including one battalion from the 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade and composite units drawn from several other 1st Krajina Corps formations, totaling some 1,500 troops.⁸ To help lead VRS counterattacks, elements of the elite 1st Military Police Battalion were dispatched to the area as an “intervention” unit.⁹ Elements of the 1st Mixed Artillery Regiment and the 1st Mixed Antitank Artillery Brigade, plus at least one tank company, provided fire support.

The fighting around Donji Vakuf during 1994 consisted of straightforward battles for trenches and bunkers along forested mountains and hilltops. Even the expert infiltrators of the ARBiH infantry would have to close with and slug it out with VRS units that were dug in and backed by armor and artillery. It was to be a slow, grinding series of attacks to take bits of ground from the VRS.

The ARBiH Assaults on Donji Vakuf, March-November 1994

The Donji Vakuf section of the front enjoyed, with most of the rest of Bosnia, a relatively quiet time from January through March of 1994. The Bosnian Serbs would occasionally shell Bugojno and the Bosnian Army would shell Donji Vakuf, but there were no serious infantry assaults. This would change with the coming of spring: Donji Vakuf was one of the first objectives of the Bosnian Army’s spring offensive of

1994. In mid-March, at the same time the ARBiH was attacking towards Teslic to the north and Mt. Vlasic to the east, the first of its many attempts to retake Donji Vakuf was launched.

The assault on Donji Vakuf opened on 16 March with the capture of the peak at Mala Suljaga from the VRS 19th Brigade; the ARBiH also cut the water supply from Bugojno to Donji Vakuf.^{10 11} Apparently taken by surprise, the VRS yielded more ground to the 7th Corps the following day, losing a T-55 tank and a substantial amount of other equipment.¹² Although the attack stopped short of the town itself, the Muslim troopers were within heavy mortar range, and had advanced close enough to alarm the town's Serb population.^{13 14} The VRS 30th Division counterattacked on 22 March, blunting the Bosnian Government advance but failing to take back any ground.¹⁵

A little over a week later the 7th Corps tried again, gaining hope when the attack on 2 April captured the Urija area from the VRS 19th Brigade and placed the most advanced Bosnian Army units about five kilometers southeast of Donji Vakuf.¹⁶ Alagic's forces pressed the attack from two directions, advancing from Prusac to the south and Bugojno to the east.¹⁷ Again they were stopped and the offensive wound down by 6 April.¹⁸ Fighting was desultory and sporadic during the rest of April and May while the Bosnian Army built up its forces for another attempt.

On 29 May the 7th Corps renewed its operations, attacking the VRS 30th Division all along its three-brigade front from the Komar Mountains south of Turbe to the Koscani plateau south of Donji Vakuf. They seized several Serb-held villages in the Komar, some 10 kilometers southwest of Turbe, from the 1st Sipovo and 11th Mrkonjic Brigades,¹⁹ then pressed hard along a roughly 20-km front, trying on 5 June to seize Koscani, 7 km southwest of Donji Vakuf. Fighting continued in earnest on 11 June—disregarding the declaration of a countrywide cease-fire with the Serbs which began on 10 June.^{20 21} In mid-June the Bosnian Army pressed simultaneous offensives in the adjacent Donji Vakuf and Mt. Vlasic areas and appears to have made gradual gains over the next two to three weeks. By the end of July it claimed

to have retaken a total of 100 square kilometers in the Donji Vakuf-Vlasic area.^{22 23}

The last major push toward Donji Vakuf in 1994 began around 19 October with another ARBiH general offensive; 7th Corps forces again pushed the confrontation line back a short distance to the northwest.^{24 25 26} Eventually, however, the October drive on Donji Vakuf merged with the Bosnian Army's simultaneous and adjacent effort to capture Kupres, some 20 km to the southwest. Although the once Muslim-majority Donji Vakuf was a more important, longer-term objective, Kupres, where Croats had been in the majority, became the more immediate focus of the simultaneous ARBiH/HVO offensive. After the Bosnian Croats recaptured Kupres, the Bosnian Army could advance no further south and again redirected its main efforts toward Donji Vakuf to the north.

On 4 November the 7th Corps mounted determined infantry assaults against the 19th Brigade defenders of Koscani (about 7km southwest of Donji Vakuf), Kocpici, and Urije.²⁷ Extensive preparations, equipment movement, and probing assaults preceded the major assault toward Donji Vakuf—then about 16 km away—from the southwest on 7 November.²⁸ The Bosnian Croats provided an artillery barrage to support the Bosnian Army attack on Serb defense lines between Kupres and Donji Vakuf.^{29 30} But despite a day of heavy shelling, the Bosnian Army could not push past Prusac, 7 km south of Donji Vakuf. The ARBiH and VRS tried to push each other off the strategic high ground over the next few days, but neither could dislodge the other.³¹ The Bosnian Army made another hard push on 16-20 November, shelling and assaulting Serb-held Koscani, which sat atop high ground overlooking Donji Vakuf.^{32 33 34} The end of November and December saw weeks of bitter but inconclusive fighting, uphill and downhill, between the 7th Corps and the 30th Division along the ridge-lines surrounding the town. As November turned into December, both sides abandoned the offensive and settled in for a dug-in winter facing each other across the trenchlines running up and down the pine-forested

ridges. The war of maneuver was over, at least until the following spring.

Conclusions:

Donji Vakuf is not an area of national interest to the Croats but Jajce is... You have to take Donji Vakuf to get to Jajce.

— HVO Gen. Tihomir Blaskic, November 1994³⁵

The Bosnian Army and the Bosnian Croats cooperated to a surprising degree during the latter stages of the attack on Donji Vakuf. Although the Croats apparently took over Kupres without fully informing their Bosnian Army counterparts of their intention to do so, relations remained so good that the Bosnian Croats were supplying the Bosnian Army with weapons during its attacks on Donji Vakuf.³⁶ HVO guns and rocket launchers actively supported Bosnian Army units in early November, with a mixed team of Croat and Muslim artillery spotters directing fire from both armies.³⁷

Whether the Bosnian Army could eventually capture Donji Vakuf depended on three competing factors: its own logistics and capabilities, Bosnian Croat willingness to support the Muslims, and the Bosnian Serbs' will to fight. The Bosnian Army had been moderately successful at taking on the Serbs in the

rugged, forested slopes around Donji Vakuf. Indeed, such terrain made for an infantryman's war—and the ARBiH was an infantryman's army. But even an infantry army requires supplies, which the Bosnian Army was hard-pressed to obtain and push forward into the mountainous terrain. It was largely dependent on its notoriously capricious Bosnian Croat allies for weapons, ammunition, and artillery support. And while the HVO had an interest in taking back Croat-majority Kupres, its only interest in Muslim-majority Donji Vakuf was as a route to Jajce, which had once contained a sizeable population of Croats as well as Muslims. The last variable, the Bosnian Serb Army's determination to carry on the fight, seemed immutable—during 1994 at least, the Serbs stuck to their guns.³⁸

The Bosnian Army had come frustratingly close to Donji Vakuf, but as 1994 drew to a close success remained out of reach. From the hills to the south and southwest Alagic's 7th Corps soldiers could see—but not yet enter—Donji Vakuf. The Bosnian Serbs still held the even higher peaks to the northwest and northeast that gave them a secure defensive position for the winter months. As it turned out, the war for control of Donji Vakuf would be fought from ridgeline to ridgeline for almost another year.³⁹

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle, Donji Vakuf Area, 1994

ARBiH 7th Corps, HQ Travnik (Elements) Brig. Gen. Mehmet Alagic, Commander

17th Krajina Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

- At least one battalion normally, possibly the entire brigade during attacks
- Deployed southwest of Donji Vakuf from Bugojno

707th "Bugojno" Mountain Brigade, HQ Bugojno

- (Previously the 307th "Bugojno" Mountain Brigade of the 3rd Corps)
- Probably most or all of the brigade during attacks

770th "Donji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade

- (Previously the 370th "Donji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade of the 3rd Corps)
- Deployed near the town of Prusac

[Possible reinforcements from Travnik]

727th "Banja Luka" Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

- (Previously the 327th "Banja Luka" Mountain Brigade of the 3rd Corps)
- (Engaged at Mt. Vlasic)
- Probably most or all of the brigade during attacks

705th "Jajce" Mountain Brigade

- (Previously the 305th "Jajce" Mountain Brigade of the 3rd Corps)
- (Engaged at Mt. Vlasic)
- Probably one battalion normally, entire brigade during attacks

706th Mountain Brigade, HQ Han Bila

- (Previously the 306th Mountain Brigade of the 3rd Corps)
- (Engaged at Mt. Vlasic)
- Probably the entire brigade during attacks

Chart 2

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle, Donji Vakuf Area, 1994

**VRS 1st Krajina Corps, HQ Banja Luka
(Elements) Lt. Col. Gen. Momir Talic, Commander**

30th Light Infantry Division, HQ Mt. Vlasic
Colonel Jovo Blazanovic, Commander

1st Sipovo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Sipovo
—Deployed west of Turbe in Komar Mountains

11th Mrkonjic Grad Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Mrkonjic Grad
— Deployed north of Donji Vakuf in Komar Mountains

19th Krajina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Donji Vakuf (aka Srbobran)
— Deployed around Donji Vakuf town

Endnotes, Annex 50

- ¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Readies Attack on Donji Vakuf" by Kurt Schork, 8 November 1994.
- ² Reuters, "Belgrade Concerned Over Bosnia War Escalation" by Jovan Kovacic, 27 June 1994.
- ³ At the time known as the 370th Donji Vakuf Mountain Brigade, previously of the ARBiH 3rd Corps.
- ⁴ At the time known as the 307th Bugojno Mountain Brigade, previously of the ARBiH 3rd Corps.
- ⁵ At the time known as the 27th Krajina Mountain Brigade, previously of the ARBiH 3rd Corps.
- ⁶ At the time known as the 305th Jajce Mountain Brigade, previously of the ARBiH 3rd Corps.
- ⁷ At the time known as the 306th Mountain Brigade, previously of the ARBiH 3rd Corps.
- ⁸ The 6th and 5th Battalions/1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade each undertook one tour of duty in the line during the year, attached to the 11th Mrkonjic Light Infantry Brigade. A VRS journal article notes that personnel from Sanski Most (6th Sanski Infantry Brigade), Gradiska, (1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade), Knezevo (22nd Infantry Brigade), Banja Luka (1st-4th Banja Luka Light Infantry Brigades or 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade), Celina (1st Celina Light Infantry Brigade), Laktasi (1st Laktasi Light Infantry Brigade), and Prijedor (43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade) all served in the "Srboban" sector. The brigades from these towns probably contributed at least one company-sized unit each to form composite units for attachment to the 30th Division. Nedeljko Rudić, "The Gates to the Heart of Krajina Are Sealed on the Srboban Battlefield: Krajina is Defended Here," *Krajiski Vojnik* 15 Nov 1994, pp. 22-23, an article on the 11th Mrkonjic Grad Light Infantry Brigade.
- ⁹ VRS military journal articles (plus one Bosnian Muslim article on a VRS unit) covering the Donji Vakuf battles in 1994 include: Nedeljko Rudić, "Enemy Offensive Stopped," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 23. Milka Tosić, "The Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 52, an article on the 1st Military Police Battalion. Nedeljko Rudić, "The Gates to the Heart of Krajina Are Sealed on the Srboban Battlefield: Krajina is Defended Here," *Krajiski Vojnik* 15 Nov 1994, pp. 22-23, an article on the 11th Mrkonjic Grad Light Infantry Brigade.
- ¹⁰ Dzemal Sefer, "Krajiski Osvetnica Su Vratili Vlasima Dio Duga!" *Travnik Bosnjak* 21 November 1995, p. 21, an article on the VRS 1st Novigrad Brigade.
- ¹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1603104794, 161047Z Mar 94.
- ¹² Reuters, "On Some Bosnian Fronts, No Truce, No Peace" by Laura Pittier, 18 March 1994.
- ¹³ Sarajevo Radio, 17 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1703102094, 171020Z Mar 94.
- ¹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 19 March 1994. FBIS London LD1903214994, 192149Z Mar 94.
- ¹⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 March 1994. FBIS London LD2103202894, 212028Z Mar 94.
- ¹⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 22 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2203191694, 221916Z Mar 94.
- ¹⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 2 April 1994. FBIS London LD0204175994, 021759Z Apr 94.
- ¹⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 April 1994. FBIS London LD0404091794, 040917Z Apr 94.
- ¹⁹ Belgrade Tanjug, 6 April 1994. FBIS London LD0604155794, 061557Z Apr 94.
- ²⁰ Nedeljko Rudić, "The Gates to the Heart of Krajina Are Sealed on the Srboban Battlefield: Krajina is Defended Here," *Krajiski Vojnik* 15 Nov 1994, pp. 22-23, an article on the 11th Mrkonjic Grad Light Infantry Brigade; Paris AFP, 31 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU3105114494 311144Z May 94; Pale Srpski Radio-Televizija 31 May 1994 FBIS London LD3105150294 311502Z May 94.
- ²¹ Belgrade Radio, 5 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0506143294, 051432Z June 94.
- ²² Belgrade Radio, 11 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1106152094, 111520Z June 94.
- ²³ Zagreb *Vечерњи Лист*. Interview with General Rasim Delić, Commander of the General Staff of the Supreme Command of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army, "We Are Prepared For Launching Offensives" by Slobodan Lovrenović, 26 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0107085594, 010855Z Jul 94.
- ²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 22 July 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2207202094, 222020 Jul 94.
- ²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 19 October 1994. FBIS London LD1910221594, 192215Z Oct 94.
- ²⁶ Reuters, "U.N. Running Out of Fuel Under Bosnian Serb Ban" by Kurt Schork, 19 October 1994.
- ²⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 27 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2710191194, 271911Z Oct 94.
- ²⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 October 1994. FBIS London LD0411161194, 041611Z Nov 94.
- ²⁹ Reuters, "Bosnians Plan Fresh Offensives—U.N." by Sean Maguire, 7 November 1994.
- ³⁰ Reuters, "Serbs Hit New Bombardment in Bosnia" by Sean Maguire, 7 November 1994.
- ³¹ Reuters, "Bosnian Muslims, Croats Pound Serbs Around Kupres" by Kurt Schork, 7 November 1994.
- ³² Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Said Attacking Croat Troops," 14 November 1994.
- ³³ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Attacks in Central Bosnia," 16 November 1994.
- ³⁴ Paris AFP, 16 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1611100594, 161005Z Nov 94.
- ³⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 November 1994. FBIS London LD2011172894, 201728Z Nov 94.
- ³⁶ Reuters, "Croat-Muslim Alliance Scores First Victory" by Kurt Schork, 10 November 1994.
- ³⁷ Reuters, "Croats Supplying Arms to Bosnian Army—Commander" by Kurt Schork, 6 November 1994.
- ³⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Muslims, Croats Pound Serbs Around Kupres" by Kurt Schork, 7 November 1994.
- ³⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Readies Attack on Donji Vakuf" by Kurt Schork, 8 November 1994.
- ⁴⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Readies Attack on Donji Vakuf" by Kurt Schork, 8 November 1994.

Annex 51
A Contest of Wills:
The Struggle for Mt. Majevica and the Stolice
Transmitter, 1994

The Majevica region is a hilly area about 20km east of Tuzla. Serb artillery in the Majevica hills could shell much of Government-held northeast Bosnia—ranging as far as Tuzla itself—and the Bosnian Army ached to push the confrontation line farther back and move Tuzla outside shelling range. But the crucial prize in the hills was the Stolice radio tower, atop 916-meter Mt. Majevica itself. This tower was a vital communications node relaying radio, television, and telephone communications. Both sides wanted control of the summit and the transmitter, and 1994 was to see a prolonged struggle on the slopes of Mt. Majevica.^{1,2}

For the defense of the general Majevica area—including the Stolice transmitter—the Bosnian Serb Army's East Bosnia Corps created the Tactical Group "Majevica," with five subordinate brigades assigned to it, under the command of Colonel Momir Zec. On Mt. Stolice itself was the 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade. To the northwest were the 3rd Majevica and 1st Semberija Light Infantry Brigades. The 1st Majevica Infantry Brigade held the confrontation line to the northeast of Mt. Stolice. Altogether, Tactical Group Majevica had some 7,000 troops under its direct command, supported by at least one battalion of the 3rd Mixed Artillery Regiment, plus most of the brigades each had a T-34 tank company under command. If required, the East Bosnian Corps' 1st Bijelina Light Infantry ("Panthers") Brigade and 3rd Military Police Battalion, plus the local MUP Special Police detachment (all from Bijelina), could deploy to the sector whenever a counterattack was needed.

Across the confrontation line were the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps' Fourth and Fifth Operational Groups. The Fifth Operational Group, headquartered in Tuzla, had responsibility for most of the confrontation line opposite TG Majevica, facing the 1st Semberija, 3rd Majevica, and most of the 2nd Majevica Brigades. The Fourth Operational Group occupied the entire

"Sapna thumb" area, and thus manned the line east and northeast of Stolice where the 1st Majevica Brigade was deployed. From west to east, the Fifth OG fielded the 2nd Tuzla (later 252nd) Mountain Brigade, the 1st Tuzla (later 250th) Mountain Brigade, and the 3rd Tuzla Brigade (later 253rd), which faced Mt. Stolice directly. The Fourth OG was on the 3rd Tuzla Brigade's right flank, with the 1st "Hajrudin Mesic" (later 255th) Teocak Mountain Brigade generally opposite the VRS 1st Majevica. Altogether, the Bosnian Army had about 8,000 troops in the Majevica area, but only about a dozen heavy mortars and 40 or 50 medium ones for fire support.

During the winter months of early 1994 the Majevica region saw only occasional Serb shelling and intermittent infantry firefights. But the Bosnian Army began massing its forces in the area in April, and its forces first assaulted the mountain on 11 May.³ The ARBiH 2nd Corps mounted repeated attacks on Mt. Majevica and a secondary elevation on adjacent Banj Brdo, with at least two brigades (the 206th and the Hajrudin Mesic Brigade) committed to the fiercest of the government assaults on 14 and 15 May.^{4,5} The Serbs replied with heavy shelling of Bosnian towns and infantry counterattacks on 15 and 16 May. During the attack, Bosnian Army forces got close enough to shell and damage the Stolice relay—temporarily shutting down Serb TV and telephone links in the region—but could not capture and occupy the summit from the 2nd Majevica Light Infantry Brigade, which was probably reinforced with elements of the 3rd Military Police Battalion.⁶ Fighting tapered off around 20 May as the Bosnian Government offensive wound down and the Army paused to regroup and reinforce.⁷ Apparently undaunted, the ARBiH resumed the attack on 27 May, again assaulting the Stolice peak and Banj Brdo.^{8,9} The TG "Majevica" counterattacked and drove south several kilometers from Stolice, retaking much of the ground they had lost to Government forces earlier in the month.¹⁰ When the June cease-fire took effect, the Bosnian Army had been pushed back out of most of its recently won territory.

The Majevica region was relatively quiet for most of the summer while the Bosnian Army directed its primary offensive efforts at the Ozren mountains region. A series of small Government attacks in the Majevica hills all drew negative results, the first from 29 June to 2 July—concurrent with an attack in the Ozren—a second from 21 July to 24 July, and a third from 8 to 13 September. On each occasion, the VRS responded with heavy shelling of Muslim-held towns, particularly Kalesija and Tuzla.^{11 12 13 14 15 16}

In early November, the Bosnian Army made another serious attempt to capture the Stolice radio relay. Preliminary probes appear to have begun as early as mid-October when “recon-sabotage” groups—small, specialized infantry formations—scouted ahead, probably looking for weaknesses in the Serb lines.^{17 18} The main offensive began on 9 November.¹⁹ By 13 November Government soldiers had managed to capture several important hills—including nearby Velika and Mala Jelika—but not Stolice itself.^{20 21} Once again, fierce fighting around the Stolice transmitter damaged the relay but the Bosnian Army again failed to gain control of the Mt. Majevica summit.²²

When, in the course of the November offensive, the Bosnian Army encircled some 30 Bosnian Serbs on

the secondary Vitovaca peak near Majevica itself, the local VRS commander threatened to pound Tuzla—a UN-declared “safe area”—with artillery fire every hour until his “lost platoon” was released.^{23 24} The threat was no bluff, and regular shelling of the urban Tuzla area began early on the morning of 21 November and continued periodically while the Bosnian Army doggedly pursued its infantry attacks against the mountaintop.²⁵ There is no reporting to indicate the captured Serbs were released, but in any event both the Bosnian Government assaults and the Bosnian Serb shelling of Tuzla tapered off by the end of November.^{26 27 28 29}

As 1994 drew to a close, the situation in the Majevica hills was not far different from the year’s beginning. Small infantry clashes—generally begun by Bosnian Army forces—erupted occasionally on the slopes below the Stolice transmitter, but the confrontation lines advanced marginally if at all. VRS forces shelled Tuzla and the smaller towns of the “Sapna thumb” regularly, causing substantial destruction but accomplishing little from a military standpoint. Casualties mounted on both sides of the confrontation line, for little visible gain.

Endnotes, Annex 51

¹ Zagreb *Globus*, "The Tuzla Corps Has Gotten Through Almost to Han Pijesak, General Mladic's Headquarters!" by Karlo Jager, 27 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0706183794, 071837Z June 1994.

² Among other things, Stolice was the broadcast point for Pale television.

³ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 11 May 1994. FBIS London LD1105150594, 111505Z May 94.

⁴ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 14 May 1994. FBIS London LD1405133794, 141337Z May 94.

⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 15 May 1994. FBIS London LD1505175094, 151750Z May 94.

⁶ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 15 May 1994. FBIS London LD1505215194, 152151Z May 94. See Slobodan Markovic, "'Subscribed' for the Hardest Tasks," *Srpska Vojska* 26 August 1995, p. 38, for an article on the VRS 3rd Military Police Battalion.

⁷ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 20 May 1994. FBIS London LD2005215294, 202152Z May 94.

⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Blame Each Other Over Talks" by Kurt Schork, 27 May 1994.

⁹ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 27 May 1994. FBIS London LD2705132492, 271324Z May 94.

¹⁰ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 27 May 1994. FBIS London LD2705153294, 271532Z May 94.

¹¹ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 29 June 1994. FBIS London LD2906234494, 292344Z Jun 94.

¹² Belgrade Radio, 3 July 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0307183594, 031835Z Jul 94.

¹³ Belgrade Radio, 21 July 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2107145694, 211456Z Jul 94.

¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 24 July 1994. FBIS London LD2407133894, 241338Z Jul 94.

¹⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 8 September 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0809194694, 081946Z Sep 94.

¹⁶ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 13 September 1994. FBIS London LD1309213894, 132138Z Sept 94.

¹⁷ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 12 October 1994. FBIS London LD1210163994, 121639Z Oct 94.

¹⁸ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 20 October 1994. FBIS London LD2010224394, 202243Z Oct 94.

¹⁹ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 9 November 1994. FBIS London LD0911231894, 092318Z Nov 94.

²⁰ Zagreb *Hina*, 13 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1311151694, 131516Z Nov 94.

²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 15 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1511164494, 151644Z Nov 94.

²² Zagreb *Hina*, 17 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1711160794, 171606Z Nov 94.

²³ Sarajevo Radio, 17 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1711195494, 171954Z Nov 94.

²⁴ Zagreb *Hina*, 19 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1911172694, 191726Z Nov 94.

²⁵ Zagreb *Hina*, 21 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2111152894, 211528Z Nov 94.

²⁶ Zagreb *Hina*, 24 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2411090094, 240900Z Nov 94.

²⁷ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 24 November 1994. FBIS London LD2411011894, 240118Z Nov 94.

²⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 24 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2411092994, 240929Z Nov 94.

²⁹ Belgrade *Tanjug*, 29 November 1994. FBIS London LD2911194994, 291949Z Nov 94.

Annex 52

Kladanj, 1994

The Muslim-held town of Kladanj was only about 7 km from the confrontation line at its closest point, but was shielded from the Bosnian Serbs by a series of high ridges and peaks. This was a great blessing, for although the town was well within range of the Bosnian Serb field guns, without an observation point the VRS could not shell Kladanj accurately. The Bosnian Serbs shelled the area fairly frequently in 1993 and early 1994, but the town was not as heavily damaged as other locales—like nearby Olovo—that were in direct line-of-sight.

Like Olovo, Kladanj's strategic importance derived from its position along the main north-south road from Sarajevo to Tuzla.¹ The road link between Olovo and Kladanj was of particular importance, and the Bosnian Serbs' control of a segment of this road denied it to the Bosnian Government.

The primary defenders of the Kladanj area were two brigades under the ARBiH 2nd Corps' "6 East Operational Group," which held the section of frontline from south of Kladanj northwards almost to Kalesija.² The two Kladanj-based units were the 121st Mountain Brigade (later redesignated the 243rd) and the 1st Muslim Podrinje Brigade (later redesignated the 244th). Of these brigades, the 121st Mountain Brigade was more directly engaged, holding the line due east of Kladanj. To the north of Kladanj was the ARBiH's 119th "Banovici" brigade; to the south was the 1st Olovo Brigade.

Opposing the ARBiH to the east were elements of the Bosnian Serb Army's Drina Corps, under the command of Major General Milenko Zivanovic. The corps had the 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade northeast of Kladanj, the 1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade immediately east of Kladanj, and two battalions of the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade southeast of Kladanj. In addition, the 2nd Romanija Brigade had one battalion from the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry

Brigade attached. The total force numbered about 2,500 to 3,000 troops. The 1st Birac Infantry Brigade was deployed to the north of the 1st Milici, centered around Kalesija, away from the main action.

All appearances indicated that the ARBiH was not content with merely holding its positions along the Olovo-Kladancj confrontation line. Between 12 and 17 January its 121st Mountain Brigade pushed slightly forward, capturing the towns of Jelacici and Majdan along the boundary between the VRS 1st Milici and 1st Birac Brigades, about 10km northeast of Kladanj.³⁴⁵⁶ Exchanges of artillery and mortar fire, punctuated by occasional small infantry clashes along the line east of Kladanj, continued through February and March. The pace of fighting picked up around 14 April, as the Bosnian Army stepped up its infantry actions all along the confrontation line.⁷ During the latter half of April and the first week of May, UN observers noted a steady buildup of military supplies and additional Government forces into the area—including the spearhead 7th Muslimski Brigade and elements of the army's elite "Black Swans."⁸ When the ARBiH 2nd Corps began restricting the movements of UN military observers south of Tuzla, the observers took this as an almost certain sign of an impending offensive.⁹ The UN—and the Bosnian Serbs—watched and waited for the blow to fall.

They did not have long to wait. The Bosnian Army launched its expected offensive east of Kladanj in the second week of May—concurrent with other 2nd Corps attacks at Mt. Majevica-Stolice and Mt. Vijenac in the Ozren mountains—moving in the general direction of Sekovici and Vlasenica, astride the Serb supply corridor from Serbia to Han Pijesak and Sokolac. By 15 May the UN was reporting significant Bosnian Army gains in the area.¹⁰ The Bosnian Army's most significant breakthrough came the following day, when rapid advances captured some 32 square kilometers along the boundary of the 1st Vlasenica and 2nd Romanija Brigades.¹¹¹² Under the leadership of

Becir Mekanic, the last peacetime mayor of Vlasenica, the 1st Muslim Brigade seized 1,300-meter Mt. Sokolina—in sight of Mekanic’s hometown, only 12km away.¹³ Further south, the ARBiH also took the 1,100-meter Mt. Stijena peak.

The VRS responded by shelling Tuzla on 16 May followed by very heavy shelling all along the Kladanj front on 19 May.¹⁴ By about 21 May, the VRS Drina Corps appears to have halted the Bosnian Army attack, regaining Mt. Stijene and some of the surrounding ground in a counterattack.¹⁵ Doggedly pressing forward a kilometer at a time in the hilly and wooded terrain, the Bosnian Army was able to make a few small gains until, apparently worn out, it gave up the struggle in early June, leaving the Olovo-Kladanj

front largely quiet during the summer months except for sporadic Serb shelling.^{16 17}

The Bosnian Army advance had reached its farthest point by mid-May, a 15-km thrust that brought it within 10km west of Vlasenica and pushed the Serb lines back in a bulge east of Kladanj.¹⁸ But there had never been a chance of actually taking Vlasenica and the advance did nothing to break the Serbs’ control of the Olovo-Kladanj road, so the Bosnian Army’s gains were more important morally than militarily. Still, even threatening Vlasenica and the Bosnian Serbs’ lifeline from Serbia was a major accomplishment that gave the Serbs a scare and the ARBiH a propaganda victory.

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle Kladanj Area, 1994

ARBiH 2nd (Tuzla) Corps, HQ Tuzla
Brigadier Saad Delic, Commander

3rd Operational Group, HQ Kladanj

1st Muslim Podrinje Brigade
(Later redesignated the 244th Mountain Brigade)
Becir Mekanic and/or Hakija Hodzik, commander

121st Mountain Brigade, HQ Kladanj
(Later redesignated 243rd Mountain Brigade)

Chart 2

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle Kladanj Area, 1994

VRS Drina Corps, HQ Vlasenica (Elements)
Major General Milenko Zivanovic, Commander

1st Birac Infantry Brigade, HQ Sekovici
—Deployed north of Kladanj; not significantly engaged in Kladanj fighting

1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Milici
—Deployed northeast of Kladanj

1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Vlasenica
—Deployed east of Kladanj

Elements, 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade, HQ Sokolac (-)
—Deployed southwest of Kladanj

Podrinje Detachment “Drina Wolves”/1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade
—Deployed as counterattack unit

Endnotes, Annex 52

¹ UN designated "Route Python" from Kladanj south to Sarajevo, and "Route Skoda" running north from Kladanj.

² In early 1994, the 2nd Corps "Operational Group 3," headquartered in Kladanj and consisting of the 121st and 1st Muslim Brigades, was incorporated into Operational Group 6.

³ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 January 1994. FBIS London LD1201182694, 121826Z Jan 94.

⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 13 January 1994. FBIS London LD1301211694, 132116Z Jan 94.

⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 14 January 1994. FBIS London LD1401183894, 141838Z Jan 94.

⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 17 January 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1701124494, 171244Z Jan 94.

⁷ Belgrade Radio, 14 April 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1404192694, 141926Z Apr 94.

⁸ Paris AFP, 8 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0805155294, 081552Z May 94.

⁹ Reuters, "Moslem 'Safe Haven' Shelled After Serb Town Hit," by Davor Huic, 11 May 1994.

¹⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Report Increased Fighting," 15 May 1994.

¹¹ Sarajevo Radio, 16 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1605190194, 161901Z May 94.

¹² Reuters, "Tuzla Shelled After Moslems Claim Military Gains," by Dan De Luce, 16 May 1994.

¹³ Reuters, "Moslem Chief Aims to Retake 'Cleansed' Drina Valley," by Davor Huic, 17 May 1994.

¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 19 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1905185994, 191859Z May 94.

¹⁵ Reuters, "Serbs Widen Battle Fronts in Bosnia," by Dan De Luce, 21 May 1994.

¹⁶ Paris AFP, 29 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2905132294, 291322Z May 94.

¹⁷ By 23 May, the 121st Kladanj Brigade was apparently relieved by the 119th Banovici Brigade. Belgrade Tanjug, 23 May 1994. FBIS London LD2305144794, 231447Z May 94.

¹⁸ Zagreb *Globus*, "The Tuzla Corps Has Gotten Through Almost to Han Pjesak, General Mladic's Headquarters!" by Karlo Jeger, 27 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0706183794, 071837Z Jun 94.

Annex 53 **Tesanj and Teslic, 1994**

After staving off the Bosnian Serb offensives against the surrounded Tesanj enclave from December 1993 through the signing of the Croat-Muslim ceasefire in March 1994, the Bosnian Army switched almost immediately to the offensive. Although relations with the HVO's 111th Zepce Brigade remained uneasy, the ARBiH no longer needed to actively defend its "southern front" and could turn its newly available resources against the VRS. For the first time the Bosnian Army's defenders of Tesanj could seriously consider a drive westward toward their own objective—Serb-held Teslic, several kilometers west of the Muslim-held pocket.

The Bosnian Army forces in the area had been designated the "Operations Group 7-South"—originally under the 2nd Corps but transferred to the 3rd Corps in mid/late 1994. Like the ARBiH 5th Corps in the Bihać pocket, the 7-South Operations Group had proved themselves a courageous, hardy, and determined body of fighting men, in spite of the fact—and more likely because of it—that the Tesanj pocket was cut off from the rest of Government-held Bosnia and had to fend for itself. OG 7-South had at this time four brigades and one independent battalion totaling about 10,000 troops. In addition, the HVO's 110th "Usora" Brigade (which had remained operationally allied to the ARBiH throughout the Croat-Muslim war) held the northeast corner of the enclave with another 2,000 troops.

The Bosnian Serbs clearly accorded high priority to Teslic and dedicated substantial forces to its defense. The VRS 1st Krajina Corps's "Doboj" Operational Group 9 had responsibility for the entire area; the segment of the confrontation line immediately west of the "Maglaj finger" around Tesanj was assigned to "Doboj" OG's Tactical Group 2 (TG-2).¹ Tactical Group 2 consisted of six subordinate brigades spread from southwest of Teslic to the northwest corner of

the enclave. These included the 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade (which provided the headquarters for the tactical group and was strongest formation in the sector), the 1st Teslic Infantry Brigade, the 1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade, and probably the 1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade.² The 2nd Teslic Light Infantry Brigade was deployed further south, opposite the Croat-held Zepce enclave. Still further south and west was the 27th Motorized Brigade, the westernmost unit along OG 9's segment of the confrontation line. TG-2 was supported by at least one OG or corps-level artillery battalion, and during critical operations would be reinforced by elements of corps-level elite units, such as the 1st MP Battalion and 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company and the OG's 2nd Armored Brigade.³

The Muslim counteroffensive came only days after a local HVO-ARBiH cease-fire took effect on 19 March. On 23 March the displaced 204th "Teslic" Mountain Brigade began a drive towards its original hometown.⁴ The attack rolled forward briskly and by 26 March had rolled up gains one to two kilometers deep along a six-kilometer front against the VRS 1st Teslic Infantry Brigade. The higher ground south of Tesanj and Teslic had been taken and the critical 577-meter Husar elevation was under assault.⁵ The advance looked promising, and hopes were high that Teslic itself might soon be reached. But it was not to be. Infantry battles and artillery exchanges extending into April slowed the advance and brought it to a halt five or six kilometers east of Teslic.

It was about 22 May before the ARBiH was ready to try again, this time with the more limited objective of capturing only a few more pieces of higher ground. And this time the HVO's 111th "Zepce" brigade—OG 7-South's former foes—appears to have contributed at least two tanks to the fight.^{7,8,9} Even these limited objectives proved unattainable, and the ARBiH was able to push the confrontation lines only a little bit forward.¹⁰ It did gain control over a line of peaks 5-15 kilometers southeast of Teslic from the VRS 1st

Teslic Brigade, but it was unable to push the last few kilometers to the west to reach the Veliki Usora river valley, the adjacent north-south road into Teslic, or the town of Teslic itself. OG 7-South's best efforts had failed to make the hoped-for territorial gains before the countrywide cease-fire took effect on 10 June.¹¹¹²

The summer months saw little more than artillery exchanges, with the great preponderance of force coming from the VRS side. Bosnian Army and, less often, HVO artillery would at times shell Teslic to the west or Doboј to the northeast. The VRS shelled Tesanj and almost all of the other villages of any size in the pocket. The one important development during this time was the ARBiH's capture of the long contested Husar elevation—almost exactly halfway between Tesanj and Teslic—on 19 August.¹³ The VRS made several attempts to regain possession of the peak, but this time the Muslims were able to hold onto their gains.¹⁴¹⁵

The Bosnian Army's most ambitious effort of the year in the Teslic area began on 3 October and would continue for nearly two months. The October-November offensive was to be significantly larger and more complex, requiring major operations by both Operations Group 7-South east of Teslic and by the 3rd Corps' Operations Group "3-North" well to the south of Teslic. Each of the two operations groups contributed three reinforced brigades to the attack, for a total of perhaps 14-16,000 troops.

The battle was to extend over a period of weeks, and in the end would bring mixed success for the Bosnian Army, claiming substantial advances in the south but only marginal progress in the north near Teslic itself. The first day's attacks in the southern area—spearheaded by the 7th Muslimski Brigade and the "El Mujahid" Detachment of foreign Islamic volunteers and followed up by the 319th Mountain and 330th Light Brigades—caught the VRS defenders off guard and some 20 square kilometers were taken in a matter of hours from the 27th Motorized Brigade.¹⁶ The ARBiH made a similar thrust west of Tesanj—with the 202nd Mountain Brigade taking the lead—but without similar success.¹⁷ VRS forces halted the ARBiH advances in short order and TG-2—probably reinforced—counterattacked on 10 and 11 October.¹⁸

¹⁹ VRS artillery also retaliated with heavy shelling of

Muslim-held villages in the area. Bosnian Government forces advanced against the VRS 1st Teslic Brigade as far as the Teslic suburb of Banja Vrucica, but could go no further.²⁰²¹

But while the Bosnian Government advance was being stopped cold in the north, the 3rd Corps attack in the south was continuing to make steady gains. As OG 7-South drew VRS reserves into the defense of Teslic, OG 3-North was able to make further advances against the 27th Motorized Brigade, pushing north and west to take another 50 square kilometers or so in a series of short advances of 2-3 kilometers a day along a 10-km-wide front.²²

By late October it began to look as if the two-front attack might succeed. Operations Group 7-South was still fighting in Banja Vrucica, close enough to Teslic to worry the Serb defenders. Meanwhile, OG 3-North was advancing slowly but seemingly inexorably. VRS TG-2 forces made several counterattacks around Teslic, retaking some territory, but the ARBiH 3rd Corps countered with yet another offensive by OG 3-North on 8 November. Once again, the crack 7th Muslimski Brigade led the way in an advance that took more than 30 more square kilometers over the next ten days.²³²⁴²⁵

The ARBiH 3rd Corps advance from 8 to 17 November was to mark the last major success in the Tesanj-Teslic area, as winter set in and the ARBiH 3rd Corps' elite units were redirected toward the Kupres and Donji Vakuf fronts. In the end, VRS forces were able to hold on, pushing Government forces back a short distance from the Teslic suburbs and digging in along a new confrontation line opposite OG 3-North. But even though the objective of Teslic was never reached the October-November offensive can be considered a substantial success. The Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps had demonstrated its ability to mount sizeable, coordinated operations within its area of responsibility. The VRS, which had begun the year on the offensive, was forced to end it on the defensive. And over 100 square kilometers of territory were captured—a significant gain by the standards of the Bosnian war. The goal had not been reached, but the effort itself had been worth it.

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle, Tesanj-Teslic Area, 1994

Operational Group 7 South, HQ Tesanj

(Previously Tesanj Operational Zone, HQ Tesanj)
(Later the 37th Division, HQ Tesanj)

[Established 8 March 1993]

Mustafa Cerovac, Seven-South Operational Group, commander.

Tesanj Independent Battalion

Tesanj Independent Battalion

202nd "Tesanj" Chivalrous Brigade, HQ Tesanj

(Previously the 1st Famous Tesanj Brigade)
(Later the 372nd "Tesanj" Mountain Brigade)

203rd "Doboj Bosna" Famous Motorized Brigade

(Later the 373rd Doboj Bosna Mountain Brigade)
Ismet Memagic, commander [after Sept. 1993]
Adnan Bajraktarevic, commander [through Sept. 1993]

204th "Teslic" Famous Hill Brigade, HQ East of Teslic

(Later the 374th "Teslic" Mountain Brigade)
204th Teslic Famous Hill Brigade
Ismet Memagic, Chief of Staff [through Sept. 1993]
Anniversary of Teslic Brigade noted, 24 December 1994.

207th Gallant Mountain Brigade, HQ Tesanj

(Later the 377th "Jelah Pousora" Mountain Brigade)
Aden Omahic, Cmdr. [After Sept. 1993]
Ismet Avdic, Cmdr [Became 7 OG South Cmdr, Sept. 93]

110th "Usora" HVO Brigade, HQ Jelah

(HVO unit functioning cooperatively with the ARBiH)
(Later the 110th "Usora" Home Defense Regiment)

Chart 2

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle, Tesanj-Teslic Area, 1994

“Usora” Tactical Group 2, HQ Teslic/Banja Vrucica²⁶
Lieutenant Colonel Vlado Topic, Commander

1st Krnjin Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Omanjska

1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Cerovica

16th Krajina Motorized Brigade, HQ Vitkovici

1st Teslic Infantry Brigade, HQ Teslic-Banja Vrucica

2nd Teslic Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Donji Komusina

27th Derventa Motorized Brigade, HQ Blatnica

Endnotes, Annex 53

- ¹ This TG may have been designated as Tactical Group 3, vice TG-2.
- ² Zeljko Petrovic, "The Sure Hand of 'Gara's' Soldiers of the 16th Krajina on the Dobojs-Teslic Battlefield: Years of Brilliant Victories," *Srpska Vojska* 15 November 1994, p. 27. Although the 16th had its own frontline sector north of Teslic, elements of the brigade probably acted as the tactical group's reserves and were shifted to meet developing threats accordingly.
- ³ M. Tasic, "The Majority of the Glorious Ones—Tank Units," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, p. 34, an article on the 2nd Armored Brigade.
- ⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 23 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2303202594, 232025Z Mar 94.
- ⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 25 March 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2503180394, 251803Z Mar 94.
- ⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 26 March 1994. FBIS London LD2603174994, 261749Z Mar 94.
- ⁷ Paris AFP, 24 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2405163694, 241636Z May 94.
- ⁸ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 May 1994. FBIS London LD2505023194, 250231Z May 94.
- ⁹ Paris AFP, 25 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2505123094, 251230Z May 94.
- ¹⁰ Paris AFP, 26 May 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2605142294, 261422Z May 94.
- ¹¹ Paris AFP, 9 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0906120994, 091209Z June 94.
- ¹² Paris AFP, 11 June 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1106204694, 112046Z June 94.
- ¹³ Sarajevo Radio, 19 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1908105494, 191054Z Aug 94.

- ¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 23 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2308094994, 230949Z Aug 94.
- ¹⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 31 August 1994. FBIS Vienna AU3108193594, 311935Z Aug 94.
- ¹⁶ Sarajevo Radio, 3 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0310202794, 3 Oct 94.
- ¹⁷ Sarajevo Radio, 7 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0710095494, 7 Oct 94.
- ¹⁸ Sarajevo Radio, 10 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1010195294, 10 Oct 94.
- ¹⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 11 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1110210394, 11 Oct 94.
- ²⁰ Sarajevo Radio, 12 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1210120394, 12 Oct 94.
- ²¹ Sarajevo Radio, 12 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1210193394, 12 Oct 94.
- ²² Sarajevo Radio, 19 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1910205894, 19 Oct 94.
- ²³ Sarajevo Radio, 8 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0811195694, 8 Nov 94.
- ²⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 9 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0911204494, 9 Nov 94.
- ²⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 17 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1711124194, 17 Nov 94.
- ²⁶ This TG may have been designated as Tactical Group 3, vice TG-2.

Annex 54

The Battle of Vozuca, Ozren Mountains, June-July 1994

As the Bosnian Army's confidence in its ability to take the war to the Serbs grew, the ARBiH General Staff prepared plans for a much more ambitious offensive in the Ozren mountains. The objective of the attack was to cut off and capture the southern lobe of the Serb-held Ozren salient around Vozuca. This would reconnect an important route—the UN's so-called "Route Duck"—between the cities of Tuzla and Zenica by freeing up a short stretch of road—only 12 kilometers—that ran between Muslim-held Zadovici and Banovici through Serb-controlled Vozuca. Though the Tuzla-Zavidovici link appears less than a direct route, it was in fact the best and quickest road to Zenica. The road would also open a firm, convenient link between 2nd and 3rd Corps and facilitate coordination of hoped-for joint operations against the Doboј-Ozren area.¹ And a defeat in the Ozren would further reduce VRS forces and resources and give the ARBiH a major psychological victory. The operation would be the largest conducted to date by the ARBiH and would involve a coordinated attack by major elements of the 2nd and 3rd Corps—up to 14,000 assault troops—under General Delic's personal supervision.

Order of Battle and Campaign Planning

The ARBiH. The Bosnian Army General Staff, which directly managed and coordinated the operation, assigned the 2nd and 3rd Corps the mission of capturing "Route Duck."² The "Bosna" Operational Group/3rd Corps, under the leadership of Colonel Fadil Hasanagic, would lead 3rd Corps' attack. The 3rd Corps commander, Brigadier Sakib Mahmujin, and his staff probably supervised Hasanagic's command. The "Bosna" OG's mission was to attack from Muslim-held positions on the east bank of the Bosna River around Hajdarevici southeast along the Krivaja River to link up with 2nd Corps forces. Normally, the OG's sector opposite the sector running from the important

Blizna hill north of Zavidovici south to Vozuca was manned by the 318th Zavidovici and 309th Kakanj Mountain Brigades. For this operation, however, the OG was reinforced with assault troops believed to have been drawn from the "El Mujahid" Detachment of foreign Muslim volunteers, the 7th Muslimski Mountain, 303rd Mountain, 311th Light, 314th Mountain, 320th Light, and 330th Light Brigades. In addition, special operations units from the corps' 3rd Recon-Sabotage Battalion and the General Staff's 120th Liberation Brigade "Black Swans" probably took part. All told, the OG probably had about 7,000 assault troops, plus 5,000 sector-holding personnel in the 309th and 318th Brigades.

The other attack axis was under the command of 2nd Corps' 6th "East" Operational Group and, like the 3rd Corps' OG, at least part of the operation would be supervised by the corps commander, Brigadier Hazim Sadic, and his staff. The 6th OG's mission called for an attack from the Banovici area—near newly captured Vijenac (see below)—along a secondary road through the Seona/Lozna area to link up with the "Bosna" OG coming south. In addition to the normal sector-holding troops from the 119th Banovici Mountain Brigade, the OG appears to have been reinforced with both the 212th and 251st Liberation Brigades to stiffen the spearhead of the attack. Very likely, elements of several more brigades were collected to bolster the assault forces, drawn from the 211th Liberation, 210th Mountain, 117th Mountain, and all three Tuzla brigades. The total assault force probably numbered 6,000, backed up by about 5,000 sector-holding personnel in the 117th and 119th Mountain Brigades.

The VRS. VRS forces in the Ozren mountains came under the command of Major Milovan Stankovic's "Ozren" Tactical Group 6, part of Colonel Vladimir Arsic's "Doboј" Operational Group 9/1st Krajina Corps. Stankovic controlled at least six light infantry brigades—1st through 4th Ozren and 1st Vucijak

Light Infantry Brigades, plus attached elements of the 1st Knin Light Infantry Brigade.³ Elements of the “Doboj” OG’s 2nd Armored Brigade and the corps-level 1st Mixed Artillery Regiment supported the tactical group. Of this array, however, it would be only the 1st Vucjak east of Hajdarevici at Podilsjevo and the 4th Ozren at Vozuca, and elements of the 2nd Ozren northwest of Banovici—some 2,500 troops—bearing the brunt of the attack. Major Stankovic could call on the tactical reserves of his other line brigades to strengthen his defenses in the critical area, but these probably numbered only about 1,000 troops. And to conduct a major counterattack, he would have to ask for elite reserves controlled at the OG and corps levels (see text below).

Preliminaries: Operation “Proljece 94,” The Capture of Vjenac Hill Area, April-May 1994

Well before the battle’s planned commencement the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps launched a small preliminary operation during April and May—“Proljece (Spring) 94”—to secure important observation and jump-off positions for the main attack. The primary objective was the occupation of Vjenac hill, a 700-meter feature from which the VRS could look down on the Muslim-held town of Banovici, some 10 kilometers to the southeast. In ARBiH hands, it would provide excellent observation over the Vozuca area for the attack. On 12 April troops from the 212th Liberation Brigade seized the approaches to Vjenac in a 40-minute battle.⁴ The attack should have been a wake-up call for the VRS 1st Knin Light Infantry Brigade, but its troops were taken by surprise when on 11 May the ARBiH moved against Vjenac itself. Again the 212th Liberation Brigade, now supported by the 117th Lukavac and 119th Banovici Brigades, stormed and overwhelmed the VRS positions.⁵ The VRS lost a full company of troops, some 70 soldiers being captured and 21 killed in action.⁶ The ARBiH also captured a sizeable number of heavy weapons, including three ZIS-3 76mm field guns, four 120mm mortars, and four 82mm mortars.⁷ It was a small, quick action but it gave the ARBiH an enormous psychological victory that it could trumpet for the rest of the year.

The Battle of Vozuca Opens, 18 June 1994⁸

On 18 June the ARBiH opened the offensive and rolled over the VRS frontline defenses.⁹ By 19 June more than 1,000 Serb civilians had fled their villages near the frontline as the Muslim attack gathered steam. “Bosna” Operational Group forces appear to have had the most success, and by 24 June ARBiH troops had seized six villages east of Zavidovici, driving back the VRS 1st Vucjak Brigade. Meanwhile, the 6th OG/2nd Corps pushed northwest from the Banovici area against the 2nd and 4th Ozren Brigades. Two days later, 2nd and 3rd Corps troops were only three kilometers apart and had nearly cut off VRS 4th Ozren Brigade forces around Vozuca. Muslim light infantry and special units penetrating behind the Serbs’ thin frontline defenses apparently disrupted a number of units, leading in some cases to panic. But around the important Blizna hill on the northwest flank of the Muslim attack VRS units (apparently 3rd Ozren Brigade) were able to block ARBiH efforts to widen the advance and protect the primary thrust.

The VRS Launches its Counterstrike, 28 June-5 July 1994

Despite the rapidity of the Muslim advance and its near success, the VRS defenders were not finished yet, and the 1st Krajina and East Bosnian Corps rushed reinforcements into the Ozren. The 1st Krajina Corps sent in two motorized battalions from the 27th Motorized Brigade, plus many of its elite units: elements of the 1st Military Police Battalion, 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, the “Wolves of Vucjak” Assault Detachment, and probably the 9th Reconnaissance Company and 9th Military Police Battalion from “Doboj” Operational Group—about 1,750 troops. The East Bosnian Corps also sent its veteran 1,000-man 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade “Panthers” under Major Ljubisa Savic (“Mauzer”) to the area.

With the arrival of the “Panthers” on about 26 June, the “Ozren” Tactical Group was ready to begin its

counterattack. Perhaps the 1st Krajina Corps reinforcements had blunted and roughed up the ARBiH advance, because the ARBiH began to rotate its front-line units just as the VRS was preparing to make its move. In addition, communications between the 2nd and 3rd Corps may have broken down.¹⁰

The "Panthers," joining with the 1st Krajina Corps reinforcements, appear to have attacked on 28 June into the Hajdarevici area to strike the flank of "Bosna" OG's spearheads. The elite VRS troops sliced through the ARBiH's exposed positions, seizing several villages. As 3rd Corps shifted forces to meet the threat on about 1 July, the VRS appears to have intentionally pulled back its spearheads, luring Muslim troops into an artillery killing ground strewn with mines. Reeling ARBiH forces took heavy losses in the ensuing fire-storm.¹¹ In the chaos and shock that followed this setback, the "Ozren" Tactical Group launched a general counterattack against both the 2nd and 3rd Corps thrusts, and by 4/5 July they had driven the disorganized Muslim forces back to their start line. A once promising advance disintegrated into a discouraging defeat.¹²

Evaluation of the June Vozuca Operation

Like so many of its ambitious attacks in 1994, the operation against Vozuca was a learning experience for the Bosnian Army. The dramatic shift in the fortunes of the battle over a span of less than four days made the failure in the Ozren one of the ARBiH's more spectacular setbacks, capturing the front page of the *Washington Post*. Despite its lack of success, the operation displayed some important new ARBiH strengths. The ability of the General Staff and its two corps to organize, move, and supply such a large number of troops was an impressive feat for an army more used to defending than attacking. And, as in many of its offensive operations in 1994, ARBiH units, particularly elite recon-sabotage forces, demonstrated great effectiveness in penetrating VRS defenses and sowing panic behind Serb lines to disrupt the VRS defensive effort. But key ARBiH weaknesses left the army still vulnerable to many of the VRS's unique strengths. In particular, the ARBiH appears to have failed to properly consolidate its gains at the tactical and opera-

tional levels, leaving its main thrust overextended and vulnerable to the VRS counterstrike. This was a constantly recurring problem with many of the ARBiH attacks during 1994, most dramatically demonstrated at Bihać four months later. Limited tactical radio communications made it difficult for ARBiH commands to coordinate the actions of many units in the attack, which further hampered the advance.

The operation in the Ozren also displayed the Bosnian Serb Army's traditional strengths and weaknesses. The VRS's ability to organize and rapidly deploy elite reserve formations to mount a major counterattack again showed the Serbs' superiority in staff work, logistics, and mobility. It was the tried and true professional skills of the VRS mid-level and senior commanders in integrating these units and exploiting the classic VRS firepower that produced the effective artillery and minefield "ambush" tactics that confounded the ARBiH offensive. But the VRS defensive performance was also marred by several troubling failures that were characteristic of its actions during 1994. As frequently noted earlier, at the battalion level and below most VRS brigades were poorly led, disciplined, and trained, and too often they appear to have panicked too easily and fallen back precipitously, particularly when surprised by ARBiH sabotage units. At the strategic and operational level, VRS commanders and staff had to operate with insufficient reserve forces that could quickly be inserted into a difficult battle situation. The 1st Krajina Corps had an impressive array of elite reserves to draw on to halt and disperse the Bosnian Army offensive, but they had to be shifted a considerable distance. The fact that the "Ozren" Tactical Group had to rely so quickly and so heavily on these corps-level reserves signaled an ominous dependence that would grow worse. Most of the elite 1st Krajina units would be called on for every major battle fought during 1994, because there simply were few local reserves available.

Battle for Vozuca Resumes, November 1994

Much later that year the ARBiH revived its campaign against Vozuca, but with major differences. This time the attack was timed with 2nd and 3rd Corps attacks on Doboj and Teslic and, in contrast to the failed June-

July operation, the two corps' assignments were to seize and hold key hills and villages that would form the starting blocks for a later operation to win back Vozuca and "Route Duck." The "Bosna" Operational Group/3rd Corps was charged with squeezing the narrow waist of the Ozren-Vozuca salient; a week's fighting penetrated about a kilometer deep into the VRS defenses.¹³ The 6th "East" Operational Group/2nd Corps attacked south and northeast of Vozuca at the same time, achieving even greater success by captur-

ing several hilltops and villages at the waist or around Vozuca.¹⁴ Counterattacks by the local VRS forces kept the ARBiH from squeezing further, but, without elite reinforcements, were unable to retake the lost positions. The VRS' corps-level reserves were already containing the 2nd and 3rd Corps attacks around Doboј and Teslic and supporting the Bihać counteroffensive; they could not be spared for a major action to retake the limited ARBiH advances at Vozuca.

Endnotes, Annex 54

¹ General Sadic and Brigadier Mahmuljin both had explained the importance of "Route Duck" to their Muslim constituents. Zagreb *Globus*, after interviewing Sadic, wrote in 1994.

The Zavidovici-Banovici communication toward Tuzla is of vital importance. It is the fastest connection between Tuzla and Zenica, as it is fully asphalted. The roads through which supplies are brought into the Tuzla area at present will, with the first autumn rains, become unsafe. [According to Sadic.] 'for instance, at Konjub Planina, through the village of Milankovici, you already have to be towed by a tractor, and when the earth is drenched with rain . . .

Mahmuljin stated in 1995 (after the ARBiH finally conquered the area) that,

Our strategic task was above all to reestablish communications—telecommunications and transportation, and this internal linkage of the free territory made it possible to move on further. Nedzad Latic, "They Will Never Again Think of Moving Against Us That Way," Sarajevo *Lijiljan* 15 November 1995, pp. 5-6, an interview with Brigadier General Sakib Mahmuljin.

² Brigadier General Hazim Sadic, commander of the 2nd Corps, stated in August 1994 that,

The operation that is under way, is being directly conducted by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army headquarters, and, apart from our corps, the Zenica [3rd] Corps formations are also involved—they have captured the most important facilities on the western side of Ozren. We almost managed to have the corps connected, in which case Vozuca, the main Chetnik stronghold, would have been cut off.

The operation has been going on for quite a while, which we expected, but we will not stop before we have complete control over the area. The Chetniks have launched a counterattack, and retrieved a village above Podsjelovo, but the distance between the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Corps is now only 3 km. We expect to take complete control of the Banovici-Zavidovici communication, across the Krivaja River valley, before the first rains . . .

Zeljko Garmaz and Sasa Buric, "The Offensive Aimed At Cutting the Corridor and Lifting the Blockade of Sarajevo Has Started," Zagreb *Globus* 12 August 1994, pp. 2, 4, 13. Although Sadic exaggerates when he claims that the offensive was still ongoing—in August—his statement regarding the conduct of the operation and the results are generally accurate, although they also exaggerate the ARBiH successes.

³ Going around the salient clockwise, the "Ozren" Tactical Group deployed its brigades as follows:

1st Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, northeastern sector along the Spreca River.

2nd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade (possibly with elements of the 1st Krnjin Bde), southeastern sector along the Spreca opposite Lukavac

4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, far south around Vozuca itself

1st Vucijak Light Infantry Brigade, southwestern sector, opposite Zavidovici

3rd Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, western sector opposite Maglaj

⁴ Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, p. 23-24, article on 212th Liberation Brigade (later redesignated 222nd Liberation Brigade); Rifet Haskovic, Travnik *Bosnjak* 17 October 1995, pp. 28-29, article on 117th Lukavac Brigade.

⁵ Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, pp. 23-24; Rifet Haskovic, Travnik *Bosnjak* 17 October 1995, pp. 28-29, article on 117th Lukavac Brigade; Sarajevo Radio 13 May 1994.

⁶ B. M., LJ, C, "Mount Ozren Remains Serbian," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 20 May 1994, p. 5; Belgrade Tanjug 23 November 1994.

⁷ Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, pp. 23-24.

⁸ The narrative of the Battle of Vozuca is based on the following sources, including a large number of reports using UN and VRS information, plus Sarajevo Radio and Belgrade Tanjug reporting. Note that few Bosnian Army sources even obliquely refer to the June operation, a sure sign that it did not go according to plan.

Kurt Schork, "Heavy Fighting Further Damages Bosnian Truce," June 18 1994

Kurt Schork, "Serb Civilians Flee Moslem Attack," 19 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Bosnian Serbs Say Moslems Press on With Attacks," 19 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Serbs and Moslem-Led Army Clash in Central Bosnia," 22 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Serbs Flee As War Tide Turns in Central Bosnia," 24 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Bosnians Battle On Amid Peace Plan Preparations," 26 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Bosnian Army Grabs More Ground From Serbs," 26 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Ceasefire Collapsing in Central Bosnia, UN Says," 28 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "UN Says Peace Plan Ready But Ceasefire Threatened," 29 June 1994

Kurt Schork, "Serbs Push Back Moslem-Led Forces in Bosnia," 2 July 1994

Sarajevo Radio 27 June 1994

Sarajevo Radio 29 June 1994

Sarajevo Radio 1 July 1994

John Pomfret, "Bosnians Keep Faith in Fighting," *Washington Post* 10 July 1994, A1, A12 (An interesting after-action account, based primarily on UN reporting; it provides a fairly detailed description of the ARBiH defeat)

Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, p. 23-24, article on 212th Liberation Brigade (later redesignated 222nd Liberation Brigade)

Sarajevo *Lijiljan* 2 November 1997, interview with Brigadier Sakib Mahmuljin

Milka Tomic, "The Striking Fist," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 52, an article on the VRS 1st MP Battalion

Zoran Grgurevic, "The Pincers Will Not Close," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 22

Ljubomir Paljevic, "The Eyes and Ears of the Corps," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 53, an article on the VRS 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company (later redesignated 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment)

Lidija Zaric, "From Lipa in Victory and Glory," *Krajiski Vojnik* June 1994, p. 50, an article on the VRS 1st Vucijak Light Infantry Brigade.

M. Tomic, "The Majority of the Glorious Ones—Tank Units," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, p. 34, an article on the VRS 2nd Armored Brigade. Ljubinko Curic, "3rd Ozren Brigade: Barrier Against the Winds of Islam," *Krajiski Vojnik* August 1995, p. 33.

Nenad Cetkovic, "Ozren Brigades of VRS Do Not Yield Before the Enemy: Ungovernable Mountain," *Srpska Vojska* 15 November 1994, pp. 28-29.

⁹ The ARBiH attack broke an eight day old cease-fire which the UN had brokered, causing no small amount of anger in UNPROFOR over what the UN perceived as Muslim "aggression."

¹⁰ John Pomfret, "Bosnians Keep Faith in Fighting," *Washington Post* 10 July 1994, A1, A12.

¹¹ A Bosnian Army officer reportedly stated that "It was a massacre. . ." John Pomfret, "Bosnians Keep Faith in Fighting," *Washington Post* 10 July 1994, A1, A12.

¹² Bosnian Army casualties numbered at least 600 to 700 men killed and wounded, and possibly up to 1,500 over about 17 days of fighting. "Reuters, Serbs Stop Bosnian Offensives, Reaffirm Superiority," by Davor Huic, 7 September 1994.

¹³ Sarajevo Radio 10-19 November 1994, Belgrade Tanjug 10-19 November 1994. "Bosna" OG forces, probably drawn primarily from the 303rd and 314th Zenica Mountain Brigades, and the 318th Zavidovici and 309th Kakanj Mountain Brigades, faced the VRS 1st Prnjavor and 1st Srbac Light Infantry Brigades/"Ozren" Tactical Group 6.

¹⁴ Sarajevo Radio 14 November 1994; Rifet Haskovic, *Travnik Bosnjak* 17 October 1995, pp. 28-29, article on 117th Lukavac Brigade.; Said Huremovic "222nd Liberation Brigade: 'Young Lions' Standard Bearers of Freedom," *Prva Linija* March 1997, pp. 23-24, article on 12th Liberation Brigade (later redesignated 222nd Liberation Brigade); elements of the 117th 119th, 121st, 220th, and 216th Mountain and 212th Liberation Brigades were involved in the operation. They faced the VRS 4th Ozren Light Infantry Brigade, reinforced with a battalion from the 1st Gradiska Light Infantry Brigade, and possibly elements of the 1st Prnjavor Light Infantry Brigade/"Ozren" Tactical Group.

Annex 55

Back and Forth on Mt. Vlasic, 1994

The commanding heights of the massive Vlasic feature—1,933 meters high atop its tallest peak, Mt. Paljenik—overlooked the entire western Lasva valley; its strategic significance was obvious to all the warring factions. It had been seized at the very outset of the war by the Bosnian Croats, but the JNA occupied the peak in May 1992 and its Bosnian Serb Army successors retained possession thereafter. From the slopes of Mt. Vlasic the Bosnian Serbs could shell Muslim-held Travnik and Zenica at will, causing relatively little physical damage but spreading constant fear among the townspeople. The summit was also the site of a key military communications facility and civilian radio and television transmitters. A key terrain feature at a critical location, Mt. Vlasic was the gateway to Donji Vakuf and Jajce—and that gate was firmly closed.

Responsibility for the defense of the mountain fell to the Bosnian Serb Army's "Vlasic" Operational Group of the 1st Krajina Corps, formed from the headquarters, 22nd Infantry Brigade, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Janko Trivic. The "Vlasic" OG was comprised of three infantry/light infantry brigades—the 1st Kotor Varos Light Infantry, 22nd Infantry, and the 1st Knezevo Light Infantry Brigades, supported by an artillery battalion and one tank company.¹ The 22nd Infantry was stationed directly on the mountain and opposite Turbe to the south, while the 1st Kotor Varos occupied the Meokrnje feature to the north of Vlasic.

Holding the Muslim territory immediately adjacent to Mt. Vlasic were the two or three Bosnian Army brigades based in Travnik. The attacks on the mountain, however, were conducted by the ARBiH 7th Corps, and major elements of the corps were dedicated to Vlasic's seizure in some of its most important operations of the year. For the larger offensives in 1994, the 7th corps committed its spearhead 17th Krajina Brigade from Travnik (along with the 3rd Corps'

analogous 7th Muslimski Brigade), the 27th Banja Luka Brigade also in Travnik, at least elements of the 305th Jajce Mountain Brigade, 306th Mountain Brigade, and 325th Mountain Brigade, and possibly also the 333rd Mountain Brigade.

At the very end of March the Bosnian Army mounted the first of its many assaults on Mt. Vlasic feature, apparently as a secondary effort in support of its concurrent attack toward Donji Vakuf. These attacks continued well into April. After weeks of uneventful skirmishing, elements of the ARBiH's newly formed 7th Corps finally broke through near the boundary between the VRS 1st Kotor Varos and 22nd Infantry Brigades in the Mt. Meokrnje-Javorak area on 28 April, and made some important tactical gains.² The VRS, however, contained the advance the following day and recaptured some of the lost territory over the next two weeks.^{3,4}

After a short lull, Government forces resumed their attacks on 24 May, launching a major attack against the "Vlasic" OG along the entire Vlasic frontline in an effort to encircle the mountain. Although the Bosnian Army was able to press the Serb-held flanks back and gain control of much of the Vlasic feature's perimeter, it was unable to complete the encirclement and the VRS remained able to resupply their forces on the mountain. It was, however, a close-run thing: the "Vlasic" OG reserves were all but exhausted and the VRS was just barely able to maintain the line.

Fighting picked up again around 25 July when VRS forces counterattacked in the Javorak area—on the southeast part of the Vlasic feature—trying to take back some of the Government gains. But the VRS offensive efforts were similarly unsuccessful, and little ground changed hands. Things remained quiet atop the mountain for the next few weeks as the Bosnian Army again built up its forces for yet another offensive push.

The beginning of September saw what was apparently the last major Bosnian Army attempt in 1994 to take over the mountain, followed by another limited VRS counterattack in the Vlasic-Turbe area on 6 September.⁵ The offensive won some more ridge lines but again fell short of its goal. With winter approaching, the Bosnian Army reluctantly abandoned the idea of occupying Vlasic in 1994, and the ARBiH redirected some of its forces on Vlasic southwest to support its October-November offensives in the Donji Vakuf and Kupres areas. The VRS relied primarily on artillery fire for the remainder of the year, continuing to shell Travnik and its environs and only occasionally mounting small-scale infantry attacks in the direction of Turbe.

The ARBiH's operations on Mt. Vlasic in 1994 illustrated many of the Bosnian Army's weaknesses at this time. The strategic concept was sound: mount a limited attack in sufficient force to capture a key terrain feature overlooking several roads and towns. But the plan largely broke down in the execution phase as the lightly armed Bosnian attackers tried and failed to break through the multiple layers of well prepared Serb defenses. (In places, the VRS units atop Vlasic fought from concrete bunkers behind four concentric

rings of minefields.) Lacking the heavy artillery needed to dislodge entrenched enemy forces, or even enough mortars for suppressive fire, the ARBiH infantry had to throw itself against dug-in opponents on mountainous terrain behind minefields and barbed wire. It was a recipe for high casualties and small gains, as repeatedly proved to be the case.

The Bosnian Army's 1994 campaigns had tied down some VRS forces during ARBiH attacks elsewhere and won some modest territorial gains, but had done little to force the offending artillery off the Vlasic plateau. The Serbs could still shell Travnik and Zenica from the heights with impunity, and they made the ARBiH pay for its offensives by stepping up their shelling of the two towns. Weighed against the high casualties the ARBiH 7th Corps had sustained in its offensives, the Bosnian Army leadership had to accept that costs had probably exceeded gains. Despite this hard reality, Alagic's 7th Corps had by no means given up on Vlasic. The homes of the thousands of displaced soldiers in the 7th Corps' ranks lay on the far side of Vlasic, and they were as determined as ever to go through, over, or around the mountain in order to get there.

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle Mt. Vlasic Offensives, 1994

ARBiH 7th Corps, HQ Travnik Brig. Gen. Melimet Alagic, commander

7th Muslimski Brigade, HQ Zenica

(Note: ARBiH 3rd Corps subordinate, opcon to 7th Corps for Vlasic operations)

— Probably most or all of the brigade during attacks

17th Krajina Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

— At least one battalion normally, possibly the entire brigade during attacks

27th Banja Luka Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik

— Probably most or all of the brigade during attacks

305th Jajce Mountain brigade

— Probably one battalion normally, entire brigade during attacks

306th Mountain Brigade, HQ Han Bila

— Probably the entire brigade during attacks

325th Vitez Mountain Brigade, HQ S. of Vitez

— At least one battalion

333rd Mountain Brigade, HQ Kacuni

— Possibly one battalion

Chart 2

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle Mt. Vlasic Offensives, 1994

VRS 1st Krajina Corps, HQ Banja Luka Lt. Col. Gen. Momir Talic, commander

“Vlasic” Operational Group, HQ Vitovlje Lt. Col. Janko Trivic

1st Kotor Varos Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Kotor Varos

— AOR Javorak-Meokrnje northeast of Vlasic feature

22nd Infantry Brigade, HQ Skender Vakuf (aka Knezevo)

— Deployed on Vlasic itself

1st Knezevo Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Skender Vakuf (aka Knezevo)

— Deployed behind 22nd Brigade near Babanovac

Endnotes, Annex 55

¹ The 1st Knezevo Light Infantry Brigade appears to have been a second-line formation, probably composed of older and less capable personnel; it appears to have been held in reserve behind the 22nd Infantry Brigade.

² Sarajevo Radio, 28 April 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2804124394, 281243Z Apr 1994.

³ Belgrade Tanjug, 29 Apr 1994. FBIS London LD2904125894, 291258Z Apr 1994.

⁴ Reuters, "Moslems Seized Land While World Watched Gorazde—UN," by Davor Huic, 6 May 1994.

⁵ Reuters, "Serbs Stop Bosnian Offensives, Reaffirm Superiority," by Davor Huic, 7 September 1994.

Annex 56

The Battles for Herzegovina, 1994

September: The ARBiH Push from Konjic

As 1994 began, Muslim-held Konjic faced a small, hostile Croat community immediately to its south and a Serb-occupied confrontation line only a few kilometers to the east. Konjic was well within Serb artillery range, and the Serbs' regular shelling of the town gave the Muslims a powerful incentive to push the confrontation line a few kilometers back. Strategically, moving Konjic out of artillery range would secure the all-weather north-south road into Sarajevo for relief convoys and the military supplies that would be coming up from Croatia following the signing of the Washington Agreement. All these considerations figured into the ARBiH planners' decision to make Konjic the focus of their next 1994 offensive.

The main Bosnian Army 43rd "Suad Alic" Brigade was raised from Konjic itself, and manned the confrontation line in the area around the town. To the west of Konjic, the 49th Brigade held the Bijelemici area. When called on for offensives, the 43rd and 49th Brigades were probably reinforced by corps-level reserves, including at least the 4th Muslimski Brigade.

The Bosnian Serb Army's 2nd Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade of the Herzegovina Corps bore primary responsibility for defending the Konjic area, supported by the corps-level artillery that harassed the town from the hills. The brigade held a salient along the Neretva river southeast of Konjic, with Bosnian Army forces to the north, west, and east of it. The left flank of the 2nd Herzegovina's line was about 15km south of Konjic, and the right flank of its horseshoe-shaped line was near the town of Glavaticevo about 15km southeast of Konjic. The VRS-held line ran as close as 3km to Konjic itself, just south of the town. The 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade bounded the 2nd Herzegovina on the right near Glavaticevo.

To the south of Konjic, a tiny Croat-held area was controlled by the HVO's 56th "Herceg Stjepan" Home Defense Regiment. Until the signing of the Washington agreement the HVO regiment would periodically shell the Muslim lines, supplied and abetted by Bosnian Serb forces.^{1 2 3} Following the Washington Agreement, the HVO regiment faced toward the Serbs, took charge of a small segment of the front, and provided marginal assistance to the ARBiH, but it was never fully trusted by the Bosnian Army's Fourth Corps leaders.

In addition to the three combatant forces, there was a fourth actor in the Konjic area: The UN's Malaysian battalion, whose first elements arrived in the Konjic area on 9 February.^{4 5} The battalion was one of those the UN directed to patrol the frontline between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats just after the signing of the Washington Agreement. Malaysian peacekeepers took over the checkpoints in the area formerly manned by ARBiH and HVO soldiers.⁶

Konjic was shelled regularly (though not especially heavily) during most of 1994, but on the whole it was a secondary theater and infantry clashes were minor and infrequent. Beginning in late August, though, the pace of fighting began to escalate—possibly as both sides sent forward infantry probes to determine each other's intentions and seek out weaknesses in the opposing lines.^{7 8 9 10 11} Bosnian Serb shelling of Konjic also increased.¹² This activity rose to a crescendo on 11-12 September when the Bosnian Army opened a determined offensive, launching infantry assaults on three Serb-held suburbs: Bijela, Borci, and Glavaticevo.¹³ As expected, the VRS responded immediately with heavy shelling of the front lines and Konjic itself.¹⁴ The Bosnian Army made steady advances over the next few days, systematically eliminating VRS bunkers and strongpoints and occupying the high ground overlooking Bijela, a sizable village southeast of Konjic.^{15 16} By 15 September, the UN confirmed the ARBiH capture of Bijela.¹⁷

So far, the HVO's 56th "Herceg Stjepan" Home Defense Regiment had been a part of the offensive, securing its section of the confrontation line and supporting the Bosnian Army advance with mortar fire.¹⁸ With the capture of Bijela, however, the HVO regimental command reversed its position and advised that it was pulling out of the line.¹⁹ This announcement caused substantial consternation in the Federation camp. ARBiH and HVO officials quickly called a meeting in Sarajevo that same day, 15 September, and both sides issued soothing statements playing down the rift. US diplomatic pressure helped to avert a crisis within the nascent Federation, and the HVO eventually reversed its position and agreed to cancel plans to withdraw from the fight.^{20 21 22}

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Army pressed on with its successful offensive southward, extending the front-line some 10km on 15 and 16 September and taking about 40 square kilometers from the 2nd Herzegovina Brigade.^{23 24 25 26} Steady fighting continued through the following week, with steady but smaller Bosnian Army advances.²⁷ A brief lull was followed by a renewed Bosnian Army push along the Borci-Glavatićevo line southeast of Konjic beginning 23 September.²⁸ At the beginning of October, the Bosnians extended their advance slightly further, taking the important Kiser hill south of Konjic and rolling on to the south.²⁹ There the advance ceased, after which back and forth fighting through the rest of the year reclaimed some lost territory for the VRS, but the front lines had generally stabilized, leaving the Bosnian Army in possession of almost 100 square kilometers beyond Konjic's former perimeter.³⁰ In terms of net gains, the Konjic-area offensive was to be one of the ARBiH's most successful operations of the year.

Nevesinje in November

Serb-held Nevesinje was about 20km due east of Muslim-held Blagaj and Croat-held Buna. The confrontation line was well west of the town, and Nevesinje had

been virtually untouched by the war. The Bosnian Army and sometimes the HVO would occasionally shell some of the intervening Serb-held towns, but on the whole it was a quiet section of the front.

The first serious action in the Nevesinje sector began shortly after the 15 September Bosnian Army offensive from Konjic, well to the north. While still pressing its attacks outward from Konjic, on 19 September the Bosnian Army shifted its emphasis to the Mostar-Nevesinje axis, pressing its attacks for a week through 26 September with no apparent gains.^{31 32 33 34 35 36 37} It tried another offensive push in the Mostar-Nevesinje area a month later, this time launching infantry attacks eastward from Blagaj beginning on 12 October. This effort also halted after a few days without visible gains.^{38 39 40}

The Bosnian Army's main offensive effort came the following month, when the ARBiH 4th Corps attempted to cut the road to Nevesinje. The night before the main attack the 4th Corps sent in elite "recon-sabotage" elements—most likely from the General Staff's crack "Black Swans" unit—to infiltrate VRS 8th Herzegovina Motorized Brigade lines at Sipovac and Podvelezje, northwest of Nevesinje. The conventional assault began with the Bosnian Army shelling Serb positions on the morning of 11 November, followed by an infantry attack from Blagaj.^{41 42 43} The conventional assaults had only limited success, but the infiltration teams appear to have caused considerable disruption in the VRS rear area, striking at Cobanova Polje (about 4km east of Blagaj) and as far away as Rabina (about 10km east of Blagaj).⁴⁴ However, at least some of the infiltration teams had to fight stand-up engagements with Bosnian Serb Army units and likely took heavy casualties on the way back out. The Bosnian Army offensive halted around 20 November, with apparently heavy casualties on both sides.^{45 46 47 48}

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle, Konjic Area, 1994

ARBiH 4th Corps (Elements)

43rd “Suad Alic” Mountain Brigade, HQ Konjic
(previously the 7th Suad Alic Brigade)
(later the 443rd Suad Alic Mountain Brigade)
[Established 3 November 1992]

450th Light Brigade
(Probably the former 649th Brigade)
[Established 30 November 1993]

Chart 2

Croatian Defense Council (HVO) Order of Battle, Konjic Area, 1994

HVO Mostar Corps District, HQ Mostar (Elements)

56th “Herceg Stjepan” Home Defense Regiment,
(Formerly the Herceg Stjepan Brigade)
—HQ south of Konjics

Chart 3

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle Konjic Area, 1994

VRS Herzegovina Corps, Forward Command Post at Trebinje

2nd Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Borci
—deployed in Konjic-Glavaticevo area

18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gacko
—deployed in Glavaticevo-Treskavica area

Endnotes, Annex 56

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- ¹³ Belgrade Tanjug, 12 September 1994. FBIS London LD1209165294, 121652Z Sept 94.
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- ³³ Belgrade Tanjug, 21 September 1994. FBIS London LD2109150794, 211507Z Sept 94.
- ³⁴ Belgrade Tanjug, 24 September 1994. FBIS London LD2409183994, 241839Z Sept 94.
- ³⁵ Belgrade Tanjug, 25 September 1994. FBIS London LD2509141194, 251411Z Sept 94.
- ³⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 25 September 1994. FBIS London LD2509192894, 251928Z Sept 94.
- ³⁷ Belgrade Tanjug, 26 September 1994. FBIS London LD2609161794, 261617Z Sept 94.
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Annex 57
“Twin Peaks”:
The Battles for Mts. Bjelasnica and Treskavica,
1994

There are two commanding peaks just south of Sarajevo. One is Mt. Igman (968 meters), less tall than its neighbor but more important by virtue of its proximity to the city and the fact that the Igman road, one of besieged Sarajevo's few lifelines, ran over the mountain. The other peak is Mt. Bjelasnica (2067 meters), slightly south and west of Mt. Igman and one of the highest peaks in Bosnia. In addition to its towering height, Bjelasnica's summit had additional value as the site of a huge radio and television transmitter—one of Sarajevo's more recognizable landmarks.

Both Igman and Bjelasnica had been captured by the Bosnian Serbs in mid-1993, but were placed under UN control after the threat of NATO airstrikes compelled the VRS to withdraw from the mountains. Since the 14 August 1993 UN-imposed demilitarization agreement, the UN held control of the peaks with the understanding that UN peacekeepers would keep the DMZ free of combatants or equipment from any of the factions.¹ The ostensible demilitarization did not, however, keep the Bosnian Army from stationing troops on both peaks. Probably as many as 2,000 ARBiH troops occupied the “UN-controlled” mountains at any given time, and even more worked on prepared defenses, bunkers and trenchlines within the demilitarized zone. Swedish UN peacekeepers tried and failed to sweep the Government forces off the mountains in late 1993.

Southeast of Mt. Bjelasnica was the equally imposing Mt. Treskavica (2088 meters). Treskavica was just south of the 20km artillery exclusion zone and had not been included in the August 1993 demilitarization agreement, so there were no restrictions on weapons or forces on its slopes and heights.

In its many assaults on the peaks the Bosnian Army's real, ultimate objective was neither Bjelasnica nor Treskavica themselves, but the town of Trnovo. The town lay astride the major road running south out of Sarajevo, connecting Serb-held Herzegovina to the Serb-controlled areas around Sarajevo. Trnovo was also a gateway to the Drina Valley, where a road continued on to Serb-held Foca and—ultimately—Gorazde. By virtue of its location, Trnovo became one of the most sought-after ARBiH objectives in eastern Bosnia.

The 1994 offensives against both Bjelasnica and Treskavica were carried out by the ARBiH's 1st Corps, with only a minor supporting attack by the 4th Corps to the south.

Mt. Bjelasnica lay within the VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps area of responsibility. The siege of the city and the defense of the Serb-majority neighborhoods of Sarajevo was this corps' primary responsibility, and a comparatively weak holding force manned the confrontation line to the east of Bjelasnica. Elements of the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade and the entire 12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade—attached from the 1st Krajina Corps—held roughly 20km of defensive positions along the edge of the demilitarized area, starting from the southern outskirts of the city near Sarajevo airport to Trnovo itself. Elements of the 1st Sarajevo Mechanized Brigade and the 4th Mixed Artillery Regiment provided armor and artillery support, while the 4th Reconnaissance-Sabotage Detachment “White Wolves” was available to act in the “intervention” (counterattack) role.

The area to the south of Trnovo—including Mt. Treskavica—all lay within the area of VRS Herzegovina Corps. Within the corps, the VRS defense of the Treskavica area was assigned to Tactical Group “Kalinovik,” formed from the headquarters of the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade and headquartered in Kalinovik.

Kalinovik with two subordinate brigades. The area's main defense centered on the 1st Guards Motorized Brigade—a VRS Main Staff subordinate that was attached to the Herzegovina Corps. In addition, TG "Kalinovik" controlled the 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade from Gacko, which bounded the 1st Guards on the left, south of Treskavica.

Total VRS forces on the Trnovo-Treskavica front probably numbered about 5,500 to 6,000 troops. Both the Sarajevo-Romanija and Herzegovina Corps probably could also draw on some VRS Main Staff elements, primarily the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, plus parts of the MUP Special Police Brigade, to counterattack any ARBiH advances.²

October 1994: The Bjelasnica Controversy

Around the end of September, the Bosnian Army began massing its forces on and around Mt. Bjelasnica—site of the former Alpine skiing, bobsled, and luge runs in the 1984 Olympic games—for a substantial offensive directed through the demilitarized zone and against Serb positions on the mountain's far side.³ The first of October marked the commencement of ARBiH offensive operations in the Bjelasnica-Treskavica area. The attack was launched by probably most of two full 1st Corps brigades—the 82nd Mountain and 1st Mountain Brigades—as well as elements of at least three other brigades, further supported by the Interior Ministry's elite "Lasta" (Swallows) special police battalion.⁴ The offensive started against the town of Rakitnica on the slopes of Mt. Bjelasnica, and soon expanded to include fighting along the entire Bjelasnica-Treskavica frontline.⁵ Trnovo itself came under Bosnian Army artillery fire the following day.⁶ (Still further to the south, the Bosnian Army was also taking the offensive from Konjic towards Kalinovik.) French UN peacekeepers blocked some 300 Bosnian Army troops of the 1st Corps' 1st Mountain Brigade transiting the mountain on 3 October, but others were clearly getting through.^{7,8}

Controversy erupted the following week, on 6 October, when the Bosnian Serbs charged that a Bosnian Army sabotage unit had massacred and then mutilated 20 Serb troops—including four female nurses—at a

VRS battalion headquarters of the 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade location near Mount Bjelasnica. The UN initially appeared to corroborate the Bosnian Serb reports, and UN Special Envoy Akashi told reporters that in many cases the Serb bodies had been "mutilated or burned and disfigured."⁹ Details of what had happened atop the snow-covered mountain remained unclear.

The Bosnian Serb reaction was prompt and typically threatening. The VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps issued an ominous statement that "this criminal act by the Muslim side has made Sarajevo a tinderbox that can ignite the whole area"—implying though not stating that general Serb shelling of the city could resume despite the creation of the heavy-weapons exclusion zone.¹⁰ Bosnian Serb President Karadzic asserted that the Bosnian Serbs might demand the return of Mts. Igman and Bjelasnica and suggested that the Serbs might also cease to guarantee the safety of UN relief flights into Sarajevo airport.¹¹

The UN took immediate action, hoping to forestall a general VRS offensive by clearing the mountains of Muslims. French UN peacekeepers swept over the Igman and Bjelasnica areas on 7 October, forcing Bosnian Army soldiers out of their positions and off the mountains. On the first day, some 550 ARBiH troops were escorted out of the demilitarized zone—occasionally with the additional persuasion of French warning shots—and their bunkers were destroyed with anti-tank rockets.¹²

At this point, a clearer picture began to emerge of what had taken place during the attack that night. First, the UN retracted its charge that the Bosnian Army had mutilated the enemy corpses. Instead, it turned out that four sentries had had their throats slit in a commando-style operation. Others had been shot at close range but apparently during combat. What had happened began to look less and less like a massacre. Under closer scrutiny, the evidence pointed instead to a sophisticated, swiftly-executed sabotage operation against the command post of the VRS 3rd (Trnovo) Battalion/2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade.¹³ An indignant Bosnian Government demanded a formal

apology for Akashi's earlier assertions that the Bosnian Army had executed its prisoners. The UN leveled the counter-accusation that the Bosnian Army was not supposed to be operating in the demilitarized zone in the first place.¹⁴

Meanwhile, UN forces continued to force Government troops off the mountains, both to preserve UN credibility and to forestall VRS retaliation against Sarajevo city.^{15 16} On 9 October, the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Government, and the United Nations agreed to form a joint commission to inspect the demilitarized zone and verify that it had been cleared of Government forces.¹⁷ UNPROFOR Bosnian Commander Rose met with Mladic on 10 October to discuss the demilitarization, while Karadzic continued to threaten that if UNPROFOR did not clear the mountains, the VRS would retaliate "against selected targets on the Muslim side" and would "teach the Muslims how to behave in a demilitarized zone."¹⁸

The dispute dragged on. Not only did the Bosnian Government keep delaying the joint inspection of the mountains, the Bosnian Army brazenly ran a second attack through the Igman DMZ to ambush a VRS unit just outside the demilitarized area. The Bosnian Serbs retaliated with heavy weapons fire from within the exclusion zone. On 13 October, VRS Chief of Staff Gen. Milovanovic issued a one-week ultimatum, asserting that if the UN did not evict the Bosnian Army from Igman and Bjelasnica, the Bosnian Serbs would reoccupy the peaks and clear them by force.¹⁹ Talks broke down on 18 October, with the Bosnian Government refusing to withdraw the 500 or so troops remaining on the two mountains unless the withdrawal was linked to UN assurances that UNPROFOR would safeguard traffic over the Mt. Igman road into Sarajevo. The UN refused, and Bosnian Serb retaliation looked imminent.^{20 21}

The 20 October deadline came and went with the standoff by no means resolved. When UN personnel confronted the Bosnian Government forces in the DMZ on 24 October, the troops opened fire on a group of French peacekeepers. The French responded in kind, and a sharp firefight ensued before tempers cooled and the two forces disengaged. An apologetic Bosnian Government, apparently recognizing that it

had gone too far, ordered its remaining troops off the mountain. With the three-way standoff finally defused—for a time, at least—as October faded the focus of activity and attention was to move from Mt. Bjelasnica to Mt. Treskavica, its neighbor to the south.^{22 23 24}

November: The Treskavica Offensive

The beginning of November marked the transition to a new phase of the ARBiH offensive, one directed further south toward Mt. Treskavica and the Sarajevo-Trnovo road segment. Events began on 29 October—just as the Igman-Bjelasnica withdrawal was to be completed—when Bosnian Government troops again advanced south through the Mt. Bjelasnica demilitarized zone to attack two Serb-held villages at the foot of the mountain. The Bosnian Army also shelled a nearby UN observation post with a heavy artillery piece from within the exclusion zone.^{25 26} The following day, heavy artillery rained shells on Serb-held Javorak on the south side of Bjelasnica and ARBiH forces moved in to capture the town.²⁷

The Bosnian Army continued its advance in early November, attacking further to the east after taking Javorak near the boundary between the VRS 12th Kotorsko and 1st Guards Brigades and moving onto the Hojta ridge line connecting the flanks of Mounts Bjelasnica and Treskavica.²⁸ In a successful push over the next few days, the Bosnian Army took additional territory, advancing the frontlines several kilometers to the east and taking three towns along the smaller north-south road which ran several kilometers west of Trnovo.²⁹ However, the VRS Herzegovina and Sarajevo-Romanija Corps troops halted the ARBiH advance around 6 November, with the frontline still several kilometers west of the main highway, and counterattacked with elements of the 11th Herzegovina Infantry and 18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigades—probably led by the VRS 65th Protection Regiment and MUP special police units—brought in as reinforcements.^{30 31} On 14-15 December, the Bosnian Army made its last push of the year in the direction of the Trnovo road, despite more reinforcements

from the VRS Drina Corps.³² Again the ARBiH advanced, claiming gains of 20 square kilometers—but still failed to secure the road from the VRS.³³ At the end of the year, the Bosnian Army had taken a total of some 100 square kilometers on Mts. Bjelasnica and Treskavica and captured at least five highly-prized tanks, several small artillery pieces and mortars, and sizable munitions stores.^{34,35,36} Nevertheless,

although the Bosnian Government gains were substantial, they still fell short of the primary goal of interdicting or capturing the Trnovo road. The ARBiH had made a valiant and worthwhile effort, but Trnovo still lay beyond its reach.

Chart 1

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order Of Battle, Mt. Bjelasnica Offensives, October 1994

1st Corps Mixed Artillery Regiment

1st Corps LARD PVO

82nd "Foca" Mountain Brigade

1st Muslim Drina Brigade

— Probably one battalion

1st Motorized Brigade (-)

— Probably one battalion

4th Motorized Brigade (-)

— Probably one battalion

Chart 2

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order Of Battle, Mt. Bjelasnica Battles, October 1994

VRS Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, HQ

2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade

3rd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade

Chart 3

Bosnian Army Order Of Battle, Mt. Treskavica Offensives, November 1994

MUP "Lasta" Battalion, HQ Sarajevo

1st Bosniak Brigade [sic]

82nd Foca Brigade

4th Motorized Brigade (-)

5th Motorized Brigade (-)

1st Glorious Brigade

2nd Chivalrous Brigade

Chart 4

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order Of Battle, Mt. Treskavica Battles, November 1994

Sarajevo-Romanija Corps

Major General Dragomir Milosevic, Commander

Elements, 2nd Sarajevo Light Infantry Brigade

—deployed northeast of Mt. Igman

12th Kotorsko Light Infantry Brigade/1st Krajina Corps (attached)

—deployed east of Mt. Igman-northwest of Trnovo

Herzegovina Corps

Major General Radovan Grubac, Commander

Tactical Group Kalinovik, HQ Kalinovik

Colonel Milenko Lazic, Commander

1st Guards Motorized Brigade, HQ Kalinovik

—deployed at Trnovo-Treskavica, northwest of Kalinovik

18th Herzegovina Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Gacko

—deployed south/southeast of Treskavica

Endnotes, Annex 57

¹ In addition to being demilitarized (i.e. no troops or equipment belonging to any faction were supposed to be on or transit across the mountains), both mountains were within the 20km heavy-weapons exclusion zone in any case.

² Milenko Kuzmanovic, "Offensive Against Bjelavica, Treskavica, and Igman Stopped: Fury Because of Powerlessness," *Srpska Vojska* 15 November 1994, pp. 24-24. FBIS Reston 98E08022A 211625Z Nov 97.

³ Belgrade Tanjug, 20 September 1994. FBIS London LD2009170994, 201709Z Sep 94.

⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 15 December 1994. FBIS Vienna VA1512202794, 152027Z Dec 94.

⁵ Sarajevo Radio, 1 October 1994. FBIS London LD0110170894, 011708Z Oct 94.

⁶ Belgrade Tanjug, 2 October 1994. FBIS London LD0210135594, 021355Z Oct 94.

⁷ Paris AFP, 3 October 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0310102294, 031022Z Oct 94.

⁸ Belgrade Tanjug 5 October 1994. FBIS London LD0510184494, 051844Z Oct 94.

⁹ Reuters, "U.N. Withdraws Mutilation Charge in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.

¹⁰ Reuters, "Serb Corpses Mutilated in Attack" by Kurt Schork, 6 October 1994.

¹¹ Reuters, "Serb Threaten to Ignite Sarajevo After Atrocity" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.

¹² Reuters, "U.N. Drives Bosnian Troops From Mountain DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.

¹³ Reuters, "U.N. Withdraws Mutilation Charge in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994; Sarajevo Radio 7 October 1994 FBIS Vienna AU0710200494 072004Z Oct 94, a press conference with Bosnian President Izetbegovic.

¹⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian President Demands U.N. Public Apology" by Kurt Schork, 7 October 1994.

¹⁵ A warning of sorts came on 8 October, when Bosnian Serb troops used machine gun fire—not defined as heavy weapons—to attack city trams and pedestrians, killing one and wounding 11. The 12-minute volley of fire represented the worst single attack since the Merkale market shelling and the subsequent creation of the 20 km heavy weapons exclusion zone in February 1994. Reuters, "Serb Guns Avenge Moslem Attack As Victims Buried" by Kurt Schork, 9 October 1994.

¹⁶ Reuters, "U.N. Resumes Vital Airlift Into Sarajevo" by Kurt Schork, 9 October 1994.

¹⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Rivals Agree on Demilitarized Zone," 9 October 1994.

¹⁸ Reuters, "Serbs Block Aid to Moslem Civilians" by Kurt Schork, 11 October 1994.

¹⁹ Reuters, "Bosnian Serbs Give Moslems Deadline to Clear Zone," 13 October 1994.

²⁰ Reuters, "Talks on Demilitarized Zone Break Down in Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 18 October 1994.

²¹ Reuters, "Sarajevo DMZ Pact Faces New Hitch" by Kurt Schork, 23 October 1994.

²² Reuters, "Bosnian Army Fires on French Peacekeepers in DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 24 October 1994.

²³ Reuters, "Bosnian Government, U.N. Agree to Clear DMZ" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1994.

²⁴ Reuters, "U.N. Chief Defends Peacekeeping Commander" by Kurt Schork, 25 October 1994.

²⁵ Reuters, "Moslems Spread Offensive to Zone Near Sarajevo," 29 October 1994.

²⁶ Reuters, "U.N. Threatens Bosnian Army With NATO Strikes" by Kurt Schork, 29 October 1994.

²⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Resumes Shelling From DMZ," 30 October 1994.

²⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Closing in on Serb-held Trnovo" by Kurt Schork, 31 October 1994.

²⁹ Sarajevo Radio, 1 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0111210294, 012102Z Nov 94.

³⁰ Reuters, "U.N. Reports Bitter Fighting for Northwest Town," 6 November 1994.

³¹ Belgrade Tanjug, 4 November 1994. FBIS London LD0411234294, 042342Z Nov 94.

³² At least one battalion/1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade, plus probably additional Drina Corps composite units, reinforced TG "Kalinovik" in November-December.

³³ Sarajevo Radio, 15 December 1994. FBIS Vienna AU1512105994, 151059Z Dec 94.

³⁴ Sarajevo Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0311134994, 031349Z Nov 94.

³⁵ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Claims Advances on Serb-held Town," 1 November 1994.

³⁶ Zagreb *Hina*, 5 November 1994. FBIS Vienna AU0511140294, 051402Z Nov 94.

Annex 58
“With Friends Like These, Who Needs Enemies?”
The HVO-Bosnian Army Capture of Kupres,
November 1994

Background

Serb-held Kupres had been a prize long sought, especially by the Bosnian Croats, ever since the town's fall to the then-JNA in the first days of the war. The HVO hungered to avenge that humiliating defeat and take back the Croat-majority town, but it also wanted control of the road junction from Tomislavgrad toward Bugojno and Sipovo. The Bosnian Muslims also longed to free Kupres; though their historical attachment to the town might be less strong than the Croats, they too had a strategic purpose: they wanted to extend their hold on nearby Bugojno through Kupres and open lines of communication to the real Muslim objective in the area—Donji Vakuf, 20 kilometers to the northeast.

In mid-March, the Bosnian Army 370th “Donji Vakuf” Mountain Brigade, probably supported by at least the 307th “Bugojno” Mountain Brigade, essayed an attack westward from Bugojno against the VRS 30th Light Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps. Government forces advanced towards Serb-held Mt. Suljaga on 16 and 17 March, cutting off the water supply line into Donji Vakuf and capturing a substantial amount of equipment from the apparently surprised 19th Light Infantry Brigade. A VRS counterattack took back some of the lost ground and the two armies battled it out for the next week or so. When the Government offensive halted around 29 March, the Bosnian Army had advanced the front lines about five kilometers to the west.

Phase 1: The Bosnian Army Presses from the Northwest

Not until late in the year was the Bosnian Army ready to make a serious offensive effort against Kupres itself, which abutted the boundary between the VRS 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps and was held by the 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade/2nd Krajina Corps. It was a considerably larger effort than the one mounted in March: the 7th Corps committed at least three full brigades—the 17th Krajina, 307th “Bugojno”, and 370th “Donji Vakuf”—and probably at least battalion-sized elements of five others. The offensive was further supported by available elements of the 7th Corps’ Mixed Artillery Regiment and by a detachment of Interior Ministry special police forces. The campaign began on 20 October with infantry attacks along a roughly 14-km front northeast of the town. The VRS 30th Division responded typically with heavy artillery shelling along the front and into Bugojno itself the following day. By 23 October, the ARBiH had advanced close enough to Kupres to reply with mortar fire into the town, but the Army’s 7th Corps continued to make only slow advances in the difficult, mountainous terrain against the 30th Division, while the Bosnian Serbs kept up their punishing shellfire. Bosnian Government forces moved progressively closer to Kupres town over the next few days, capturing one peak at a time but never managing to achieve a decisive breakthrough against the 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps defenders. The struggle ground on, and by 27 October UN observers were reporting Bosnian Serb forces in retreat and over 2,000 Serb civilians fleeing the town for the safety of Serb-held Sipovo. But Kupres itself had not been taken.

Why, at this point, the Bosnian Army failed to keep pressing all the way into Kupres remains unclear.

There could have been a variety or a combination of reasons. The advance had been slowed by fog, rain, and the need to consolidate gains against the likelihood of counterattacks. Even against the thinly-stretched Serb defenders, advancing through the rugged mountains northeast of the town was a costly and wearing process. The 7th Corps leadership may simply have concluded that a pause in the offensive would be prudent, and that the ARBiH—just a few kilometers outside the town—could make the final push a little later on. Or a prior agreement with the Croats may explain the delay. Whatever the cause, the Bosnian Army's pause—of just a few days—was to prove crucial. By the first of November, when the ARBiH 7th Corps had driven to the front gates of Kupres, it would be the HVO that would race into the town through the other, unguarded gate.

Phase 2: The HVO Races into Town from the South

Thus far, the HVO had elected to remain on the sidelines of the battle for the former Croat territory, watching and waiting for an opportune moment to step in. Now, with the Bosnian Army tying down the Serb defenders and on the verge of taking the town, the time had come to launch Operation "Cincar," the Croat plan for their own capture of Kupres.

Much of the HVO's best was assembled to participate in the Kupres battle, and elite HVO forces had been coming into the area for days beforehand. HVO commander Ante Roso's newly-established HVO Guards brigades would form the backbone of the operation; three of the four Guards brigades would contribute to the operation, supported by the 60th "Ludvig Pavlovic" battalion, Bosnian Croat MUP special police troops, and HVO corps-level artillery.

Carefully choosing its moment, the HVO elected to enter the fray on 1 November. A public announcement stated that the Croats were responding to attacks by Serb snipers on Croat civilians visiting gravesites in Sujica on All Saints' Day. On this pretext the HVO mounted a two-pronged offensive from the south against the thinly stretched VRS 7th Motorized Brigade. VRS attempts to stem the ARBiH 5th Corps advance at Bihać had left both the 1st and 2nd Krajina

Corps without enough reserves to hold back what was now a combined ARBiH/HVO assault. One HVO spearhead drove north from Suica along the main road into Kupres. This western axis captured Donji Malovan on 1 November, and continued several kilometers further to take smaller Gornji Malovan on 2 November. A second spearhead advanced in parallel to the east, moving from Ravno to the Serb-held village of Rilic on 2 November.

Kupres—by this time an abandoned ghost town—fell the following day to a lightning Croat advance. The ARBiH had been plodding methodically ahead and announced on 3 November the capture of the heights at Kupreska Vrata—a mere 3km from the center of town. The message anticipating an ARBiH victory was both premature and too late; Bosnian Croat special police and HVO special forces detachments were the first to enter Kupres, a little after midday.

Cooperation or Competition?

Exactly what had been agreed to before the offensive remains unclear. Just before the HVO intervened, ARBiH 7th Corps commander Alagic had announced that the "HVO is not participating, but I hope they will." (Alagic may have gotten more than he had hoped for.) Just after the town fell, HVO commander Ante Roso told reporters that "This is a very good moment for cooperation." Asked if the Croats and Muslims were operating under a joint command, however, he qualified the statement with "We're coordinating, we don't need a joint command." It seems likeliest that the two factions had discussed their intentions to mount a simultaneous attack in the direction of Kupres, but withheld their actual operational plans from each other.

The Bosnian Army may not have had its heart set on capturing Croat-majority Kupres, but its soldiers had paid for the town in blood slogging through the hills to the north, and it was undoubtedly less than pleased to discover that the Croats had meanwhile raced in from the south to occupy the town. Regardless, the Bosnian Government leadership evidently came to calculate that Croat military cooperation was more important

than ownership of traditionally-Croat Kupres, and that vying for the town could well reignite the Croat-Muslim war that had already proven so destructive to both sides.

The operation to capture Kupres was the first visible example of major Croat-Muslim cooperation in military operations since the signing of the Federation agreement in March 1994. As such, it was both a test case and a public relations example of military cooperation. If it is true that no military plan survives contact with the enemy, in this case whatever plans may

have been made did not even survive contact between the allies.

For all its flaws in planning and execution, the Croat-Muslim capture of Kupres was a step in the right direction—militarily, politically, and geographically—and a step closer to both factions' ultimate objective of Jajce. But it left unclear whether the ARBiH and the HVO were advancing down the road alongside each other or racing each other to the finish.

Chart 1

Forces Engaged at Kupres, October-November 1994

Bosnian Army (ARBiH) Order of Battle

Kupres, October-November 1994

ARBiH 7th Corps, HQ Travnik (Elements)

Brig. Gen. Mehmet Alagic, commander

7th Corps Mixed Artillery Regiment (elements)

Operational Group West, HQ Bugojno (Exercised operational

control over the Kupres offensive)

Tahir Granic, commander after March 1994

Selmo Cikotic, commander until March 1994

305th "Jajce" Mountain Brigade—Probably at least one battalion,
possibly the entire brigade

307th "Bugojno" Mountain Brigade—Probably the entire brigade

317th "Gornji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade—Probably one battalion

370th "Donji Vakuf" Mountain Brigade—Probably the entire brigade

Bosanska Krajina Operational Group, HQ Travnik

(Committed additional forces in support of OG West)

Fikret Cuskic, commander from late 1993 through early 1994

Mehmet Alagic, commander through late October/early November 1993

17th Krajina Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik—Probably the entire brigade

27th "Banja Luka" Mountain Brigade, HQ Travnik—Probably at least one
battalion

37th Brigade, HQ Travnik—Probably at least one battalion

325th "Vitez" Mountain Brigade—Probably one battalion

Ministry Of Internal Affairs Units One Special Police detachment (company/
battalion size)

Chart 2

Croatian Defense Council/Croatian Army (HVO/HV) Order of Battle, Kupres, 1994

Brig. Gen. Tihomir Blaskic, operational commander

Herceg-Bosna MUP Special Police Brigade elements:

— First unit to enter Kupres

"Ravens" Special Purpose Unit

60th "Ludvig Pavlovic" Guards Battalion — Probably
about 300 troops.

1st HVO Guards Brigade — 1st HVO Guards Bde remained at Kupres after Cincar-94

2nd HVO Guards Brigade (-) — 2nd HVO Guards Brigade participated in Operation Cincar-94

3rd HVO Guards Brigade (-) — 3rd HVO Guards Brigade participated in Operation Cincar-94

Chart 3

Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) Order of Battle, Kupres, 1994

Elements, 30th Light Infantry Division/1st Krajina Corps
Colonel Jovo Blazanovic, commander

19th Light Infantry Brigade, HQ Donji Vakuf (Srbobran)
— deployed east/southeast of Donji Vakuf to boundary with 2nd Krajina Corps

Elements, 2nd Krajina Corps
Major General Grujo Boric, commander

7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade, HQ Kupres
Colonel Drago Samardzija, commander

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¹⁷ Mostar Croatian Radio, 3 November 1994. FBIS London LD0311172794, 031727Z Nov 94.

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Annex 59

The Demise of Abdic's Empire, January-August, 1994

"It's absolutely crazy here. There's a joke going around: Three people die on the Abdic side, and then three people die on the Government side. Who wins? The Serbs, 6 - 0."

—A U.N. official in Bihac, June 19951

As 1994 opened, Fikret Abdic's breakaway Autonomous Republic of Western Bosnia (APWB) held sway over about 600 square kilometers of territory, anchored on its "capital" of Velika Kladusa and comprising roughly the northwest third of the Bihac pocket. Abdic's military, under the direction of APWB "Peoples Defense" (Narodna Odbrana) commander Hazim Delic, could field a force of six infantry brigades and a small artillery unit totaling perhaps as many as 10,000 troops with a handful of tanks and other heavy weapons.

In mid-January the Bosnian Army's 5th Corps mounted the year's first serious attack in the back-and-forth war between the Bosnian Army and Abdic's rebels. ARBiH forces pressed along a broad front, advancing about two kilometers and capturing the town of Skokovi.²³⁴ The fighting paused at the end of the month as the opposing Muslim factions signed a cease-fire and exchanged bodies of those killed in action.⁵

Beginning on 16 February, however, the tables turned, as Abdic's forces and their Bosnian Serb allies hit the ARBiH 5th corps with simultaneous attacks from two directions.⁶ Bosnian Army Brig. Gen. Arif Pasalic confirmed on 21 February that APWB forces had advanced to within 10 km of Government-held Cazin. At the same time, UN officials reported that Bosnian Serb units of Gen. Boric's 2nd Krajina Corps, reinforced by additional forces brought up from Prijedor, were hammering 5th Corps defenders with artillery

along the entire line from Bihac to Bosanska Krupa.⁷⁸

⁹ For a time, the situation looked almost critical, but Dudakovic's resilient 5th Corps managed to rally yet again and hang on despite the pounding. No further advances were reported, and comparatively little fighting took place along the Abdic-5th Corps internal confrontation line during most of spring 1994.¹⁰

The signing of a cease-fire between the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs in early June finally allowed Dudakovic's 5th Corps to devote its full attention to the Abdic separatists. Since Abdic had not signed the agreement, the 5th Corps was free to redeploy scarce resources northward to take on the until-then secondary APWB opponent.¹¹ Fifth Corps forces struck the first blow on the night of 2 June with a tentative attack around Liskovac, followed by a similar probe around Pecigrad the following day. Abdic's forces replied with a powerful counterattack on 10 June, hitting Government-held territory between Pecigrad and Skokovi and making some minor gains.¹²¹³¹⁴ The battlefield situation changed rapidly, though, and by 13 June the Bosnian Army had regained the initiative, advancing to the towns of Todorovo and Golubovici and up to the outskirts of Pecigrad—a small but crucial town astride the key north-south highway from Cazin to Abdic's stronghold of Velika Kladusa. The ARBiH claimed to have captured 30 square kilometers and two companies of Abdic troops during its advance.¹⁵ The losses stung Abdic; the following day, reports emerged that he had purged his ranks, arresting 500 or more of his own supporters suspected of disloyalty.¹⁶

Whether inspired by Abdic's leadership or by fears of arrest, the APWB forces rallied on 15-16 June and halted the 5th Corps advance with a counterattack near Liskovac.¹⁷ By 20 June, however, the UN reported that Government forces had resumed their advance, approaching to within 13km of Abdic's de-

facto capital of Velika Kladusa.¹⁸ The fiercest fighting occurred in and around the town of Golubovici, which sat atop high ground overlooking the approaches to Velika Kladusa.¹⁹ The UN observers—fearing an escalation of the conflict—watched nervously as Krajina Serb troops supported the Abdic rebels with tank and artillery fire from across the border in Croatia.

The emphasis of the fighting now centered on the key town of Pecigrad, which had been fiercely contested for over a week.²⁰ Both the assaulting ARBiH 5th Corps and Abdic's defending 4th Brigade knew that the town's capture would open the way for the Bosnian Army to advance into Velika Kladusa. Abdic's 4th Brigade—known as the APWB's best formation—did not give ground, but found itself threatened with encirclement by fast-moving Bosnian Army units. Fifth Corps forces had surrounded the town on three sides by 22 June, then pressed the attack on the village of Pivka on the remaining north side. Abdic himself conceded that his 3rd Brigade “fell apart” during the town's defense, eventually leaving the 4th Brigade still blocking the Government advance but trapped in Pecigrad.^{21 22 23}

Recognizing his desperate position, Abdic appealed to his last hope, the Krajina Serbs. The Krajina Serb forces had been supporting the Abdic rebels all along with artillery fire but had remained unwilling to commit Serb infantry into the battle itself. On 30 June, UN monitors reported that Krajina Serb forces had removed at least 20 heavy weapons from UN-monitored weapons collection sites in Croatia and moved them into Abdic-controlled territory.²⁴ The action inspired grave concern among the UN observers that now the Croatian Serbs would cross over to battle the 5th Corps in Bosnia, but in the event the Krajina Serbs elected—at least for now—not to commit any ground troops in support of Abdic's failing regime.

The Battle of Smoke and Mirrors: Operation “Tigar-Sloboda 94”

In the seesaw battle that Bihać had become, one of the oddest operations of the entire Bosnian war was about to take place. The intricate and audacious Operation “Tigar-Sloboda 94” (Tiger-Freedom 94) was to prove

perhaps the most daring and unorthodox stunt of ARBiH 5th Corps commander Dudakovic's career.

The first reports of odd developments in the Bihać pocket came on 7 July, when both local and western news organizations reported that 5th Corps troops had surrounded the French UN peacekeeping contingent's compound in Bihać city. The UNPROFOR troops were told only that armed terrorists had infiltrated from the north and the peacekeepers had to be confined to base for their own safety. The French battalion naturally objected to being placed under house arrest, but could do little about it.²⁵ Later in the day, Abdic's news agency reported that the chaos inside the 5th Corps had been caused by mutinying troops who had refused to continue fighting their Muslim brothers on the rebel side. On 9 July, UNPROFOR spokesmen reported gunfire and explosions in Bihać itself, but as the French were still confined to base, the UN could not confirm exactly who the 5th Corps was fighting.²⁶

Reports began to filter in that loyal 5th Corps troops were battling “peace force” defectors who had gone over to Abdic's side. At the same time, Abdic's own brigades—again backed by Krajina Serb artillery and mortar fire—were supporting the mutiny with an assault along the Krivaja-Cajici segment of the confrontation line. Things looked bleak indeed for Dudakovic's 5th Corps, at the same moment fighting against the Bosnian Serbs, the Krajina Serbs, the Abdic rebels, and “peace force” mutineers within its own ranks.²⁷

On 10 July, however, the Bosnian Army announced triumphantly that the entire “peace force” rebellion had been a charade—a staged mutiny—engineered by the 5th Corps headquarters and executed largely through the unwitting collaboration of the Abdic forces. As it turned out, the 5th Corps had confined the UN to base to prevent its finding out the truth while feeding foreign and Serb reporters selected pieces of information. Handpicked Bosnian Army and MUP special police troops out of sight of observers staged phony battles with blank cartridges, lighting fires and setting off grenades. Bihać radio and

television announcers feigned damage from pro-Abdic fifth columnists. The capstone of the effort was an appeal for assistance by a fictional “Seventh Brigade” of Abdic supporters in the town of Izagic. Eager to recruit the supposed defectors, Abdic, supplied by the Krajina Serbs, sent truckloads of small arms, rocket launchers, and ammunition to his alleged supporters. Of course, on arrival in Izagic the 5th Corps took gleeful possession of both the weapons and the Abdic agents sent to deliver them. It was a classic “Trojan Horse” operation—in reverse.²⁸

In the end, the operation proved a brilliant and completely successful combination of deception and execution. The desperately underarmed 5th Corps gained 3,000 weapons and over 200,000 rounds of ammunition provided by its APWB and Serb opponents, no less. As a bonus, the ruse had inspired a handful of key Abdic supporters in Bihac to show their true colors, allowing the 5th Corps to round up the enemy sympathizers within its ranks. And Dudakovic had achieved a public-relations coup, boosting morale within his own forces and exposing the Abdic rebels as Serb collaborators. While his later battlefield successes were undoubtedly greater in scope, in many ways “Tigar-Sloboda 94” was the wily Dudakovic’s masterstroke.^{29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36}

Abdic’s Last Stand: Velika Kladusa Falls

Although “Tigar-Sloboda” had provided a boost to 5th Corps morale and enough small arms to outfit an entire new brigade, the war with the Abdic forces was by no means over. Indeed, the APWB continued to press the offensive it had begun, securing the town of Cajici on 11 July after a heavy shelling by Krajina Serbs.³⁷ The Bosnian Army responded by mirroring the UN’s fears—5th Corps forces crossed the border into Serb-held Croatia on 14 July to attack the Krajina Serb positions that had been shelling into the enclave, crossing back into Bosnia after a short engagement.³⁸ Heavy fighting and high casualties marked the rest of July but gained the Bosnian Army little ground.³⁹

While Abdic and the 5th Corps battled to the north, the VRS continued its own operations against Dudakovic’s forces.⁴⁰ In July, Major General Grujo Boric’s

2nd Krajina Corps completed plans by which it hoped to finally occupy all of the Grabež plateau and seize the southern (right) bank of the Una River, which it had been trying to do since 1992; its last attempt had been in February 1994. The capture of these areas would allow the Corps to take over important railroad lines running through the outskirts of Bihac city. The new operation, “Una 94,” appears to have begun on 11 July—concurrent with the Abdic/Krajina Serb push toward Cajici. The first objective of the three light infantry brigades leading the attack was to capture important hills on the plateau—objectives that had been perpetually contested—then grab the villages lining the Una below the hills.⁴¹ But the Serb troops again made little or no progress against the defending Muslims, and the battle had ended by 15 July.

At the beginning of August, the focus of the conflict shifted once again to the little town of Pecigrad, where Abdic’s surrounded defenders continued to put up a determined resistance. Bosnian Army forces had pounded the town with mortar and artillery fire, but Abdic’s 4th Brigade—led by its capable commander, Nevdad Djerić⁴²—hung on doggedly.⁴³ Pecigrad finally yielded on 4 August, after Djerić refused a 5th Corps surrender offer. As a UN official narrates the rest of the story:

The Fourth Brigade realised they were in a rather parlous position. Their commander was a hero but they were trapped in their castle HQ...

The message came back [to the 5th Corps] “OK, kill us all.”

So Dudakovic fires one tank round straight through the door of this fort, kills the brigade commander and everyone there says, “Well, this is a bad idea, let’s forget it...”⁴⁴

Thus fell Pecigrad, opening the way for the 5th Corps to continue its advance. At least 800 Abdic defenders—and their much-needed weapons—were captured, and roughly 2,000 Bosnian Army troops were freed up to fight elsewhere.⁴⁵

As August progressed, Abdic was increasingly hemmed in around his self-declared capital. Two major towns in the west, Trzac and Sturlic, fell on 9 August, and Abdic established a new defensive line anchored on the towns of Johovica and Marjanovac about 10km southeast of Velika Kladusa. With the handwriting clearly on the wall, he became uncharacteristically open to a negotiated settlement.⁴⁶ But it was too late. The Bosnian Government rejected Abdic's cease-fire proposal and demanded his unconditional surrender. Abdic refused, electing to fight it out with his last two brigades (one of them down to one-third of its original strength) in Velika Kladusa.⁴⁷

On 21 August, just hours after Abdic refused the government's unconditional surrender demand, Bosnian Army troops overran Velika Kladusa.⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹ The Bosnian Government announced a three-day amnesty period

for any former rebels, but hundreds of Abdic soldiers abandoned their weapons and joined the massive column of 10,000 or more refugees fleeing Velika Kladusa for the Serb-held sections of adjacent Croatia.⁵⁰ Abdic himself abandoned Velika Kladusa for the relative safety of Croatia, where he would seek Serb backing for a comeback attempt.

There was to be little rest for the Bosnian Army's triumphant 5th Corps. Within three weeks of the rout of Abdic, the VRS and Krajina Serbs would counterattack with Operation "Breza 94."

Chart 1

Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia People's Defense ("Narodna Odbrana"), Order of Battle, 1994

Fikret Abdic, President
Asim Delic, APWB Military Commander

1st Brigade, HQ Vrnograc
(Formerly ARBiH 521st Brigade)
Mirsad Huskic, Commander

2nd Brigade, HQ Velika Kladusa FCP Johovica
(Previously ARBiH 527th Brigade)

3rd Infantry Brigade, HQ Todorovo

4th Infantry Brigade, HQ Pecigrad
Col. Nevzad Djeric, Commander

5th Brigade, HQ Kudici

6th Infantry Brigade, HQ Trzac

Chart 2

Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH), Order of Battle, Bihac, 1994

5th Corps, HQ Bihac

(Formerly Unsko-Sansko Ops Group)

Atif Dudakovic, Commander.

Mirsad Selmanovic, Dep. Cmdr/Chief of Staff.

1st Bosnian Liberation Brigade, HQ Cazin

(Later the 510th Liberation Brigade)

Maj. Amir Avdic, Commander

501st Glorious Mountain Brigade, HQ Eastern Bihac

(Previously the 1st Bihac Brigade)

Brig. Senad Sarganovic, Commander.

502nd "Tigrovi" Heroic Mountain Brigade, HQ Western Bihac

(Previously the 2nd Muslim-Croat "Crne Pume" Brigade)

Col. Hamdo Abdic, Commander

503rd Cazin Brigade, HQ Cazin

(Previously 1st Cazin Brigade)

Brig. Muhamed "Hamda" Delalic, Commander

[Established probably 23 August 1992]

504th Cazin Light Brigade

Maj. Salih Omerovic, Commander

505th Viteska Buzim Brigade, HQ Buzim

(Formerly 105th Buzim Muslim Krajina Brigade)

Brig. Izet Nanic, Commander

506th Velika Kladusa Light/Liberation Brigade,

HQ Velika Kladusa (after its capture)

(Established in July 1994 from former 521st and 527th Brigade troops)

Maj. Mias Mirjkovic, Commander

[Established 21 July 1994]

511th "Bosanska Krupa" Brigade, HQ Bosanska Krupa (Pistaline area)

(Previously 1st/111th Bosanska Krupa Brigade)

Maj. Mirsad Sedic, Commander.

517th Light Brigade, HQ Pjanici

Maj. Ibrahim "Baja" Nadarevic, Commander

[Established 15 August 1993]

101st HVO Brigade, HQ SE of Bihac

Gen. Vlado Santic, Commander

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- ³⁶ Sarajevo *Prva Linija*, "The Anniversary of the Formation of the 517th Liberation-Light Brigade, 15 August 1997: On the Road to Freedom" by Z. Seferagic, September 1997. FBIS Reston VA, 96E08028A, 151724Z Jan 98.
- ³⁷ Reuters, "Bosnians Enter Last Week to Decide on Peace Plan," by Kurt Schork, 11 July 1994.
- ³⁸ Reuters, "Troops From Moslem Enclave Clash With Serbs," 14 July 1994.
- ³⁹ Reuters, "UN Comes Under Fire in Fierce Bihac Battle," 30 July 1994.
- ⁴⁰ The narrative is based primarily on Sarajevo Radio reports from 7 July and 11 July to 15 July 1994 and Paris AFP reports from 11-13 July and 15 July.
- ⁴¹ The 1st Dravar, 3rd Petrovac, and 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigades were the main VRS combat formations.
- ⁴² Nevdad Djeric had previously been commander of the ARBiH 503rd Cazin Brigade.
- ⁴³ Abdic declined a UN offer to evacuate the town's civilian population, reasoning that if the town's population left Pecigrad's defenders would see no reason to carry on the fight. Reuters, "Inter-Moslem Fighting Traps Up to 2,000 Civilians," by Richard Meares, 4 August 1994.
- ⁴⁴ Reuters, "Separatist Bosnian Moslem Leader Vows to Fight On" by Davor Huic, 10 August 1994.
- ⁴⁵ Reuters, "Moslem Rebels Surrender as Bosnian Town Falls," by Richard Meares, 4 August 1994.
- ⁴⁶ Reuters, "Moslems, Serbs Send More Troops to Battle Zone," by Mark Heinrich, 11 August 1994.
- ⁴⁷ Reuters, "Rebel Moslem Leader Tries to Rally Forces," by Davor Huic, 12 August 1994.
- ⁴⁸ Reuters, "Bosnian Government Troops Crush Abdic Revolt," by Mark Heinrich, 21 August 1994.
- ⁴⁹ There are conflicting reports regarding the behavior of the 5th Corps forces that occupied the town after 11 months of fighting. UN observers initially reported that they were disciplined and professional, taking the town with a minimum of casualties and causing little damage during and after the attack. Reuters, "Moslem Refugees Block French UN Troops," by Davor Huic, 23 Aug 1994. But later reports from Abdic refugees and at least one UN observer maintained that Bosnian Army troops had fired on retreating Abdic soldiers and civilians as they fled Velika Kladusa. Reuters, "Refugees Accuse Bosnian Forces of Killings" by Davor Huic, 24 August 1994.
- ⁵⁰ Reuters, "Bosnian Government Troops Crush Abdic Revolt," by Mark Heinrich, 21 August 1994.

Annex 60

Operation “Breza 94”: The Bosnian and Krajina Serb Armies Attack Bihac, September 1994

In the midst of the continuing ARBiH offensive operations, the VRS began planning in August for a new offensive against the Bihac enclave, “Breza (Birch) 94.” The VRS plan called for 2nd Krajina Corps to lead off the offensive with new attacks on the Grabež plateau to seize the line of the Una River and eventually seize rail lines on the east side of Bihac city. The 1st Krajina Corps, in conjunction with the Krajina Serb Army’s 39th Banija Corps, would then follow with an assault between the two towns of Buzim and Bosanska Otoka on the northeastern side of the enclave. Once VRS forces broke through here, the Serbs would push on to the Bihac enclave’s central road and the logistics hub around the town of Cazin. The loss of Cazin, splitting the enclave in half, would virtually ensure the complete defeat of the 5th Corps. Events would outrun their plans, however, for when the ARBiH 5th Corps defeated Fikret Abdic’s rebel Muslim forces the major attack axes it faced were reduced from three to two.

Order of Battle and Campaign Planning¹

The VRS. The Main Staff plan for Operation “Breza 94” called for separate attacks by 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps, supported by Krajina Serb Army (SVK) forces. The campaign would lead off with a new 2nd Krajina Corps attack to seize its long-time objectives on the Grabež plateau and the Una River near Bihac city. In this sector, General Boric’s forces had been trying to take control of key hills and villages near the Una River northeast of the city since 1992—the last offensive, “Una 94,” had occurred in July. The capture of these positions would allow Serb forces to take over the road and rail links running north from Bihac city along the river. As with the previous month’s operation, the 1st Drvar, 3rd Petrovac, and 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigades, supported by the 15th Bihac Infantry Brigade—about 5,000 to 5,500 troops—would spearhead the new attack.

The second and larger part of the operation was undertaken by 1st Krajina Corps under Mladić’s direct supervision.² While 2nd Krajina Corps would be attacking in the same old place, the Main Staff decided to switch its main effort to a previously untried axis and call on the SVK to help. Major General Momir Talic, the corps commander, assembled two brigade-sized forces for the operation: a tactical group with at least a battalion each from the 5th Kozara Light Infantry, 6th Sanske Infantry, and 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigades, and the 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade “Panthers” from the East Bosnian Corps. Elements of the corps’ special units, the 1st Military Police Battalion and 1st Reconnaissance-Sabotage Company, reinforced the infantry formations as shock troops. These assault forces were backed by the sector-holding 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade on the eastern/northeastern side of the Bihac enclave near the town of Bosanska Otoka. In addition to corps artillery units, elements of the 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade/2nd Krajina Corps would provide fire support from its positions along the facing bank of the Una. Colonel Zarko Gajic’s SVK 39th Banija Corps mobilized the 33rd Dvor Infantry Brigade along the border, plus 155mm howitzer units, to support the VRS attack. Total VRS/SVK forces in this sector numbered about 4,000 assault troops, plus up to 3,000 sector-holding infantry. The corps plan called for an initial advance towards Otoka along the Una River with the objective of seizing the town and then driving along the main highway through Bosanska Krupa to link up with 2nd Krajina Corps forces opposite the Grabež. Once this attack was under way and (it was hoped) drawing in the 5th Corps reserves, the VRS would send a second column, led by the “Panthers” and the 33rd Dvor Brigade, towards Buzim with the initial objective of taking the town and then pushing on towards the vital road and logistics hub of Cazin. The loss of Cazin would bisect the enclave and allow the VRS to defeat 5th Corps piece by piece. After Cazin’s fall, VRS troops would then swing south toward Bihac city and the Grabež.

Their timely defeat of Fikret Abdic's Muslim separatist troops around Velika Kladusa in August freed up forces of ARBiH. Brigadier General Atif Dudakovic's veteran 5th Corps to meet the Serb offensive. Around Bihać city and the Grabež, 5th Corps defenses relied on the 501st Bihać, 502nd Bihać, 503rd Cazin, and 1st Bosnian Liberation Brigades to hold the line. On the Buzim-Otoca axis, the corps had the entire 505th Buzim Motorized Brigade and most of the 511th Bosanska Krupa Mountain Brigade. All told, the 5th Corps mustered about 15,000 troops for the battle.

Battle for Grabež Plateau, 31 August-6 September 1994

The 2nd Krajina Corps attack at Grabež began on 31 August and proceeded in the same manner as most of the previous VRS attempts to seize the Una valley had gone. Initial objectives for the Serb brigades were the Alibegovica Kosa and Barakovac hill (Hill 453) areas, the capture of which would have permitted VRS units to take the river plain and the villages of Spahici, Jezero, and Srbljani. The rail lines running north from Bihać city would then be in striking distance. As usual, the VRS made some progress in taking both hill masses, but 5th Corps did not crack. Instead, it launched a counterattack on 6 September, led by the 503rd Cazin Mountain Brigade, that erased VRS gains and even seized some previously Serb-held ground.³ Although sporadic fighting continued on the plateau for several more days, for 2nd Krajina the battle was essentially over.

Battle for Buzim-Otoca, 5 September-15 September 1994

The 1st Krajina Corps opened its battle on 5 September with a salvo of "Orkan" long-range rockets loaded with cluster sub-munitions from the 89th Rocket Artillery Brigade against targets in Cazin and Buzim.⁴ VRS ground forces then attacked on about a 10-kilometer front towards Otoca with their left on the Una River.⁵ The 1st Krajina Corps tactical group appears to have led the advance on this axis. Over the next four days, VRS units gradually pushed elements of the

ARBiH 511th Mountain Brigade back towards Otoca, crossing the Bastra River on 8-9 September. At this point, the attack towards Otoca—now only one kilometer from the town—stalled. Muslim troops dug in around two key hills above Otoca, Vuckovac and Plavna. For four days the VRS hurled strong attacks against the hills, whose capture would have given them the town, to no avail.

On 8 September, the same day as the attack across the Bastra, the "Panthers" and the SVK 33rd Dvor Brigade, supported by at least a company of tanks, attacked about 10 to 15 kilometers north of Otoca, between the Corkovaca and Radac hills on the Croatian-Bosnian border. Their objective was Buzim, some 10 kilometers down the road. Facing Major Izet Nanic's ARBiH 505th Motorized Brigade, the VRS penetrated two kilometers into Muslim defenses on 8-9 September.⁶ Attacks on 10-11 September, despite strong artillery support from inside the RSK, yielded only minor gains.

On 12 September the "Panthers" renewed the attack, pummeling ARBiH defenses southwest of Corkovaca. The 5th Corps, however, had been preparing a major counterattack. Elite recon-sabotage units of the 505th Motorized Brigade—the "Hamza" and "Gazije" companies and the "Tajfun" battalion—had been withdrawn from the frontline, while additional recon-sabotage elements from at least the 502nd Bihać Mountain and 517th Light Brigades were transferred to the area.⁷ As the VRS assault struck the ARBiH defenses, the regrouped Muslim special units, which had apparently infiltrated neighboring SVK positions, struck the "Panthers" in the flank.⁸ The Serb attack collapsed, and the "Panthers" and the SVK 33rd Dvor Brigade troops withdrew in disorder.⁹ ARBiH units pursued the retreating Serbs to the border, taking up to 20 square kilometers of ground previously under VRS control and nearly capturing General Mladić.¹⁰ Muslim troops even pushed across the frontier into the RSK. The resounding defeat of the VRS/SVK opposite Buzim put an abrupt and final end to the Serb offensive.

Evaluation of “Breza 94”

The VRS operation against Bihać was a typical Serb offensive, organized and conducted in ways similar to those it had fought throughout Bosnia during 1993 and 1994. VRS strengths and weaknesses were the same that had brought it victories and limited its successes. The more interesting aspect of the operation has to do with the tactics the ARBiH 5th Corps used to defeat the offensive.

The VRS achieved little in its attacks on the Grabež plateau, and ARBiH forces defeated Serb troops in that battle through the time tested methods of fortifications backed up with strong counterattacks. The Serb defeat also owed something to the weak forces the VRS assigned to the mission (three to four light infantry brigades instead of more elite mobile formations) and the fact that these units had repeatedly failed against the same ARBiH defenses.¹¹

However, it was in the Buzim sector where the ARBiH’s superiority in the use of small, elite reconnaissance-sabotage units came into play. These types of Muslim units had been causing the VRS no end of trouble throughout the year during the ARBiH’s own offensive operations. In this instance, the long front-line held by the 505th Motorized Brigade should have enabled the VRS to penetrate Muslim defenses and push quickly towards its objectives. Instead, ARBiH troops fought hard, delaying the Serb attack while the Muslims grouped and infiltrated a large number of recon-sabotage units into the VRS/SVK rear in preparation for a major counterattack. These forces were then able to exploit the forward momentum and focus of the VRS “Panthers” (together with poor coordination and flank security between formations) to crash into the Serb assault troops’ open flanks.¹² This time superior ARBiH tactics overcame the VRS’s advantages in firepower and command skills.

Endnotes, Annex 60

¹ The narrative of "Brezza 94" is based on a combination of daily Sarajevo Radio reporting covering 30 August to 15 September, Reuters pieces, and magazine/newspaper articles, including in particular those from the Bosnian Army journal, *Prva Linija*. Other than Sarajevo Radio, the following sources were used:
"Rockets Kill 3, Wound 60 in Moslem Enclave," Reuters 6 September 1994.
Mark Heinrich, "Croatian, Bosnian Serbs Attack Moslem Enclave," Reuters 8 September 1994.
Kurt Schork, "Serbs Take Two Bridgeheads in Bihać Offensive," Reuters 9 September 1994.
Kurt Schork, "Heavy Fighting Reported in Bihać Enclave," Reuters 10 September 1994.
Kurt Schork, "Fighting Rages in Bosnia After Pope's Visit," Reuters 12 September 1994.
Kurt Schork, "Bosnian Serb Shelling Prompts Moslem Evacuation," Reuters 13 September 1994.
Samira Dzanic, "On the 3rd Anniversary of the Defeat of the 'Birch (Brezza) 94' Offensive: Unbreakable Krajina," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 24, an article describing the ARBiH defeat of the "Brezza 94" operation.
Zemka Seferagic, "Fifth Anniversary of the Formation of the First Cazin 503rd Glorious Mountain Brigade, 17 August 1997: From Mokres to Sanski Most," *Prva Linija* September 1997, p. 24.
Samira Dzanic, "Ponos Bosne i Bosnjaka," *Prva Linija* September 1997, p. 22, an article on the 505th Motorized Brigade.
Zemka Seferagic, "The Anniversary of the Formation of the 517th Liberation-Light Brigade, 15 August 1997: On the Road to Freedom," *Prva Linija* September 1997, p. 23.
Antun Masle and Eduard Popovic, "We Will Enter All the Occupied Towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina With Arms, Just As the Serbs Did Two Years Ago," Zagreb *Globus* 30 September 1994, pp. 7-9, interviews with Brigadier Ramiz Drekovic and Atif Dudakovic.
S. Hodzic, "A Knight and a Hero," Sarajevo *Ostlobodenje* 5 March 1996, p. 6, an article on Izet Nanic, commander of the ARBiH 505th Motorized Brigade.
Zilhad Kljucanin, "Not A Single Foot of Buzim Soil Ever Fell Into the Hands of Anyone," Sarajevo *Nova Bosna* 17 October 1995, p. 12, an interview with Sead Jusic, the commander of the 505th Motorized Brigade after Nanic.
"The Command of the Army of the Serbian Republic Believes That Mladic Has Been Betrayed By Order of Belgrade," Belgrade *Telegraf* 12 October 1994, p. 11.
Milan Jelovac, "The Bihać Front—Mladic's Headlong Flight," Zagreb *Danas* 20 September 1994, pp. 12-13.
² Brigadier General Dudakovic stated in October 1994 that, In early September, a coordinated action of the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs was started, headed by General Mladic himself . . . The best units of the 1st and 2nd Krajina Corps were brought to the area of Bosanski Novi [Novigrad], Dvor, and the village of Zirovac, and some of the units of the 39th Corps were also included in the operation . . . The main attack was planned in the direction of Buzim, and the auxiliary one on the line Otoka-Bosanska Krupa. The Serbs intended to destroy and break the 5th Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army and besiege Bihać . . . Antun Masle and Eduard Popovic, "We Will Enter All the Occupied Towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina With Arms, Just As the Serbs Did Two Years Ago," Zagreb *Globus* 30 September 1994, pp. 7-9, interviews with Brigadier Ramiz Drekovic and Atif Dudakovic.
³ Captain Mirko Marcetic, the commander of the 2nd Battalion/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade—apparently attached to the 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade—described the fighting on 6-8 August in the 6th Brigade's journal: "In the morning of 6 September I went to the front line with the goal of reconnoitering from Vrsko to the Kamenicki vrh...upon

arriving, I was informed by the commander of the 4th Company that the enemy had executed a penetration . . . since the enemy was now coming from behind us, the commander requested a withdrawal to a reserve position. I denied this request and immediately organized a unit out of some reserve troops and headed out to provide assistance to Hasin vrh. As I climbed towards the target, I realized that the situation was much more serious than I had thought. Our right flank company had to withdraw from four trenches which the enemy now controlled. The enemy was continuing on from Hasin vrh towards Krmacke vrh. However, I didn't have any comms with my superiors...we began to fire on the enemy with artillery and I, along with some other fighters, moved in for a counter-attack. The enemy retreated after losing a few of the trenches and we succeeded in consolidating the line and regaining some self confidence. The enemy had been driven back and was now behind the battalion command. During the [ensuing] battle, I ordered a portion of our artillery to withdraw to a designated location. I further ordered them to equip each artillery piece with an explosive charge in case we were unable to withdraw. By 12:00 the battle had let up. At nightfall, I ordered that a platoon of 76mm-b1 cannons be withdrawn to the Drenovo region, while the 82mm and 120mm mortars, along with the kitchen, had already been repositioned to a more secure location. The next morning was abnormally quiet and one could feel the premonition of the fates of the previous day. At around 1300, the sky opened up and the enemy commenced a fierce attack, again in the direction of Petrovac...they again succeeded in penetrating the line to our left. We placed all of the reserve units in support of the Petrovac battalion. We told the aggressors that if they were true heroes they would fire on us, but instead they continued to fire on the weak spot. Our young men began to lose their patience, including, in particular, the entire contingent of the 3rd "Crni Djordje" Company. They hit the enemy from the flank and, together with sniper artillery from our battalion, our fighters managed to capture a large amount of weaponry and ammunition. We later found out that the enemy lost 26 fighters and that another 50 had been wounded...following the battle, our position was visited by the commander of the 2nd Krajina Corps, General-Major Grujo Boric who recognized the soldiers of the 2nd battalion, 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade for their efforts.

Captain Mirko Marceta "The Dragons Don't Want a Border Near the Sana: The Battle of Grabež, 6, 7 and 8 September, 1994," *War Bulletin of the 6th Sanski Infantry Brigade*, October 1994, pp. 4-5.

Zemka Seferagic, "Fifth Anniversary of the Formation of the First Cazin 503rd Glorious Mountain Brigade, 17 August 1997: From Mokres to Sanski Most," *Prva Linija* September 1997, p. 24; Antun Masle and Eduard Popovic, "We Will Enter All the Occupied Towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina With Arms, Just As the Serbs Did Two Years Ago," Zagreb *Globus* 30 September 1994, pp. 7-9, interviews with Brigadier Ramiz Drekovic and Atif Dudakovic.

⁴ Reuters 6 September 1994; Samira Dzanic, "On the 3rd Anniversary of the Defeat of the 'Birch (Brezza) 94' Offensive: Unbreakable Krajina," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 24, an article describing the ARBiH defeat of the "Brezza 94" operation. The targets for these rockets remain unknown. The VRS had fired long-range rockets at targets in the Bosnian Army rear areas in the past that often appeared to indiscriminately target civilian areas but in reality were aimed at supposed logistics or artillery sites and missed. In any event, the rockets caused a number of casualties, almost all civilians.

⁵ In the far northeast corner of the enclave around Bosanska Bojna, SVK troops from the 24th Glina Infantry Brigade/39th Corps attempted to take and hold territory at the end of August. Troops from the 505th Motorized Brigade defeated the SVK attempt, which probably was an effort to divert ARBiH troops from sectors further south.

⁶ Nanic was 29 years old and had graduated from the JNA military academy. He left the JNA in January 1992. Nanic was killed in action during 1995. See S. Hodzic, "A Knight and a Hero," Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje* 5 March 1996, p. 6, an article on Izet Nanic, commander of the ARBiH 505th Motorized Brigade.

⁷ Samira Dzanic, "On the 3rd Anniversary of the Defeat of the 'Birch (Breza) 94' Offensive: Unbreakable Krajina," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 24, an article describing the ARBiH defeat of the "Breza 94" operation; Zemka Seferagic, "The Anniversary of the Formation of the 517th Liberation-Light Brigade, 15 August 1997: On the Road to Freedom," *Prva Linija* September 1997, p. 23.

⁸ "The Command of the Army of the Serbian Republic Believes That Mladic Has Been Betrayed By Order of Belgrade," Belgrade *Telegraf* 12 October 1994, p. 11. The article states that,

... the Army of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) recently let through its lines one unit of the 5th Corps of the Muslim Army, which attacked the units of General Ratko Mladic from behind. This happened on the Bihać front, near Bosanska Krupa (sic). On that occasion 17 Serbian soldiers were killed, while 76 were wounded, 28 seriously.

⁹ Samira Dzanic, "On the 3rd Anniversary of the Defeat of the 'Birch (Breza) 94' Offensive: Unbreakable Krajina," *Prva Linija* October 1997, p. 24, an article describing the ARBiH defeat of the "Breza 94" operation; Zilhad Kljucanin, "Not A Single Foot of Buzim Soil Ever Fell Into the Hands of Anyone," Sarajevo *Nova Bosna* 17 October 1995, p. 12, an interview with Sead Jusic, the commander of the 505th Motorized Brigade after Nanic. Milan Jelovac, "The Bihać Front—

Mladic's Headlong Flight," Zagreb *Danas* 20 September 1994, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ Dudakovic stated that,

In the area of the village of Majdan, two "Puchs" [a light truck favored by Mladic], and a ground vehicle were captured.

According to the statement of a prisoner, this is where Mladic fled from. I do not know the details . . . We have confiscated many documents, working maps . . .

Antun Masle and Eduard Popovic, "We Will Enter All the Occupied Towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina With Arms, Just As the Serbs Did Two Years Ago," Zagreb *Globus* 30 September 1994, pp. 7-9, interviews with Brigadier Ramiz Drekovic and Atif Dudakovic. Nanic and his successor used Mladic's captured "Puch" as their personal vehicle the rest of the war. S. Hodzic, "A Knight and a Hero," Sarajevo *Oslobodjenje* 5 March 1996, p. 6, an article on Izet Nanic, commander of the ARBiH 505th Motorized Brigade.

¹¹ Although three light infantry brigades sounds like a sizeable force, and in some ways it is, the ARBiH had successfully repelled these VRS brigades' attempts to advance in this sector for over two years and the Muslim formations had the moral ascendancy over these VRS brigades. They were simply not up to storming and holding the positions against a more motivated and skillful foe without additional reinforcement or much stronger fire support.

¹² Even Mladic's biographer notes that,

The Muslim attacks were certainly strong—and cunning, especially with the infiltration of sabotage units which were very familiar with the terrain. On one occasion, even Mladic found himself surrounded by them.

Jovan Janjic, *Srpski General Ratko Mladic* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska Press, 1996, Chapter 12.

Annex 61
Punch and Counter-Punch: Bihac Operations,
October-December 1994¹

Dudakovic on the Attack: Operation “Grmec 94”

By the fall of 1994, Brigadier General Atif Dudakovic’s ARBiH 5th Corps was a confident, experienced, and battle-hardened force. Absolutely loyal to their charismatic commander, the 5th Corps troops thought they could beat anything—even the long odds that still faced their surrounded force even after the defeat of Fikret Abdic’s rebels. Indeed, flushed with victory after trouncing their “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia” opponents, and having weathered the Bosnian Serb “Breza-94” offensive against them immediately afterward, the 5th Corps’ troops were ready to take the offensive.

On 25 October, almost the entire 5th Corps was unleashed against its Bosnian Serb opponents to the south, with only a relatively small holding force defending the enclave’s borders with the Krajina Serb Army. Dudakovic’s forces achieved near-complete surprise, and their gains on the first day were substantial. Government forces, comprising the 501st Mountain, 502nd Mountain, 503rd Mountain, and 1st Bosnian Liberation Brigades, captured the Grabež barracks and much of the long-contested Grabež plateau east of Bihac from the four long-suffering infantry/light infantry brigades of the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps on the plateau.² The Grabež barracks and plateau directly overlooked Bihac itself, and Bosnian Serb forces had shelled the town constantly from these positions. For the first time in two and a half years, Bihac’s residents could enjoy a reprieve from the threat of shelling.³

By the second day of the offensive, the Bosnian Army had made major advances, taking over a hundred square kilometers of territory and advancing along two main axes south and east of Bihac. One prong of the attack, led by the 501st and 502nd Mountain

Brigades, drove south toward Serb-held Ripac, in the direction of Orasac, Kulen Vakuf,⁴ and ultimately Bosanski Petrovac some 40km to the south. Another prong, comprising elements of the 503rd Mountain, 511th Mountain, and 1st Bosnian Liberation Brigades, drove eastward along the south bank of the Una River, in the direction of Bosanska Krupa,⁵ about 20km east of Bihac.⁶ Serb citizens—some 3,500 initially, eventually as many as 10,000—fled ahead of the Muslim advance, a sure sign of shaky confidence in the Bosnian Serb Army’s defense line.⁷

By 27 October the Bosnian Army had taken between 100 and 150 square kilometers of territory, and had captured several pieces of precious heavy equipment abandoned by the Bosnian Serbs during their headlong flight.⁸ The always-underequipped Bosnian Army forces had also seized and distributed the contents of the just-captured Grabež barracks, an infusion that magnified the weight of their advance. Meanwhile, Major General Grujo Boric’s VRS 2nd Krajina Corps, still off-balance, continued to fall back in disarray. Fifth Corps forces advanced about 10km south towards Bosanski Petrovac and reached right up to the edges of Bosanska Krupa to the east.⁹ But although the exultant 5th Corps brigades continued to press forward, the ARBiH advance was beginning to outpace itself. Movement began to slow as the 5th Corps strove to consolidate its gains and allow its rudimentary logistics system to catch up with the advancing frontline forces.¹⁰

At this point, the Bosnian Serb leadership was genuinely alarmed about the military situation in northwest Bosnia, and they were outraged that the United Nations had watched with apparent unconcern as the Bosnian Government mounted a massive offensive out of the UN’s supposedly demilitarized “Safe Area” of Bihac. On 27 October, Bosnian Serb Army Main Staff chief Manojlo Milovanovic issued a public statement demanding that the UN require the Bosnian Army to pull back to its confrontation line of

23 October. His accompanying threat was two-pronged: if the Muslims failed to pull back the VRS would “retaliate by attacking the area from which their attacks are launched,” i.e., the UN Safe Area.¹¹ The following day Bosnian Serb President Karadzic called for an all-out counteroffensive to recapture the lost territory, and demanded retaliation “regardless of the safe areas.”¹² Dismissing the Bosnian Serb rhetoric, UNPROFOR Bosnia commander Rose responded with a counter-threat of NATO airstrikes should the Bosnian Serbs shell any of the UN-declared safe areas.¹³

On 29 October the Bosnian Serb President underlined the Pale leadership’s concern over the situation by declaring a “state of war” in the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps’ area of responsibility. What this declaration meant, more than two years into the conflict, was not entirely clear, but it required the suspension of all leaves for soldiers, directed full mobilization within the corps area, and—in an effort to prevent thousands more from fleeing—imposed movement restrictions on all citizens in the Serb-held municipalities of northwest Bosnia.¹⁴ On this same day it appears that the Bosnian Supreme Command—the RS national command authority—also issued General Milovanovic his orders for an early counteroffensive.

By the end of the eventful 29th of October the Bosnian Army had encircled—but not captured—the very sizeable town of Bosanska Krupa, once the home of 58,000 pre-war residents. Bosnian Serb Army units from the 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade trapped inside the town on the east side of the Una River could not get out—but neither could the encircling ARBiH units force their way in.¹⁵ To the south, the Bosnian Army had captured the town of Kulen Vakuf, on the Bosnian-Croatian border fully 30km southeast of Bihać.

The last two days of October would mark the high-tide line of the 5th Corps’ autumn 1994 advance. On 30 October heavy fighting raged all around newly besieged Bosanska Krupa as troops from the 511th Mountain Brigade, supported by the 505th Motorized Brigade, attempted to wrest control of the town from its Serb defenders. Intense battles raged for two days as elements of the two brigades forced their way into

Bosanska Krupa itself, only to be driven back. The embattled Bosnian Serbs held fast to their positions, and Bosanska Krupa marked the end of the offensive’s eastward surge.¹⁶

Though the Bosnian Army continued to press forward in the south, its lines were becoming dangerously overextended. Overeager 5th Corps attackers took another 30 square kilometers on 30 and 31 October, bringing the total captured area to almost 250 square kilometers.¹⁷ But the goal was no longer one of capturing territory—5th Corps now faced the challenging task of hanging on to what it had just won.

The VRS Defends Bosanska Krupa, Late October-Early November 1994

As the 5th Corps began its attempt to break out of the Grabež plateau on 27 October, two key Serb-held positions stood in their way: the ridgeline at Veliki and Mali Radic (covering the Bihać-Krupa road) and the Serb-held half of Bosanska Krupa on the southern (right) bank of the Una River. Although VRS 2nd Krajina Corps defenses had collapsed on the southern side of the Grabež, Serb forces on the northern half—apparently the 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade—fell back in better order. As a result, 5th Corps formations, probably the 503rd Cazin and 1st Bosnian Liberation Brigades, had difficulty forcing VRS troops off of the Radic ridges. The VRS stand delayed the capture of the features until 29 October.

Meanwhile, the 511th Mountain Brigade was moving east from Grabež toward Krupa—held by the VRS 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade—while preparing to cross the Una River north of Krupa in a bid to encircle the town. The main attack did not really get under way until 29 October, possibly because of the Serbs’ dogged grip on the Radics. Then a successful river crossing by the 511th and probably the 505th Motorized Brigade, together with the frontal attack from the west, quickly cut most of the roads into the town. VRS reinforcements, however, had already begun to arrive. Major General Rajko Balac, the

commander of the VRS Center for Military Schools in Banja Luka, led a cadet battalion, together with a battalion from both the 6th Sanski Infantry and 43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigades, into the battle on 30 October. Balac's forces hit the right flank of the 5th Corps forces southwest of Krupa, bringing their advance to an abrupt halt and apparently reopening some Serb entry points into the town.¹⁸ Over the next five days the ARBiH repeatedly tried and failed to drive into the town from their stalled position.

The VRS defense of these critical positions and the timely arrival of reinforcements turned the key that locked the door on the ARBiH advance. The Serbs had managed to contain the left side of the hitherto rapid 5th Corps thrust, slowing it with their stubborn defense of Radic and halting it with their stand at Krupa. As a result, the 5th Corps was unable to broaden the base of its offensive. But there was more at stake than just the loss of momentum and an opportunity for further advances by the ARBiH. On the right of the corps, along the Bihać-Petrovac/Kulen Vakuf axis, the VRS collapse had permitted the 5th Corps to make a quick 20-kilometer march clear to Kulen Vakuf. This success, however, rapidly became a liability with the failure on the 5th Corps' left flank because the VRS's defense perimeter now left 5th Corps units around Kulen Vakuf overextended in a vulnerable salient, with insufficient forces to hold the new frontage. The VRS would soon move to exploit the situation.

Milovanovic Organizes the Counteroffensive, Late October-Early November 1994

Lieutenant Colonel General Manojlo Milovanovic, the Chief of the VRS Main Staff, arrived in the Krupa area on 30 October. Milovanovic's mission was to analyze the situation and determine what should be done.¹⁹ The general had already put in motion plans to shift significant resources to the sector in order to restore the situation and mount a counterattack. He assumed command of all VRS formations in the Bihać theater the same day, establishing his command post in the village of Jasenica, some 13 kilometers southeast of Bosanska Krupa. A new unit commanded by General Balac—whose scratch relief force had

helped stop the 5th corps' left wing outside of Krupa on the day of Milovanovic's arrival—formed the first wave of this plan. Balac's unit was a new composite 1st Serbian Brigade, the first of three composite brigades that Milovanovic had earlier ordered formed from throughout the VRS, drawing on each corps. (Because of the large number of elements from so many different units, Milovanovic gave the honorifics, "1st, 2nd, and 3rd Serbian Brigades," to these formations.)²⁰ Milovanovic appears to have superimposed three tactical group headquarters over these new units and elements of the 2nd Krajina Corps then in the process of regrouping. The tactical groups, together with another formed later from the 11th Krupa Light Infantry and 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigades, comprised the bulk of the VRS force, which eventually grew from an initial 6,500 personnel to some 14,000 troops with strong armor and artillery support.²¹

Milovanovic, operating under direct orders from the RS Supreme Command, was given the mission of retaking all lost Serb territory, establishing the RS "border" on the Una River—an objective 2nd Krajina Corps had failed to achieve for over two years—and, especially, defeating the ARBiH 5th Corps. Milovanovic made this clear on several occasions:

My task is to regain Serbian territories occupied by the 5th Corps between 24 and 31 October and I say: my exclusive mission is to break up the 5th Corps, to recapture territories . . . I have no intention to leave the 5th Corps alone until I have rendered it militarily harmless, so that after a month I do not have to beat them once again.²²

No asset would be overlooked in the Serbs' campaign to secure western Bosnia once and for all. Krajina Serb Army forces would assist in this operation, with strong support from Yugoslav Army and Serbian State Security (RDB) units. Even the remnants of Fikret Abdic's rebel Muslim forces would be included and, after 5th Corps forces had been knocked out, the Serbs planned to reinstate Abdic as the puppet ruler of the enclave.

Operation “Stit 94” Kicks Off, 4 November–20 November 1994

Milovanovic's counteroffensive, Operation “Stit (Shield) 94,” began on 4 November.²³ Tactical Groups-1 and 3 (TG-1 and TG-3), spearheaded by the 1st and 3rd Serbian Brigades respectively, composed the main strike force with Tactical Group-2 (TG-2), including the 2nd Serbian Brigade, linking the two main axes. Tactical Group-3's attack along the main Bihac-Petrovac road made the most visible and rapid progress during the first week of the counteroffensive. VRS troops had already reoccupied Kulen Vakuf on 3–4 November, probably after 5th Corps realized the VRS was building up for a major counteroffensive and concluded that its exposed positions there could not be held. Elements of the 501st and 502nd Bihac Mountain Brigades comprised the main force opposing the Serb attack, but their units were spread too thinly to halt the assault.²⁴ On 6 November, VRS units—supported by SVK 15th Lika Corps artillery fire—seized the village of Cukovi, some 14 kilometers north of Kulen Vakuf, which controlled key high ground north of the town and adjacent to the main highway. By 8 November, TG-3 had taken Dubovsko, another seven kilometers north of Cukovi, and had pushed on to positions at or near the village of Racic, only 10 kilometers southeast of Bihac city. At the same time, TG-2 was driving northwest on TG-3's right flank, pushing into the Tihotina and Hrgar areas on 9–10 November. The next objective was the important former Serb-controlled village of Ripac and key hilltops surrounding it on the southeastern approaches to Bihac city and the Grabež plateau.

On the VRS right flank, Balac's 1st Serbian Brigade and the rest of Tactical Group-1 faced stiffer opposition. ARBiH units here had less ground to give and proportionally more troops to hold their ground with. Balac himself was killed in action on 4 November while leading his tactical group into battle.²⁵ Over the next five days, the 1st Serbian Brigade pushed ARBiH units—probably from the 503rd Cazin, 511th Krupa, and 1st Bosnian Liberation Brigades—back from the western side of Krupa toward Grabež. The VRS reconquered the Veliki and Mali Radic area on 8/9 November, and had driven another five kilometers deep into ARBiH defenses by

the next day, taking the important Drenovo Tijesno junction on the Krupa-Bihac road. In addition, on 8/9 November, Tactical Group 4 forces around Krupa drove back elements of the ARBiH 505th and 511th Brigades on the northeastern side of the town. These Muslim troops had remained on the south side of the Una after the 5th Corps attack had been halted at the end of October.

On the far left, southwest of Bihac city, the SVK 103rd Donji Lapac Light Infantry Brigade/15th Lika Corps attacked on 8 November in support of a VRS attempt attempting to penetrate HVO/ARBiH lines around Veliki and Mali Skocaj. Although the SVK attack gained little ground, combined with a successful Serb air strike on an ammunition storage depot and artillery fire, it helped keep ARBiH forces around Bihac pinned down and less available to block the primary VRS attacks.²⁶

Very briefly, Milovanovic halted the advance and called on the 5th Corps to surrender. The nearer the 5th Corps troops were forced to their original October positions, however, the harder and more grimly the Muslims fought. Milovanovic resumed the operation, determined to retake all the lost territory on the Grabež plateau and probably move on Bihac's line of communications to the north. In a week of heavy fighting, all three tactical groups battered their way forward. By 16 November, TG-1 appears to have driven 5th Corps units back another six kilometers, reaching the village of Grmusa on the Una River, while TG-2 and 3 retook Ripac, and the Lohovska Brdo area. It took the VRS another four days to recapture the last of the territory lost to the 5th Corps offensive, when Milovanovic proclaimed the Serb victory. Phase one of Operation “Stit 94” appeared to be over, and phase two had already begun.

Phase Two: The Resurrection of Fikret Abdic, the Involvement of the Krajina Serb Army, and the Campaign to Destroy the 5th Corps

While the VRS was closing in on Bihac and the Grabež plateau from the southeast, the Krajina Serb Army, with support and guidance from Belgrade, was reconstituting the Muslim “People's Defense” forces

of Fikret Abdic's defunct "Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia," apparently in preparation for phase two—the planned destruction of the 5th Corps.

After Abdic's forces had been defeated and dispersed from their "capital" in August, most of his supporters and former soldiers fled into the RSK, settling in refugee camps in UN Sector North, southeast of Karlovac. On 8 November, UN observers noted that the SVK had begun recruiting able-bodied Muslim males from among the refugees. The SVK was reforming some 4,000-5,000 of Abdic's troops into three brigades: 1st Velika Kladusa, 2nd Cazin, and 3rd Vrnograc Brigades. On 10 November, the new formations began taking up positions along the RSK border near Velika Kladusa.

In actual command of these puppet troops was a newly formed Operational Group "Pauk" (Spider) commanded by SVK Major General Mile Novakovic and Serbian State Security Department (RDB) Colonel "Raja" Bozovic, a veteran special operations officer. A key deputy of RDB chief Jovica Stanisic, "Frenki" Simatovic, oversaw Novakovic and Bozovic's work.²⁷ To stiffen the Abdic units—as well as allied SVK ground forces—Novakovic and Bozovic could call on a bevy of elite Yugoslav Army and Serbian RDB and Serbian Volunteer Guard (SDG) troops.²⁸ Elements of the VJ's 63rd Airborne Brigade/Corps of Special Units, plus Simatovic's "Red Beret" special operations unit, as well as elements of the SDG—probably about 500 troops combined—were to provide the spearhead for the APWB attack.²⁹

The SVK also contributed about 6,500 troops drawn from all six of Major General Milan Celeketic's SVK corps.³⁰ These forces were grouped to conduct and support operations in two main sectors. The first, west/northwest of Bihac city, operated in conjunction with VRS forces to the east and were organized in two or three tactical groups under the control of Colonel Stevo Sevo's 15th Lika Corps—about 4,500 troops altogether (plus at least 500 APWB personnel).³¹ The second, around Velika Kladusa, would mesh with the

* The exact designators for these tactical groups are unclear, but may have been numbered TG-5, TG-6, and TG-7; the VRS and SVK tactical groups appear to have been sequentially numbered, TG-1 through TG-9

VJ/Serbian forces to provide essential stiffening to the Muslim APWB troops. It was organized into probably two tactical groups (some 2,000 troops), one each from Colonel Veljko Bosanac's 21st Kordun Corps (Tactical Group 8) and Colonel Zarko Gajic's 39th Banija Corps (possibly Tactical Group 9), operating under Operational Group "Pauk" control.³² SVK artillery batteries would provide fire support to both forces from inside the RSK.

The role of these SVK groups in the renewed Serb offensive was to divert, stretch and thin the 5th Corps defenders so that one of the three main forces—SVK, APWB, or VRS—could break the 5th Corps front in one of the main sectors and deal a mortal blow to Dudakovic's force. To this end the first operational group (15th Lika Corps) had as its immediate tactical objective the seizure of key terrain and lines of communication to the west/southwest of Bihac city while threatening Cazin and the important resupply airfield at Coralici. The mission of the second operational group (OG "Pauk") was to seize Velika Kladusa, then move on toward Cazin to link up with the first group and/or the VRS.

At the same time that the SVK/APWB forces joined the battle, General Milovanovic—who presumably directed the entire Serb force (or was at least responsible for its coordination)—would renew his VRS assault on the Grabez plateau, while attacking the Bihac city approaches in conjunction with the SVK. Once 5th Corps had been defeated on Grabez, the VRS plan appears to have called for its forces to punch across the Una north toward Cazin. At the same time, the VRS was to open a new attack axis, crossing the Una River at Krupa to outflank the Grabez defenses. As SVK, APWB, and VRS forces converged on Cazin, the 5th Corps would be destroyed. Interestingly, it appears that Milovanovic did not plan to physically occupy Bihac city, although the Serbs were to surround it (see discussion below).

With the expected defeat of the 5th Corps, the Serbs planned to withdraw VRS and SVK forces slowly to the RSK and to the RS "border" along the Una. This

would leave Fikret Abdic and his Serb-controlled military in charge of the enclave, safeguarding the SVK and VRS rear. Both Serb armies would then be able to reorient their newly released forces to the fronts opposite the Croatian and Bosnian Armies.

The Battle for Velika Kladusa Begins, 16 November-1 December 1994³³

The combined SVK/APWB force attacked across the border on 16 November. The Novakovic/Bozovic plan apparently called for their units to cut off Velika Kladusa, with a pincer movement around the north and south sides of the town, possibly in hopes of avoiding a costly street-by-street battle that would also wreak havoc on the homes of their Muslim troops. This meant the initial SVK/APWB attack consisted of one thrust to seize key ridges directly north of Velika Kladusa on the border—thus pinning the defending 506th Kladusa Mountain Brigade inside the town—while the rest of the force attempted to sweep around the 506th's flanks from the north and the south. Other SVK/APWB units attacked in the Serb-populated Bosanska Bojna area, some 15 kilometers to the east, pressuring the rear of the forces around Velika Kladusa and threatening the town of Vrnogranc.

Against the much larger SVK/APWB force, the outmanned 5th Corps troops put up a strong defense. Troops from the 506th Brigade repelled the assault on the ridges north of Velika Kladusa. The Serbs and rebel Muslims, however, quickly penetrated the flanks. In the north, the SVK/APWB units pushed in about one to two kilometers in the Ponikve-Poljana area, while to the south they drove in about two to three kilometers in the Smrekovac area. Over the next week, SVK/APWB troops edged their way forward in heavy fighting, pushing into built-up outskirts of Velika Kladusa. In particular, they worked their way along the southern flank of ARBiH defenders (now reinforced with elements of the 503rd Cazin, 505th Buzim, and 517th Light Brigades) in an attempt to sever the main road between Velika Kladusa and Cazin, because the loss of the road would cut off ARBiH forces in the town. On 19 November, APWB forces claimed to have taken Keserovici Brdo, a 235-meter hill overlooking central Velika Kladusa and the

road.³⁴ Meanwhile, SVK/APWB units continued to press 5th Corps in the north along the Daterovica Brdo-Elezovici sector (supported by attacks from Bosanska Bojna), despite strong resistance by 505th Brigade in the east and 506th Brigade in the west. By 21 November, SVK/APWB troops had advanced five kilometers from the border to positions five kilometers south of town and attacked 5th Corps positions in Trn and Polje along the Kladusa-Cazin road.

The SVK/APWB gains came only slowly and grudgingly as 5th Corps units contested every attack. By the end of November, however, the SVK/APWB advantages in manpower and firepower had begun to tell and 5th Corps forces were stuck in a tenuous salient with a vulnerable exit route. Both the Velika Kladusa-Cazin and Velika Kladusa-Vrnogranc road were on the verge of being cut. SVK/APWB units also were beginning to penetrate further into the town itself. As December began, the Serbs and Abdic's rebel Muslims were positioning themselves for a final push to seize the town and the northern half of the enclave.

The Battle for Bihać City, 16 November 1994- 1 December 1994

While the battle for Velika Kladusa ground on, the international community was more concerned with the renewed SVK/VRS assault on the Bihać city area and the Serbs' penetration of the UN-declared "Safe Area" there. On 16 November, the SVK 15th Lika Corps launched its attack against the western and southwestern approaches to Bihać as part of phase two of the Serb campaign plan. The corps attacked with three tactical groups. Tactical Group 7/15th Corps pushed into the Bugari area, some 20 kilometers northwest of Bihać, along the route toward Cazin. Tactical Groups 6/15th Corps and Tactical Group 5/15th Corps focused more directly on the road and terrain features around Bihać itself. TG-6 attacked the Izacic-Zeljava Air Base sector, while TG-5, in conjunction with VRS Tactical Group-3 on its right, was to assault the direct approaches to Bihać from its position in the Pljesevica Mountains.

Initially, however, only SVK TG-6 and 7/15th Corps attacked, together with the VRS forces on the Grabez plateau (see above). TG-7/15th Corps made a quick penetration of the ARBiH 517th Mountain Brigade's border zone at Bugari. At the end of the first day, SVK units, backed by "Gazelle" light attack helicopters, had advanced three kilometers on an eight-kilometer front, approaching the village of Gata Ilidza.

However, further south, TG-6/15th Corps had less success in its attack toward Izacic, making less than a kilometer of gains against the 501st Bihac Mountain Brigade. TG-6 and TG-7 assaults, together with VRS attacks on Grabez, continued over the next four days, but gained little ground, although they did pin down 5th Corps troop reserves. Serb airstrikes against 5th Corps headquarters in Bihac on 18 November and against an ammunition storage site in Cazin on 19 November missed their targets and had little impact on the ground battle.

With 5th Corps partially diverted, the SVK TG-5, together with the VRS TG-3, now launched the main Serb assault on the Bihac city defenses. On 20 November SVK/VRS units hit the weak HVO 101st Bihac Brigade—some 500 men—in the Croat villages of Veliki Skocaj, Mali Skocaj, Medrudrazje, and Zavalje directly south of Bihac. HVO defenses rapidly collapsed, and elements of the 502nd Bihac Mountain Brigade quickly shifted to the area were unable to halt the Serb advance. By 23 November SVK and VRS infantry were preparing to assault the vital 570-meter Debeljaca hill directly overlooking Bihac city. Debeljaca fell to Serb forces on 23/24 November. Meanwhile, to the west, TG-2 troops also had pushed 501st Bihac Brigade elements back to the village of Klokot, where the city's water works was located.³⁵ On 26 November the village of Vedro Polje fell and SVK/VRS troops pushed into Zegar, less than two kilometers from the center of Bihac and less than a kilometer from the city hospital. NATO air strikes against the SVK's Udbina Air Base on 21 November (in response to the Serb air strikes launched from there) and against VRS air defense sites east of Bihac had no effect on the Serb attack. Both SVK and VRS units now had overrun almost 20 percent of the UN's so-called "Safe Area." The captured Muslim and Croat villages were burned.

Meanwhile, on the Grabez plateau, VRS units from all three tactical groups had also renewed their assault and, against strong resistance, penetrated another kilometer into ARBiH defenses to reach the village of Orljani and the important Pritocka Glavica hill by 29/30 November. From this direction, Serb troops were within four to five kilometers of the center of Bihac city. However, 5th Corps troops stood firm on most of the plateau.

The Serb approach to Bihac had evoked open expressions of concern from the UN and the international community that the Serbs would attempt to capture and occupy the city and drive out its 70,000 residents.³⁶ The Croatian government had warned that it would take a hand in the fighting if Bihac were threatened. Now the SVK and VRS appeared to have Bihac at their mercy. To the relief of some, however, although the Serbs continued fighting for some outlying villages and positions, they seemed to be making no effort to capture the city itself. General Milovanovic claimed after the war that Serb forces never intended to enter Bihac. In one interview, he said

If I had entered Bihac—it is true that I tried to motivate soldiers to head toward Bihac—I would have been very unpleasantly surprised, just as I was on Mount Igman and Mount Bjelasnica, [when Karadzic ordered VRS units to withdraw in 1993 from the key mountains because of the threat of NATO air strikes] when I was the one who led the army there and then had to take them back. I feared the same would happen in Bihac as well, since Bihac was a protected zone. . . I was not ordered to get to Bihac. I even had restrictions with regard to that. I was not allowed to target Bihac with heavy artillery. I could not seize such a town using a slingshot. Imagine if I had entered Bihac, lost several hundred soldiers, and then withdrew.³⁷

In an earlier interview, Milovanovic stated, with regard to an attack on Bihac city, "I did not dare to do such a thing without a decision from the Supreme

Command.”³⁸ We believe Milovanovic’s statements are generally accurate, and that occupying Bihac city was irrelevant to the overriding VRS/SVK objective of eliminating the 5th Corps and installing Fikret Abdic as a puppet ruler over the enclave. Karadzic and the RS Supreme Command almost certainly believed that the conquest of Bihac would have been too costly politically and might have incited NATO air strikes, and they would have refrained from ordering or allowing Milovanovic to assault and capture the city itself.

Battle for Bosanska Krupa, 20 November-1 December 1994

Just as the VRS was finishing up its initial push back into Grabež on 20 November, Milovanovic ordered another attack on a new axis at Bosanska Krupa. VRS Tactical Group 4 units had earlier managed to drive back 505th and 511th Brigade troops on the southern bank northeast of town. Now, the VRS mounted its own river crossing, pushing across the Una and seizing several key hills around the village of Hodzinac, about a kilometer from Krupa.

Milovanovic’s apparent objective was to seize the Krupa area and then push north, outflanking ARBiH defenses on Grabež and pushing on toward Cazin.

After three days of heavy fighting, however, the 511th managed to contain the attempt, although claims that it had recaptured the sector appear to have been in error. The VRS then tried again (apparently less than a week later on 25 or 28 November), making another crossing southwest of Krupa, into the Cojluk hill area. Again, however, the 5th Corps stymied TG-4’s efforts to break out of the bridgehead and surround the town.

Zagreb Threatens Intervention

The shrillest voice in the international outcry opposing the VRS move on Bihac was that of the Croatian Government, whose worst nightmare would be realized if Bihac’s fall permitted the SVK and VRS to consolidate their position in western Bosnia. Zagreb therefore published a warning to the Serbs on 10 November and again on the 14th that it was considering intervening if Bihac were about to fall to a

Serb assault. This was as far as the Croatian leaders felt able to go under the intense pressure the US was exerting on them to stay out of the conflict. But on 29 November the Croatian Army joined the HVO in Operation “Zima (Winter) 94” in the Livno valley, hitting a long-quiet 2nd Krajina Corps sector in a move partly designed to draw off Serb forces around Bihac.³⁹ One day later, on 1 December, Croatian Defense Minister Susak issued yet another warning of Croatian intervention, with no apparent effect on the VRS/SVK drive toward Bihac.³⁹

Fighting Around Bihac City, Grabež, and Krupa Smolders On, 1 December 1994-1 January 1995

Although most Western attention was focused on Bihac city, the 5th Corps’ staunch defense of the vital Grabež plateau and the western approaches to Bihac and Cazin in late November signaled that the main SVK/VRS drive had begun to falter. The success of the 5th Corps stand became even more apparent when Milovanovic had to renew the VRS/SVK drive during December, trying to drive Dudakovic’s forces from the Grabež and from the western approaches to Bihac city. VRS and SVK formations attacked in the Bugari, Izacic, Grabež, and Krupa areas, but failed to break out on to the plain. In the Bugari area, elements of the 502nd and 517th Brigades even managed to retake most of the ground lost in November. At Krupa, VRS TG-4 efforts to expand its bridgeheads also failed, despite help from “Gazelle” light attack helicopters firing AT-3 antitank missiles. Clashes in the southern half of the enclave petered out with the implementation on 1 January of former US President Carter’s proposal for a nationwide cease-fire. The cease-fire left the Serbs with only one relative success in that part of the enclave, the seizure on 7/8 December of most of the village of Klokot, which SVK 15th Lika Corps forces had finally managed to wrest from 501st Bihac Brigade troops along with the site of the Bihac city water works.⁴⁰

³⁸ See the section, Operation “Zima 94”: Croatia Enters the Bosnian War Again, November-December 1994.

The decision to halt the fighting appears to have been taken by the RS Supreme Command—and specifically Karadzic—over the strong objections of the VRS. RS President Biljana Plavsic and former senior Main Staff officers have since claimed that the operation against the 5th Corps was cut short by the Supreme Command despite VRS demands that it continue.⁴¹ Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, the chief of the VRS Information Service, claimed in a now-famous (or infamous, if you are an SDS supporter) letter that,

The Supreme Command's decision to hear out former President of the United States Jimmy Carter and agree to yet one more cease-fire, thus halting the operation to break up the 5th Muslim Corps near Bihac, was surprising. According to numerous assessments, the halting of the operation near Bihac was a big mistake, the consequence of which was the loss of the strategic initiative.⁴²

Certainly the VRS Main Staff believed that agreeing to a cease-fire was a mistake and that they could have knocked out the 5th Corps. However, given the failure of VRS and SVK forces to gain any significant ground around Bihac city, Grabez, or Krupa during December, it seems questionable that the Serb forces would have been able to knock out the 5th Corps even if they had been allowed to continue. It remains a difficult question, especially in light of the disasters that befell the VRS during 1995, in which the surviving 5th Corps played a major role. The RSK leaders might have done better to allow Milovanovic to continue the offensive, possibly shifting forces to the Velika Kladusa axis or other sectors to try to force a breakthrough.

The Battle for Velika Kladusa Ends, 1 December 1994-1 January 1995

While the Serbs ground away at the southern approaches to Bihac all through December, the main focus of attention in the north was the continuing battle for Velika Kladusa and the northern half of the Bihac enclave. The nibbling tactics Operational Group "Pauk" had been forced to adopt during November

gradually eroded 5th Corps territorial holdings around Velika Kladusa until 5th Corps positions in the town became completely untenable.

During the first week of December, SVK/APWB troops attacked along the northern flank and frontally toward Kladusa. On 4 December, the APWB command claimed that its troops had finally seized the Drmeljevo-Halatusa ridge position northwest of town on the border and had also captured the important Plazikur hill and Trnovi area at the northeast corner of town. However, 505th Buzim Brigade troops apparently retook the hill; otherwise, its loss probably would have forced the withdrawal of 5th Corps from Kladusa then and there.

The modest but important 5th Corps success notwithstanding, the SVK units of OG "Pauk"—elements of the 21st Kordun and 39th Banija Corps, led by VJ and Serbian special units—redoubled their efforts along the 5th Corps' main northern flank defense line between Velika Kladusa and Bosanska Bojna as well as directly into the town itself. Nevertheless, it took over a week of more SVK/APWB pounding before the 5th Corps defenses gave way. On 14/15 December, SVK/APWB units finally seized the vital positions around the Plazikur hill and Trnovi for good, while continuing the pressure on the south. SVK artillery fire pounded 5th Corps positions with a barrage that a Reuters crew described as "one constant roar."⁴³ With SVK/APWB troops on the verge of severing the 5th Corps's last link out of town, the ARBiH pulled out, withdrawing its remaining units to positions about five kilometers southeast of Kladusa on the Cazin road. Velika Kladusa finally fell on 17 December, but the battle for the northern half of the enclave would continue on into 1995.

Evaluation of Bihac Operations, October-December 1994

The operations around Bihac, stretching from late October through December, encompassed some of the most confusing and complex fighting of the war. More importantly, however, the battles clearly illustrated the year's shifting military balance of power the strengths and weaknesses exhibited by the forces engaged.

By autumn the Bosnian Army had been gnawing away at the VRS for most of a year, seizing bits and pieces of terrain, terrorizing Serb infantry units with surprise raids, and often creating mayhem in VRS rear areas. The ARBiH demonstrated a growing tactical superiority over the VRS, particularly in its effective use of elite recon-sabotage units, which had achieved moral dominance over nearly all VRS infantry formations, including even the Serbs' elite units.

However, this tactical superiority was often offset by the VRS's better staff work and, of course, its firepower. This dynamic played itself out through most of the operations covered in this year's combat narrative.

What should have been, and briefly was, the pinnacle of the ARBiH achievements of 1994, the 5th Corps' Operation "Grmec 94," appears to have been planned and executed in the same manner as most other ARBiH offensive operations during 1994—albeit even more effectively and professionally than elsewhere thanks to General Dudakovic and his staff, the best in the ARBiH. Two of the corps' finest brigades, the 501st and 502nd Bihac Mountain Brigades, kicked off the October offensive, sending their elite "Tajfun" and "Tiger" Assault/Recon-Sabotage Battalions plunging into the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps' rear.

This time the 2nd Krajina Corps finally cracked and disintegrated under the force of the Muslim attack. Major General Grujo Boric's corps had always been the weak sister to the other five VRS corps in terms of resources and troop reserves but had to man an equally extensive frontage. It was already less able than its stronger brethren to absorb the constant pounding by the ARBiH, and it had suffered a particularly unsuccessful year, having battered itself futilely against 5th Corps defenses on the Grabež plateau in at least three significant operations. These ARBiH successes gave Dudakovic's infantry a singular moral superiority over their Serb opponents, so that when the 5th Corps attacked on October 24-25 all of the 2nd Krajina Corps' problems crystallized. The persistently poor training and discipline that beset the entire VRS below the brigade command level, together with what appears to have been inordinately low frontline manning, led to the complete

disintegration of the VRS frontline brigades when 5th Corps elite units arrived in their rear.⁴⁴ The 2nd Krajina Corps command staff was overwhelmed by this collapse, which neither it nor the corps' relatively weak firepower assets could compensate for. With the VRS suddenly scattering and fleeing before it, the 5th Corps was able to advance almost at will.

His corps' retreat cost Major General Boric his command.⁴⁵ Boric and his staff were competent, professional ex-JNA officers. They knew their business and had properly analyzed the inherent structural flaws in their command, just as other VRS corps commands and the Main Staff had done elsewhere. No one, not Boric or the rest of the VRS command and staff, had been able to repair the defects in the VRS ranks despite, or perhaps because of, more than two years of steady combat nor, without enough troop-level cadres to impart training and enforce discipline, could they be expected to. In other corps at other times, the deployment of a few elite units backed by artillery and adeptly maneuvered into position had been able to halt an apparently successful ARBiH attack. In October 1994 the 2nd Krajina Corps lacked those few luxuries essential to stopping the 5th Corps, and it faltered, fled and nearly died.

The late 1994 campaign at Bihac, however, is often best remembered for the Serb riposte rather than Dudakovic's initial blow. Almost exactly one month after the 5th Corps' spectacular breakout from Bihac, VRS and SVK troops were back at the gates of the city and the ARBiH forces seemed on the brink of defeat. Why?

As with 5th Corps' earlier victory, there were several reasons behind the Serbs' successful counteroffensive. In this case, the geographical disposition of the enclave and poor operational-tactical dispositions by the ARBiH operated to the advantage of the Serbs' traditional strengths in professional command and staff work and in firepower to nearly crush the life out of Dudakovic's corps. But a key initial factor in General Milovanovic's ability to organize VRS forces

to strike back was the defense by the discredited 2nd Krajina Corps of the Veliki/Mali Radic-Bosanska Krupa position. As discussed earlier, this prevented the 5th Corps from widening its attack and left its more successful units strung out along the Bihac-Petrovac axis in a vulnerable salient. In addition, the 2nd Krajina Corps's delaying action gave Milovanovic time to collect reinforcements that had to be drawn from throughout the Republika Srpska and preserved for Milovanovic staging areas within striking distance of 5th Corps positions.

General Milovanovic's rapid redeployment of disparate VRS units and his creation of ad hoc combat commands for the quick initiation of a major counteroffensive was one of the greatest demonstrations of VRS command staff skills in the war. It was his tactical skill combined with the Serbs' normal firepower advantages that exploited the unfortunate operational-tactical disposition of the 5th Corps that enabled VRS forces to swiftly eject ARBiH troops from the extensive territory they had so quickly captured. It was his rapid injection of SVK and APWB forces to help the regular VRS forces retake lost ground and the opening of a broad front covering almost the entire border of the enclave that

brought the 5th Corps to its knees. The three Serb or Serb-stiffened armies mustered more than 25,000 troops against the 15,000 Dudakovic could field. The 5th Corps probably could have dealt with these odds in a straight-ahead, limited-frontage fight, but the many attack axes opened so far apart against the 5th Corps made it almost impossible for Dudakovic to stretch his thin forces to cover all the gaps. He was fortunate that not all of these attacks appear to have been pressed home with the vigor necessary to overcome the Muslims' fabled powers of resistance.

When it all came down to the wire, Dudakovic and the 5th Corps prevailed. The 5th Corps soldiers had a certain spirit about them that kept them fighting on against daunting odds—the will to win. The Bosnian Army had demonstrated the superiority of its morale compared to the Serb forces throughout the war. Around Bihac the 5th Corps combined an apparently even stronger intensity, borne of the adversity of its isolation, with discipline and military skills second to none. It was these qualities that finally stopped the Serbs.

Endnotes, Annex 61

¹ This narrative is based on extensive and detailed combat analysis on 1/50,000 scale maps using Sarajevo Radio, Belgrade Tanjug, SRNA, and Paris AFP reporting from 24 October 1994 to 1 January 1995, plus the Reuters pieces listed below. AFP and Reuters regularly carried operational and tactical information provided by UNPROFOR on the battlefield situation. This daily reportage has been supplemented by a collection of journal, magazine, and newspaper articles also listed below.

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Mira Lolic-Mocevic, Interview with Serb Republic Defense Minister Manojlo Milovanovic, Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 10 February 1998. Ranko Vojvodic, "We Lost 13 Western Krajina Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power," Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine* 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic.

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⁵ Renamed by the Serbs to Spasovo.

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⁷ Reuters, "Bosnian Army Tries to Break Out of Bihac Enclave," by Mark Heinrich, 27 October 1994.

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²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Milovanovic later stated,

... I had ordered the corps commanders . . . that three brigades be formed from all units. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Serbian Brigades . . . I did not expect that the corps commanders, of all people, would have an easy time with that. However, the response was massive. I even excluded the Herzegovina Corps from that order because I knew that they were having a crisis replenishing their personnel. However, I received a complaint from the commander of the Herzegovina Corps . . . asking why I did not want Herzegovinians in any of those brigades. When I arrived in Jasenica, the frameworks of those brigades were already in place. Not all the units had arrived in their entirety, but the command structures were already in place, there were two, in some places three battalions . . .

Ranko Vojvodic, "We Lost 13 Western Krajinan Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power," Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine* 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic.

²² General Milovanovic outlined the number of personnel involved in the operation during a February 1998 interview. See Mira Lolic-Moevic, interview with Serb Republic Defense Minister Manojlo Milovanovic, Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 10 February 1998. However, the exact composition of the tactical groups remains unclear, but appears to have involved the following formations:

Tactical Group 1
 1st Serbian Brigade
 Schools Battalion/Center of Military Schools
 1 battalion/43rd Prijedor Motorized Brigade
 1 battalion/6th Sanski Infantry Brigade
 1 composite battalion/Drina Corps
 Major elements, 3rd Petrovac Light Infantry Brigade (-)

Tactical Group 2
 2nd Serbian Brigade
 3 composite battalions
 Major elements, 1st Drvar Light Infantry Brigade

Tactical Group 3
 3rd Serbian Brigade
 3 composite battalions
 Major elements, 15th Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade
 Major elements, 17th Kljuc Light Infantry Brigade
 1st Bijeljina Light Infantry Brigade "Panthers" (-)
 Podrinje Special Forces Detachment "Drina Wolves"
 Battle Group/7th North Dalmatian Corps SVK

Tactical Group 4
 11th Krupa Light Infantry Brigade
 1st Novigrad Infantry Brigade

The 2nd Serbian Brigade's composite battalions appear to have been formed from platoons and companies of the brigades of probably the East Bosnian Corps, Sarajevo-Romanija, Drina, and probably the

Herzegovina Corps. The 3rd Serbian Brigade's composite battalions appears to have been drawn from the 1st Krajina Corps, including platoons and companies of the 2nd Krajina Infantry, 1st Celinac Light Infantry, 11th Dubica Infantry, 43rd Prijedor Motorized, 1st Gradiska Light Infantry, 1st Doboj Light Infantry, 22nd Infantry, 11th Dubica Infantry Brigades—all from the 1st Krajina Corps—and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Semerija Light Infantry Brigades/East Bosnian Corps, plus the 3rd Military Police Battalion/East Bosnian Corps. In addition, several other units were involved in the counteroffensive although their exact subordination remains unclear. These included the corps troops from 2nd Krajina Corps (2nd Military Police Battalion, 2nd Mixed Artillery Regiment, 2nd Recon-Sabotage Company), elements of the 65th Protection Motorized Regiment, plus up to a battalion of armor from the 1st Krajina Corps (either 1st or 2nd Armored Brigades), probably a corps artillery battalion from 1st Krajina Corps, and the 6th (Banja Luka) and 7th (Prijedor) Detachments/MUP Special Police Brigade. Each tactical group probably was supported by a tank company and a mixed artillery battalion. See especially Ranko Vojvodic, "We Lost 13 Western Krajinan Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power," Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine* 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic, and also Vladimir Jovanovic, "Live Mud of Bihac," *Podgorica Monitor* 25 November 1994, pp. 21-22 and Denis Kuljic, "20,000 Serb Soldiers From Croatia and Bosnia Are Entering Bihac!" Zagreb *Globus* 25 November 1994, pp. 3-5.

²³ Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, "The Angrier the Serbs in Serbia Get At Us, the More We Love Them," Belgrade *Duga* 10-23 December 1994,

pp. 25-28, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic; see also Milena Markovic, "The Comeback With People," Belgrade *Vечерње Новости* 15 November 1994, p. 5 in which Milovanovic states,

Our goals are as follows: the total military elimination of the 5th Corps, to the last man who could in any way pose a danger to the Army of the Serbian Republic and the establishment of the borders of the Serbian Republic precisely where our people and deputies in the assembly decided they should be . . . at the Una River.

Bosnian Serb President Karadzic stated on 11 November 1994 that "We are going to disarm the 5th Corps and pacify the region." "Bosnian Serbs Will Capture Bihać, Karadzic Says," Reuters 11 November 1994. Major General Milisav Sekulic, former Chief of Operations and Training for the Main Staff of the Krajina Serb Army also states that the goal of the operation was to destroy the 5th Corps, take over western Bosnia—the Bihać enclave—and proclaim the "Republic of Western Bosnia" under the control of Abdic. Sekulic indicates that the achievement of this would free up significant VRS and SVK forces for other sectors. Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Krin Fell in Belgrade)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, p. 92.

²⁴ Mira Lolic-Moevic, Interview with Serb Republic Defense Minister Manojlo Milovanovic, Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 10 February 1998 and Ranko Vojvodic, "We Lost 13 Western Krajinan Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power," Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine* 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanovic.

²⁵ Mustafa Borovic and Mirsad Sinanovic, "The War Comedy in Which We Made a Jackass Out of Fikret Abdic," Sarajevo *Ljiljan* 4 October 1995, p. 12, an interview with Hamdija Abdic, commander of the 502nd Mountain Brigade.

²⁶ Banja Luka Televizija and Banja Luka Srpski Radio 4 November 1996.

²⁷ The first observed Serb air strike since the VRS Air and Air Defense Force tried to bomb the Novi Travnik plant earlier in the year (and lost four aircraft to US F-16 fighters) was a flashy and successful attack. The Serbs launched an "Orao" strike aircraft from Udbina Air Base in the RSK. Just as the aircraft neared the Bosnian border, it loosed two US-made "Maverick" missiles. The target was an ARBiH ammunition storage depot in Bihać, which the missiles spectacularly destroyed.

²⁸ Novakovic was an ex-JNA officer who formerly had served as the Chief of the SVK Main Staff. Prior to this, he had commanded the VRS Tactical Group 2 (composed of SVK/RSK MUP troops) during Operation "Corridor 92" and had served in the 1991 war. See Dragoljub Petrovic, "Courier Jovica's New Assignment," Belgrade *Nasa Borba* 22-23 November 1997, p. 7, for references to Bozovic and Simatovic. See also International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm>, accessed June 2002, p. 119, which

cites "Pauk" Operative Diary and "Pauk" Operations Logbook No. 1, which apparently covers 16 November 1994 to 1 December 1994.

²⁹ General Sekulic states that,

... a decision was made in Belgrade to destroy the Muslim 5th Corps and for the Serb armies (the SVK and the VRS) to take over the territory of western Bosnia, which would subsequently become the "Republic of Western Bosnia" with Fikret Abdic at its head. It was planned to create a special military grouping under the name "Pauk" (Spider) into which, besides Fikret Abdic's People's Defense units, would enter units of the RSK Ministry of Internal Affairs with reinforcements from Serbia and a number of elements of the Serb Krajina Army. The formation of the "Pauk" grouping commenced in October 1994, and the constitution of its command was completed by 15 November ... General Mile Novakovic was appointed commander of "Pauk".³⁰

From the leadership perspective, an unusual construct of a command system was created. The command of "Pauk" was the key one, and it was not subordinated to either the Main Staff of the Republika Srpska Army or Main Staff of the Serb Krajina Army. The "Pauk" command was subordinated to (in part to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Yugoslavia and in part to the competent element of Serbian State Security.) The task of providing "Pauk" with rear services was entrusted to the Main Staff of the Serb Krajina Army.

Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, pp. 91-92.

³⁰ Operational Group "Pauk" appears to have been organized into three tactical groups that probably exercised control over specific sectors, each controlling one of the three APWB brigades and any SVK, VJ, or RDB/RDB-affiliated troops in that sector. RDB Colonel Radojica ("Raja") Bozovic-"Kobac" likely commanded Tactical Group-2 and SDG Colonel Mihajlo Ulemelek-"Legija" commanded Tactical Group-3. See International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Prosecution's Second Pre-Trial Brief (Croatia and Bosnia Indictments)*, 31 May 2002, <www.un.org/icty/latst/index.htm> accessed June 2002, p. 120. The ICTY cites an SVK parade video from 1995 that show Bozovic and Ulemelek as commanders of-as the ICTY puts it- "VRS TG-2" and "VRS TG-3" respectively. Given the known affiliation of both Bozovic and Ulemelek with OG Pauk, it is likely that these tactical groups were actually part of OG Pauk.

³¹ Major General Sekulic states that a total of 6,638 SVK soldiers "took part in combat operations against the Muslim 5th Corps during December." He breaks down the total as follows:

1,100 troops in two reinforced battalions drawn from several different units of the 11th East-Slavonia-Baranja Corps
1,000 troops from the 39th Banija Corps, not including the 33rd Infantry Brigade "the whole of which was engaged in positions facing the Muslim 5th Corps."
2,553 troops from the 21st Kordun and 15th Lika Corps "in the structure of 'Pauk'" [probably about 1,500 from the 15th Corps and about 1,000 from the 21st Corps]
1,450 troops from the 18th West Slavonian Corps
213 troops from the 7th North Dalmatian Corps attached to the VRS 2nd Krajina Corps
150 special operations troops from Captain Dragan's Alpha Training Center

Note that Sekulic's breakdown does not add up to 6,638. In addition, based on publicly released reports from SVK prisoners held by the ARBiH 5th Corps, the SVK 7th Corps also appears to have had an additional battle group with 15th Corps. This probably comprised another 250 troops. The 33rd Infantry Brigade near Dvor does not appear to have been engaged in offensive operations during November or December which is probably why Sekulic did not include its troops in the total. If the 33rd Brigade is included, the total SVK forces involved probably numbered over 8,000 troops. Major General Milisav Sekulic, *Knin Je Pao U Beogradu (Knin Fell in Belgrade)*, Bad Vilbel: Nidda Verlag, 2001, pp. 92-93. For the prisoner reports, see Rozita Vukovic, "To War for 300 Cigarettes," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 7 December 1994, p. 5.

Celeketic had taken over as Chief of the SVK Main Staff in February 1994 from General Novakovic. Celeketic previously commanded the SVK 18th West Slavonian Corps and the VRS 16th Krajina Motorized Brigade.

³² The 15th Lika Corps forces appears to have been comprised of the following units:

1 company/63rd Airborne Brigade/VJ Corps of Special Units

Tactical Group 5

103rd Donji Lapac Light Infantry Brigade (-)

1 composite battle group/11th Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Corps

1 tank company

1 mixed artillery battalion

May also have included one of the 18th Corps battle groups

Tactical Group 6

1 battalion/9th Gracac Motorized Brigade

1 battalion/18th Korenica Infantry Brigade

1 battalion/50th Vrhovine Infantry Brigade

1 composite battle group/11th Eastern Slavonia-Baranja Corps

Elements, "Scorpion" Special Battalion/11th Eastern

Slavonian-Baranja Corps

1 tank company/50th Vrhovine Infantry Brigade

1 mixed artillery battalion

May also have included one of the 18th Corps battle groups

Tactical Group 7

1 composite battle group/7th North Dalmatian Corps

1 battalion/70th Plaski Infantry Brigade

Elements/Alpha Training Center

1 tank company

1 mixed artillery battalion

The subordination of two composite battle groups/18th West Slavonian Corps is unclear.

³³ Operational Group "Pauk" and its Tactical Groups-1, 2, and 3 appear to have been comprised of the following units:

2 companies/63rd Airborne Brigade/VJ Corps of Special Units

Elements, "Red Beret" Special Operations Unit/Serbian State Security Department

Elements, Serbian Volunteer Guard

HQ, National Defense of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia

1st Velika Kladusa Brigade

2nd Cazin Brigade

3rd Vrnograc Brigade

Tactical Group 8/21st Kordun Corps

1 battalion/11th Vojnic Infantry Brigade

1 battalion/13th Slunj Infantry Brigade

1 battalion/19th Vrgimost Infantry Brigade

1 armored battalion

1 mixed artillery battalion

Tactical Group 9/39th Banija Corps

1 battalion/24th Glna Infantry Brigade

1 battalion/31st Petrinja Infantry Brigade

1 tank company

1 mixed artillery battalion

³⁴ Opening the second phase, the VRS salvoed a number of SA-2 surface-to-air missiles from the 155th Air Defense Rocket Brigade, used in the ground-to-ground mode, at targets across the enclave.

³⁵ On 18 November, APWB forces claimed to have taken a total of 365 5th Corps troops prisoner during the fighting at Velika Kladusa, further claiming that 100 of these had joined APWB units.

³⁶ An article in Zagreb *Globus* claims that the main water works for Bihać are actually in the village of Privilica, about two kilometers southeast of central Bihać, which the VRS seized on 23/24 November. Klokoč was the location of the auxiliary pump system. Denis Kuljic, "Serbian Brigades and Corps Are Already Court-Martialing Deserters," Zagreb *Globus* 2 December 1994, pp. 2, 18.

³⁷ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "UN/NATO Powerless to Stop Serbs," 3 December 1994, p. 1.

³⁸ Mira Lolic-Močević, Interview with Serb Republic Defense Minister Manojlo Milovanović, Banja Luka Srpska Televizija 10 February 1998.

³⁹ Ranko Vojnović, "We Lost 13 Western Krajina Municipalities Militarily: Power is Power," Banja Luka *Nezavisne Novine* 21-27 May 1997, pp. 20-22, an interview with General Manojlo Milovanović.

⁴⁰ Giles Elgood, "Croatian Would Intervene to Stop Bihać Fall," Reuter 1 December 1994.

⁴¹ Zarif Safic, "No One Can Prevent Us From Taking, Taking Back What Belongs to Us!" Travnik *Bosnjak* 9 January 1996, pp. 12-14, an interview with Brigadier Senad "Sargan" Saganovic, commander of the 501st Bihać Mountain Brigade.

⁴² *Beta* 27 October 1997.

⁴³ Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, "Loss of Supreme Command," Belgrade *Nin* 1 November 1996, pp. 19-22, a letter to the editor from the Chief of the VRS Information Service.

⁴⁴ "Rebel Moslems Close Circle Around Kladusa," Reuters 15 December 1994.

⁴⁵ A Bosnian Serb official, Momcilo Mandic, claimed that some VRS brigades had only 15 percent of their "fighters" on the frontline when the attack came. R. Kovacevic, "Is Zametica Still Karadzic's Adviser?" Belgrade *Politika* 11 November 1994, p. 12.

⁴⁶ Colonel Radivoje Tomanic replaced Boric. Boric took over as commander of the VRS Center of Military Schools, now given the honorific "Rajko Balac" in honor of its former commander, killed during the VRS counteroffensive.

Annex 62
Operation “Zima 94”:
Croatia Enters the Bosnian War Again,
November-December 1994

The Croatian Government had several important strategic reasons for wanting to keep VRS/SVK/APWB forces from overrunning the Bihac enclave. There was the near-certainty that Bihac's fall would allow the SVK and VRS to consolidate their position in western Bosnia, virtually integrating the RS and RSK and making Zagreb's goal of reclaiming its Serb-controlled territory doubly difficult. And the Croatian Army's plans for attacking the RSK would be made even more complicated if the capture of Bihac also relieved the SVK of the 5th Corps threat to its rear. Under pressure from the US not to intervene in the conflict, Zagreb at first limited its actions to warning the Serbs, twice—on 10 and 14 November—that it would “consider” intervening if Bihac seemed about to fall. By 29 November, however, it was ready to join with the HVO in launching Operation “Zima (Winter) 94” in the Livno valley, hitting a long-quiet 2nd Krajina Corps sector. In this it expected both to relieve pressure on Bihac and to position HV forces for an eventual campaign against the RSK capital of Knin. Two days later, on 1 December, Croatian Defense Minister Susak explicitly warned that the Croatians would directly intervene against the RSK if necessary: “If Croatia should estimate that Bihac will fall, Croatia will intervene before that happens.”¹ Apparently undeterred by either the initiation of “Zima 94” or the Croatian threats, VRS/SVK forces continued their operations around Bihac.

Campaign Planning and Order of Battle

“Zima 94” sought to achieve two strategic objectives. As stated by General Ante Gotovina, commander of the HV Split Corps District, these were:

- “to weaken and halt the enemy offensive against Bihac,”

— “to create a favorable operational-strategic zone for liberation of the parts of the [Croatia] and Bosnia-Herzegovina under the control of the rebel Serbs.”² (In other words, make territorial gains such that eventually, HV troops could threaten the Krajina Serb capital of Knin and the rest of Serb-controlled UN Protected Area South.)

To meet these strategic objectives, the Main Staff of the HVO and General Gotovina’s Split Corps District set the following operational-tactical goals:

— “In the part of Dinara under HVO control, from the Donji Rujani [village]-Maglaj [mountain] line, to rout and repulse the enemy forces in the direction of Poviruse-Troglav [mountain tops], in that way eliminating the danger of a possible enemy flank blow in the direction of Rujani-Sinj.”

— “East of Livanjsko Polje, along the Celebic-Radanovci-Bogdasi line, to push the enemy forces from the eastern edge of Livanjsko Polje and limit their maneuvering room, thus securing the right flank of the forces on the Dinara line of attack.”

— “With deep spearhead wedges skirting the basic communication lines east and west of Livanjsko Polje, to gradually expand the attack and develop it on the flanks, thus ensuring our forces’ freedom of movement across Livanjsko Polje while splitting the enemy forces between Dinara and Staretina [Mountains].”³

To achieve this, the HV/HVO were to,

— “With a simultaneous frontal and flank attack, together with the insertion of combat groups into the enemy’s tactical depth, and with strong artillery-rocket support, to rout the enemy forces and push them back from their forward positions and the dominant elevations.”

— “To repulse any enemy counterattacks, and then to fortify and establish obstructions at the achieved line, from which fresh forces are introduced.”

—“To ensure stable logistical support and to be prepared to continue the attack.”⁴

The operation was planned to proceed over a period of 10 to 15 days.⁵

Operation “Zima 94” came under the nominal command authority of the HVO Main Staff, headed by Major General Tihomir Blaskic. Most of the HV forces involved in the operation, however, remained under the direct control of their HV commanders, who made sure that all their actions were closely coordinated with the HVO. The joint Croat forces established two operational groups for the attack, taking over normal command and control for the Livno-Glamoc-Kupres area from the HVO Tomislavgrad Corps District.

The command responsible for the main effort in “Zima 94” was the “Livno” Operational Group, which was formed from the staff of the HV Split Corps District, commanded by Major General Ante Gotovina. The “Livno” OG was an all-HV force assigned the mission of attacking along the Croatian-Bosnian border in the Dinara Mountains and on the western side of the Livno valley. The Split Corps District earmarked several formations for the attack so that the assault units could be rotated and refreshed on a regular basis. These units included the 4th Guards Brigade, the 7th Guards Brigade, and the 126th Home Defense Regiment. In addition, the corps committed special composite companies from the 6th Home Defense Regiment, the 114th Split Brigade, the 142nd Home Defense Regiment, plus corps-level assets such as the Split Corps District’s Tactical Sniper Company, 264th Recon-Sabotage Company, and the Antiterrorist Group/72nd Military Police Battalion. The corps-level 14th Artillery Battalion provided fire support while the 40th Engineer Battalion helped the HV forces deal with the problems of difficult terrain, weather, and Serb minefields. All told, the “Livno” OG could call on some 7,000 troops, but probably no more than

2,000 to 4,000 of these were engaged in combat or support roles in Bosnia at any one time.

The “Kupres” Operational Group was an HVO command, stiffened by an HV special operations unit, with the mission of clearing the Staretina and Hrbina-Slovinj Mountain areas and seize positions around the town of Glamoc. On the right, southeast of Glamoc, the 1st HVO Guards Brigade “Ante Bruno Basic,” reinforced with a battalion each from the 2nd and 3rd HVO Guards Brigades, was the primary combat formation. On the left, attacking in support of the “Livno” OG, was a mixed HV/HVO tactical group comprising elements of the elite 1st Croatian Guards Brigade, the 1st HGZ, (the main combat formation of President Tudjman’s guard force, the 1st Croatian Guards Corps.) the HVO 22nd Sabotage Detachment, and a battalion-size unit of Bosnian Croat Special Police. In addition, troops from the HVO 79th and 80th Home Defense Regiments were available to hold less important sectors or take over captured ground. Elements of the HVO Main Staff’s 10th Artillery-Rocket Regiment, plus assorted HVO engineer, MP, and air defense assets, probably were in support. The total force, including both HV and HVO personnel, numbered some 4,500 troops. The HVO Main Staff could also call on major elements of the HV 5th Guards Brigade—about 1,000 troops—in reserve around Livno, to reinforce any sector as needed.

The VRS 2nd Krajina Corps had three brigades defending the front from the Croatian-Bosnian border to north of Kupres. On the Serb right (HV left), the 9th Grahovo Light Infantry Brigade manned the front over to about halfway between Livno Valley and Glamoc Valley, in the Staretina Mountains. From here, the 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade took over and linked up with the 7th Kupres-Sipovo Motorized Brigade about 15 kilometers southwest of Kupres. The motorized brigade probably had only one battalion involved on the HV/HVO attack front. In total, the 2nd Krajina Corps had only about 3,500 troops to defend some 55 kilometers of frontage. The corps lacked any operational-level reserves to deal with a major attack, and the brigades had hardly any tactical

reserves either. Because there had been little or no fighting in the area since 1992, most of the VRS brigades probably were not fully mobilized until just before the operation began.

Terrain and Weather

The Livno-Glamoc-Kupres front tended to be a quiet one because its geography exerted even more dramatic effects on combat operations than was usual in Bosnia; now, the addition of the terrible winter weather common to the region was going to make military activity very, very difficult. This sector lies in the karst region of former Yugoslavia. Quoting an earlier section of this study, karst

consists of dissected, rocky surfaces, almost exclusively limestone, covered with only sparse vegetation; interspersed in the region are "poljes," which are large, open valley plains. The limestone in karst regions has been eroded, producing fissures, sinkholes, underground streams, and caverns. The region's scattered mountain ranges have many peaks over 1,500 meters, while the hills crest primarily between 200 to almost 550 meters. Most of the scattered rivers are small, less than 60 meters wide at high water, while very shallow at low water. Large scale combat operations in the region, especially using large numbers of mechanized or motorized transport, would be difficult in the rocky, steep terrain and given the limited road network. In addition, winter adds deep snow, making many roads impassable. The flat poljes also become flooded or mud-covered during winter, making movement difficult. The population lives primarily in the poljes and on the coast, with scattered villages across the remainder.⁶

Between Livno and Glamoc lay two prominent "poljes" (hereafter referred to as valleys), Livansko Polje and Glamocko Polje. On the west side of Livno Valley are the towering Dinara Mountains. Between Livno and Glamoc Valleys are the equally imposing Staretina Mountains and on the east side of Glamoc Valley are the Hrbina-Slovinj Mountains. All of these

rise in several places over 1,500 meters, and many over 1,800 meters. In addition, as noted above, it was impossible to attack directly up the valleys because snow and meltwater make the plains impassable in winter.

That winter the terrain difficulties were compounded by weather that was "abnormally bad" and bone-chillingly cold. Heavy snow blanketed the area and, according to an HV article on the 5th Guards Brigade, temperatures were between -20 and -30 degrees Celsius (-4 and -22 degrees Fahrenheit).⁷ In conditions like these, all military activity slows down. Personnel have to be rotated frequently to avoid freezing to death, while equipment operates sluggishly and requires intensive maintenance.

"Livno" Operational Group Advances in the Dinara, 29 November-10 December 1994⁸

The leading elements of General Gotovina's forces jumped off on 29 November as the 3rd Battalion/126th Home Defense Regiment (HDR) began infiltrating seven platoon-size groups behind VRS lines in the Dinara Mountains that day. These infiltration tactics—similar to those the Bosnian Army had been using throughout 1994—were important to the attack's initial success. Gotovina writes,

The aim of infiltrating combat groups in the enemy's rear before the onset of the frontal and flank attack was to achieve a positional advantage over the enemy. By using the element of surprise, the mission was to capture as many prominent elevations under enemy control as possible.

Placing combat groups in the enemy's rear was exceptionally difficult because of the heavy snow and low temperatures. The combat groups encountered the enemy, and one of their members was also captured. Some positions in the enemy's rear were not fully captured, but very importantly the left flank . . . was secured.⁹

The main attack began on 30 November, with the “Livno” OG pushing two battle groups forward. The 3rd Battalion/126th HDR attacked on the left, along the border where its earlier moves to seize and occupy important elevations like the 1,572-meter Veliki Sokolac had loosened the VRS 9th Grahovo Brigade’s defenses and facilitated the advance. By 1 December 126th Regiment troops had advanced some seven kilometers into VRS lines. Meanwhile, on the right, a composite battle group (Rapid Reaction Company/ 114th Brigade, 264th Recon-Sabotage Company, Tactical Sniper Company), attacked along the main Grahovo road, keeping pace with the 3rd/126th HDR and seizing the villages of Caprazlje, Provo, and Gubin (north of Rujani).¹⁰ Overall, although the VRS forces were unable to halt the HV attack they managed to slow it and prevent the Croatians from achieving a breakthrough.

The excruciating weather forced “Livno” OG to make frequent rotations of the sub-elements of 3rd/126th HDR with a variety of disparate units, which apparently compounded command and control problems already exacerbated by the weather. Nevertheless, the HV pressed the attack over the next week. On 4 December, a battle group from Brigadier Damir Krsticevic’s 4th Guards Brigade, including an armor-mechanized company, replaced the composite battle group in the right hand attack. By 5 December, 126th HDR and 4th Guards units had advanced another five kilometers, reaching a line running roughly between Veliki Troglav mountain and the village of Sajkovic. On 7 December, Brigadier Ivan Korade’s 7th Guards Brigade relieved both the 126th HDR and 4th Guards, taking over “Livno” OG’s entire front. Korade’s troops immediately attacked and gained another two kilometers in some places.

However, over the next three days, the VRS 9th Grahovo Brigade, probably reinforced with elements of the SVK 1st Vrlika Light Infantry Brigade and other VRS odds and ends, was able to counterattack and temporarily retake some ground from the 7th Guards. General Gotovina states,

Eight days after the commencement of the offensive activities on Dinara and the eastern edge of Livanjsko Polje, there were increasing signs

pointing to the need for greater caution and reinforcement of the line of defense. The enemy made unsuccessful attempts at limited counter-attacks in several directions. One such counter-attack was on 10 December at Dinara, when he managed to temporarily regain some less important positions that he had previously lost.¹¹

Though these VRS counterattacks failed to retrieve any important ground, they appear to have disrupted the HV advance and forced a pause.

“Kupres” Operational Group Partially Stymied, 29 November-10 December 1994

On the right wing of the HV/HVO attack, the operation proceeded less successfully. The “Kupres” OG attack plan called for a two-pronged advance. On the left, the mixed HV/HVO tactical group was to attack up the right hand side of the Livno Valley, along a road and in the Staretina Mountains, in support of the “Livno” Operational Group. On the right, “Kupres” OG was to make its main effort, with a reinforced 1st HVO Guards Brigade attacking the Staretina and Hrbina-Slovinj Mountain areas toward the town of Glamoc.

When “Kupres” OG apparently kicked off its attack on 29/30 November, neither of its two prongs were able to advance, running into stiff opposition from the VRS 5th Glamoc Light Infantry Brigade. The HV/HVO special operations units on the left side were unable to drive Serb troops from the fortified village of Celebici, less than a kilometer from the start line. On the right, the HVO Guards troops also failed when they tried to establish VRS control over key mountaintops, particularly Koricina and Kujaca on either side of the Glamoc Valley, and this helped stifle the Croat assault.

On the right, however, 1st HGZ, 22nd Sabotage, and Bosnian Croat Special Police troops—possibly with assistance from the HV 5th Guards Brigade—finally took Celebici on 6 December.¹² With the loss of this

stronghold, 5th Glamoc Brigade defenses appear to have almost collapsed, and HV/HVO units pushed forward seven to eight kilometers on 7 December, reaching the village of Vrbica and securing the key mountains flanking the attack axis along the road.

The Final Push, 10 December-24 December 1994

With the capture of Celebici, the HV/HVO paused briefly again. Taking the time to provide unity of command for a concerted drive up the valley, the "Livno" OG assumed command of the right side of the Livno valley.¹³ The rest of "Kupres" OG appears to have gone the defensive. In preparation for a renewed assault along all three axes (left sector, Dinara; center sector, Grahovo road; right sector, Staretina/right-hand valley road), the "Livno" OG attacked with 7th Guards Brigade and took a series of mountaintops along the Velika Duvjakusa-Donji Kazanci line, moving forward another two kilometers.

To make the final push, "Livno" OG rotated fresh formations into the frontline, inserting the 4th Guards Brigade on the left and in the center, and taking Brigadier Ivan Kapular's 5th Guards Brigade from reserve and placing it on the right. VRS 2nd Krajina Corps defenses, already under intense strain, buckled under the onslaught. By 19 December, HV units had driven forward another seven kilometers in the center and right-hand sectors, taking several villages, including Przine, Gornji Kazanci, and Bogdasi.¹⁴ At the same time, the VRS Main Staff and 2nd Krajina Corps appear to have made the decision to withdraw from the rest of the valley to more defensible positions along the northern rim. By 24 December, the VRS had pulled back to the Dinara-Crni Lug-Grkovci-Nuglasice-Staretina Mountains-Glamoc town line, protecting the main pass toward Bosansko Grahovo—the HV's eventual objective.

Evaluation of "Zima 94"

Although a resounding battlefield success, Operation "Zima 94" failed to achieve its immediate strategic objective of relieving Serb pressure on Bihać. This was not a reflection on the HV/HVO strategy but

rather the result of a conscious choice made by the VRS Main Staff to continue its assault on the enclave rather than detach troops to relieve the threatened sector. This reflected the perpetual strategic dilemma faced by the VRS Main Staff—the lack of strategic and operational-level troop reserves. The difficult choice forced on Mladić and Milovanović in 1994 would be amplified during 1995.

The VRS's failure to shift forces to cover Livno, however, definitely contributed to the Croats' success in achieving the second important objective of the campaign. The HV's goal was to bite off a portion of Serb territory in the Dinara-Livno sector so that HV troops might eventually reach positions from which they could more easily strike Knin, the Krajina Serb capital. Despite their long frontages and limited resources, the VRS defenders rallied enough to slow the able HV assault and stop the HVO. If the VRS command had been able or willing to commit more units to the battle, the HV gains could have been curtailed even further. That might have made it more difficult for the HV to position itself for its mid-1995 offensive in time to defeat the RSK.

The VRS decision to withhold forces from Livno and the 5th Corps' stand at Bihać gave Zagreb the best of both worlds and achieved both of its main objectives. If "Zima 94" did not relieve Serb pressure on Bihać, the 5th Corps nevertheless was able halt the Serb attack. Because the Serbs concentrated their limited forces on Bihać, the troop reserves that might have stopped the Croat advance were not available. The convergence of Croat and Muslim interests in 1995 would combine the Bosnian Army's dogged ability to pressure the Serbs despite limited gains and the Croatian Army's lightning operations, a war-winning combination that the VRS could not defeat.

Operation "Zima 94," the first major HV operation since 1993, was an important gauge of the improvements the army had made. The HV attack was able to achieve sizeable territorial gains in a relatively short period of time, making a 20-kilometer-deep penetration and taking 200 square kilometers of

territory. Earlier, Dudakovic's 5th Corps had taken as much territory and advanced even further and much faster after the 2nd Krajina Corps's defenses completely collapsed. Opposite the HV/HVO, some of the same VRS units seem to have fought pretty hard and given a better account of themselves in delaying the HV attack despite their marked inferiority in numbers. In this they were aided by the horrible weather and difficult terrain, which made it impossible for the Croatians to maintain any kind of operational momentum against the need for constant rotation of frontline units. As stated earlier, in these circumstances the Croat attack probably could have been slowed even more or even halted if the VRS had been willing to commit more troops to the defense.

Overall, though, the HV/HVO campaign was well planned and executed. In particular, the Croats effectively integrated armor and artillery support with their infantry advances in a demonstration of the combined arms capability that would help propel HV troops across the Krajina and Bosnia in 1995. All in all, the operation gave the HV an excellent training opportunity to blood its units and work out bugs in its system in preparation for greater things to come the next year. In 1995, the HV was to demonstrate an ability to seize far more ground far more quickly than it had in "Zima 94."

Endnotes, Annex 62

- ¹ Giles Elgood, "Croatian Would Intervene to Stop Bihać Fall," Reuters 1 December 1994.
- ² Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 25.
- ³ Gotovina, op. cit., p. 27.
- ⁴ Gotovina, op. cit., p. 27.
- ⁵ Gotovina, op. cit., p. 28.
- ⁶ See Annex 9: Military Geography and Weather in Croatia, in the section on the Croatian War 1990-1991.
- ⁷ Gordan Radosevic, "Slavonia, Land of the Falcons," Zagreb *Velebit* 24 November 1995, pp. 16-17.
- ⁸ The combat narrative for Operation "Zima 94" is based primarily on General Gotovina's account in *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996. It has been supplemented by a series of articles in the Croatian Army newspaper, *Velebit*, which has proven particularly useful in identifying units participating in "Zima 94." In addition, Belgrade Tanjug and Zagreb Radio reports covering the period 29 November to 24 December 1994 have helped corroborate Gotovina's narrative detailing HV/HVO territorial gains during the operation. The following *Velebit* articles (and some others) have proven to be the most useful:
- Eduard Milicevic, "Heroes Never Die," Zagreb *Velebit* 15 March 1996, p. 11, an article on Brigadier Ante Saskor, the deputy commander of the 1st Croatian Guards Corps (1st HGZ).
- Gordan Radosevic, "Slavonia, Land of the Falcons," Zagreb *Velebit* 24 November 1995, pp. 16-17, an article on the 1st Infantry Battalion/5th Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Radosevic, "Slavonian Glories," Zagreb *Velebit* 8 December 1995, pp. 16-17, an article on the Reconnaissance Company/5th Guards Brigade.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "They Fulfilled Every Task," Zagreb *Velebit* 19 April 1996, pp. 14-15, an article on the 3rd Infantry Battalion/4th Guards Brigade.
- Nikolina Satalo, "Pumas' Leaps To Victory," Zagreb *Velebit* 26 April 1996, pp. 12-13, an article on the 1st Infantry Battalion/7th Guards Brigade.
- Statement by Major General Ivan Korade, Zagreb *Velebit* 13 September 1996, p. 14, a statement on the 7th Guards Brigade.
- Vesna Puljak, "Steel for the Pumas Leaps," Zagreb *Velebit* 12 January 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the Armored Battalion/7th Guards Brigade.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Side By Side With the Guard Brigades," Zagreb *Velebit* 7 February 1997, p. 13, an article on the 6th Home Defense Regiment.
- Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail on All the Battlefields," Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* 1 June 1996, p. 8, an article on the 114th Infantry Brigade.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Defense of the Homeland—A Sacred Task," Zagreb *Velebit* 8 December 1995, p. 14, an article on the 126th Home Defense Regiment.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "The Pride of Drniš," Zagreb *Velebit* 4 April 1997, p. 13, an article on the 142nd Home Defense Regiment.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Lethal and Precise," Zagreb *Velebit* 20 December 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 14th Artillery Battalion.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Few But Effective," Zagreb *Velebit* 3 January 1997, pp. 16-17, an article on the 264th Recon-Sabotage Company.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven Countless Times," Zagreb *Velebit* 10 January 1997, pp. 16-17, an article on the Tactical Sniper Company.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "They Successfully Responded to All Challenges," Zagreb *Velebit* 20 December 1996, an article on the 72nd Military Police Battalion.
- Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven in Every Task," Zagreb *Velebit* 22 November 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 40th Engineer Battalion.
- Gojko Jelic, "We Had An Honorable Mission—We Were the First to Enter Kupres," Mostar *Hrvatski List* 31 March 1995, p. 30, an interview with Bosnian Croat Special Police commander Brigadier Zlatan Mijo Jelic.
- Neven Miladin, "Flight on the Wings of Victory," Zagreb *Velebit* 12 July 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 2nd HVO Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Radosevic, "Hawks of the Lasva Valley," Zagreb *Velebit* 19 July 1996, pp. 16-17, an article on the 3rd HVO Guards Brigade.
- Gordan Radosevic, "Pillars of the Defense," Zagreb *Velebit* 3 January 1997, pp. 18-19, an article on the 2nd Infantry Battalion/3rd HVO Guards Brigade.
- N. M., "The Visitor's Return," Zagreb *Velebit* 15 December 1995, p. 32, an article on the 80th HVO Home Defense Regiment.
- ⁹ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 29. In addition, a Belgrade Tanjug piece from 4 December 1994 outlined detailed information gleaned from captured 126th HDR personnel who were paraded on Knin TV. This information matched closely that in Gotovina's study.
- ¹⁰ For whatever reason, General Gotovina's study only mentions elements of the 114th Split Brigade on this axis. However, an HV Zagreb *Velebit* article makes it clear that elements of all three units, the Rapid Reaction Company of the 114th Brigade, the 264th Recon-Sabotage Company, and the Tactical Sniper Company, fought together in the operation. See Zeljko Stipanovic, "Few But Effective," Zagreb *Velebit* 3 January 1997, pp. 16-17, an article on the 264th Recon-Sabotage Company. See also Zeljko Stipanovic, "Proven Countless Times," Zagreb *Velebit* 10 January 1997, pp. 16-17, an article on the Tactical Sniper Company, and Zoran Vukman, "Victorious Trail on All the Battlefields," *Slobodna Dalmacija* 1 June 1996, p. 8, an article on the 114th Split Brigade. In the latter article, the brigade commander, Colonel Marko Skejo, states,
- For those operations [Zima 94, Ljeto (Summer) 95, and Oluja (Storm) 95], we separated out volunteers from all the battalions, and formed one Rapid-Reaction Company, which first left for the Rujani-Grahovo line, and broke through the line ahead of the 4th Guard Brigade, which afterward continued the operation.
- ¹¹ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, p. 30.
- ¹² Gotovina seems to indicate that the 5th Guards were not inserted into combat until after 10 December, but a Zagreb *Velebit* article claims that the brigade was involved in the capture of Celebici. See Gordan Radosevic, "Slavonia, Land of the Falcons," Zagreb *Velebit* 24 November 1995, pp. 16-17, an article on the 1st Infantry Battalion/5th Guards Brigade.
- ¹³ Colonel General Ante Gotovina, *Offensive Battles and Operations of the Croatian Army and HVO Knin*: Split Corps District, 1996, pp. 26, 31.
- ¹⁴ Belgrade Tanjug 19 December 1994.

Annex 63

UNPROFOR in 1994: Towards Escalation or Evacuation?

By early 1994, United Nations peacekeeping was wisely perceived as having reached a state of crisis—not only in the former Yugoslavia, but around the world. The UN, under Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's energetic though controversial leadership, fielded no fewer than 70,000 troops from 70 countries under its flag in 17 nations around the world—a force, for the sake of comparison, more than half the size of the British Army and bigger than the *entire* Canadian military.^{1,2} But while a British or Canadian military operation would have been supported and directed by phalanxes of civilians in London or Ottawa, the tens of thousands of UN peacekeepers scattered across the planet were directed by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' minuscule staff of 267 (including secretaries).³

With over 36,000 total peacekeepers under three commands in Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia, policing the former Yugoslavia had become the UN's largest and most visible operation in the world.⁴ Rightly or wrongly, UNPROFOR was increasingly seen by many as an exemplar of all that was wrong in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The operation was big, expensive, seemingly unclear of purpose, and had no clear end in sight. But its very size and visibility also made it too big to abandon, for to do so would be to admit failure, further compromising the credibility of the UN and its troop-contributing nations. UNPROFOR had become UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's albatross.

Following the pattern of previous years, UNPROFOR would expand both its size and its mandate during the course of 1994. But it remained unclear whether UNPROFOR's expanding forces—and the growing range of military options made available to it—were helping UNPROFOR gain control over the Bosnian conflict or merely drawing the UN further into it.

Changing Forces

UNPROFOR began the year 1995 with about 12,000 peacekeepers in Bosnia; it would roughly double in size to some 24,000 troops by year-end. Largely as a result of this rapid expansion—and “donor fatigue” on the part of the overstretched, downsizing NATO militaries—UNPROFOR's composition became visibly less NATO-generated in the course of the year. Desperately in need of additional forces to carry out its ever-expanding list of missions (including the task of maintaining a credible presence in all six of the UN-declared “safe areas”), UNPROFOR had to accept contributions from a wider range of nations. By the end of 1994 about one-third of its troops were from non-NATO Scandinavian, Eastern European, and Asian contributors, who were distributed throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of these forces lamentably proved to be liabilities rather than assets, obliging UNPROFOR headquarters to support and defend them but adding little capability to the UN command.

While some of these newer contingents—like the 1,000-strong Swedish contribution to the composite “Nordic” battalion based in Tuzla⁵—were drawn from well-equipped, highly professional militaries that could be readily integrated into the existing NATO command and logistic structure, others were not. The 1,200-man Bangladeshi battalion that replaced the French contingent in Bihać in November 1994 was to prove worse than ineffective. Not only did they arrive in Bosnia without equipment—later provided by the Germans from former East German military stocks—but most of the men lacked rifles and the most rudimentary infantry supplies. Their utter lack of cold-weather clothing assured that the Bangladeshis—who had never seen snow before—during the harsh winter of 1994–1995 would suffer terribly from the moment they disembarked, rendering them completely ineffective as a peacekeeping or even an observing force.⁶

As in previous years, UNPROFOR's peacekeeping troops were generally deployed in national battalions, operating under the direction of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC), a de facto multinational division headquarters in Sarajevo. BHC was subdivided geographically into three brigade-equivalent sectors: UN Sector Sarajevo, UN Sector South West, and UN Sector North East. The French had primacy in Sector Sarajevo, which still had French, Egyptian, and Ukrainian subordinate battalions and was responsible for the capital and its immediate environs. The British formed the core of UN Sector South West, headquartered in Gornji Vakuf and comprising British, Canadian, Spanish, and Malaysian battalions. UN Sector North East was a composite command, including Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch components.⁷

Towards the “Mogadishu Line”

UNPROFOR in Bosnia began the year with a new commander, British Lt. General Sir Michael Rose. Rose—a former Special Air Service (SAS) officer—took over from Belgian General Francis Briquemont on 5 January, after Briquemont had complained of fatigue and publicly expressed his frustration with the UN’s repeated unwillingness to commit the additional peacekeeping forces pledged in UN Security Council Resolutions.⁸ By mid-year Rose also had been rendered disillusioned and despairing by his dealings with the Bosnian factions and the UN civil authorities.

UNPROFOR’s mission and mandate had become a bewilderingly complex tangle derived from literally dozens of UN Security Council Resolutions. (By December 1993, no fewer than 54 UN Security Council Resolutions had been passed on the former Yugoslavia, perhaps half of these explicitly defining or refining UNPROFOR’s mandate.) French General Philippe Morillon, a former UNPROFOR Bosnia commander, had observed that the UN’s Security Council Resolutions were “like the Koran—everything was there, including its opposite.”¹⁰

Rose and UNPROFOR were plagued by a seemingly inexorable process of “mission creep” during the course of the year. Moreover, the already-challenging task of fulfilling UNPROFOR’s varied missions was

necessarily aggravated by the intrinsic difficulties of “peacekeeping with a war machine.” Such difficulties were borne of the mismatch between the problems UNPROFOR routinely confronted, and the punitive measures available to it—when UN headquarters allowed any measures at all. As Rose characterized it upon the conclusion of his term as commander,

You have NATO, which is a high-tech, highly-integrated warfighting machine—the most powerful one the world has ever seen, which has based its entire strategy and doctrine on the mass application of force and total destruction of the enemy in a limited timeframe—having to learn the art of peacekeeping...

UNPROFOR was never there to protect one party from another. Even though one may be a legitimate sovereign power and the other one may be a renegade regime. That’s not what peacekeeping is about. The dangers are that you lose sight of what you are here to do because you are sucked in and you get manipulated by internal and external pressures. Then you lose your mission and cross ‘the Mogadishu line’ using more force than you should and end up with the sort of disaster we saw in Somalia.¹¹

The “Mogadishu line”—that intangible point when a peacekeeping force crosses over and becomes a combatant effectively allying itself with one of the sides in the conflict—was always at the forefront of the thinking of UN civilian and military thinking after the horrific American debacle in Somalia. But events constantly seemed to pull UNPROFOR continually closer to this line, like tides drawing a ship inexorably toward a reef. And in 1994, the means by which UNPROFOR commanders found themselves most directly engaged in the conflict was the use of NATO airpower.

NATO Airpower: A “Blue Sword” but Not a Silver Bullet

Unable to command the respect or compliance from the forces of the warring factions—most notably, the Bosnian Serbs—UNPROFOR’s Bosnia-Herzegovina

Command and, more reluctantly, the UN civilian leadership, began to use the threat of NATO airpower more actively as an instrument of policy. In the early cases—Sarajevo in February 1994 and Gorazde in April—the mere threat of substantial airpower proved an effective means of influencing Bosnian Serb actions and helped bring about the creation of the heavy weapons exclusion zones around the two cities. But by the end of the year, when NATO aircraft were actually striking Bosnian and Krajina Serb targets on the ground, neither the threat nor the use of NATO airpower was modulating Bosnian Serb behavior in the manner the UN had hoped it would—perhaps because when the hammer fell it did not fall as hard as the Serbs had feared. By the end of 1994 the Bosnian Serbs still tried to avoid NATO airstrikes if possible but at times they could and did defy the UN even at the risk of air reprisals.

On 28 February 1994 NATO conducted its first official combat action of the alliance's 45-year history. On that date six Krajina Serb "Galeb" light ground-attack aircraft took off from the Serb-held area in adjacent Croatia to raid the Muslim-held Pucarevo arms factory just outside Novi Travnik. Enroute they were detected by NATO AWACS aircraft and four US F-16 fighters were vectored in to intercept them. After almost 11 months of DENY FLIGHT Operations with no combat activity, NATO pilots had for the first time encountered unmistakably military aircraft conducting combat operations in clear violation of the No-Fly Zone. It was all over in less than three minutes as four of the six Krajina Serb aircraft went down while the other two escaped out of Bosnian airspace and the No-Fly Zone's jurisdiction.¹²

The contrast between the success of the DENY FLIGHT enforcement operation—whose response to visible violations required no additional authorization from UN officials—and the failures of the UN's cumbersome system for close air support of threatened ground troops was to be highlighted not long afterward. On 13 March the dangerous inefficiency of the UN's close air support mechanism (known as "Blue Sword" missions) was illustrated by a much-publicized incident when NATO aircraft arrived over Bosnia hours after a request for assistance from threatened French peacekeepers. UNPROFOR Bosnia com-

mander General Rose had approved the request and relayed it to overall UNPROFOR commander General Jean Cot, and thence to UN Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi, who exercised final civilian control over all airstrike requests. But by the time Akashi had concurred in the request the offending Bosnian Serb guns had long since vanished.¹³ Although no French casualties resulted from the hours-long delay, the embarrassing ineffectiveness of the airpower response mechanism precipitated a long series of demands to have the UN—specifically, UN Special Envoy Akashi—taken "out of the loop" in the airstrike decision process. NATO Allied Forces Southern Europe commander Admiral Leighton Smith offered perhaps the most direct commentary on the lessons NATO had drawn from this parallel military-civilian chain of command arrangement: "Don't ever have another dual key...It is a hell of a lot easier if there is a single chain of command, with one guy in charge...I would not make that mistake again."¹⁴

Although the directed use of NATO air power against ground targets—as distinct from downing No-Fly Zone violators or providing close air support to embattled peacekeepers—had been threatened around Sarajevo in February 1994, NATO air power was first actually used in early April against Bosnian Serb ground targets around Gorazde.* At this time, the Bosnian Serb army was on the verge of overrunning one of the six UN-declared "safe areas," and the front lines were only three kilometers from the center of Gorazde. On 10 April, when both Western and UN anxieties had reached a crescendo, UNPROFOR Bosnia Commander Rose and UN Special Representative Akashi authorized NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb ground targets after several forward air controllers of the British Special Air Service came under Serb fire.^{15 16}

Late that afternoon two US Air Force F-16s struck a Bosnian Serb command post 12 kilometers southwest of Gorazde with three bombs. When the first strike had no apparent effect, a second was authorized the following day. Two US Marine Corps F/A-18s struck the Serbs on 11 April, hitting a group of VRS armored

* See Annex 49, "Operation 'Zvezda 94': The VRS Assault on Gorazde, April 1994" for a more detailed discussion of the VRS offensive against Gorazde and the NATO airstrikes and ultimatum.

vehicles that had been firing into the town.¹⁷ NATO's bare-minimum aerial sorties seem to have done little in the way of material damage, but they had the effect of temporarily halting the VRS advance on Gorazde.¹⁸ The UN's satisfaction with its success at Gorazde was short-lived; the furious Bosnian Serb commander, General Mladic, promptly "detained" about 150 UN personnel and held them for the duration of the Gorazde crisis.¹⁹

Even worse, the VRS continued its offensive against Gorazde despite the NATO air actions and after the Bosnian Serbs had agreed to accept a UN proposal to cease fire, withdraw their forces from a three-kilometer exclusion zone on the eastern bank of the Drina, allow the deployment of UN peacekeepers into the town, and agree to let medical aid and relief workers to reach the town.²⁰ With its threats disregarded after only a few days, NATO issued a second ultimatum to the Serbs on 22 April, threatening air strikes against VRS military targets within 20 kilometers of Gorazde unless the VRS complied with the terms of the UN agreement by 24 April.^{21 22} Stubbornly defying the UN and the international community, Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic finally bowed to pressure from Serbian President Milosevic and directed General Mladic to comply with the terms of the NATO ultimatum. As at Sarajevo, Serb heavy weapons were to be withdrawn from a 20-kilometer radius from the town center or placed under UN supervision; VRS troops were to withdraw from a three-kilometer sub-zone, which would be monitored by UN peacekeepers and military observers. The Serb forces withdrew as ordered, and had withdrawn at least most of their troops and heavy weapons to the specified distances by the 24 April deadline.^{23 24}

The unquestioned technological superiority of NATO aircraft operating over Bosnia did not make them invulnerable during the April Gorazde crisis. The Bosnian Serbs demonstrated their ability to defend their territory (at least close to the ground) on 15 April, when the VRS damaged a French carrier-based Etendard IVP aircraft with a SA-7 shoulder-fired SAM. The damaged aircraft was able to make it back to sea and land safely, but a British aircraft was not so fortunate the following day, when a Royal Navy Sea Harrier was felled by a similar missile while

searching for a Bosnian Serb tank firing at Gorazde's city hospital.^{25 26}

Although the military consequences of the NATO air actions around Gorazde were negligible, the precedent had been established of offensive air strikes against ground targets not directly related to the defense of UN peacekeepers.²⁷ The slow evolution of NATO air actions away from the immediate defense of UN ground forces toward retaliatory actions at times and places of NATO's choosing would eventually reach its culmination in the DELIBERATE FORCE air campaign almost a year and a half later.

NATO's April 1994 air actions notwithstanding, by late summer the Bosnian Serbs were openly flouting the Sarajevo heavy-weapons exclusion zone, presenting an increasingly embarrassing problem for the UN and NATO. For months the UN had elected to quietly overlook most violations as long as the Bosnian Serbs did not resume shelling the city itself. But it became increasingly obvious that the Serbs were not only moving weapons around but practicing with them inside the UN weapons collection depots and firing them in full view of UN observers.²⁸ NATO's resolve was tested a little too blatantly when Bosnian Serb troops removed a tank, two armored vehicles, and two anti-aircraft guns from a UN collection point on 5 August in defiance of an explicit threat by General Rose.²⁹ When the VRS refused to return the weapons, Rose ordered a retaliatory airstrike. The ensuing NATO actions produced more sound and fury than significance. Two US A-10 aircraft supported by Dutch, French, and British aircraft fired some 600 30mm cannon rounds at what turned out to be a derelict World War II-era M-18 tank destroyer 12km south of the airport.³⁰ The misdirected demonstration of force nevertheless prompted the Bosnian Serbs to back down and return the five stolen weapons the following day.³¹

Continuing Bosnian Serb violations of the Sarajevo exclusion zone—culminating in a series of attacks on

UN vehicles and personnel—prompted a second NATO air action on 22 September. Two British Jaguar aircraft dropped 1,000lb bombs while another US A-10 strafed a Bosnian Serb T-55 tank west of Sarajevo. Poor weather prevented two French Mirage jets from locating the target. This second strike in defense of the Sarajevo area was hardly more successful than the first. The offending vehicle was reported

destroyed, but the Bosnian Serbs promptly reacted by obstructing UN humanitarian efforts across the country, blocking relief convoys and forcing the closure of the Sarajevo airlift, leaving the city with only two weeks' food. VRS commander Mladic went so far as to threaten retaliation against captive UN peacekeepers if NATO mounted another air attack. With the UN now under pressure to restore Sarajevo's food supplies, UNPROFOR and the VRS settled the standoff in a few days, but it remained debatable which side had called the other's bluff.^{32 33 34 35}

NATO's largest and most dramatic air action of 1994 was the November airstrike against the Krajina Serbs holding Udbina airfield in Croatia. Despite the loss of four aircraft to NATO on 28 February, the Krajina Serbs continued to fly occasional brief strike missions against the Muslims of the Bihac enclave, only minutes away and just over the Bosnian-Croatian border. After Krajina Serb Air Force Galebs were detected bombing in November, the UN accepted a NATO proposal to put a stop to the flights with an airstrike against the airfield from which they had been operating. On 21 November a NATO strike package of more than 30 combat aircraft struck Udbina with a mix of 80 laser-guided bombs, iron bombs, and cluster munitions.³⁶ The airfield runway was damaged—though not irreparably—and the immediate objective of stopping Krajina Serb flights over Bosnia was achieved—at least temporarily.³⁷ Czech peacekeepers reported the airfield back in operation less than three months later, apparently supporting Bosnian Serb Army operations around Bihac in early February 1995.³⁸

NATO's punitive airstrike raised the ante over Bosnia for both sides. The following day, 22 November, the Bosnian Serbs almost downed their second Royal Navy Sea Harrier with another SAM. NATO responded by mounting heavily-armed “suppression of enemy air defense” (SEAD) missions. The next

day, it was NATO's turn to chalk up a win when a Bosnian Serb SAM battery turned on its radars near Bihac. NATO aircraft struck the battery with three high-speed anti-radiation missiles (HARM) that homed in on the Serb radars. NATO aircraft continued to search for Bosnian Serb SAMs for the rest of the day, firing three more HARMs and dropping several unguided bombs on other air defense sites.³⁹

Within just a few days, NATO aircraft and the Bosnian Serbs' air defenses were effectively at war—a far cry from UNPROFOR's original vision of impartial, on-the-ground peacekeeping. And by 25 November NATO was threatening all-out airstrikes against Bosnian Serb tanks shelling Sarajevo in open violation of the heavy weapons exclusion zone. At General Rose's request, NATO's 5th Allied Tactical Air Force (5 ATAF) assembled another 30-plane strike package and launched it to disable the Serb tanks. Meanwhile, though, things had gotten very ugly on the ground. To deter further NATO airstrikes, inflamed Bosnian Serbs took more than 300 UN military observers and peacekeeping troops hostage, tying some up and placing them across the runway at Banja Luka airfield and holding other hostages as “human shields” at weapons collections points around Sarajevo.⁴⁰

The weakness inherent in the UN's effort to use NATO airpower as the “bad cop” to coerce the Serbs was now all too apparent: UNPROFOR—the “good cop”—was effectively unarmed and defenseless. More threatened than threatening, the UN and General Rose were forced to call off the NATO strike already in the air and defuse the crisis. UNPROFOR, fearing for the lives of its peacekeepers, requested that NATO temporarily stop its flights over Bosnian airspace until the release of its personnel had been negotiated. The standoff was gradually resolved as the UN hostages were progressively released and NATO air action was held in abeyance. After this last, most serious confrontation between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR ended both sides walked away with black eyes, but nothing fundamental had been resolved. The experience did not bode well for the coming year.

UNPROFOR and the Contact Group Peace Plan

On the ground in Bosnia, two great fears had developed among UNPROFOR's commanders by mid-1994. Both grew out of the Contact Group's peace plan, which had been drafted in Geneva and presented to the three factions as a "take it or leave it" proposal with a 19 July deadline for acceptance or rejection by the Bosnian Muslim, Croat, and Serb leaderships.

The first fear was that the Bosnian Serbs would not sign, in which case they were to be subjected to an escalating package of international coercive measures, beginning with tighter sanctions and stricter enforcement of the heavy weapons exclusion zones, and potentially ranging up to punitive airstrikes. UN commanders were deeply concerned that such coercive measures could lead, as they had before, to Bosnian Serb retaliation against the overstretched and under-protected UNPROFOR peacekeepers scattered across Bosnia. As one UN source in Sarajevo characterized it,

Our concern is that the international community will do something stern and punitive against the Serbs, suddenly making us confrontational...Given the way UNPROFOR is configured now, the only we can operate with any acceptable margin of safety is on the basis of voluntary agreements.⁴¹

Ironically, UNPROFOR's other great fear at that moment was that the Bosnian Serbs would sign the Contact Group plan, requiring UNPROFOR to transition almost immediately from peacekeeping to countrywide enforcement of the peace agreement. UN commanders repeatedly protested that they did not have enough forces for even the tasks already assigned to them, let alone a broad treaty-enforcement mission. General Rose had earlier stated that implementation of a Geneva-like peace agreement—assuming the consent of the Bosnian parties—would require about 12,000 additional troops (preferably American), including two logistics battalions, two engineering battalions, and two to three helicopter regiments.⁴²

As it happened, it was the UN commanders' first fear that was more or less realized, although it developed

incrementally and in the course of more than a year. The international community did over time move from confrontation to coercion, and in some degree to the realization of the second great fear. When UNPROFOR eventually transitioned to a peace-enforcement mission, it would require even more than the notional force General Rose had laid out.

What a Tangled Web: UNPROFOR's Withdrawal, Lifting the Arms Embargo, and Plan 40104

Plagued with shrinking defense budgets, downsizing militaries, and an expensive and open-ended military commitment in Bosnia, several key UNPROFOR contributors began to call into question the mission's utility and their own continued participation in it. For nearly two years the internationally-brokered peace talks had seemed to be going nowhere, while obstructions to humanitarian aid deliveries and risks to UN peacekeepers seemed if anything to be on the rise. It was in France (which had contributed the most troops and taken the most casualties) that the debate over UNPROFOR's success or failure, and whether the peacekeeping force should remain, increase in size, or withdraw completely, was played out perhaps most visibly, but the same issues were being agonized over in the policy circles of Washington, London, and virtually every nation that had contributed peacekeeping troops to the region.^{43 44 45}

At different times during 1994, France, Great Britain, and Canada—who between them contributed nearly half of UNPROFOR's total force in Bosnia and Croatia—signaled that they might withdraw their peacekeeping contingents from the region if the peace negotiations didn't soon produce some results.^{46 47 48} France was the most explicit in its statements, warning in mid-March that it would begin withdrawing its peacekeepers from Bosnia if there was not visible progress on the peace talks by mid-June. The NATO allies reacted sharply to the French public statement—but mostly because they had not been consulted in advance.^{49 50} Only days later, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd told reporters that, although British policymakers were not "so precise about dates" as the French, they were in agreement in principle regarding

a possible troop pullout; he asserted that “We certainly have no desire to keep British troops indefinitely in Bosnia.”⁵¹ Much of the public soul-searching that followed was probably posturing designed to frighten the Bosnian Muslims into accepting a less-than-desirable peace settlement to avoid a UN pullout. But the concern expressed by the NATO allies over escalating costs, unfocused missions, and indefinite timelines were certainly genuine enough.

At this point, however, the possibility of a complete UNPROFOR pullout had become inextricably linked with two other issues. The first question was the wisdom of lifting the UN arms embargo on Bosnia. The second was that of NATO assistance to an UNPROFOR extraction operation.

The issue that arose first was the proposed lifting of the UN’s arms embargo against all former Yugoslav republics, which had been imposed by UNSC Resolution 713 on 25 September 1991 in a vain attempt to limit the scale of the fighting. This option, seen as a way to help the outgunned Muslims and Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina against the Serb military machine, was supported by many elements of the US Government and conditionally by some European governments. The idea was in conflict with the conventional wisdom that, while lifting the arms embargo might eventually help to “level the playing field” by allowing the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats to acquire additional weapons and approach military parity with the Bosnian Serbs, in the short term new arms deliveries would simply drive up the body count. More weapons and ammunition injected into an already vicious war zone would increase the intensity of fighting and leave the international community indirectly responsible for even more bloodshed. Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs would have every incentive to press their offensive as hard and as fast as they possibly could to smash the ARBiH and HVO before either military could acquire, distribute, or effectively utilize the weapons that a cessation of the embargo would bring. And these prospects convinced virtually everyone that lifting the arms embargo would make the situation on the ground completely untenable for UN peacekeepers and international aid workers, leading to the corollary conclusion that before the embargo

could be lifted all international forces and relief personnel would have to be withdrawn from Bosnia—with all of the risk, effort, and expense the planners calculated that would entail.⁵²

The issue of the UN arms embargo came to a head in October 1994, when the United States seriously entertained the possibility of lifting the arms embargo over the strong objections of its European allies and the Russian government. Furious diplomacy ensued, out of which came the conclusion by the Bosnian government that, rather than risk the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, it would be best off accepting the continuation of the UNSC arms embargo, importing what weapons it could via its covert pipeline through Croatia while retaining the meager protection afforded by the continued presence of the peacekeepers and hoping that the Bosnian Serbs’ own embargo—imposed by Serbian President Milosevic on 4 August—would begin to bite into their opponents’ capabilities. It therefore announced that it would accept a six-month delay in implementation of any future Security Council decision to lift the embargo. With the Bosnian government no longer lobbying for the right to gain more arms, the issue of the UN arms embargo could be postponed, though not resolved.⁵³

Counterintuitively, the second, related issue was whether and how NATO would send more troops into Bosnia, which would be required to facilitate the safe withdrawal of the UNPROFOR troops assigned there. NATO planners had concluded that covering the withdrawal of UNPROFOR under hostile fire could require seven to nine NATO maneuver brigades, totaling between 30,000 and 45,000 troops, thousands of tanks and armored vehicles, three aircraft carriers, 70 combat aircraft, and 180 helicopters. It was clear that the extraction option would not come cheap, either. Costs could run \$275 million to start and \$100 million per month thereafter—or much, much more.⁵⁴ Moreover, implicit in any NATO-run extraction operation (a series of contingency plans officially designated “Operation Plan 40104”) was the idea that the US would contribute not just air and sea lift but also its own ground forces to help secure transit

corridors out of Bosnia.⁵⁵ All could agree that UNPROFOR might have one leg caught in the Bosnian bear trap—but the available ways of removing the leg from the trap looked more painful than leaving it in.

A three-way impasse had thus been reached. Many believed that the simplest and most just solution would be to lift the arms embargo and let the Bosnian Muslims fight it out on their own. But it was already a given that lifting the arms embargo would require pulling out the peacekeepers. This in turn necessitated the commitment of major NATO forces to cover the withdrawal of UNPROFOR's 24,000 peacekeepers and at least implied a requirement for what

Washington had opposed from the start of the Balkan hostilities—direct involvement of US ground forces. The long-term goal of reduced expense and international disengagement had as its price a massive near-term commitment of money and troops, and the hitherto unacceptable engagement of American ground forces. Partly because of the interlinked nature of UNPROFOR withdrawal, cessation of the UN arms embargo, NATO force deployment, and the potential commitment of US troops—each highly contentious issues in themselves—the matter of UNPROFOR's withdrawal was long discussed but never resolved until its successor Implementation Force (IFOR) eventually arrived to replace it in December 1995.

Endnotes, Annex 63

- ¹ *The Economist*, "United Nations: Sea of Blue" 30 April 1994, p. 52.
- ² *The Economist*, "United Nations Peacekeeping: Trotting to the Rescue" 25 June 1994, pp. 19-22.
- ³ Largely because of its small staff, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations enjoyed a reputation as one of the most efficient elements of the UN's bloated and Byzantine bureaucracy. *The Economist*, "United Nations Peacekeeping: Trotting to the Rescue" 25 June 1994, pp. 19-22.
- ⁴ Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 99.
- ⁵ Although designated the "Nordic Battalion," NORDBAT was in effect a Brigade (-). It was comprised of roughly 1,000 Swedish, 730 Norwegian, and 120 Danish troops. *Jane's International Defense Review*, "Nordic Troops Remain Committed to Bosnia Mission" March 1995, p. 6.
- ⁶ *Jane's International Defense Review*, "UN Force Attracts More non-NATO Troops," November 1994, p. 10.
- ⁷ *Jane's International Defence Review*, "Bosnia Mission Forces UN To Grow With the Times" by Tim Ripley, May 1994, pp. 63-65.
- ⁸ Paris AFP, 20 January 1994. FBIS Vienna AU2001161394, 201613Z Jan 94.
- ⁹ Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 118.
- ¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, "Where UN Angels Fear to Tread" by Ed Vulliamy, 21 January 1996.
- ¹¹ *Jane's International Defence Review*, "Peacekeeping With a War Machine: Interview With General Rose" by Tim Ripley, January 1995, p. 11.
- ¹² *Air International*, "First Shoot Down by NATO," April 1994, p. 170.
- ¹³ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "UN Chiefs Call for CAS Streamlining in Bosnia" by Ian Kemp, 26 March 1994, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "The Jane's Interview: Admiral Leighton Smith," 28 January 1995, p. 32.
- ¹⁵ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA, p. 328.
- ¹⁶ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 70-82.
- ¹⁷ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. Penguin USA, p. 328. See also Reuters, 11 April 1994 for description of the attacks.
- ¹⁸ James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 149-151.
- ¹⁹ Silber and Little, p. 328.
- ²⁰ Belgrade Tanjug, 18 April 1994.
- ²¹ Silber and Little, pp. 332-333.
- ²² Paris AFP, 22 April 1994, carries the text of the North Atlantic Council ultimatum.
- ²³ *White Dragon: The Royal Welch Fusiliers in Bosnia*. Wrexham, UK: The Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Headquarters, pp. 9-13.
- ²⁴ The initial UN peacekeeping force in Gorazde was a composite battalion of British, Ukrainian, and Canadian troops; over the time the peacekeeping force in the enclave was to become predominantly British. *White Dragon: The Royal Welch Fusiliers in Bosnia*. Wrexham, UK: The Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Headquarters, pp. 9-13.
- ²⁵ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 70-82.
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- ²⁷ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "NATO Ready For Wider Air Strikes on Serbs" by Barbara Starr, 30 April 1994, p. 4.
- ²⁸ Reuters, "Serbs Flout U.N. Weapons-Free Zones" by Mark Heinrich, 2 August 1994.
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- ³⁶ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "UN Forces Attack Serb-Held Targets," 26 November 1994, p. 3.
- ³⁷ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 70-81.
- ³⁸ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "Flashpoints: Croatia," 25 February 1995, p. 15.
- ³⁹ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 70-81.
- ⁴⁰ Ripley, Tim, *Air War Bosnia: UN and NATO Airpower*. Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing, 1996, pp. 70-81.
- ⁴¹ Reuters, "U.N. Weighs Bosnia Options if Serbs Refuse Plan" by Kurt Schork, 14 July 1994.
- ⁴² Reuters, "U.N., NATO Weigh Military Options for Bosnia" by Kurt Schork, 14 July 1994.
- ⁴³ Reuters, "New Talk of UN Troop Pullout From Bosnia" by Patrick Worsnip, 11 May 1994.
- ⁴⁴ Reuters, "Bosnian Enforcement Issues Divide World Powers" by Kurt Schork, 10 July 1994.
- ⁴⁵ *Jane's International Defense Review*, "France Weighs Its Options in Bosnia" October, 1994, p. 6.
- ⁴⁶ France was the largest contributor to UNPROFOR, with over 6,000 troops deployed in the former Yugoslavia in the spring of 1994. *Jane's International Defense Review*, "France Weighs Its Options in Bosnia" October, 1994, p. 6.
- ⁴⁷ London had roughly 2,600 troops in Bosnia at the beginning of 1994. *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Britain Mulls Withdrawing Its Peacekeepers in Bosnia" 24 January 1994, p. 4.
- ⁴⁸ At this time, Canada had just under 2,000 peacekeeping troops deployed in the former Yugoslavia. *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Canadians Rethink Role as International Peacekeepers" 31 January 1994, p. 3.
- ⁴⁹ Reuters, "France Says Mid-June Talks on Bosnia Decisive" by Paul Taylor, 19 May 1994.
- ⁵⁰ Reuters, "NATO Allies Criticize France on Bosnia Pullout Threat" 24 May 1994.
- ⁵¹ Reuters, "British Troops Not In Bosnia Indefinitely—Hurd" 26 May 1994.
- ⁵² Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien stated on 6 July 1994 that "We would not be very happy with a possible lifting of the arms embargo because that could lead very rapidly to the withdrawal of the Canadian troops and probably those of other countries...The same feeling was expressed by the French and the British." Reuters, "UN May Withdraw if Bosnia Plan Fails—Canada" 6 July 1994.
- ⁵³ *The Economist*, "Only Postponing" 1 October 1994, pp. 65-66.
- ⁵⁴ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "Bolster or Withdraw: NATO Looks at Options" by Marc Rodgers, 7 January 1995.
- ⁵⁵ *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "Clinton Says US Troops Will Aid UN Pull-Out" by Kathleen Bunten, 17 December 1994, p. 4.

Section VI

Bosnia and Croatia 1995

Annex 64
UNPROFOR in 1995:
From Vacillation to Retaliation to
Peace Implementation

After nearly three years in the no-man's land between traditional UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement, UNPROFOR¹ in early 1995 clearly began to tilt from the former type of operation toward the latter. Traditionally, UN peacekeeping forces (such as those in Cyprus or the Golan Heights) had almost always been called in after a formal agreement had been reached between two parties. A small, lightly-armed peacekeeping force could thus serve as an impartial observer mission which would give both sides confidence that the other was adhering to the terms of the agreement. On the other hand, "peace enforcement"² missions are very different, potentially involving direct confrontation or coercion of the parties and correspondingly require a much larger and better-armed peacekeeping force. UNPROFOR, however, lay in between these two extremes, deployed during an ongoing conflict and assigned many peace monitoring responsibilities, but also at times attempting to compel compliance by the warring parties although lacking the resources or mandate to do so effectively.³

The organization, composition, and doctrine of the UN's ground forces changed fundamentally with the incorporation of the "Rapid Reaction Force," and the escalation from the ineffectual, pinprick air attacks of 1994 to the countrywide DELIBERATE FORCE air campaign of August-September 1995. The latter, especially, demonstrated beyond question the international community's new philosophy of political coercion through the direct application of military force. Having tried since 1992 to persuade the warring parties (specifically, the Bosnian Serbs) by using the velvet glove—and having been consistently humiliated for its efforts—the UN was finally prepared to switch hands and try using the iron fist in dealing with Bosnia.

Having concentrated on its humanitarian mission during the winter of 1994-95, UNPROFOR was drawn back into the center of events in Bosnia very soon after the ARBiH "spring offensive" put an end to the winter cease-fire. After the Bosnian Government resumed hostilities on 20 March 1995 with its attacks on Mt. Vlasic and the Stolice radio tower, the Bosnian Serbs responded by removing heavy weapons from UN weapons collection points. These Serb violations of UNSC resolutions in turn led to international objections, prompting calls for a UN response. Events soon escalated rapidly and drastically.

Not long after the Bosnian Army offensive began, the Bosnian Serbs responded by harassing the UN relief airlift into Sarajevo. On 8 April, a US C-130 transport took machinegun fire while approaching Sarajevo airport. The plane landed and departed safely, but UNHCR closed down the airlift in response—almost until the end of the war, as it turned out. NATO jets overflew Sarajevo as a threat to the Bosnian Serbs, but did not bomb any targets. The NATO show of force had no apparent effect.

The Last Straw: The UN Hostage Crisis of May-June 1995

In May Bosnian Serb actions reached a new and unacceptable level of impudence, forcing the new UN Bosnia Commander, 52-year old British Lt. Gen. Rupert Smith,⁴ to raise the stakes once again. After Bosnian Serb troops removed four heavy weapons from a UN-monitored compound and proceeded to use them to shell the city, Smith delivered an ultimatum, warning that airstrikes would be launched unless the Serbs returned or withdrew the four heavy weapons. When no weapons were forthcoming, Smith ordered NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb ammunition depots just outside the Republika Srpska's self-proclaimed capital of Pale, 15 kilometers east of Sarajevo.⁵

American F-16s and Spanish F-18s struck the Pale ammunition depots on 25 May, raising a giant mushroom cloud visible from Sarajevo and signaling that the UN—through NATO—was taking its involvement to a new level. Up until this point UNPROFOR had confined its punitive air actions to tactical, ground-support operations against VRS weapons and vehicles that were directly violating UNSC resolutions. By bombing a highly visible Bosnian Serb infrastructure target at a time and place of its choosing, NATO had escalated the level of confrontation between the UN and the Bosnian Serbs.

The Bosnian Serbs responded swiftly and unmistakably, shelling five of the UN-declared “safe areas” that evening. In one of the artillery barrages, a single shell—in what was almost certainly a fluke hit—impacted near a crowded Tuzla outdoor cafe. Seventy-one civilians were killed and more than 200 were wounded. News of the bloody massacre at the Tuzla outdoor cafe spread instantly around the world, prompting renewed NATO airstrikes against the intransigent Bosnian Serbs the following morning. Twelve NATO aircraft struck six more bunkers at the Pale ammunition depot complex at around 10:30 AM on 27 May, reportedly damaging or destroying them all.⁶

Following the second round of NATO airstrikes, the Bosnian Serbs pushed the stakes still higher by taking 377 UN peacekeepers and military observers hostage on 27 and 28 May.⁷ Most of these were UNPROFOR troops, who were surrounded, disarmed, and detained at the “UN-controlled” weapons collections points around Sarajevo. But some others were used as “human shields” to deter further NATO airstrikes. Bosnian Serb television promptly broadcast pictures of these peacekeepers—from a wide spectrum of nations—chained to military installations, bridges, and other potential targets across the Republika Srpska.⁸

Nor was that all. An embarrassed UN command was obliged to report that it had also surrendered hundreds of flak jackets and rifles, six French light tanks, and 11 French and Ukrainian armored personnel carriers to the Bosnian Serbs.⁹ (In fact, a total of 616 UNPROFOR vehicles of all types were captured or stolen by

the various former Yugoslav factions between 1991 and 1995.¹⁰) The UN’s fears that the captured equipment would be abused were immediately validated when Serb troops disguised as French peacekeepers, complete with blue helmets, infiltrated a French observation post on Sarajevo’s Vrbanja Bridge and captured the position and 12 UNPROFOR troops.

Stung into action, a French platoon responded with UNPROFOR’s first infantry assault of the war. After a sharp gun battle that left two French and four Bosnian Serb soldiers dead, each side was left holding one end of the bridge.¹¹ Extremely tense negotiations followed, during which the Bosnian Serbs forced two French peacekeepers to kneel on the ground with rifles to their heads, and threatened to execute them both unless UNPROFOR released the four captured Serbs. In the end, the two French soldiers were spared and the French regained control of both ends of the bridge by 28 May. The battle at the Vrbanja bridge had shown both the possibilities and—with two peacekeepers killed and twelve wounded—the potential costs of the UN’s proposed new “robust peacekeeping” doctrine.^{12 13}

At this point, the UN had a full-blown catastrophe on its hands. Faced with the obvious risk of killing their own personnel with any more airstrikes, UNPROFOR and NATO backed away from the further use of air power. NATO’s 16 foreign ministers met in the Netherlands to rethink UNPROFOR’s basic strategy and configuration.¹⁴ Meanwhile, diplomats negotiated frantically for the release of the detained UN peacekeepers. The first breakthrough came on 3 June when the Serbian State Security Service (RDB) chief, Milosevic henchman Jovica Stanisic, arranged the release of 121 UN hostages through Zvornik to Serbia and from there to freedom.¹⁵ Subsequent negotiations between Bosnian Serb President Karadzic, RDB chief Stanisic, and two Greek envoys (Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias and Defense Minister Gerrassimos Arsenis) led to the release of another 111 UN hostages on 7 June. All but 26 UN personnel were freed on 13 June. On 18 June the UN in turn released the four Bosnian Serb soldiers taken prisoner during the

Vranja Bridge battle on 27 May. This cleared the way for the release of the remaining 26 prisoners on the following day, 19 June.^{16 17 18}

Though the United Nations had managed to negotiate the release of the hostages without loss, this seeming success was obscured by a haze of concessions, compromises, and allegations of secret deals. Almost a month after the UN had insisted on the “immediate and unconditional” release of all hostages¹⁹, the deal had to be facilitated by RDB Chief Jovica Stanisic, a very shady character indeed, who had previously armed the likes of Serb gangster “Arkan” and undoubtedly had no small amount of innocent blood on his hands. There were also reports that Paris had secretly bargained through former UN commander Gen. Bernard Janvier for a settlement whereby the UN hostages would be traded for a guarantee that there would be no further NATO airstrikes against Serb positions. Spokesmen admitted that secret meetings had been held, but denied that any concessions had been made. Never confirmed or refuted, the rumors persisted.^{20 21 22}

In fact it was almost irrelevant whether an explicit bargain had been struck or not. The reality was that the UN made substantial concessions to the Bosnian Serbs in order to secure the safe release of its personnel. The Republika Srpska’s dire threats and drastic measures had won the high-stakes poker hand it had played out against the international community. But it was not the last hand of the game.

The UN’s New Strategy: Consolidation and Retaliation

“Peacekeeping in a country at war is an impossible mandate to carry out. Our mandate must therefore be amended . . . At present, however, I lack the means to carry out genuine military missions or to impose peace.”

—French Gen. Hervé Gobillard, UN Sector Sarajevo Commander, June 1995²³

Even before the hostage debacle, the UN had begun to consider consolidating its forces into less vulnerable

groupings, relying increasingly on airpower and the as yet undeployed Rapid Reaction Force to defend the six Safe Areas and prevent attacks on UN peacekeepers. But the hostage-taking catastrophe jarred both the UN and NATO into adopting a new concept of operations in early June. In what would be termed the “dual-track” strategy, NATO and the Contact Group sought to coordinate their military and political activities, combining a more muscular military stance with a stepped-up diplomatic effort. As one part of this two-track campaign, UNPROFOR and NATO would undertake major changes in where they positioned their forces and how operations were conducted. At the same time, a diplomatic campaign would concentrate on persuading Serbian President Milosevic to apply pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to sign a peace settlement, in exchange for a suspension of the international economic sanctions against Milosevic’s regime.²⁴

The manifest vulnerability of isolated UN forces demonstrated during the hostage crisis—and continuing threats by key troop-contributing nations to pull their contingents entirely out of Bosnia—forced UNPROFOR to fundamentally rethink both its force structure and its operating strategy. UNPROFOR’s new strategy was to have several planks: consolidation of the UN peacekeeping troops into larger, more defensible groups, withdrawal of the extremely vulnerable UN Military Observer teams then scattered across Serb-held Bosnia, deployment of the much-touted Rapid Reaction Force, aggressive opening of overland supply corridors between cities and the besieged enclaves, and an increased readiness to use NATO airpower when necessary.

The first order of business was to remove UN forces remaining at risk so that the hostage crisis could not simply be repeated. Part of this consolidation had already been accomplished by the UN’s de facto abandonment of its efforts to enforce the Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone, which it suspended in exchange for the release of the last UN hostages on 20 June. Simultaneous with the Bosnian Serbs’ release of the last 26 of their captives, the UN peacekeepers abandoned the ten heavy-weapons collections

sites where UNPROFOR had supposedly been controlling all Bosnian Serb tanks and artillery from the 20km zone around Sarajevo since February 1994. Sixteen months after its initiation, NATO's high-profile effort to safeguard Bosnia's capital had formally been declared dead, and the UN had abandoned all pretense of enforcing the Sarajevo heavy-weapons exclusion zone. "The policy of weapons-collection points has now been abandoned," as a UN spokesman openly conceded.²⁵

UNPROFOR's troop consolidation process rapidly gained momentum following the fall of Srebrenica in mid-July, after the isolated Dutch battalion trapped in the enclave was held hostage in yet another successful Serb bid to stave off NATO airstrikes. Shortly thereafter, the Zepa safe area was also lost to the Bosnian Serbs, with its company-sized detachment of Ukrainian peacekeepers likewise unable to prevent the loss of a UN-declared safe area. Gorazde—the last remaining UN safe area in eastern Bosnia—was evacuated between 24 and 28 August, as the UN successively pulled 90 Ukrainian and 170 British peacekeepers out of the still-encircled enclave. With the horrors of Srebrenica perpetrated only weeks earlier still vivid in everyone's mind, Gorazde's populace remained unconvinced that 12 UN Military Observers and the threat of NATO airstrikes would be enough to safeguard Gorazde if the Serbs determined to take the enclave.²⁶ But a combination of threats and surprise allowed the British peacekeeping contingent to escape under cover of night and cross the border into Serbia and thereafter to the UK.²⁷ One way or another, UNPROFOR had left all of the eastern enclaves.

Now, having successfully consolidated its forces into a smaller number of bases, UNPROFOR had indeed made itself less vulnerable. But by essentially withdrawing its peacekeepers into UN firebases UNPROFOR had also left itself open to questions about what exactly it was there for. If it was not going to man observation posts, monitor contested areas, or deliver relief supplies to remote areas, why be there at all? Conversely, if it was to force its way through road-blocks in spite of opposition, might UNPROFOR simply become another combatant in the Bosnian war? Looming uncertainties about UNPROFOR's underlying purpose—whether to safeguard itself or to attempt

to impose its will upon the Bosnian factions—would be raised often in conjunction with the UN's highly visible new effort, the Rapid Reaction Force.

The Rapid Reaction Force

"It isn't rapid, it isn't a force and it isn't reacting."

—Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich,
July 1995.²⁸

Consolidation of UNPROFOR's forces into less vulnerable positions was only one side of the UN's new strategic coin. The other side was to be the prompt defense of UN peacekeepers threatened anywhere in Bosnia, and retaliation if necessary for any violations of UN resolutions. And the striking arm of UNPROFOR's aggressive new doctrine was to be the new "Rapid Reaction Force" (RRF).

UNPROFOR's plans to establish a land-based deterrent force coincided with the demands of many of UNPROFOR's contributors—in particular, the British and French—for a better way to enforce UN resolutions. There had been nebulous plans for a multinational mobile reaction unit at the time of the May-June hostage crisis, but the size, organization, command, and national contributions needed to make this force a reality had yet to be worked out.²⁹ After the hostage crisis, it seemed clear that UNPROFOR had to be transformed from a dubious liability into a credible deterrent.

The proposed solution eventually became the Rapid Reaction Force, intended to be a ground-based, mobile, and heavily-armed contingent that could rapidly respond to any threats to the peacekeeping contingents. Unlike other UNPROFOR forces, the RRF was supposed to be able to blast its way past any adversary that tried blocking its convoys or to demolish any heavy weapons that flouted UN exclusion zones restrictions.³⁰ (As a small but visible symbol of the RRF's new mandate, its vehicles and weapons were

painted in camouflage green, not UN white.) And although few would say so publicly, it was also understood that the Rapid Reaction Force could also be used to facilitate an UNPROFOR withdrawal—if it came to that.³¹

Organizationally, the RRF emerged as a two-brigade force composed of British, French, and Dutch troops.³² One of the two deployed brigades was the all-British 24th Airmobile Brigade, 5,500 strong and brought directly from the UK. The second was a British-French-Dutch multinational brigade.³³ (A 200-man Belgian paracanndo field artillery battery was also designated and trained to be part of the RRF, but owing to a series of delays it did not arrive in country before the war's end.^{34 35}) The RRF as a whole was supported by a composite artillery regiment atop Mt. Igman equipped with French 155mm howitzers, British 105mm light artillery, and Dutch 120mm heavy mortars. Mobility—deemed an essential element of the RRF—was contributed by a sizeable contingent of British and French transport helicopters.^{36 37 38 39}

UN Security Council approval for the force was delayed into mid-June, as the US and its European allies haggled over who would pay the estimated \$380 million for the force's first six-month deployment—the troop-contributing countries or the United Nations.^{40 41} (In the latter case, under UN regulations the US would be assessed for 31 percent of the associated costs even if it had no troops participating.⁴²) In the end, Washington relented and agreed to partially fund the operation through the UN. On 16 June 1995, UN Security Council Resolution 998 authorized the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force and its deployment to Bosnia.

Although advance elements of the UK 24 Airmobile Brigade were supposed to begin deploying through Ploce in the first week of July, Bosnian Croat authorities obstructed the RRF's entry into Herzeg-Bosna, demanding a clearer explanation of the new force's mandate, duration, strength, and deployments.⁴³ Thanks largely to this delay, the RRF was neither deployed nor ready for action when the Dutch battalion was surrounded and taken prisoner during the VRS capture of Srebrenica in mid-July. The RRF's seeming haplessness added to the UN's mounting

humiliation as critics began to castigate UNPROFOR for failure to prevent the massacres and atrocities that followed the fall of Srebrenica.

On 24 July—as the full scope of the Srebrenica disaster was becoming apparent to the world—the Rapid Reaction Force made a much-publicized deployment of its tri-national artillery formation atop Mt. Igman near Sarajevo. The first functional RRF element in Bosnia, the powerful force eventually included two infantry companies (one British, one French), a French AMX light tank squadron, a battery of eight French 155mm howitzers, a battery of 12 British 105mm light howitzers, and a composite battery of 12 Dutch and French heavy mortars.^{44 45} Its immediate purpose was to show the UN flag. But it would indeed serve its specified aim of defending UN troops and retaliating for Bosnian Serb provocations later on, during the DELIBERATE FORCE air campaign of August-September.*

Even after the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa in late July, however, both the Croatian and Bosnian Governments continued to impede the deployment of the RRF with an assortment of legal and procedural obstacles. By mid-August, the obstructionism had gotten so bad that UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali was publicly criticizing the demand by Zagreb and Sarajevo for additional money for the UN's use of facilities and for control over the RRF's movements. Although part of this intransigence was simple haggling over money (as with the Bosnian Government's insistence on compensation for "environmental damages" caused by RRF forces) the underlying issues were more serious, and centered around deeply-rooted concerns about the true potential function of the RRF. Some Bosnian Government officials feared that the RRF might simply become the "UN Self-Protection Force." (Or, worse still, the "UN Rapid-Extraction Force" if UNPROFOR was to evacuate Bosnia.⁴⁶) Other officials were concerned that while the RRF might indeed

* See the section "DELIBERATE FORCE: NATO Airpower Over Bosnia, 30 August - 20 September 1995" for a more complete discussion of the NATO air campaign and the RRF's concurrent military operations during this period.

curb Serb excesses, it might also impede the Bosnian or Croatian armies from taking the offensive themselves. As one Bosnian official put it, “Our concern may sound silly at a distance, but we know the first goal of Britain and France is to contain the war. Our goal is to win the war. We are worried that if the two goals conflict, Britain and France could use the force to try to obstruct our army or even attack it.”⁴⁷ As a result of this seemingly endless series of delays, it was not until August that UNPROFOR’s RRF became a truly functional force. And just in time, too—for the UN (through NATO) was just about to take the offensive with the DELIBERATE FORCE air campaign and the RRF’s concurrent artillery strikes around Sarajevo.

From UNPROFOR to IFOR

In the last few weeks before the Dayton Agreement was signed, UNPROFOR was already making plans to simultaneously draw down and plus-up. On the one hand, some national contingents were released from duty with UNPROFOR after the US-brokered ceasefire took effect in late October. On the other hand, though, the multinational peacekeeping force was also preparing itself to be transformed at the stroke of a pen from a peacekeeping force into a peace enforcement force with the signing of the Dayton Agreement.

As part of the transition from UNPROFOR to IFOR, NATO’s Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Force (ARRC) mobile headquarters would take over from UNPROFOR HQ as the corps-equivalent command element. Bosnia would, in turn, be administratively divided into three division-equivalent sectors, to be placed under American, British, and French command headquarters. Each of these three “framework”

divisions would in turn include brigades, battalions, and even companies and platoons from nations as diverse as Germany (deploying its armed forces out-of-area for the first time in half a century), Russia (operating alongside its erstwhile NATO adversaries of only a few years before), the newly-independent Baltic States, Malaysia, Jordan, and Albania.⁴⁸

IFOR was to be much more than simply a bigger UNPROFOR. Its forces, equipment, mandate, and rules of engagement were to be very different. Even after the introduction of the Rapid Reaction Force, UNPROFOR had been a 24,000-strong UN-mandated peacekeeping force, with broadening powers of self-defense but still a limited mandate within Bosnia. IFOR, by contrast, was a 60,000-strong, explicitly NATO-run peace-enforcement mission armed with tanks, armored fighting vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters—and, just as important, a mandate explicitly laid out under the terms of the Dayton Agreement which allowed IFOR to essentially run the country. Whereas UNPROFOR had essentially operated when and how the three Bosnian factions would allow, after Dayton IFOR would dictate when and how the three Bosnian factions could operate. All at once, the tables had turned.

With the transition on 20 December 1995 from UNPROFOR to IFOR, the international peacekeeping force completed the four-year journey from the first peacekeepers in the now-nonexistent UN Sectors of Croatia to the 60,000 peace enforcers policing the de facto NATO protectorate of Bosnia. If the handful of mediators, negotiators, and observers present in Sarajevo in April 1992 could have seen the veritable international army which would eventually follow them in December 1995, they might well have been amazed.

Chart 1

NATO Rapid Reaction Force

The Rapid Reaction Force

2 Signal Regiment (UK)
21 Signal Regiment (UK)
72 Aircrew Workshop (UK)
80 Postal and Courier Squadron (UK)
Multi-National Brigade, HQ Tomislavgrad

'Task Force Alpha' (Anglo-Dutch), HQ Vitez

1st Battalion, Devon & Dorset Regiment (UK)
3 x Cos each of 14-16 x Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles
51 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers (UK)
armored bridgelayers and engineering vehicles
Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, Household Cavalry Regiment (UK)
12 x Scimitar Light Tanks, 4 x Striker, 5 x Spartan

'Task Force Bravo' (French), HQ Tomislavgrad/Mt. Igman

UNPROFOR French Battalion 5 (FREBAT-5)
3 x Mechanized Infantry Cos each with 14-18 VAB APC
elements, 2nd Foreign Legion Infantry Regiment
elements, 1st Foreign Legion Cavalry Regiment
12 x 105mm AMX-10 armored reconnaissance vehicles
Combat Support Company
Combat Engineer Company

Artillery Component, Deployed Mt. Igman

1 x battery 155mm howitzers (France), Deployed Mt. Igman
8 x 155mm GCT self-propelled howitzers
19 Regiment, Royal Artillery (-) (UK)
2 x batteries each of 6 x 105mm L-118 light howitzers
1 x Co 120mm mortars (Royal Dutch Marine Corps), Depl. Mt. Igman
6 x 120mm heavy mortars

5e Regiment d'Helicopter de Combat (-) (French Army), HQ Ploce

8 x Gazelle attack (HOT anti-tank missiles)
7 x SA330B Puma transport

24 Airmobile Brigade (UK), HQ Ploce, Croatia

- 1 Royal Anglican Air Mobile Infantry Battalion
(1 Light Infantry Battalion remained in the UK on standby)
- 21 Air Defense Battery, Royal Artillery (UK)
- 24 Combat Service Support Battalion (UK)
- 19 Field Ambulance Co (UK)

3 Regiment Army Air Corps (UK)

- 9 x Gazelle attack
- 9 x Westland Lynx AH Mk 7 TOW
- 9 x Westland Lynx AH Mk 9 transport

RAF Support Helicopter Force (UK)

- 6 x Chinook HC Mk2 transport
- 6 x Puma HC.1 transport

Endnotes, Annex 64

¹In the spring of 1995, the UN changed its designations so that the new term "UNPFF" (United Nations Peace Forces) was used to refer to UN operations in the entire former Yugoslavia, whereas the term "UNPROFOR" (United Nations Protection Force) was reserved for operations within Bosnia alone. Colloquially, though, "UNPROFOR" was frequently still used to refer to any UN peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia right up through the end of the Croatian and Bosnian wars in late 1995.

²Exemplified, perhaps, by the very proactive "peacemaking" doctrine of the Russian military.

³One reflection of this schizophrenia of mission was the fact that many of the UN Security Council Resolutions which defined UNPROFOR's mandate were based upon Chapter VI of the UN Charter (the pacific settlement of disputes) whereas others were based upon Chapter VII of the Charter (enforcement measures). Gow, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. p. 118.

⁴The new commander of UN forces in Bosnia, British Lt. General Rupert Smith replaced Gen. Rose at the beginning of the year. Smith had commanded the UK's 1st Armored Division during the Gulf War and subsequently served as Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff during much of the British deployment in the former Yugoslavia. Reuters, "Smith, New U.N. Commander in Bosnia, Faces Long Haul" by Paul Majendie, 19 January 1995. Reuters, "General Rupert Smith Was Key Player in Gulf War" by Peter Millership, 23 January 1995. Reuters, "U.N. Commander Smith Exits Bosnia With Top Marks" by Kurt Schork, 19 December 1995.

⁵*Jane's Defence Weekly*, "Headline News: NATO Poised as Serbs Retaliate," 3 June 1995, p. 5.

⁶*The Washington Post*, "Serbs Take Hostages After Airstrike," by Joel Brand and Juliana Mojsilovic, 27 May 1995.

⁷More precisely, a total of 372 UN peacekeepers were seized, detained, held hostage, or otherwise restricted beginning on 27 and 28 May. An additional five UN personnel were taken into custody on 2 June, bringing the overall total to 377.

⁸This was not the first time the Bosnian Serbs had taken UN personnel into custody: in late November 1994, in the face of NATO threats to bomb Serb airfields and military targets, the Bosnian Serbs had taken some 300 UN peacekeepers and military observers hostage, similarly using some as "human shields" at key locations.

⁹*The Washington Post*, "Bosnian Serbs Seize More U.N. Troops," by Joel Brand, 29 May 1995.

¹⁰*Jane's Defence Weekly*, "UN Liberia Mission is Latest Robbery Victim," by Thalif Deen, 24 April 1996.

¹¹*Time*, "Pity the Peacekeepers; The Serbs Respond to NATO Bombings by Chaining Hostages," by George J. Church, 5 June 1995.

¹²*The New York Times*, "Conflict in the Balkans: UN Forces, Bosnia Battle Shows UN's Pride and Limits," by Roger Cohen, 6 June 1995.

¹³The French peacekeepers also captured four Bosnian Serb fighters in the battle. They were returned to the Bosnian Serbs via the International Committee of the Red Cross on 20 June, at the same time the Bosnian Serbs released the last of the detained UNPROFOR personnel. In a public statement, the UN denied any linkage between the release of the four Bosnian Serbs and the UN peacekeepers—a claim regarded with intense skepticism by observers inside and outside of Bosnia.

¹⁴*The New York Times*, "Conflict in the Balkans: In Europe, U.S. and NATO Demand Quick Release of the Hostages," by Steven Greenhouse, 31 May 1995.

¹⁵Reuters, "U.N. Says it Gave Nothing for Bosnia Hostages," 3 June 1995.

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